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The Islamic Opposition in Malaysia:
New Trajectories and Directions?


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# ABSTRACT

The shattering defeat of PAS in the 2004 general elections, while holding on to the reins of government in the state of Kelantan by a tiny majority, heralded an era of introspection for party leaders and strategists. PAS has misread popular sentiment for justice and good governance, which propelled it into recording massive gains at the expense of its arch-rival UMNO in 1999, as an endorsement of its Islamic state agenda. Its adamant retention of this agenda, costing it an alliance with the DAP in the Barisan Alternatif (BA) coalition, was most vividly displayed by its revelation of the Islamic State Document (ISD) in late 2003. While PAS does not claim to have disavowed the ISD, deliberations on the ISD seem to have stalled in preference for internal party reforms. Prodding for the reforms are the young professionals whose influx into the party in the mid 1990s transformed the landscape of PAS that in the 1960s was closely identified with the Malay peasantry class. Clearly, the impact of globalization and the rise of the middle class during the era of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's premiership have not eluded PAS. This paper traces such changes, focusing on the realms of political economy and ideological modernization. Internal pressures for changes have accelerated since the electoral setback of 2004 and a string of by-election defeats, at the risk of alienating grassroots party activists who hold the conservative *ulama* leadership in high esteem. This paper contends that any structural transformation in PAS will necessarily take a long time. As such, it will not be able to overcome these developing internal fissures by the next general elections, which are just around the corner.

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# THE ISLAMIC OPPOSITION IN MALAYSIA: NEW TRAJECTORIES AND DIRECTIONS?

## 1. Background: The Islamic state in the recent ideological discourse of PAS

The shattering defeat of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS, Parti Islam SeMalaysia), in the country's 2004 general elections was one of its worst-ever electoral setbacks in terms of parliamentary representation. PAS witnessed its representation drop from 27 to six seats in the federal parliament and from 98 to 36 seats in state legislative assemblies. Its leader lost his status as Leader of the Opposition in parliament, while at the state level, PAS lost the state of Terengganu, which it unexpectedly captured in 1999, and held on to the reins of government in its stronghold, Kelantan, by a tiny three-seat (24 to 21) majority in the state legislature.[1]

Such a depressing portrayal of PAS's performance, as adopted by both local and foreign media,[2] overlooks the fact that the popular votes for PAS actually registered a slight increase from 1999. Support for PAS among its hardcore following and like-minded pro-Islamist Malay constituents was more or less consistent. In the Malay heartland states of northern and north-eastern Malaysia, despite a slight erosion of electoral support, PAS retained significant influence and was very much on level terms with its arch-rival, the United Malays' National Organisation (UMNO),[3] in large Malay-majority constituencies. Academic analyses have attributed PAS's defeat in 2004 to its failure to attract support from the burgeoning middle class—both Malay and non-Malay, women and youth—who made up most of the newly enfranchised 800,000 or so voters.[4] In the 1999 elections, the rising urban middle class deserted the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) in droves as a protest against what

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[1] This has been further reduced to a one-seat majority since December 2005, when BN wrested the state seat of Pengkalan Pasir by majority of 134 votes in a by-election held following the death of its PAS incumbent.

[2] Cf. Veena Rusli, "*Dilema pemimpin menjelang Muktamar PAS ke-50*", *Berita Harian*, 26 August 2004; Zulkiflee Bakar, "*PAS cari pendekatan baru*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 September 2004; "Malaysia's Islamists learn lesson at the ballot box", *The Guardian*, 20 January 2006.

[3] UMNO is the main component party of the ruling National Front (BN, Barisan Nasional) coalition, which consists of 14 parties contesting elections under a common banner and manifesto. BN's other major constituent parties are the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (GERAKAN), People's Progressive Party (PPP), Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) in Sarawak and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) in Sabah. For a complete list, see www.bn.org.my/parties.html (accessed on 26 August 2007).

[4] Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "*Mandat tuntut perubahan: BN harus memahami kejayaan besar yang diberi oleh rakyat*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 28 March 2004; Edmund Terence Gomez, "The 2004 Malaysian General Elections: Economic Development, Electoral Trends, and the Decline of the Opposition" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), pp. 91–94; John Funston, "The Malay Electorate in 2004: Reversing the 1999 Result?" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, pp. 152–154.

they saw was a steady deterioration of standards of justice, democracy and good governance under Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, as exemplified succinctly in the social debacle and pro-Reformasi (reform) unrests following his unceremonious dismissal of Deputy Prime Minster and Deputy President of UMNO, Anwar Ibrahim, in September 1998. By 2004, enthusiasm for Reformasi had waned, the economy had largely recovered from the 1997–1998 recession, the opposition coalition was in disarray and the ruling coalition could boast a new leader in Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who had embarked on a subtle process of de-Mahathirization once he was installed into power in late October 2003.[5] Long regarded as the nemesis of Malaysian civil society, Dr. Mahathir retired from formal politics and divested BN of a detested object of opprobrium in the eyes of a new middle class that had been prodding for greater democratic space since the early 1990s. This middle class was now prepared to give Abdullah Badawi, who had declared the fight against corruption and Islam Hadhari[6] to be cornerstones of his administration, the chance to prove his democratic credentials.[7]

Driven by common concerns to defend justice, democracy and good governance, PAS contested the 1999 elections under the banner of the Alternative Front, BA (Barisan Alternatif), which grouped PAS together with the multi-racial Anwar Ibrahim-inspired National Justice Party (Keadilan, Parti Keadilan Nasional), the Chinese-dominated social-democratic Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the Malay socialist-oriented People's Party of Malaysia (PRM, Parti Rakyat Malaysia). Various civil-society elements and human-rights organizations openly or tacitly backed BA in the name of social and political reform. As the biggest election contender among the Reformasi elements, PAS was identified as the natural leader of BA almost by default.[8] In the name of coalition unity, PAS was willing to drop its cherished ideal of an Islamic state from BA's manifesto—"Towards a Just and Democratic Malaysia"—and campaigned instead for a broad-based, transparent, accountable and tolerant

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[5] Khoo Boo Teik, "De-Mahathirising Malaysia: Abdullah Badawi's debt to Reformasi", *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 23 No. 8 (2003), pp. 2–6; Khoo Boo Teik, "Malaysian Politics in 2004: Transitions and Elections", *Political and Security Outlook 2004: Political Change in Southeast Asia*, Trends in Southeast Asia Series Monograph 7 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 8.

[6] Literally translated as "civilizational Islam", *Islam Hadhari* is officially understood as a progressive form of Islam that espouses ten fundamental principles, viz. faith and piety in God; a just and trustworthy government; free and independent people; a vigorous mastery of knowledge; a balanced and comprehensive economic development; a good quality of life; protection of the rights of minority groups and women; cultural and moral integrity; conservation of the environment; and strong defence capabilities. See Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, "*Menuju kecemerlangan*", keynote address at the 55th UMNO General Assembly, *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 September 2004.

[7] John Funston, "The Malay Electorate in 2004: Reversing the 1999 Result?", pp. 146–147; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, pp. 114–117.

[8] Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "*Reformasi, Reradikalisasi dan Kebangkitan Islam di Malaysia*", *Pemikir*, bil. 20 (2000), p. 44.

government.[9] Having reached such an electoral understanding, which bore fruit in delivering huge setbacks to BN in terms of popular votes, decline of parliamentary representation and defeats of ministers and deputy ministers, PAS's coalition partners in BA were comprehensibly taken aback by PAS's post-election reversion to its pro-Islamic state stance. DAP lamented recurring open declarations by PAS's leaders of its commitment to create a juridical Islamic state if granted power at the federal level. It warned that such an entity not only flouted BA's common manifesto but also was incompatible with parliamentary democracy, power sharing in a plural society, human rights, women's rights, personal freedoms and constitutional tolerance. After issuing several public statements specifying reservations on the compatibility between BA ideals and the Islamic state, DAP eventually withdrew from BA in September 2001 and closed all doors of negotiation with a PAS that adamantly retained an Islamic state agenda in any form.[10]

At the level of state governance, PAS's insistence on an Islamic state agenda was demonstrated by its attempts in Terengganu to impose the *kharaj* (land tax) on non-Muslims and to force through the Syariah Criminal Offences (Hudud and Qisas) Enactment, which nevertheless remained inoperative due to its being in contravention to the Federal Constitution.[11] PAS's policy turnabout was quickened by the untimely death in June 2002 of its president, Fadzil Noor, whose brand of accommodative politics was instrumental in PAS's leadership of the People's Unity Front (APU, Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah)[12] and BA coalitions. The compromises reached with other opposition parties had brought PAS out of the political fringes by transforming PAS's sagging electoral fortunes.[13] But towards the end of his tenure as president, Fadzil had to weather fierce criticisms by radical elements within PAS who had became worried that Fadzil would eventually strike a political compromise with UMNO and BN. Considering Fadzil's willingness in May 2002 to appear on stage together with Dr. Mahathir in a public function to commemorate the Palestinian struggle, such a fear

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[9] John Funston, "Malaysia's Tenth Elections: Status Quo, Reformasi or Islamization?", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22 No. 1 (2000), p. 38; Meredith L. Weiss, "The 1999 Malaysian General Elections: Issues, Insults, and Irregularities", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XL No. 3 (2000), p. 426.

