

The Practice of Asian Democracy in Kelantan State, Malaysia, 1959–2013

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Abstract

The debates on Asian democracy began 30 years ago. Western countries have often promoted liberal democracy as being the genuine democracy, giving justice to the people and being able to meet the needs of their communities. However, at the same time, some Asian countries practice democracy that promotes Asian values, which are very different from Western values. Western countries describe Asian democracy as an excuse for some leaders to maintain power in their respective countries, for example Malaysia. Critics have pointed out that some Asian leaders have used authoritarianism or despotism in order to mitigate the weaknesses of their rule. Asian democracy is practiced in Kelantan where the PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) continued to maintain power for 23 years, from 1990 to 2013. Factors that have contributed to the long rule of the PAS party include socio-political stability, including political parties who were clean and competent and leaders who are knowledgeable and pious.

Introduction

Democracy has been defined by some as being based on the historical, social-cultural background, and the socio-political atmosphere of the respective countries. In this way, there are debates between the scholars from the West and East who defend

and support their form of democracy as the best, as surpassing that of other countries. This has caused some Asian countries to defend Asian values, which are said to be the basis of Asian democracy. Malaysia is no exception in defending this Asian democracy, especially during the reign of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, which lasted from 1981 to 2003. The bravery of defending Asian values, together with a strong rule made him the longest serving Prime Minister. His values seemed to correspond closely with those of the PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) that ruled in Kelantan for 41 years (1959–178 and 1990–2013) and the UMNO (United Malay National Organization) that ruled there for 12 years (1978–90). Both parties had prominent political leaders and gained support from the people due to the strong stability of the party. When this stability is rocked, parties will face problems and will usually lose the next election.

The background of Asian democracy

In order to understand the concept and the practice of Asian democracy, one has to take into consideration developments in the wider political world as a result of the Cold War and the era following it. From the 1950s to the 1980s, the two most powerful countries in the world, which were the United States of America and the Soviet Union, competed with each other, a time period that was dubbed the Cold War. Even though both countries were not involved in physical conflict, they both strengthened their military capabilities considerably and formed pacts with other countries to defend themselves from the ambitions of their competitor. The United States of America led the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliance while the Soviet Union was strongly affiliated with the Warsaw pact. At certain times between 1950s and the early 1980s, the Cold War was the result of the tension between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. During those years, both countries intervened in the internal political affairs in other parts of the world to stop countries from joining the opposing block of countries. For instance, both the United States of America and the Soviet Union intervened in the internal political affairs of some countries in Asia such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, and China. However, towards the end of 1980s, the relationship between these two superpowers improved when the communist ideology, which had been practiced by the Soviet Union and some other Eastern Europe countries, collapsed, bringing an end to the Cold War.

The power struggles during the Cold War period had implications for other countries in the region. The issues of basic humanity, such as the human rights violations, and anti-democratic attitudes had not been noted by the Western countries. However, when the relationships between the United States of America and the Soviet Union improved, greater attention was paid by the Western countries to the issue of democracy. For example, during the third wave of democracy, which happened around 1974, relationships between blocks of countries that had previously been in conflict improved (Huntington, 1991). Within this wave, authoritarian governments and military regimes such as Portugal, Greece, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and other countries practiced democracy. This wave of democracy also hit the dictatorship and military

regimes in Asia such as the Philippines, Taiwan, and Pakistan, which held elections and practiced a democratic political system.

Among the factors that have affected the growth of democracy are economic development and the emergence of the middle-class, including the labour aristocracy, the professionals, and the white-collar workers. Economic development has thus played a vital role in changing the social structure by enabling people to be better educated and by increasing awareness of the rest of the world. Huntington (1991) also added other factors that contributed to the third wave of democracy, such as the role of Christianity and the Western institutions, the roles of the United States of America and the Soviet Union, and the influence of neighbouring countries that practiced a democratic system. O'Loughlin *et al.* (1998) studied the spread of democracy throughout the world using the basic framework of space-time. Their analyses demonstrated that trends are not uniformly towards democracy. Between 1920 and 1935 and between 1950 and 1975, there was a change towards authoritarian government, and although, democracy resurfaced, such waves demonstrate that democratization is susceptible to reversal (O'Loughlin *et al.*, 1998). They are of the opinion that the process of democratization is also determined by various factors, such as countries with similar characteristics, economic cooperation, and similar political organizations.

