

An epic battle of three men
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"When you eliminate the impossible, that which remains - no matter how implausible - must be true."
MCPX

Since Saiful Bukhari Azlan's accusation, things have moved so hard and so fast that real, considered analysis of the bigger picture has been difficult.

Reflecting on the 24 hours of Anwar Ibrahim's arrest allows us a good chance to take a step back and make some analytical suppositions.

Let's begin by highlighting some of the more salient features of Malaysia's current political climate: a leadership vacuum.

anwar abdullah najib crash movie style poster 180708Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is universally - and the word 'universally' is not used lightly - perceived as weak. Najib Abdul Razak either refused to go for Abdullah's jugular when he could have, or has been held back both now and then by threats of solid proof emerging to validate what are already widely believed implications of his involvement in a certain crime.

The last few weeks appear to indicate a stalemate, based in large part on the limitations described above to be facing the three men. Abdullah can't make himself appear strong and popular, Najib can't shake his ghosts, and Anwar hasn't yet pulled the rabbit out of his hat.

Players behind the scene

The question we should now ask is: what does this mean for other, less visible players and stakeholders in this game?

In conducting this analysis, we must move beyond front-page politicians and examine the other power brokers in the country.

For today's purpose, let's concentrate on some heads of law enforcement and perhaps take a glance at some former prime politicians.

For these gentlemen, two things are extremely bad for business - a power vacuum and Anwar coming to power.

It is worth noting that of the two factors, in circumstances of the former, the latter becomes ever more likely.

As long as Abdullah and Najib continue to fight, Anwar's chances of achieving the premiership become higher. It appears that some were less than convinced by Abdullah's and Najib's 2010 deal - which plausibly was announced to buy time, placate the Umno masses and give the false impression of stability.

Some could very well view that the stalemate that exists is neither a peaceful nor stable

one.

In the absence of a domineering power ala Hobbes' Leviathan, warring parties are always likely to continue fighting their war, bringing everyone down with them - the parameters of the game make it such that there is simply too much at stake to act otherwise.

Going down with sinking ship

One problem that arises is that the everyone that stands to be brought down together with the sinking ship may have ideas of their own.

The conclusion that the police were merely flexing their muscles in Anwar's arrest as a show of brute strength is overly simplistic. The signal was not to Anwar, but to the factions in the ruling party: "Don't forget that we are players too, and don't think that we will let you take us down with you."

Abdullah may have even gotten wind of potential disloyalty where he disengaged the safety locks on the ACA and gave it its own prosecuting powers - independent of the police or AG's Chambers - introducing another player into the law enforcement game because he cannot effectively control the existing players.

This is not a Mahathiresque landscape, where literally everyone in government comes under the premier's thumb. Abdullah's weakness makes for a free for all, one which law enforcement actors appears to have taken advantage of on Wednesday.

Far-fetched? Let's not forget that Umno looked ridiculous the day Anwar was arrested. Pakatan Rakyat and other social movements have successfully painted a picture of the police wherein they are mere blunt instruments constantly misused and manipulated by political power. This is no longer as true as it once was.

Law enforcement nonetheless capitalised very successfully on this perception; few now blame the police for what happened, they blame an Umno that was embarrassed after the debate from the night before; an Umno perceived to be desperate to defend itself against crossovers and Anwar coming into Parliament at all costs.

As the arrest developed, the terms "own goal" and "public relations disaster" were bandied about liberally; people could barely believe that Umno would be this stupid.

Maybe it was just made to look stupid by forces incognito.

Was this by design?

Too much of a conspiracy theory? Perhaps.

anwar arrest sequence 170708One of the oddest aspects of Anwar's arrest was its timing and manner. Both of these precipitated maximum elicitation of public anger.

Circumstances? Hours after the debate, minutes after meeting ACA, an hour early without any plausible reason whatsoever, and with a squad of 15 cars.

Balaclava masks were used as well, but close inspection of the pictures suggests that the

mask wearers were in fact overweight, sloppy, everyday cops who were given ski masks to wear along with their goofy vests at the last minute, rather than professional special-ops personnel (they also appeared fully prepared for their photo-ops, never straying far from Anwar).

What if PKR had failed to maintain control over its angered membership, and riots had spilled over into the streets? Would we be looking at an Emergency situation?

Conveniently, law enforcement would find itself extremely empowered, and political leadership may have been forced to consolidate.

The RPK case

Let us also examine Raja Petra Kamarudin's case. We notice that while we always suspect Najib of behind the action against RPK, we should note that Najib himself has never been inclined to do anything whatsoever that may call attention to the Altantuya case (such as initiate criminal or legal proceedings, which would bring the matter to court).

More self-indulgently, let's recall Nathaniel Tan's arrest. Some may suspect that Johari Baharom was behind it, in an attempt to exact revenge for "lies" published about him on the internet. However, remember that he was (successfully) trying to stay out of the limelight and avoid further mention of his bribery accusations. Recall as well that at the time, Johari and Musa Hassan were engaged in a bitter war.

It is worth investigating on a procedural level exactly what led to the charge against RPK - was it a police report by Najib? Or a police report by some unknown police officer?

Note further that RPK's trial - in which he can finally reveal to the world on record all his hidden proof and dirt on the Altantuya murder - is set for the exceptionally early date of Aug 15 (magistrates are appointed directly by the AG's Chambers), whereas his other sedition charge, months ago, is only set to be heard in early October. Presumably, if Anwar is ever charged with sodomy, his trial is likely to take years before it is heard.

Hit Anwar to embarrass Abdullah, hit RPK to embarrass Najib, and all in all, show them who's boss.

Return to the old order

The civil servant class of power brokers almost don't care who is in power; they just want a strong boss who can secure the current regime, and ensure that 'business' can be run as usual.

There's simply too much at stake - and we are talking entire lives and careers forever besmirched and some serious prison time here - for business not to run as usual, or for any type of new order based on integrity, transparency and justice to take over.

parliament building police blockade 140708 16Also in the same boat are certain former prime politicians still alive and kicking in the country, actively egging on a return to the old order.

These civil servants seem to have taken a leaf from Wong Chun Wai's whiny "We're sick and

tired" book and decided to speed things up and facilitate the dominance of one Umno faction over the other.

Just as in 1988, 20 years ago, the movement for change was identified as an easy target to facilitate the achievement of unholy goals.

Unfortunately for these agitators, they are still oblivious to what was written on the wall last March 8. The good news is that the voices of those seeking a better Malaysia for all, have matured and wisened up to these manipulations as well as learnt the value of holding fast to Gandhian principles in their struggle.

The movement has also reached out and expanded beyond its original circles to all right-thinking Malaysians, who will no longer stand and watch all that is decent and honourable stolen from beneath their noses.

We think schemers and plotters will find a stronger, more united Malaysia willing to resist peacefully to the very end.

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