[10] Lim Kit Siang, *BA and Islamic State* (Petaling Jaya: Democratic Action Party, 2001), pp. 85–103; "*DAP keluar pakatan: kegagalan rundingan isu negara Islam dengan PAS punca tindakan*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 23 September 2001; "*DAP enggan bincang jika PAS mahu tubuh negara Islam*", *Berita Harian*, 4 June 2002.

[11] "*PM: PAS hina Islam jika laksana hukum tak adil*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 19 June 2002; "*Hudud: Pusat diminta senarai perkara dianggap zalim*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 20 June 2002; "*Hudud: Pusat bertindak jika bercanggah perundangan*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 28 October 2003.

[12] APU, comprising PAS and splinter BN parties—Semangat 46 (Spirit of 1946), HAMIM and BERJASA— swept all 13 parliamentary and 39 state legislative seats in Kelantan in the 1990 elections and withstood BN gains to hold on to the state government in 1995. APU outlived its purpose after the erstwhile UMNO dissident Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah dissolved Semangat 46 in 1996, its members rejoining UMNO en masse.

[13] Kamarudin Jaffar, *Fadzil Noor: Perjuangan dan Pemikiran* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Muslimat, 2001), pp. i–xviii.

was not unwarranted.[14] The takeover of PAS's leadership by Terengganu Chief Minister Abdul Hadi Awang, notorious in Malaysia for having issued an edict in 1981 that allegedly equated UMNO's religious beliefs with those of non-Muslims,[15] sealed the future direction of PAS as a party placing the implementation of an Islamic state at the forefront of its political agenda. Prior to Abdul Hadi Awang's assertion of full control at the helm of party affairs, the mainstream media and BA coalition partners had seized on equivocal statements by other party leaders such as Murshid al-'Am-cum-Kelantan Chief Minister Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat and once vice-presidents Mustafa Ali and Dr. Hassan Ali to argue that PAS's objective was an Islamic society, as affirmed in the party constitution, rather than an Islamic state.[16]

Vestiges of equivocation on the Islamic state were eventually wiped out with the proclamation of the Islamic State Document (ISD) in November 2003. The ISD was a direct response to calls from party critics and academic analysts for PAS to produce some kind of operational blueprint spelling out features of the Islamic state it aspired to.[17] In launching the ISD, PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang reaffirmed PAS's commitments to the accomplishment of justice and equality cutting across race, religion, culture, language and political persuasion; to parliamentary democracy, to the ending of draconian legislation such as the Internal Security Act (ISA), and to women's involvement in mainstream national and social development.[18] But information on the ISD from PAS's point of view failed to reach an audience beyond its traditional supporters. Explanations by PAS leaders were available only through PAS's official mouthpiece *Harakah*, which since March 2000 had been circumscribed to become a bi-monthly rather than a weekly publication and restricted to PAS members only.

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[14] As speculated in the interview with Fadzil, "*Pengalaman 1974 menjadi peringatan yang cukup mendalam: PAS tidak minat kongsi kuasa*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 2 June 2002. See also Zin Mahmud, "*Fadzil keluarkan PAS daripada pinggiran politik*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 June 2002.

[15] On the background of the issuance of the so-called *Amanat Haji Hadi*, see Kamarul Zaman Haji Yusoff, "*PAS Dalam Era Mohd Asri Muda 1965–1982*" (M.A. thesis, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2004), pp. 384–390. For a brief account of the *Amanat*'s impact, see Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Islam and Violence in Malaysia*, RSIS Working Paper No. 124 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2007), pp. 11–17.

[16] Lim Kit Siang, *BA and Islamic State*, p. 55; "*Hadi, Mustafa tidak sekata hasrat tubuh negara Islam*", *Berita Harian*, 1 October 2003; "*PAS tidak pernah bercita-cita tubuh negara Islam: Hassan*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 15 October 2003.

[17] Muhammad Syukri Salleh, "Establishing an Islamic State: Ideals and Realities in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia", *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 37 No. 2 (1999), p. 242; "*NGO mahu PAS jelas ciri-ciri negara Islam*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 1 October 2001; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "An Islamicist's view of an Islamic state and its relevance to a multi-racial society" in Harold Crouch, Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, Carmen A. Abubakar and Yang Razali Kassim, *Islam In Southeast Asia: Analysing Recent Developments*, Trends in Southeast Asia Series Monograph 1 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 11–12; "*Mana memorandum negara Islam PAS?*", *Berita Minggu*, 14 September 2003.

[18] Dato' Seri Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang, "The Islamic State Document: Allay fears of a Theocracy", *Harakah* English section, 1–15 December 2003.

Hence, while no mention of a theocratic state was made in the ISD, the prevailing impression conveyed in the mainstream media was otherwise.[19] According to a booklet issued by the government in response to the ISD, even if there were any genuinely Islamic stipulations in the ISD, they had already been implemented by the BN-led Malaysian state, which professes to be an Islamic state in its own mould.[20] Disadvantaged by its lack of media outlets, the net result of the war of words between UMNO and PAS was a widening gulf between the ideals of PAS and the aspirations of both Malay-Muslim and non-Malay masses. On the one hand, for Malay-Muslims, there was no additional utility in voting for a juridical Islamic state à la PAS when definitive features of an Islamic state were already in place and could only be expanded further under Abdullah Badawi's Islam Hadhari. On the other hand, to non-Malays, so-called "Islamic states" have customarily been perceived as non-democratic, ruthless, backward and inappropriate for a plural society. Since the main Malay parties were intent on governing according to Islamic norms, it was always the safer option to throw support behind BN, whose version of Islam was arguably less rigid and which had a proven track record of lasting political cooperation with non-Malays. Abdul Hadi Awang's image as a fiery and radical firebrand did not help uplift PAS's reputation among non-Malay and Malay-Muslim masses.[21]

Since the electoral setback of 2004 and a further string of by-election defeats, deliberations on the ISD seem to have stalled in preference for internal party reforms. PAS has taken pains to revive its fortunes, which once saw it amassing half the Malay-Muslim votes and significant non-Malay support. This paper traces ideological and paradigm shifts in PAS to the wider tectonics of Malaysian politics, economy and society. Since Malaysia itself has undergone rapid changes of diverse socio-economic manifestations, PAS has accommodated such changes, as reflected in its steady ideological shifts. This IS not surprising because PAS was modelled first and foremost as a political party whose survival depended on a continuous stream of support which was tangibly translated into votes during regular polls. The utility of PAS as the major Malay opposition party used to lie with its ability to identify with marginalized sections of society. Even disgruntled segments of the

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[19] This impression persists till today. For example, the former Inspector-General of Police, Tun Hanif Omar, recently wrote in his special column in *The Sunday Star*, 26 August 2007, "... PAS is still championing an Islamic theocratic state, not just an Islamic state". See also Abdullah Ahmad, "The Theocracy Conspiracy", *New Straits Times*, 9 July 2003.

[20] Abd. Manaf bin Haji Ahmad, *Negara Islam: Satu Analisa Perbandingan* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia, 2004). The original proclamation that Malaysia was already an Islamic state was made by Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir during the 30th General Assembly of the GERAKAN party, see "*Malaysia negara Islam – PM: Dr. Mahathir sahut cabaran Fadzil Noor*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 30 September 2001.

[21] See interviews with Abdul Hadi Awang, "'PAS is not a racist party': Hadi Awang on minorities and Islam", *Asiaweek*, 16 June 2000; "*Kepimpinan yang mempunyai ketokohan dalam pelbagai aspek: PAS akan wujud profesional ulama*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 September 2003.

ruling establishment have benefited from formal or informal alliances with PAS during their days of being sidelined by the powers that be.[22] The practical implementation of PAS's ideological discourse had always had to take into account local factors and dimensions of wider happenings to have any realistic chance of amassing long-lasting support of respectable magnitude.[23] Monolithic discourse is more characteristic of cadre-based Islamic movements, whose survival relies less upon the command of a mass following. Herein lies the current dilemma of PAS: whether to model itself as an Islamic movement that is indifferent to the achievement of direct electoral success or to pedantically fashion itself as a broad-based political party. By trying to gain the best of both, it may actually end up being accused by both hardcore Islamists and liberal sympathizers as treacherous to its declared objectives and programmes. Short-term political contingencies, such as internal rifts within UMNO and BN, cannot be relied upon to build solid long-term grassroots support. Whatever ideals and objectives PAS decides to espouse and propagate, sustained opposition to the ruling establishment has to be cultivated by earnestly converting people's votes from "anti-BN votes" to "votes for PAS". The present paper suggests that new trajectories and directions in PAS can persevere only with internal reform at levels of both ideological thought and structural organization.

## 2. Ideological shifts and social base transformations in PAS

Considering the many studies that have been done on PAS, including recent works examining transformations in PAS,[24] and the tendency of scholarship on political Islam to be framed in

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[22] For example, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, having lost favour with Dr. Mahathir after an unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Prime Minister from the UMNO Presidency in 1987, led like-manner anti-Mahathir dissidents under the Semangat 46 splinter party, which contested the 1990 and 1995 elections under the PAS-led APU coalition. Recently, Dr. Mahathir himself, having lost favour with the mainstream media due to his persistent attacks on the policies of Abdullah Badawi's administration, has been featured positively in interviews by pro-PAS tabloids, which have made much out of his calls for the Kelantanese to retain a PAS government in the coming elections in order to give a lesson to UMNO; see "*Beri PAS menang, tolak BN adalah hak rakyat – Dr Mahathir*", *Siasah*, 9–15 May 2007; and the interview, "*Kelantan kekal di tangan PAS*", *Siasah*, 26 August – 1 September 2007. To the mainstream press, however, it is Dr. Mahathir's denials of supporting the opposition that are highlighted; see Joceline Tan, "No compromise with loyalty", *The Sunday Star*, 13 May 2007, and "*Dr. M nafi sokong pembangkang*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 14 May 2007.

