

**Political culture under siege**  
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**Stanley Koh**

The ancient science of prophecy, "ECK-Vidya" depicting the life cycles of men, nations and planets once described the law of cause and effect (karma) as the "wheel of the cart which follows the hooves of the ox". MCPX

"Nations and civilizations determine their own destinies which in turn are determined by collective mindsets and consciousness of their citizens. In older civilizations, many have all ultimately suffered, some were eventually destroyed, withered away and with them their science, literature, traditions and knowledge."

"Even Rome fell, and afterwards Europe and Middle East were wastelands for many centuries for that long sleep called the Dark Ages," author Paul Twitchell wrote in his ECK-Vidya publication.

On this basic premise, we can understand the recent political fallout affecting the Barisan Nasional government, and the weakening collective leadership within those component parties especially Umno, MCA, Gerakan and MIC.

This year is truly a karmic year and it is only the beginning when politicians shall continue to pay the price of their own follies as their collective perverse and immature political culture is under siege.

For once, many veteran politicians were treated like diapers and Malaysian voters had the courage to throw them out. Honour ceased to be the self-acclaimed exclusive property of many political parties in the Barisan Nasional.

Majority of Malaysians voted across racial lines and censured many whose "careers begin with hypocrisy, proceed with arrogance and finish with contempt," to paraphrase the quotation made by American writer Thomas Paine.

What makes a nation great? Is it due to its political cultural environment?

Or is it because of its voting population who are better educated and informed, more participative and demanding, and having their voices heard beyond the ballot box?

### **Leadership casualties**

Malaysians have finally learnt that changes of government are not in themselves a discouraging sign as it signalled an emergence of fresh leadership and a birth of an alternative government in the near future.

Leadership casualties (candidates) particularly within Umno, MCA and Gerakan become bitter lessons for them that traditional way of running things is inadequate. As a coalition government trying to govern a 21st century job with a 1950s mindset is no longer acceptable.

BN parties should realize by now that as parties of government, their political cultural

practices are causes to the growing failures in their legitimacy to govern. Unless reforms are instituted, their future role as opposition parties is a certainty.

In the words of the great American army General McArthur, "Politicians never die, they simply fade away."

Some don't fade away, they chose to leave or step down from the political scene. It is not in the Malaysian political culture for politicians in power so willingly giving up their positions and power even when public sentiments and support are not with them.

MIC president S Samy Vellu learnt it the hard way in the recent general election when he lost his electoral seat. Yet time and again, Malaysians have to tolerate these leaders who chose to cling to power and see them fighting, coup and after coup to keep their power seats.

Gerakan acting president Koh Tsu Koon had set a good example by having offered to step down vis-à-vis compatible a healthy political culture unlike the MCA leadership, preaching but not practicing it.

Reminiscent of former secretary general Dr Ting Chew Peh's speech at MCA's 56th anniversary (on Feb 27, 2005) who reminded his party leadership in cultivating a healthy political culture.

"A party that does not recognise capable and talented people will lead to its downfall."

Citing examples of a "bad" political culture, he elaborated: "Leaders who are for selfish gains, who hold on to position and who think of prospering themselves. Leaders who only carry out self-publicity and public relations or perform shows everywhere like "stars" (movie), glorifying themselves and images."

Unity, integrity and truthfulness are ingredients for a party leadership to behold. Ting said that in the 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party launched a "5-talk, 4-beauty and 3-love" campaign to educate its people and enhanced their political culture spiritually.

China's former premier Deng Xiaoping stressed that unity depended firstly on ideals and secondly, on discipline. There must be leadership credibility to bridge harmony between grassroots and leaders. A leader must not only speak the truth but should also be open-minded to divergent views from his followers.

### **Fear culture in MCA**

There must be beauty in attitude, in speech and in conduct from a leader. He must have love for the nation, community and especially for themselves.

"If a leader gains popularity through dishonest and deceitful means or by deception, he or she is not fit to be a leader," Ting said in the context of building a healthy political culture.

Is MCA's political culture purportedly in a healthy state?

MCA president Ong Ka Ting in his widely distributed publication, "The Man and his ideas", said "Many politicians talk but they never carry out their actions, which is why sometimes it can be hard to gain the public's trust.

"I believe that if we want to convince others, we must show it through our actions. When you want to do something you should also consider your community and country. Don't be selfish and self-centred by wanting everything for yourself."

His words have now backfired, disputed by some of his former loyal supporters notably former vice president Chua Soi Lek.

In a interview with Malaysiakini, Chua questioned Ka Ting's recent moves in opting out of government and re-positioning himself as Johor state chairman.

"He expressed wanting to spend more time doing party work but why become Johor state chairperson instead of Penang when the party had lost all the seats there."

"I have also received feedbacks that there are moves to cut me off (from participating) in the party's mainstream political activities, as an attempt to make others to forget me because they said I am a tainted leader," Chua added, also from Johor.

Describing MCA's prevailing political culture, Chua stressed, "There is this fear culture inculcated by or from the president as he has lots of prerogative power, in giving or recommending (title awards), in appointment of party posts and other 'goodies' dished out as rewards for political favours."

"There must be room for building consensus and freedom for others to be critical. Something must be wrong when everybody sings in the same tune," Chua expressing sentiments on nurturing a healthy political culture in the party.

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