

PKR forces PAS into impossible corner

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COMMENT PAS bashing is now fashionable amongst liberal urbanites. "Treason", "unreliable", "flip-flops" and so on are some of the milder words being thrown about.

I am certainly not ideologically conservative, and I have lived in cities all my life. Nevertheless, for the few that may be interested, it may be worthwhile to examine things from a different perspective. In doing so, we shall try to be objective in identifying both good and bad.

Put yourself in the position of the third member of a coalition consisting of PKR and DAP. For the purposes of this exercise, you need not even be an Islamist party - just a third, independent party that has been around since 1951.

So, together with your partners, you win Selangor again in GE 13, and all three parties eventually agree to re-elect Khalid Ibrahim as menteri besar.

Within half a year, there are already rumblings of replacing him, but most of these are quashed as rumours.

Persistent blindsides

In January 2014, Lee Chin Cheh (right) resigns as Kajang assemblyperson, and a few days later, Anwar Ibrahim announces he is running to replace him.

Despite multiple denials, any fool would understand that this was done to pave the way for Anwar to replace Khalid as menteri besar.

Imagine your surprise that PKR engineered this resignation without any consultation with you whatsoever, but instead presented it as a fait accompli - an accomplished fact.

Despite being blindsided, you realise that you have no option but to support PKR's candidate in the Kajang by-election to ensure Pakatan unity. This is exactly what PKR betted on in performing that blindside, and their bet paid off.

Some months later, PKR unilaterally decides that Wan Azizah Wan Ismail should replace Khalid Ibrahim menteri besar of Selangor.

A Pakatan meeting is held, following which there is great confusion over what the word 'accept' means.

Before the truth or falsehood of the accusations against Khalid can be ascertained, PKR

fires Khalid from the party, thus forcing your hand and making it untenable to support Khalid any longer, whatever your view as to his guilt or innocence.

Consensus? Or tyranny of the majority?

In both Kelantan and Penang, you and DAP respectively have the most seats in the state assembly. In Selangor, PKR has the least, and forms less than a third of the total Pakatan seats.

Nevertheless, they seem to believe not only that it is their god-given right to determine who is menteri besar, but that they have the right to do so without consultation with their Pakatan partners.

In all of Pakatan's existence as a coalition, the language of the day is 'consensus', not 'majority rule'. This means for something to become Pakatan policy, all three parties must agree, rather than just two out of three.

In theory, should consensus not be reached, then there is to be no departure from the status quo.

PKR, however, seems to feel differently, and begins to berate you for not going along with what they and DAP have decided, continuously trying to force their decision down your throat.

The situation is of course complicated by the fact that a considerable number of leaders in your own party (Team B) seem to agree with PKR.

The question then arises whether Team B supports PKR because they truly believe Wan Azizah will make a better menteri besar than Khalid, or because they are jumping on the opportunity to use this issue to kill Team A.

How did this really start?

Once the guns started going off, no one was purely innocent any more. PAS can certainly be said to be guilty of mixed signals and U-turns. While everything that PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang (left) has done was technically by the book, surely some will feel that the moves he took contravened the spirit - if not the letter - of democracy within PAS.

As politics explode and sink deeper and deeper into the mud, perhaps it is time to reflect on what the basic issue was in the first place.

In essence, after various other reasons failed to gain traction, PKR found Khalid guilty of corruption, necessitating his removal as menteri besar.

Finding someone guilty is different from accusing them, charging them, or providing conclusive evidence.

Khalid was not given the chance to defend himself in accordance with proper procedure and due process, leading to the speculation that PKR wanted him out for less than savoury reasons.

Khalid built a reputation of fiercely safeguarding the state coffers that he stubbornly believed belonged to the rakyat, coffers he believed were not there to be the personal piggy bank of politicians. Was he removed in order to facilitate a more 'liberal' handling of state funds?

If you found PKR's 'evidence' of Khalid's corruption convincing, as DAP implicitly does, then perhaps it would make sense to support the Kajang Move. If you did not find this 'evidence' convincing however, and instead found the other possibility a more convincing motivation, then are you not conscience bound not to support the Kajang Move?

The real reason PKR blindsided PAS

This may answer the question of why PKR used the fait accompli, forcing-down-your-throat approach instead of approaching each of their partners ahead of time to make their case and build consensus.

If the case against Khalid was indeed convincing, then PKR should have had no problem persuading their partners and gaining their support before, rather than after, they embarked on their ill-fated journey.

Choosing the unilateral, fait accompli approach for the Kajang Move meant forcing PAS into an impossible scenario where it was damned if it did, and damned if it didn't.

By launching the Kajang Move, with one fell swoop Rafizi Ramli and Anwar Ibrahim have thus accomplished what Barisan Nasional has failed to do in the better part of six years: split PAS, and split Pakatan - completely destroying any chance of unseating BN in the near future.

As we watch our dreams crumble around us, all just so Anwar's wife could be made menteri besar, we really need to ask - who started this mess and why?