[23] For instance, the ingenious ability of Kelantanese PAS leaders, in particular of Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, in localizing universal Islamic discourse has immensely contributed to Kelantan PAS's resilience and endurance in the face of persistent onslaught by UMNO in efforts to regain control of the state government. See Farish A. Noor, "The Localization of Islamist Discourse in the *Tafsir* of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, Murshid'ul Am of PAS" in Virginia Hooker and Norani Othman (Eds.), *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 210–220.

[24] Cf. Farish A. Noor, "Blood, Sweat and Jihad: The Radicalization of the Political Discourse of the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS) from 1982 Onwards", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25 No. 2 (2003), pp.

terms of the "PAS versus UMNO" conflict,[25] the present author does not wish to delve into details of such matters.

It is sufficient here to show that each internal metamorphosis experienced by PAS has been directly related to and preceded by wider politico-ideological shifts and socio-economic mutations. Founded by the breakaway *ulama* (religious scholars) section of UMNO in November 1951, the then Pan-Malayan Islamic Party's (PMIP) formative stages (c. 1951–1955) were characterized by indecisive leadership, vagueness of direction and institutional naivety within a political outlook that was broadly pro-establishment. Having interlocking membership with UMNO, then UMNO leader Tunku Abdul Rahman suspected PMIP to be the proxy of UMNO sympathizers of Dato' Onn Jaafar, who had earlier left UMNO and formed the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP) in protest against UMNO's refusal to accept non-Malay membership. Its inaugural constitution professed the objectives of a union of Islamic brotherhood and unified Islamic administrations throughout Malaya rather than an Islamic state per se.[26]

Such rightist perspectives were transformed with the steady influx of anti-establishment Malay nationalists of anti-UMNO persuasions from the British-banned Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM, Partai Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya) and the Party of Muslims (HM, Hizb al-Muslimin), culminating in the election of renowned anti-colonial activist Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy as President in December 1956.[27] Under Dr. Burhanuddin, PAS's discourse was re-oriented towards a hybridized ideological symbiosis between Islamism, leftist Malay nationalism and fervent anti-imperialism. The ruling establishment and observers were quick to censure PAS for its religious puritanism and zealous communalism,[28] overshadowing many aspects of openness in PAS's ideology. PAS's prominent spokesmen, such as Zulkiflee Muhammad (Vice-President, 1956–1964), denied an Islamic state à la

200–232; Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Exigency or expediency? Contextualising political Islam and the PAS challenge in Malaysian politics", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25 No. 2 (2004), pp. 359–372.

[25] Cf. Syed Ahmad Hussein, "Muslim Politics and the Discourse on Democracy" in Francis Loh Kok Wah and Khoo Boo Teik (Eds.), *Democracy in Malaysia: Discourses and Practices* (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), pp. 74–107; Amrita Malhi, "The PAS-BN Conflict in the 1990s" in Virginia Hooker and Norani Othman (Eds.), *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, pp. 236–265; Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Political Islam in Malaysia: Problematising Discourse and Practice in the UMNO-PAS 'Islamisation Race'", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 42 No. 2 (2004), pp. 184–205; Azeem Fazwan Ahmad Farouk, "Intra-Ethnic Party Competition in a Plural Society: The Case of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in Malaysia" in Kamarulzaman Askandar (Ed.), *Understanding and Managing Militant Movements in Southeast Asia* (Penang: Southeast Asian Studies Conflict Network, 2005), pp. 51–63.

[26] Safie bin Ibrahim, *The Islamic Party of Malaysia: Its Formative Stages and Ideology* (Pasir Puteh: Nuawi bin Ismail, 1981), pp. 27–36.

[27] N. J. Funston, "The Origins of Parti Islam Se Malaysia", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (1976), pp. 71–73.

[28] Cf. Fred R. von der Mehden, "Religion and Politics in Malaya", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 3 No. 12 (1963), pp. 609–615; K. J. Ratnam, "Religion and Politics in Malaya" in Robert O. Tilman (Ed.), *Man, State and Society in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1969), pp. 351–361.

Pakistan to be its ultimate goal. This was in line with its Ulama Section's 1958 resolution that an Islamic state was obligatory only insofar as it was necessary for the realization of *shariah* (Islamic law), and even then, gradualism was preferred to revolutionary change.[29] Dr. Burhanuddin's broad formulation of Malay nationality as not the hereditary right of the Malay race, but instead a political category encompassing people willing to profess allegiance to the Malay nation, provided an avenue for the absorption of non-Malays as definitive Malaysian citizens, parallel to what we call today as *bumiputeras* (sons of the soil).[30] In the relatively backward east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, voting in successive PAS state governments became a channel to express dissent based on the Malay peasantry class's grievances against the capitalist-elitist federal administration.[31]

While Dr. Burhanuddin moulded PAS with a progressive nationalist outlook, his death in 1969 heralded an era of regressive Malay nationalism under Mohamad Asri Muda (President, 1969–1982). PAS not only embraced exclusive Malay communitarianism but also participated in the ruling BN government (1973–1977). In agreeing to such a pact, PAS was influenced by UMNO calls for Malay and national unity within a post-New Economic Policy (NEP) setting. The NEP had been enunciated in response to the 13 May 1969 racial riots, which were attributed to the alienation felt by Malays in virtually all aspects of national life, notwithstanding the existence of constitutional provisions protecting their special position. Conditioned by an atmosphere of a Malay community apparently under siege, PAS's overriding concern became a defence of Malay culture and language, Islam being a mere appendage.[32] Although participation in government gave PAS leaders administrative experience and spoils of power, in the long term PAS was at the losing end. Humiliated in its stronghold state of Kelantan,[33] it failed to make inroads in other states. Worse, it lost

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[29] N. J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann, 1980), pp. 148–149; Safie bin Ibrahim, *The Islamic Party of Malaysia*, pp. 107–109.

[30] Kamarudin Jaffar, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda, 1980), pp. 13, 112–121.

[31] Clive S. Kessler, *Islam and Politics in a Malay State: Kelantan 1838–1969* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).

[32] Abu Bakar Hamzah, *Islam dan Nasionalisme di Malaysia: Kertas Kerja "Islam and Nationalism" on Panel 1: Islam, Politics and Nationalism di Seminar anjuran Information and Resource Centre (IRC), Singapore, 10–11 March 1989* (Kuala Lumpur: Ustaz Haji Abu Bakar Hamzah, 1989), pp. 15–38; Alias Muhammad, *Sejarah Perjuangan Parti PAS: Satu Dilemma* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1978), pp. 187–191.

[33] PAS's Kelantan state assemblymen were involved in a bitter row with BN over the federal government's appointment of a Chief Minister against the wishes of PAS, leading to widespread disturbances, invocation of emergency powers under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution, expulsion of PAS from BN and PAS's defeat in snap state elections in 1978. The episode is covered by Alias Mohamed, "The Pan Malayan Islamic Party: A Critical Observation", *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1978), pp. 177–179, and Alias Muhammad, *Sejarah Perjuangan Parti PAS: Satu Dilemma*, *passim*.

credibility among its Islamist constituents, who flocked to new Islamic revivalist movements during the embryonic years of Islamic resurgence.[34]

Mohamad Asri's incapacity in detecting simmering discontent over his subordination of Islam to Malay cultural nationalism—when events such as the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were galvanizing the religious sensitivities of Malay-Muslims—cost him dearly. PAS was experiencing a social base transformation from "nationalists with Islamic aspirations" to "Islamist aspirants to power", culminating in the ouster of Mohamad Asri in 1983. This takeover was led by the so-called Young Turks, who joined PAS from other new revivalist movements such as the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia) and the clandestine Islamic Representative Council (IRC). Under Mohamad Asri's successor, Haji Yusuf Rawa, PAS intellectually aligned itself with contemporary trends in Islamic resurgence by repudiating nationalism of all variants,[35] revived demands for an Islamic state, remodelled its discourse with Islamist political vocabulary, such as depicting itself as the voice of the *mustazaffin* (oppressed masses) against the *mustakbirin* (oppressors). The biggest structural transformation was the inauguration of the "*ulama* leadership", as embodied in the establishment of a Majlis Shura Ulama (Ulama Consultative Council), consisting of 12 religious scholars and headed by a Murshid al-'Am (General Guide). Although the presidential office and the Central Executive Committee (CEC) still existed, ultimate decision making was in the hands of the Majlis Shura al-Ulama.[36]

Under the *ulama* leadership, PAS has been constantly accused by the BN-controlled state of creating fissures within the Malay-Muslim community through a re-ignition of the *kafir-mengkafir* controversy,[37] which in turn supposedly had a direct bearing on the few pathetic attempts of militant insurrection to install an Islamic state in Malaysia. With its pro-Islamic state ideology, PAS was a convenient scapegoat for violent intra-Malay clashes such

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[34] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Formative Years of The *Dakwah* Movement: Origins, Causes and Manifestations of Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia", *IKIM Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 2 (2002), pp. 87–124.

