

Pakatan will wobble but not split

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COMMENT In opining that all three components would lose should PAS leave Pakatan Rakyat, well known columnist Subky Latif of the Islamic party gave vent to what long standing observers of opposition politics now acknowledge: the coalition will be fissiparous but will not fragment.

Why? A simple logic binds each component to the corporate whole.

Subky (right) says and seasoned observers would agree that DAP, PKR and PAS will not be as strong as separate and unaffiliated entities in the present political landscape as they are as individual components of the Pakatan conglomerate.

Each is going to get angry with the other from time to time on issues, major and minor, but they will stop short of drawing up the decree nisi.

They will fume and fulminate as DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng recently did against former PAS Youth chief, Nasrudin Hassan, for casting Umno-like aspersions on his administration and defamation summons will be threatened but not issued.

Bluster will remain bluster. Just like flattery, it is all right if you do not inhale.

Immersion of six years in the post-March 2008 tsunami politics of the country has inured DAP, PKR and PAS to the complex difficulties of dislodging Umno-BN.

Despite gaining a 52 percent plurality in the popular vote at the Election 2013 in May last year, Pakatan could not force Umno-BN to hand over the keys to Putrajaya.

The electoral system is deeply rigged in favor of Umno-BN and it will stay that way for the foreseeable future.

In fact, if Pakatan splits asunder now, there is no saying that the constituency redrawing exercise, scheduled for parliamentary scrutiny soon, would see the system further rigged in favor of the powers-that-be.

PAS vice-president Husam Musa (left), with his usual analytical acuity, has weighed into the roiling speculation about machinations afoot to entice PAS away from Pakatan with a warning of the moves' sinister objective - the creation of more predominantly Malay constituencies in the redelineation exercise to enable Umno to stay on top of the electoral totem pole.

Oppositionist optimists no longer place much store in Umno imploding from internal

strains despite the recent launch of what is seen as Dr Mahathir Mohamad's attempt at unseating Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak as Umno president.

The glue that holds Umno together is self-interest and Najib has rigged the spoils distribution system in such way that he has ensured a majority of the party's electors will favour him.

The gravy train over which Najib has abundant control has too many beneficiaries among the movers and shakers of Umno for them to want to upset it.

Proven plurality already exists

If Umno won't implode, how can the opposition take over Putrajaya unless DAP, PKR and PAS stick together, especially if a proven plurality already exists among the national electorate that wants an opposition takeover?

This awareness that a majority of voters, as demonstrated by the returns in last general election, desire an opposition takeover is what will keep the intermittently quarrelling troika of Pakatan sticking together in spite of their, at times, frightful differences.

Each component of the alliance - a pact that owes a lot of its vitality to the existence of the Internet - is keenly made aware of instantaneous feedback from opposition supporters on any of their decisions through the medium of the net.

Though no political party can afford to base their positions on any issue on that feedback alone, indeed Internet feedback is a veritable weather-cock - pieces of chaff drifting on every wind of circumstance - every player's next move is influenced by it.

Thus a healthy sensitivity to feedback from the medium influences the conduct of Pakatan components. This has a moderating effect on the impulses and engenders a disinclination for the rash.

Rash talk is slowed from eventuating in rash action. In the lull, the counsel of wiser heads will tend to get the edge in the ongoing discourse.

Among the sanest of these counsels is that of Mujahid Yusof Rawa (left), the PAS MP for Parit Buntar, who pointed out that the Pakatan feature of approaching national problems from vantage points not solely influenced by race and religion is the best way ahead for the polity is eminently worth preserving.

That and a proven majority's desire for change will see a fractious Pakatan swaying yet sticking together.

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