After the end of Cold War, the United States of America became the main powerful force in the world. Many have stated that the winner of the Cold War was this Western democratic country, and that it will promulgate the concept of democracy to every country in the world. The promulgation of democracy to all parts of the world has become a main policy of the United States of America and other Western countries (Ohaegbulam, 1999). The same goes for the international financial institutions that have been dominated by the Western countries, such as IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, that press the developing countries to increase the level of democracy within their countries before approving loans and other specific provisions. The authoritarian regimes that opposed communism during the Cold War era have faced problems and pressure to increase the level of democracy in their respective countries, even though they are silently supported by the Western democratic countries.

However, these efforts at democratization that are led by the United States of America are not well received by some groups of countries, especially the Gulf and Asian countries (Huntington, 1991). They are considered as interfering with the internal affairs of their countries, especially in Asia. The rulers of Malaysia, Singapore, and China defended their respective leadership styles by stating that the values in Western democracies do not belong in the countries of Asia. Western and Asian countries differ in many ways, such as historical background, customs, religion, culture, and values. The Government of China in their official document on Human Rights has stated: 'owing to tremendous differences in historical background, social system, cultural tradition, and economic development, countries differ in their understanding and practise of human rights' (Li, 1996). It has also appeared in the Declaration of the Heads of the Asian Government which was approved in Bangkok in 1993 during the preparation meeting

for the World Conference of Human Rights in Vienna which stated: 'human rights must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds' (Li, 1996). Both of these statements show that some of the Asian countries are not ready to embrace the concept of democracy and human rights as understood by the Western countries.

Since 1980s, several Asian countries have been amenable to the practice of democracy along with Western lines. The first third-wave democracy emerged in the Philippines in 1986, when the People Power Revolution movement ousted the long-standing dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos. In South Korea, the transition immediately followed with the adoption of a democratic election and constitution in 1987. Almost a decade later, Taiwan held its first presidential election in 1996. Mongolia made a rapid transition to democracy in 1990 by abolishing one-party communist rule and holding its first multiparty parliamentary election in more than 60 years.

During the early 1990s, there was an open debate between an Asian diplomat and a Western academic regarding the practice of democracy and human rights (Emmerson, 1995). Kishore Mahbubani, a Singaporean diplomat, considered that Western countries, which practice liberal democracy, took the issue of ethnic violence that happened in the Balkans and North Africa lightly. The crisis of ethnic violence never ends and involves innocent lives. He also added that the Western countries should not criticize the practice of democracy in Asia, as the practice of democracy in the West is also not perfect. As a reply, Christopher Lingle, an American academic, during a lecture in Singapore stated that at least the Western democracies reported such matters to the public and do not hide anything from the outside world. Some Asian countries have been hiding incidents regarding the issue of human rights from the eyes of the public, such as ethnic oppression in Myanmar and Tibet, the tyranny after the Tiananmen Square incident in China, and the crisis in Timor Leste, as well as incidents concerning the environment such as air pollution and haze that has affected Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia in 1994. He described that those countries are not straightforward regarding the cause of the said environmental phenomena because they want to save their country's name compared to saving the lives of their own people (Lingle, 1996). Lingle also criticized certain regimes in Asia that oppress their own people. Even though he does not explicitly state the countries involved, his opinion has been scrutinized by the Singapore government. At the end, he was sued by the Singaporean government and found guilty for criticizing the government (Lingle, 1996).