[35] Cf. Haji Yusof Rawa, "*Menggempur Pemikiran 'Asabiyyah'*" in Haji Yusof Rawa and Ustaz Haji Fadzil Mohd Noor, *Membina Ketahanan Ummah: Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Muktamar Tahunan Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) 1983–1994* (Kepala Batas: Dewan Muslimat, 1995), pp. 43–78.

[36] The background, causes, drama and immediate impact of PAS's 1982–83 leadership crisis and organizational revamp are detailed in Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 109–114, 118–125. For a more succinct account, see Jan Stark, "Constructing an Islamic Model in Two Malaysian States: PAS Rule in Kelantan and Terengganu", *Sojourn*, Vol. 19 No. 1 (2004), pp. 52–56.

[37] *Kafir-mengkafir* refers to the mutual accusations between PAS and UMNO members as infidels, leading in the mid 1980s to splits within mainly rural Malay-Muslim communities. The cleavages were manifested in mutual boycotting of feasts, formation of separate congregational prayer services in mosques and the reluctance to recognize the legality of solemnization of marriages and animal slaughtering performed by the other camp. See Mohamad Abu Bakar, "*Konservatisme dan Konflik: isu 'Kafir Mengkafir dalam Politik Kepartian 1955–2000*", *Pemikir*, bil. 21 (2000), pp. 121–159.

as the Memali and Al-Ma'unah rebellions in 1985 and 2000, respectively.[38] Such political convulsions, unusual in the case of Malaysia, were perhaps symptomatic of the dilemmas facing the Malay-Muslims in their wider search for identity in a society undergoing rapid urbanization and modernization. Dr. Mahathir's Malaysia has been characterized by unprecedented industrialization and uneven development, accompanied by growth of social ills, materialistic culture and psychological disparities between the "haves" and the "have-nots".[39] While the downtrodden "have-nots" may have consistently supported opposition parties, to a minority of them, the turn towards violence reflects a lack of conviction in the constitutional means of acquiring political power, as officially espoused by PAS.

At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, by the late 1990s, the rising middle class had been prepared to give room for PAS leaders to prove their anti-corruption rhetoric and corresponding pledges of support for democracy, justice and good governance. To the upcoming and increasingly vocal sections of civil society, politics was becoming increasingly issues-based and concerned with the question of popular participation in decision making, rather than being rigidly drawn along ethno-religious lines. The emerging middle class demonstrates a reasonable degree of civil consciousness and holds dearly universalistic causes such as human rights, women's rights, consumer awareness and environmental issues, most of which were externalized in the informal political world of interest groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[40] It was this broad-based constituency that gave PAS a respectable base of support in the 1999 elections. PAS was then treated as the voice of legitimate dissent, which could be translated into tangible terms at the polls. But in 2003–2004, PAS failed to read the politico-economic transformation in the undercurrents of Malaysian society and tried to introduce the Islamic state per se in the discursive space of political discourse, with disastrous results. The middle class was repelled by PAS's retrogressive slide back towards an institutional creation that was seen to be not in tandem with civil society's wider, post-primordial concerns.[41]

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[38] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Islam and Violence in Malaysia*, pp. 9–24.

[39] Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987), pp. 13–22.

[40] Johan Saravanamuttu, "Is There a Politics of the Malaysian Middle Class?" in Abdul Rahman Embong (Ed.), *Southeast Asian Middle Classes: Prospects for Social Change and Democratisation* (Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2001), pp. 103–118; Francis Loh Kok Wah, "Towards a New Politics of Fragmentation and Contestation" in Francis Loh Kok Wah and Johan Saravanamuttu (Eds.), *New Politics in Malaysia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 277–279; Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Politik Baru di Malaysia?, Siri Syarahan Umum Perlantikan Profesor USM* (Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2005), pp. 34–44.

[41] The term "primordial" is used here in the manner of Clifford Geertz's conception of "primordial attachment" as one that stems form the "givens" of social existence which easily fuel civil discontent in many new nation states in the post-colonial era. Geertz lists six "givens", viz. assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion and custom. See Clifford Geertz, "The integrative revolution: Primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new

Globalization and persistent repression under Mahathir-style authoritarianism have influenced the transformation of Muslim civil society's discourse from its ethno-religious pre-occupation in the 1970s–1980s to a universalism transcending ethno-cultural loyalties in the following decade.[42] Dr. Mahathir's post-NEP public advocacy for a *bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation), despite its amorphousness and contradictions,[43] as the common identity of Malaysians of all ethnicities, also had had its impact in watering down Malay-Muslim ethnocentrism. As testified by research on the new Malaysian middle class, the "new politics" of the 1990s was significantly characterized by the rising and very active involvement of Malay-Muslims in the discourses and practices of participatory democracy, justice and human rights.[44] Under such a scenario of social base transformation, the new Malay-Muslim middle class had reasons to worry about the sincerity of PAS's commitment to democracy. Among the Old Guard leaders, who were themselves the Young Turks of the early 1980s, under the pretext of internal unity, most lamented the increasing competition for posts during PAS General Assemblies. Open canvassing for votes is deplored in such contests, and the nomination and vote-counting processes are still shrouded in secrecy. However, the Old Guard's repeated calls to settle leadership tussles via *shura* (consultation) have remarkably gone unheeded.[45] This indicates the penetration of middle-class elements and values into PAS's grassroots membership. How durable these changes are remains to be seen.

The entrée of the growing Malay middle class into the upper echelons of PAS has been important in counter-balancing the perennially negative image associated with Abdul Hadi Awang's past association with radicalism. As a result of the social base transformation that has affected especially the Youth and Women's sections of PAS, the past few general assemblies have seen criticisms and counter-criticisms, pitting the so-called Young Turks,

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states" in Clifford Geertz (Ed.), *Old Societies and New States: The quest for modernity in Asian and Africa* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), pp. 109–113.

[42] Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Islam, Civil Society, and Ethnic Relations in Malaysia" in Nakamura Mitsuo, Sharon Siddique and Omar Farouk Bajunid (Eds.), *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), pp. 64–69.

[43] Ooi Kee Beng, "Bangsa Malaysia: Vision or Spin?" in Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Eds.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges*, pp. 47–72.

[44] Johan Saravanamuttu, "Is There a Politics of the Malaysian Middle Class?", p. 113; Francis Loh Kok Wah, "Towards a New Politics of Fragmentation and Contestation", p. 278.

[45] In the contest for Deputy President in 2003, the conservative *ulama* Hassan Shukri beat lawyer Mustafa Ali. In 2005, Nasharuddin Mat Isa, touted as a liberal scholar, trounced incumbent Hassan Shukri and former Deputy Chief Minister of Kelantan Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman in a three-cornered fight. In 2007, Nasharuddin successfully defeated the attempt to unseat him by Harun Taib, erstwhile head of PAS's Ulama Section. See Joceline Tan, "Who will be Hadi's deputy?", *The Star*, 7 September 2003; Joceline Tan, "High drama at PAS *muktamar*", *The Sunday Star*, 14 September 2003; "*Permuafakatan jawatan timbalan presiden gagal*", *Berita Minggu*, 14 September 2003; "Nik Aziz: Avoid contest for PAS No. 2 post", *The Sun*, 24 May 2005; Joceline Tan, "A hard-to-call contest", *The Star*, 31 May 2007.

progressives, professionals and liberals against the Old Guard, conservatives or *ulama*.[46] But the democratizing impact of the middle-class penetration into PAS has been limited. The leadership has been more open in tolerating the ideas of a female Vice President, PAS-approved entertainment concerts and outlets, limitations to powers of the Majlis Shura Ulama and future cooperation with non-Muslims, to the extent of possible acceptance of non-Muslim membership of the party.[47] While the new breed of leaders, such as Deputy President Nasharuddin Mat Isa, is "serious about establishing a mainstream image,"[48] PAS has struggled to portray itself as a party that completely disavows extra-constitutional means of acquiring power. Despite enormous pressure put on PAS by the country's religious officialdom, PAS's *ulama*, spearheaded by Abdul Hadi Awang himself, has refused to withdraw the Amanat Haji Hadi—blamed for the bloody showdown between security forces and PAS villagers in Memali, Kedah, in November 1985—and has also issued statements condoning suicide bombing in Palestine and street demonstrations as an election strategy.[49] PAS has taken pains to deny the existence of linkages between its Islamist doctrines and Islamic-related intended and actual violence, especially with the disclosures that some of the insurrectionists were PAS members, sympathizers or family members of prominent PAS personalities. In the case of the Mujahidin Group of Malaysia (KMM, Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia), which allegedly had links with the Southeast Asian Jemaah Islamiah terrorist network and whose cells were vanquished in a series of ISA arrests starting in August 2001, the purported leader was Nik Adli Nik Aziz, son of PAS's own Murshid al-'Am.[50] In the

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[46] Many of these epithets, given by the mainstream media, are opposed by PAS, which insists on the feasibility of "professionalizing" the *ulama* and educating the professionals with solid knowledge of the essentials of Islam. See the interviews with PAS Murshid al-'Am Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, "*Kita harap tuah Dr. Haron*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 May 2005; Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub, "*PAS mesti tahu membaca zaman*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 22 May 2005; and President Abdul Hadi Awang, "*Tidak semestinya dengan DAP*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 June 2005. Also, the statement by Vice President Husam Musa, in Razak Beghani, "*Tolak labelan mengenai pimpinan PAS*", www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=670&Itemid=202 (accessed on 31 August 2007).

