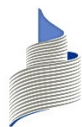


BLIND SPOT

the Islamic State debate, NEP and other issues

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DR DZULKIFLI AHMAD

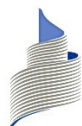


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DR DZULKIFLI AHMAD




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the blooming socio-political activists
and future intellectuals***



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■ FOREWORD

It is indeed a distinct honour and pleasure to have this opportunity of writing the foreword to this book, *Blind Spot* by Dr Dzulkifli Ahmad. Apart from the fact that I have known the author ever since he helmed the PAS Research Centre, it is the personal association with the political backdrop to virtually all the commentaries written as it appeared on the political scene that perhaps entitles me to my say here.

A toxicologist by training and constantly claiming an ‘obliging’ politician, the author has always attempted to combine his academic background with actual ground experience. This alone is, of course nothing new. What stands out and something not many have quite successfully achieved, is his acumen in articulating and contextualizing his political thoughts based on his grasp of the Islamic knowledge and the Malaysian political realities. This will be evident as one peruses his essays and ideas on issues covering quite wide-ranging topics on politics and governance, both nationally and regionally.

Despite the author’s constant bombardment of terminologies in some essays, reflecting his broad general education, including his favourite subject of *Usul Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), readers need not fear being drowned by his many nuances and cynicism. What eventually emerged are views and arguments set out to allow readers to weigh and evaluate and eventually arrive at their own conclusions.

Quite strikingly, he neither minced his words nor held up punches. He rarely shies away from stating his disagreement with or opposition

to any particular policy or political act of a political leader, party or government. Quite precariously sometimes, he neither spares the opposition's bench too. In this sense, his claim of unraveling 'blind spot' is quite apt.

This book covered event from the internal Umno crisis which saw Anwar Ibrahim being removed from his political posts right up to burning contemporary issues in the public sphere. His commentaries on the unending dispute in the NEP, failed privatisation, endemic corruption, inept leadership of the premier, jurisdictional fault-line, need for electoral reforms and other no-less important political issues amply provide alternative perspectives to a wider-section of readers.

For the precise reason stated in the rationale for putting his essays together, the timely publication preceding the 12th General Election is more than welcome. Although most, if not all, of his commentaries are his personal reflections and thought, his tireless attempts at repackaging PAS' stance on the many debates appearing on the political scenes are commendable.

Given the renewed interest on Reformasi, Islam and Democracy, notwithstanding the recurring prejudices and negative stereotyping on PAS, Dr Dzulkifli's Blind Spot would surely add an Islamic flavour, to the plethora of writings in English on national politics now available for the public domain. For that we thank him.

• **Dato Kamarudin Jaffar**
Secretary General,
Islamic Party of Malaysia.

PREFACE

For the dearth of publication in English on contemporary issues and political events from a predominantly PAS' perspective, I am obligingly putting my writings together. It must be emphasised that opinions and analyses expressed are not necessarily the party's stance. Any political stance is issued by the party's top leadership.

I have decided to title the book 'Blind Spot' for it attempts at unraveling 'blind spots' on issues addressed. The anatomical blind spot is the specific region of the retina where the optic nerve and blood vessels pass through, to connect to the back of the eye. It corresponds to the lack of light-detecting photoreceptor cells of the optic disc. From Wikipedia, 'blind spot' is the area that cannot be seen while looking forward or through either the rear-view or side-mirror when one is in an automobile.

On the plain of thought though, it pertains to a subject matter about which one is ignorant of or more often prejudiced about, hence being 'handicapped' from truly appreciating other perspectives.

The intentions of publishing this book are few folds.

Firstly, it is to ensure that these commentaries, in popular journalism, are finally put together, hopefully to last a little longer. That said, I couldn't help noting that some 'blind spots' were even predicted long before it actually took place. Barisan Alternatif's dismal outing in the 11th General Election was certainly one 'blind spot' for the Opposition Front (eg Reasserting Opposition Game-Plan). The Prime Minister's mediocre performance was arguably another as 'we saw it coming', save to the die-hard supporters (under Political Leadership).

Those ‘powers-that-be’ on both political divides (ruling or opposition) could have taken preemptive actions to mitigate such eventualities if only analysts’ writings, now abundant, were taken more seriously.

Secondly, it hopes to cut a wider spectrum of readership, namely the English-speaking ‘middle-ground’ Malaysians. Reading has never really been a Malaysian culture, worse still if it is heavily ideologically-loaded. It is characteristically a Malaysian malaise that may spell doom for our global competitiveness.

Finally, it is mainly targeted to the younger crop of socio-political activists and future intellectuals. They deserve ample exposure of writings in English, especially from a nuanced ideological standpoint, as to enhance conversant and mastery of articulating issues in the public domain, both in the fiercely-debated cyber media or in actual oral communication settings, be it in forums and discourses.