[47] Joceline Tan, "Redefining role of PAS women", *The Sunday Star*, 10 August 2003; Abdul Razak Ahmad, "PAS softening its stand on accepted popular culture", *New Straits Times*, 9 October 2004; "PAS poised for woman veep", *New Straits Times*, 18 April 2005; "*Tidak semestinya dengan DAP*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 June 2005; "*PAS cadang terima bukan Islam*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 22 May 2006; "PAS wants to work with DAP", *New Straits Times*, 8 March 2007; "PAS redefines pop culture", *The Sunday Star*, 3 December 2006; Ian MacIntyre, "PAS-style dance clubs", *The Sunday Star*, 17 December 2006; Joceline Tan, "PAS eases up on having fun", *The Sunday Star*, 31 December 2006;

[48] Joceline Tan, "No antidote for election fever", *The Sunday Star*, 18 March 2007.

[49] "*Kepimpinan yang mempunyai ketokohan dalam pelbagai aspek: PAS akan wujud profesional ulama*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 September 2003; "*Ulama PAS akan terus pertahan amanat Haji Hadi*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 7 June 2006; "*Pilihan raya dan Jalan Raya*", *Siasah*, 9–15 May 2007; Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, *Islam and Violence in Malaysia*, pp. 14–16.

[50] "*Anak Nik Aziz ditangkap: Disyaki antara tokoh terpenting Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 5 August 2001; Zachary Abuza, "Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24 No. 3 (2002), p. 445; Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Understanding and

wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, PAS's decision to throw support behind Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's Taliban government in its anti-Western *jihad* rhetoric seemed to confirm the impression that PAS did have a furtive fifth-column agenda. The consequence was a further alienation of non-Muslims and Malay-Muslim civil society from PAS's political programme.[51]

Moreover, the *ulama*-led PAS's history with democracy has been far from rosy. Whereas its leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed the party's commitment to democracy, this democracy is arguably confined to procedural democracy in the electoral context. Convinced that "if true democracy were implemented, PAS's struggle would be accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims,"[52] Abdul Hadi Awang blamed PAS's humiliating defeat in the 2004 elections squarely on the corruption of democracy by the ruling establishment, in particular the biased mainstream media, the Election Commission (SPR, Suruhanjaya Pilihanraya) and the National Registration Department.[53] The preamble to the Islamic State Document of 2003 vows that "PAS has accepted democracy as the best methodology through which it should realize the ambition, vision and mission of its political struggle",[54] but, according to a liberal Muslim critique of the ISD, the document is "largely silent over the role of the judges and the judiciary, … riddled with several statements which have the effect of negating the supremacy of elected representatives in law-making", hence rendering it "inconsistent with democratic principles".[55] In spite of PAS's constant condemnation of the ISA, the head of PAS Youth's demands for legal action à la ISA to be taken against a group of 50 NGOs who had submitted a memorandum to the government protesting against the state's moral policing sent shudders throughout civil society, which was understandably alarmed at what form of treatment would be meted out to them in a PAS-ruled state.[56]

In situations where PAS has the upper hand in decision making, its encounters with democracy have been decidedly unimpressive. In the mid-1980s, overtures to the Chinese

Responding to the Threats of Muslim Militant Groups in Malaysia" in Kamarulzaman Askandar (Ed.), *Understanding and Managing Militant Movements in Southeast Asia*, pp. 39–42.

[51] Farish A. Noor, "Globalization, Resistance and the Discursive Politics of Terror, Post-September 11" in Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna (Eds.), *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), pp. 165–170.

[52] www.pas.org.my/muktamar/wawancara_presiden.html (accessed on 31 August 2007).

[53] "*Hadi tuduh media, SPR punca PAS kalah*", *Berita Harian*, 14 June 2004; Joceline Tan, "Hadi's leadership put to test", www.malaysia-today.net/english/MT010904.htm (accessed on 31 August 2007); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The UMNO-PAS Struggle: Analysis of PAS's Defeat in 2004", pp. 117–118.

[54] www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=140&Itemid=93 (accessed on 31 August 2007).

[55] Radzuan Halim, "The Islamic state document", *The Edge Malaysia*, 22 December 2003.

[56] Fathi Aris Omar, "*PAS mengancam demokrasi*", www.malaysiakini.com/columns/35204 (accessed on 9 June 2005).

community via the Chinese Consultative Council (CCC) were cut short by internal opposition from within PAS and the reluctance to allow CCC members to contest in elections on PAS tickets.[57] More than a decade later, within the BA coalition, PAS created an unfair burden on its non-Muslim partners to explain the applicability of an Islamic state to their party rank-and-file, leading to DAP's eventual withdrawal from BA.[58] During the early years of its administration in Kelantan, while PAS has admittedly instituted successful Islamic reforms, most of its Islamization programmes lacked grassroots participation and feedback; its paternalistic implementation not unlike the 'inculcation of Islamic values' approach of the BN federal government.[59] PAS also undemocratically spurned offers of help from other Islamic movements such as Darul Arqam and the Society for Islamic Reform (JIM, Jemaah Islah Malaysia) to help its Islamization efforts in Kelantan, to the extent of proscribing the former's grand Islamic Cultural Concert and Annual World Gathering scheduled for September 1991.[60] Later, in 1994, PAS uncritically welcomed the federal government's wholesale banning of Darul Arqam.[61] Throughout its 16 and 4 years of ruling Kelantan and Terengganu respectively, PAS has shown complete disregard for the idea of reviving local council elections, which were suspended in 1965 during the Confrontation with Indonesia and abandoned altogether following the 1969 racial riots,[62] despite persistent calls by civil society for local councillors to be held fully accountable to the people,[63] and in spite of SPR having given the green light for PAS state governments to conduct municipal elections if they so wished.[64]

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[57] Abu Bakar Hamzah, *Islam dan Nasionalisme di Malaysia*, pp. 53-57; Mohd Izani Mohd Zain, *Islam dan Demokrasi: Cabaran Politik Muslim Kontemporari di Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2005), pp. 82-83.

[58] 'Tindakan DAP keluar pakatan untungkan PAS – Nik Aziz', *Utusan Malaysia*, 24 September 2001.

[59] Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 'PAS dan Islamisasi di Kelantan', *Pemikir*, bil. 21 (2000), pp. 161-185.

[60] Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 'Establishing an Islamic State: Ideals and Realities in the State of Kelantan, Malaysia', pp. 252-253; Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 'Political Economy of Islamic Development: A Comparative Analysis of Kelantan and Terengganu' in B. N. Ghosh and Muhammad Syukri Salleh (eds.), *Political Economy of Development in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications and Distributors, 1999), pp. 194-195.

[61] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, 'Inter-Movement Tension among Resurgent Muslims in Malaysia: Response to the State Clampdown on Darul Arqam in 1994', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 27 No. 3 (2003), p. 370.

[62] *Murshid al-'Am* Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat has openly opposed local council elections on the grounds that they would incur unnecessary expenses; see the interview with him during the 53rd PAS General Assembly at http://www.pas.org.my/muktamar/wawancara_TG.html (accessed 1 September 2007).

[63] Since the abandonment of local council elections, municipalities have become tools to dispense state patronage and launching pads for the careers of future politicians; see the debates in the cover story, 'Local Power' of *The Edge Malaysia*, 22 December 2003: Jacqueline Ann Surin, 'The all-pervasive influence of local councils: If the quality of life of all Malaysians is to improve, local councils must get their act together'; Jacqueline Ann Surin, 'Time for Rethink on Councils'; and 'Appointment or Elections?'.

[64] SPR chairman Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman had indicated so to political scientist Wong Chin Huat in front of PAS Central Committee member Dr. Dzulkifli Ahmad; see the interview with Wong Chin Huat, 'Ballot watch', *The Sun*, 12 July 2007.

There is no doubt that PAS's democratic disposition improved during PAS's later years of power, if only because its majority had been reduced by the withdrawal of Semangat 46 from the PAS-led coalition; thus the need to expand its support base. This was supplied by the middle-class revolt during the *Reformasi* euphoria of 1998-99, if only temporarily. For a sizeable number of Malay-Muslims, however, their experiences in dealing with or having been under PAS rule have convinced them that Abdul Hadi Awang's assurances, that under PAS's Islamic state—re-affirmed as PAS's ultimate objective upon his official installation as PAS President[65]—there would be democracy "not just for elections or on election days, but democracy at all times including for governance and administration purposes," rang hollow.[66]

## 3. Recent Criticisms of PAS and PAS's response

Criticisms of PAS have come not only from the trans-ethnic middle class-dominated civil society, but also from fellow Islamists. Given a choice at the ballot box, Islamists holding similar opinions as the critics would probably vote PAS anyway, if only for the lack of a better Islamist representative in electoral politics. But in the event of them abstaining during polls, PAS would have to regard such "lost votes" as costly, considering the narrow margins of victories in many Malay-majority marginal constituencies. Since the pool of votes from PAS members would be limited, Islamists who are not members of PAS would naturally form a potential constituency to deliver "sympathetic" votes for PAS in regular elections. But the appearance of recent critiques of PAS from fellow Islamists, who are former PAS leaders to boot, point to a different trajectory resulting from disappointments with PAS.

In the past year, two books by two well-known if somewhat controversial Islamist leaders have offered stinging criticisms of PAS. The first, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang* (*Islamic Politics Brings Forth Love and Fraternity*),[67] was authored by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, former leader of the Sufi-revivalist Darul Arqam movement that was banned by the Malaysian state in 1994 over theological questions. Consequently, the security forces instituted a clampdown on Darul Arqam's self-sustaining settlements and activities,

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[65] 'Kepimpinan yang mempunyai ketokohan dalam pelbagai aspek: PAS akan wujud profesional ulama', *Mingguan Malaysia*, 21 September 2003.

[66] Azaman Amin, 'PAS penyelamat demokrasi negara – Presiden', http://www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=628&Itemid=202 (accessed 31 August 2007).

[67] Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang* (Rawang: One Art Productions, 2007).

culminating in large-scale detentions of its leaders under the ISA.[68] Following the official disbandment of Darul Arqam, Ustaz Ashaari and his family were relocated to the town of Rawang, Selangor, and later to Labuan island off the Bornean coast of Sabah until late October 2004, when he was eventually released from restricted residence regulations. A successful businessman, Ustaz Ashaari has since 1997 remobilized his loyal followers under the aegis of Rufaqa' Corporation, which is involved in such diverse forms of businesses as retail supermarkets, restaurants and cafeterias, polyclinics and maternity services, traditional therapy, production and distribution of herbal-based products, boutiques and tailor shops, travel and tour agencies, book and magazine publishing, an arts and cultural academy, laundry services, bakeries, motivational and counselling programmes, multimedia products, electrical and electronic workshops, vehicle workshops and hotel and inn chains.[69] Ustaz Ashaari is also a prolific writer of socio-religious tracts but most of his nearly 70 books have been banned by Malaysia's Internal Security Ministry. *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang* is presently under scrutiny by the Department for the Advancement of Islam in Malaysia (JAKIM, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia)—the hub of Malaysia's religious bureaucracy.[70]

In *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, Ustaz Ashaari, a stern PAS activist in Selangor during his youth,[71] castigates Islamic parties which vie for political power via elections, the process of which is marred by a melange of un-Islamic traits and practices. To Ustaz Ashaari, the ends do not justify the means. He outlines what he believes to the true characteristics of Islamic leaders, followers and *jemaahs* (organizations), and contrasts them with what transpires in modern so-called Islamic political parties, which he calls "secularist Islamic parties", whose bastion is ideology, not religion, which is based on revelation.[72] The alternative to electoral politics would be internal motivational courses for and *tarbiyyah* (education) of party members, until love and care are externalized towards not only fellow

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[68] For a discussion of doctrinal disagreements between the official Islamic officialdom and Darul Arqam, see Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Banning of Darul Arqam in Malaysia", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Vol. 39 No. 1 (2005), pp. 87–128. While theology was the ostensible reason for the crackdown upon Darul Arqam, the present author believes that the UMNO ruling elites had a hidden political agenda; see Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Political Dimensions of Religious Conflict in Malaysia: State Response to an Islamic Movement", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol. 28 No. 80 (2000), pp. 32–65.

[69] For an account of the transformation from Darul Arqam to Rufaqa' Corporation, see Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Dynamics of Changes and Continuities in Islamic Movements in Malaysia: From Darul Arqam to Rufaqa' Corporation", paper presented at the "Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia" workshop on Islamic studies and the Study of Muslim Societies in Southeast Asia, organized by the Southeast Asian Regional Exchange Programme (SEASREP) and the School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Nakhon SiThammarat, Thailand, 24–25 February 2007. This article is in preparation for publication as a chapter of a book volume edited by Patrick Jory and Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, both of Walailak University.

[70] "*Buku Ashaari diteliti*", *Berita Harian*, 1 August 2007.

[71] For glimpses of his involvement with PAS during his younger days, see Khadijah Aam, *Abuya Ashaari Muhammad: Pemimpin Paling Ajaib di Zamannya* (Rawang: Penerbitan Minda Ikhwan, 2006), pp. 86–90.

[72] Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, p. 50.

Muslims but also non-Muslims, who would and should be delighted at the ascendancy of Islamic parties.[73] In contrast to contemporary Muslim politics that involves itself in pugnacious campaigns, slogans and propaganda, true Islamic politics practises and exhibits love and fraternity through the operation of exemplary multi-dimensional systems of life. Belying its formal registration as a private limited company, what takes place in Rufaqa' Corporation, claims Ustaz Ashaari, is part of the realization of Islamic politics.[74] He devotes the entire Chapter 7 of his book to listing the achievements of his prescribed methods, citing testimonies from foreign scholars and tangible accomplishments of his *jemaah*, seen as a continuum since the founding of Darul Arqam in 1968. This success story is then contrasted with the myriad problems faced by PAS in administering Kelantan, outlined in Chapter 8.

Ustaz Ashaari criticizes PAS's Kelantan government for prioritizing legalistic changes, such as the abortive attempt to introduce *hudud*[75] laws, as the cornerstone of an Islamic state. Such endeavours took place without prior adequate *tarbiyyah* of the Kelantan population and, more importantly, of Kelantan's PAS members, who are supposed to lead the way of Islamizing the state by becoming role models for others. As a result of the weak human development machinery in Kelantan, PAS members lack the internal strength to sacrifice their material wealth and comfort to help their state government beset with financial difficulties. To Ustaz Ashaari, the solution to economic disparities lies not so much in the efforts of Islamic banks and public and private sector financial institutions, but in inculcating in affluent citizens the moral obligation to depart from part of their wealth in order to shelter the poor. Such a feat is impossible without a comprehensive *tarbiyyah* programme that emphasizes spiritual education. While praising Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat for personally sacrificing his personal allocations and privileges, Ustaz Ashaari separates Nik Abdul Aziz's private demeanour from the public domain, where even PAS members fail to emulate their Murshid al-'Am, not to mention the Kelantan common folk. Ustaz Ashaari regards the propensity of Kelantan's PAS administration to rely on federal funds to develop its Islamic state as embarrassing. In contrast to their leaders' virtuous character, PAS's grassroots members' conduct leaves much to be desired.[76]

The second book criticizing PAS is a self-authored autobiography by Dato' Emeritus Professor Shahnon Ahmad, a *sasterawan negara* (national literary laureate), entitled

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[73] Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, p. 30, 50, 104.

[74] Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, p. 12, 18.

[75] *Hudud*, the plural of *hadd* (limit), refers to criminal punishments as instituted by the Quran and *Sunnah* (words, deeds and life of the Prophet Muhammad), such as amputation of the hand for thieves, flogging of 80 lashes for consuming intoxicating liquor, flogging for libel, stoning to death for adultery and flogging of 100 lashes for fornication.

[76] Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, pp. 120–123, 158–173.

*Perjalananku Sejauh Ini: Sebuah Autobiografi* (*My Journey Till Now: An Autobiography*).[77]
A productive writer of best-selling novels, some of which have been turned into films and
television dramas, Shahnon had a distinguished academic career at the Universiti Sains
Malaysia (USM), Penang, as lecturer, professor, Dean of the School of Humanities and
Director of the Islamic Centre. In recognition for his services and academic contributions at
the national and international levels, the Kedah state government and USM honoured him
with the titles of Dato' and Emeritus Professor in 1980 and 1993, respectively. A long-time
UMNO member, he became close to PAS leaders in the mid 1990s and as a consequence fell
out of favour with the ruling establishment. PAS President Fadzil Noor twice visited his home
to offer him PAS candidature for general elections: in 1995, when he declined, and in 1999,
when he accepted and went on to memorably beat Minister in Prime Minister's Department,
Abdul Hamid Othman, to become a one-term Member of Parliament for Sik, Kedah (1999–
2004). He claims to be quite close to Anwar Ibrahim. Thus, in the heat of the Reformasi
ferment, he produced the notorious political satire, *Shit*, which lampooned the UMNO-led
ruling elites.[78]

The uppermost factor determining Shahnon's volte-face towards PAS was a firm
conviction in the concept of *ulama* leadership. He eulogizes especially Murshid al-'Am Nik
Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, whose writings revolve a lot around eschatological-cum-spiritual
questions of life after death.[79] But Shahnon expresses disappointment that lower-level PAS
leaders and the rank-and-file denigrate the importance of such discourses, and prefer instead
to focus on political diatribes. Shahnon attributes this negative development of "politics
overwhelming and controlling *'aqidah* (faith)" to the aggressive tactics and activities of the
PAS Youth. Shahnon expresses aghast and disgust at the prospect of PAS being eventually
overtaken by "secular" leaders who brand themselves as modern and post-modern *ulama*.[80]
He admonishes the new breed of PAS's *ulama* for failing to come out with written discourses
of substantive intellectual quality for public consumption, such that the role of the Ulama
Section has been submerged by upcoming political rhetoricians.[81] For example, although the
theoretical explication of PAS's concept of the Islamic state is clear on paper, PAS's *ulama*
have failed to come up with supporting explanations and arguments that may then invite
responses and feedback from the public on their proposed model. Despite PAS being the most

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[77] Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini: Sebuah Autobiografi* (Penang: Pustaka shahnonahmad, 2006).

[78] Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini*, pp. 106–107.

[79] Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini*, pp. 93–98.

[80] Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini*, pp. 110–113.