The piece on PAS’ Islamic State Document (under Legal and Constitutional Issues) and the acrimonious debate on the Islamic state issue of late are admittedly the underpinning reason of putting the book together in the first place.

Seeing this book together was not an easy feat for me after all. After selecting the articles, I took liberty to prioritize what to me was the ‘more important’ than the ‘important’, and subsequently included these articles and omitted others. The categorization is largely mine and the sequencing generally reflects the time-line events appeared on the political scenario. I would abidingly welcome critique and advice.

I made no apology however, in including the article “Was Anwar Really Poisoned? and ‘Would the Intellectuals Please Stand Up’.” “The Anwar Saga’ was doubtless, a defining political event and a ‘watershed’ that changed the Malaysian political landscape, much as it was my grand finale of sort as a practicing toxicologist.

This publication is indeed long outstanding. I have not dedicated sufficient time to do justice to it. There were always other competing constraints and demands. It was never my utmost priority anyway.” Admittedly the efforts of fellow think-tankers have been instrumental in creating an intellectual ambience in a political party that has all also

P R E F A C E

been doggedly 'fire-fighting', granted the very tilted and uneven ground in a semi-authoritarian or quasi-democracy ala-Malaysia Bolehland.

Dr Mohd Hatta Ramli, a medic turned politician; Dr Abd Aziz Bari, a professor of Constitutional law at the International Islamic University; Dr Abdul Wahab Ismail, a corporate figure; Dr Rosli Yaakob, a former Bank Negara s economist; Dr Mariah Mahmud and Dr Lo Lo', two medically-trained PAS' promising women politician; Dr Syed Azman, a former academic; Mohamed Hanipa Maidin, a practicing lawyer; Khalid Abdul Samad, an engineer-cum-seasoned politician and top party leaders, warrant special mentioning, notwithstanding others who implored not to be cited.

My special gratitude to the publisher for permitting me to communicate my thoughts to a wider cross-section of readers.

Lastly and not the least is my very special thanks to my wife and enduring partner Azlin Hezri, whose assistance has been handy to my newly found interest, notwithstanding her countless sacrifices only God Almighty could graciously and bountifully recompense.

To my grown-up kids, this book is only a fraction of the fruits of indulgence they relentlessly gave me, when they deny themselves of their rights, due to the numerous occasions I was seen immersed in front of my notebook or engaged elsewhere, especially when they were around at home to talk to me.

This is rightfully theirs and for their generation, whom the nation now rests our hope on, to be creatively enterprising, morally and spiritually vibrant and intellectually superior, to lead Malaysia, now on the verge of celebrating her 50th Independence, into the future decades, God Willing.

• Dzulkiifi Ahmad





Democracy & Political Contestation



REASSERTING THE OPPOSITION'S GAME PLAN¹



The election is looming ever closer despite whatever the premier has to say to the contrary. The Umno/Barisan Nasional (BN) government is frantically trying to shrug off the persona of an unjust dictatorial regime symbolised by the tragic sordid treatment perpetrated on the former Deputy Prime Minister. They are still rudely reminded of how they were humiliated and humbled to such a dismal performance in the General Election of 1999.

As Abdullah prepares to take over, a seemingly tolerant government of sort is engineered by the party's spin-doctors. That may be saying the obvious. I am prepared, however to share a slightly different perspective of things that could very well be the 'blind spot' of the Barisan Alternatif or the BA's fraternity.

While everyone lauded the release of the Reformasi activist detained under Internal Security Act (ISA), no one should ever forget that the detention, according to the Federal Court ruling, was done in bad faith or mala fide. Hence, it is legally proclaimed that their two years detention is illegitimate. In other words, they shouldn't have been detained in the first place.

Let it be known to all and sundry that the ISA Review Board's

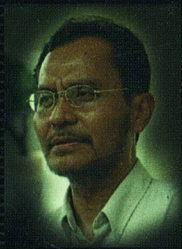
1. *Harakah*, Jan 16-31, 2003 (nearing the Eleventh General Election).

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Dr Dzulkifli Ahmad had his doctorate training in Toxicology from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, Imperial College, London. He had his undergraduate studies from Birmingham University and his Master's degree from Surrey University, Guildford, UK in the same discipline.

He left academia in 1996 after teaching for 12 years in the School of Medical Sciences, HUSM. He immediately founded and chaired a tertiary college advancing what was to him, the first accredited combined studies in Islamic Studies and Professional courses in a private institution.

During the raging era of Reformasi subsequent to the sacking of the former deputy Prime Minister, he had a calling in him to be fully involved in partisan politics. He chose to be with PAS. He stood at the parliamentary constituency of Kapar and narrowly lost in the 1999 General Election. He was later tasked by the late President, Dato Fadzil Noor to lead the PAS Research Centre and has helmed the Centre ever since.

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