[81] In the present author's interview with Shahnon Ahmad at his Penang residence on 25 August 2007, Shahnon openly quoted the examples of former head of PAS's *Ulama* Section Harun Taib and current head Muhammad Daud Iraqi as lacking conspicuousness and clout for the *ulama* to have any forceful impact in PAS.

avid proponent of the concept of the Islamic state, PAS has not undertaken the responsibility to transform burgeoning public interest in the Islamic state into fresh debate and healthy discourse. It has remained contented at reacting to UMNO politicians' random remarks on the Islamic state. Hence, the "Islamic state" remains a vague concept to non-Muslims and lay Muslims, and worse still, even grassroots PAS members are left in the dark on the exact mechanisms of an Islamic state. This in itself is evidence of the pitiful lack of *tarbiyyah* and democratization of knowledge within PAS, whose weakness Shahnon sums up as "lacking internal strength."[82]

Interestingly, Shahnon contrasts these shortcomings of PAS with the inner vitality of Darul Arqam, with which Shahnon had a brief association before joining PAS.[83] To Shahnon, the strength of Darul Arqam lies in its global concept of *tarbiyyah* as encompassing not only formal education, but also in the active erection of comprehensive systems of life, emphasizing sustainable economic development. Darul Arqam's distinctive trait, which PAS fails to emulate, is its inclination to "talk a little" but "act a lot." As such, the secular authorities fear Darul Arqam more than PAS, resulting in its banning of and clampdown on Darul Arqam. Despite falling out with the state, the mere mention of "Darul Arqam" conjures up the image of a much acclaimed Malay-Muslim economic powerhouse still held in awe by ruling elites for its material success, accomplished without relying on state patronage. In contrast, says Shahnon, the secular establishment openly pours contempt and makes a mockery of PAS, especially when its *ulama* leadership is being gradually marginalized and perhaps later displaced.[84]

In an interview with Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat at the official Kelantan Chief Minister's residence in Kota Bharu on 14 August 2007,[85] the present author asked for Nik Abdul Aziz's responses to the criticisms thrown by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad and Shahnon Ahmad. Nik Abdul Aziz did not deny the prevalent weaknesses in PAS, especially the incapacity to balance between political imperatives and the urgency of internal *tarbiyyah*. Nik Abdul Aziz has exhorted PAS members to speak on behalf of Islam and not necessarily PAS, because as a man-organized political party, PAS has admittedly many failings. In Kelantan, with political power at its behest, PAS has allotted RM40 million of its annual budget to institute reforms, establishing schools and educational institutions that integrate religious sciences with modern

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[82] Interview with Shahnon Ahmad, 25 August 2007.

[83] As chronicled in Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini*, pp. 69–89.

[84] Shahnon Ahmad, *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini*, pp. 102–103. All points from *Perjalananku Sejauh Ini* were accentuated by Shahnon Ahmad during the interview with him on 25 August 2007.

[85] Ever since becoming Chief Minister in 1990, Nik Abdul Aziz has continued to reside in his humble village house in Pulau Melaka district. He uses his official residence for the purpose of receiving visitors.

sciences.[86] Nik Abdul Aziz expresses confidence that in the long term, products of such education would eventually end the "*ulama* versus professional" dichotomy that has so plagued PAS in recent years and disillusioned idealists like Shahnon Ahmad. An efficient *tarbiyyah* curriculum would be implanted in schools from rudimentary levels of education. Nik Abdul Aziz laments the unfair treatment given in the past to Darul Arqam, arising from disagreements over subsidiary matters, but insists that he was not directly involved in the Kelantan government's decision to obstruct Darul Arqam's planned grand programmes in 1991. He defends PAS's adherence to electoral democracy as the rational means to political power, in contrast with the "irrational" views of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad, who conjures a millenarian picture of Malaysia becoming an Islamic state via a power takeover by peaceful Islamist elements.[87]

## 4. Concluding remarks

PAS has not been immune to the vast changes affecting Malaysian society within a rapidly globalizing and modernizing world. It is possible to imagine conflicting identities within one social configuration; one person or one organization may possess and exhibit different emblems of identity at different times, places and circumstances. In the case of PAS, it becomes *ummatic*ally Islamist when it preaches to its urban Islamic constituency. When facing its traditional Muslim constituency in rural areas, its local—probably even communalist—image is emphasized. When it wants to appeal to multi-ethnic middle class elements, it projects a modern, cosmopolitan face. The extent of PAS's success at the polls depends on how well PAS balances out between its contending images, and how strongly its prospective voters identify PAS as the party that mostly represents their ideals, hopes and aspirations. It should not be a surprise to us that sometimes apparently conflicting statements are issued by different PAS leaders, who are representing their respective orientations, perhaps inadvertently. In admitting to having pronounced views that contradict those of Murshid al-'Am Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang argues that such seeming contradictions are evidence of the presence of democracy and the absence of

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[86] See also Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, *Pendirian Tuan Guru Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat* (edited by Anual Bakri Haron) (Kota Bharu: Dian Darulnaim, 2005), p. 244.

[87] Cf. Khadijah Aam, *Abuya Ashaari Muhammad: Pemimpin Paling Ajaib di Zamannya*, pp. 212–220; Ustaz Hj Ashaari Muhammad, *Politik Islam Membawa Kasih Sayang*, pp. 248–259; Mohd Nizamuddin Hj Ashaari and Laila Ahmad, *Abuya Ashaari Muhammad adalah Putera Bani Tamim* (Kuala Lumpur: Perniagaan Mata Angin, 2007), pp. 74–75.

theocracy in PAS.[88] Ironically, this attitude makes PAS show a similar pragmatism with UMNO, which portrays a stoutly Malay-centric face in front of its hardcore Malay-Muslim supporters, but projects the image of "modern Malays agreeable to inter-ethnic harmony and cooperation" when it speaks, as a member of the BN coalition, to a multi-ethnic audience. To Malay-Muslims, UMNO vilifies PAS for not being as Islamic as UMNO is, but to non-Malays, UMNO conjures up the fear of having to live in fear under a PAS-ruled Islamic state governed by medieval precepts. In the discursive area of public perception, PAS is both not Islamic enough and too Islamic, depending on the audience's understanding of Islam. Whatever its characterization of PAS's Islam is, it carries negative connotations as far as UMNO is concerned.

In the world of contending images, PAS suffers from serious disadvantages vis-à-vis BN, simply by virtue of the latter's enormous control of the media. In a 2004 post-election interview with Reuters from behind his prison walls, Anwar Ibrahim blamed PAS's defeat mostly on the inadequacy of its efforts in shedding the negative perception that PAS was intent on creating an Islamic state à la Taliban should it triumph. In BN propaganda, parts of its programme highlighting peace, democracy and justice were submerged by BN's emphasis on PAS's zeal for an Islamic state and *hudud*.[89] This does not deny the importance of electoral irregularities, gerrymandering and fraud in delivering elections to BN. But PAS cannot afford to blame its defeat on a host of external factors that opposition parties have had to grapple with in all elections. Instead, PAS has to rival BN's propaganda by engaging the public in healthy discourse and debate on its plans in the Islamic state it envisions. The outlets available to PAS are the alternative media: the wide range of anti-establishment tabloids and the Internet. Tabloids such as *Siasah*, *Buletin Rakyat*, *Suara Keadilan* and even the PAS-owned *Harakah* still have limited circulation due to lack of finance. This is where material sacrifice from PAS's own members are able to raise publication and distribution levels of such pro-PAS newspapers.

Having a powerful appeal to young middle-class Malaysians is the Internet, on which PAS needs to improve the quality of its discourse to reflect more democracy. For example, the Islamic State Document and other articles by PAS leaders could be discussed and debated via blogs, which then enables PAS's Research Centre to gauge the public feedback to the party's proposals. At the moment, PAS's website[90] displays a top-to-bottom one-way flow of discussion, which is not helped by the superfluous presence of anti-UMNO diatribes issued

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[88] The interview, "*Tidak semestinya dengan DAP*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 12 June 2005.

[89] Anwar Ibrahim, *Warkah Anwar: Surat-surat dari Penjara 1998–2004* (Kuala Lumpur: Edisi Prima, 2005), pp. 281–282.

[90] www.parti-pas.org/

by its Information and Dakwah[91] Bureau (Lujnah Penerangan dan Dakwah PAS Pusat).[92] PAS's website would be more credible if it had a regular forum for PAS's Research Centre, which until now lacks an official mouthpiece, except for a regular column in *Harakah* English Section. Intellectual research and discourse, synthesizing the best from traditional and modern Islamist discourses, should be put at the forefront of PAS's agenda. Relying on political rhetoric of low intellectual quality may be able to whip up the masses into a sway of emotional support for PAS, but it does not create a long-lasting pool of supporters who could be relied on to vote consistently for PAS in successive elections. The fragility of this kind of support is further accentuated if it was determined more by a rejection of BN and UMNO rather than being a substantive endorsement of PAS's policies. Even with the reforms suggested above, PAS faces an uphill battle to woo the middle-class electorate on account of its own strength. Despite recent estimates putting the Internet-savvy community at around 11 million, only a small proportion of those had a penchant for surfing anti-establishment sites.[93]

With general elections looming, PAS may not have enough time to institute the necessary structural transformations that can form a solid support base for PAS from among middle-class elements. But it is high time for PAS's leadership to commence long-term planning in line with transformations of Malaysia's social undercurrents, without necessarily jeopardizing its Islamist fundamentals. The apparent wedge between both imperatives calls for intellectual reform or *tajdid* (renewal) to harmonize them. Too much internal politicking has disillusioned such middle-class Islamists as Shahnon Ahmad and the renowned consultant-motivator Dr. Hassan Ali, who, on the verge of relinquishing his Vice President's post in the recent 53rd General Assembly, had disclosed his unhappiness over the conduct of party elections, which neglected *shura* and the rank-and-file's labelling of him as a secularist.[94] Such belligerent behaviour from the point of view of Islamic morality cannot be meekly ignored as the necessary side effects of democracy, for it merely goes to prove the lack of internal *tarbiyyah* in PAS. The turn towards militancy among some of PAS's ordinary members, notwithstanding PAS's official disavowal of violence, is testimony to PAS's inability to educate its members in the peaceful path of true Islamic struggle. Although Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat argues that the educational reforms taking place in Kelantan are signs of

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[91] Derived from the Arabic term "*da'wah*", *dakwah* refers to the Islamic missionary effort, whether in the context of proselytizing activities of Muslims upon non-Muslims, or the spreading the message of Islam as *din al-hayah* (The Way of Life) to born Muslims.

[92] www.pas.org.my/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=7&id=17&Itemid=96 (accessed on 5 September 2007).

[93] Joceline Tan, "Watch out, the new media is here", *The Sunday Star*, 5 August 2007.

[94] "Dr Hassan: Members busy labelling each other", *The Star*, 4 June 2007; "*Hassan cadang pemilihan secara syura*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 4 June 2007; "*Ucapan penangguhan Muktamar PAS Pusat ke-53 Perlu Dihayati*", www.pas.org.my/muktamar/ucapan_penangguhan.html (accessed on 5 September 2007).

PAS moving forward, such reforms were undertaken as a corollary of PAS's assumption and retention of power of the state government. Such reforms have eluded other states, where PAS hopes for a continuous stream of support from graduates of religious schools, most of which have been taken over by the state. The remaining independent schools are run independently by PAS-inclined masters, whose traditional trappings might have prevented them from keeping abreast with recent developments in the thoughts and discourse of PAS's *ulama* and leaders. In Kelantan's case, if PAS loses power, it automatically loses its mechanism for *tarbiyyah*, which has to be systematized not only among schoolchildren but also, and perhaps more importantly, among adult members of PAS.

In 2003, the present author called for an internal reformation within PAS to re-invigorate its posture as not just a political party but also a comprehensive Islamic movement emphasizing *dakwah* and *tarbiyyah*.[95] After four years, a similar call has been echoed in an article in the pro-PAS tabloid, *Siasah*.[96] That the party rank-and-file has come to realize the internal weaknesses and admit the need for changes is encouraging, although such candid confessions are still missing from PAS's official voices. In the present author's view, PAS's internal weaknesses stem from the paucity of spiritual content in its discourse, and thus *tarbiyyah*. Spiritual regeneration brings about virtuous attributes such as willingness to sacrifice one's own comfort for larger causes and tolerance of other people's views. These in turn engender economic independence and openness to cooperation with groups of different ideological backgrounds. The electorate would be more convinced of the viability of PAS's Islamic state if PAS's party organization had exhibited qualities that care for potential supporters irrespective of faith and ethnicity. Socio-welfare activities that establish a bond between leaders and the people, in the manner of the successful service centres and complaints bureaus of MCA and Gerakan,[97] are beckoned for. As far as the grassroots electorate is concerned, it makes no difference whether one's representative is a reputable member of the *ulama* or not, if he cannot be readily available to help them in mundane matters at all times.[98] A strong economic base, built out of PAS's own programme, would have been powerful evidence of PAS's ability to handle national economic affairs. Such a message would have struck chords in non-Malays, especially the Chinese, most of whom,

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[95] Dr. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Reforming PAS?", *Aliran Monthly*, Vol. 23 No. 6 (2003), pp. 11–13.

[96] Mohamad Al-Hilmy Ishak, "*PAS perlu reformasi*", *Siasah*, 26 August – 1 September 2007.

[97] Francis Loh Kok Wah, *Politik Baru di Malaysia?*, p. 19.

[98] There have been complaints that PAS's Kelantan state assemblymen, belying their religious reputation, have been shirking their responsibilities in serving their constituents; see Joceline Tan, "Starting before the flag-off", *The Sunday Star*, 2 September 2007.

according to an independent survey by the Merdeka Centre for Opinion and Research, are dissatisfied with the government's economic policies.[99]

Emphasis on spiritualism brings us back to the roots of the tolerant form of Islam, couched in rational and peaceful Sufism—the mystical path of Islam that originally arrived in the Malay-Indonesian world.[100] The accommodative ideological outlook of Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy, the PAS President who advocated an eclectic Malay nationalism, could also be arguably traced to his strong grounding in Sufism.[101] Spiritualism will mitigate the inflexible image portrayed by PAS's juridical form of Islamic state, which many non-Muslims and even lay Muslims find too legalistic and inappropriate to Malaysia's mixed cultural heritage. While laws and regulations play an important part in an Islamic state, the majority of Malaysians have the false impression that Islam is nothing more than a series of do's and don'ts; that Islamization is but the steady intrusion of the *shariah* into Malaysia's legal system; and that the Islamic state is first and foremost a nomocracy.[102] If formal codification of the *shariah* serves as the only yardstick, it can be argued that based on the flurry of Islamic enactments passed by BN-controlled state legislatures since 2000, UMNO is more intent upon Islamizing Malaysia than PAS is.[103] Recent pro-*shariah* statements by influential lawyers and members of the judiciary purporting to interpret more substantively the constitutional clause that Islam is the religion of the federation, such that Islam becomes the overriding feature of governance in Malaysia, have accentuated the impression of Islam as law and little else.[104] Recent upping the ante on the Islamic state by politicians of both the pro- and anti-Islamic state divide, without serious efforts to turn it into healthy intellectual discourse on the very concept of the

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[99] Syed Nadzri, "Chewing on election numbers", *New Straits Times*, 14 August 2007.

[100] Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "The Impact of Sufism on Muslims in Pre-colonial Malaysia: An Overview of Interpretations", *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 41 No. 3 (2002), pp. 467–493.

[101] N. J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, p. 118, 122; Kamarudin Jaffar, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy: Politik Melayu dan Islam*, p. 17.

[102] These impressions are confirmed in a perception survey conducted by Patricia Martinez, see Patricia A. Martinez, "The Islamic State or the State of Islam in Malaysia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 23 No. 3, pp. 480–486.

[103] William R. Roff, "Patterns of Islamization in Malaysia, 1890s–1990s: Exemplars, Institutions, and Vectors", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 2 (1998), pp. 224–225; Patricia A. Martinez, "The Islamic State or the State of Islam in Malaysia", pp. 481–483; Patricia Martinez, "Mahathir, Islam, and the New Malay Dilemma" in Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (Eds.), *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance* (Singapore: Times Books International, 2001), pp. 245–246; Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Political Islam in Malaysia: Problematising Discourse and Practice in the UMNO-PAS 'Islamisation Race'", pp. 194–197.

[104] Zainul Rijal Abu Bakar and Nurhidayah Muhd Hashim, "*Sejarah bukti kukuh Malaysia bukan negara sekular*", *Berita Harian*, 1 August 2007; "*Mansuh Common Law – Ketua Hakim Negara mahu perundangan lapuk Inggeris diganti*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 22 August 2007; "*Undang-undang syariah terbaik – Gani*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 23 August 2007; "Minister: Study proposal to switch to Syariah law thoroughly", *The Star*, 24 August 2007. For constitutional arguments de-linking Islam's position as official religion to Malaysia's Islamic state status, see Shad Saleem Faruqi, "Respecting the Constitution", *The Star*, 3 May 2007; and Shad Saleem Faruqi, "Bedrock of our nation", *The Star*, 22 August 2007.

Islamic state, will in the end benefit only the ruling regime, which has adroitly exploited the dichotomy of mutually reinforcing prejudices in their quest for perpetual political power.[105]

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[105] The most recent polemic arose from Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak's statement after officiating an Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM, Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia)-organized international conference on "The Role of Islamic States in a Globalised World", that Malaysia had never been a secular state, but had always been an Islamic state by virtue of Islam being its official religion. When this was disputed by MCA, UMNO Youth rose to Najib's defence and sternly warned those who insisted that Malaysia was a secular state. Urged to stop the polemic, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi made the more qualified statement that Malaysia was neither secular nor theocratic à la Iran and Pakistan, as allegedly wished by PAS. See "*Malaysia bukan negara sekular – TPM*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 18 July 2007; "BN and PAS differ on Islamic state", *The Star*, 18 July 2007; "M'sia Islamic state as Islam official religion: What the legal experts and politicians say", *The Sun*, 18 July 2007; "*Amaran kepada MCA: Hishamuddin minta henti kenyataan Malaysia negara sekular*", *Berita Harian*, 21 July 2007; "PM: Malaysia is neither a secular nor theocratic state", *The Sunday Star*, 5 August 2007; "*Hentikan polemik Islam, sekular*", *Mingguan Malaysia*, 5 August 2007; "*PM: Pembangkang sengaja bangkitkan isu kontrak sosial*", *Utusan Malaysia*, 28 August 2007. PAS has responded by reaffirming its commitment to a "*vibrant and genuine democratic state*", see PAS Research Centre director Dr. Dzulkifli Ahmad's, "Islamic State or Secular State – What?", englishsection.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=140&Itemid=1 (accessed on 6 September 2007).

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