The Asian values in the Asian countries

The broad interpretation of democracy has caused some of the leaders in Asia to define democracy according to the Asian values and their way of life. This version of democracy as defined has emphasized respect towards the leader, avoiding public conflict, accepting the distinction of certain ethnic groups, and accepting the concept of a government that provides any development (Welsh, 1996; Hussin, 2000; Kim,

1997). This concept is quite the opposite of the democratic values of the West, which stress human rights and freedom regardless of the individual (Beetham, 2000; Hague and Harrop, 2001; Cerny, 1999). The arguments assume that social order and political stability are more important than individual rights and democracy. Western scholars assert that the Eastern values, which are based upon the teachings of Confucius, are superior to the Western values for the realization of orderly society. To these advocates, abiding by tradition and respecting authority are indispensable for achieving an orderly and moral society (Kim, 1997).

The political issues in some of the Asian countries are greatly influenced by a philosophy based on religion, which forms the backbone to the Asian culture (Hood, 1998). Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and China share the same basic semi-religious philosophy, which is Confucianism. In the practice of Confucianism, the welfare of the group is more important than the individual, and self-interest will destroy the family and, more significantly, even the society. The concept of natural self-interest, which stresses the importance of the family first, is opposite to the teachings of Confucianism. The teachings of Confucianism have also suggested that obedience is more important than the issues of morals. This factor has led some of the Asian leaders to form a master–client relationship with their supporters (Neher, 1994). This relationship is reciprocal, whereby the master will dominate the client by giving them protection or goods, and in return the client will support them. Political leaders contribute to development projects for the people and will receive their support in return. This relationship form is based on personal loyalty and can be likened to personal relationships, such as with family members, official contacts in the bureaucracy, and educational ties, all of which require loyalty. Such relationships can all become lifetime relationships, with a strong loyalty as if they are of the same blood.

The politics in Asia are also influenced by the factors of personality and power (Neher, 1994). The concept of personality is based more on the leader's power than the issues of law. Usually, the leaders have full control over the government through the relationship of master–client and determine the direction of the governance. The competitors of the leaders will be eliminated through the legislative provisions that have been controlled or manipulated by the said leaders. This happened in Singapore when Lee Kuan Yew eliminated the opposition leader, J.B. Jeyaratnam, from the parliament as he 'abused the privilege' by criticizing the government in the court (Means, 1996). The same situation happened in Malaysia when Mahathir Mohamad dismissed his competitor, Anwar Ibrahim, who was Deputy Prime Minister at that time, due to a 'sexual offence' (Abbott, 2001).

In addition, Asian leaders are also 'respected' due to their power and position in the hierarchy (Neher, 1994). Usually, open criticism towards leaders in the Asian community is something that is unacceptable, as if the criticism is meant to criticize the government and not the leaders as individuals. In the tradition of Confucianism, the ruler or the emperor has to be supported and respected as they bring harmony to the nation when performing their duties as the ruler. When there is no harmony, the

ruler or the emperor has lost the ‘mandate of heaven’ and should not be supported by his people. The said ruler or emperor will work hard to sustain the period of their reign. In the tradition of Buddha, the leader deserves high status due to their karma, which is based upon good or evil actions. The individual who has performed many good deeds will be rewarded. A leader shall achieve status with the help of his karma. In the tradition of Hindu, the leader is said to be the deva-raja (God King) that possesses special power to rule the country. The ruler is deemed to be the incarnation of Gods like Shiva, Vishnu, and Indra. To defy the leader is to defy and disobey their God. In the tradition of Islam, the Islamic teaching puts strong emphasis on obedience to leaders. Islam considers obedience to the leader as so important that it views any kind of disobedience as detestable, unless in specific situations. The authority of the leader is thus accepted as right, and subordinates are expected to show obedience to superiors (Beekun and Badawi, 1999).

Compared to Asian values, Islamic values are older and have a stronger influence in most Muslim countries in the Asian region, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Islam arrived at the Malay Archipelago around thirteenth century when Merah Silu, the ruler of Samudera-Pasai, embraced Islam. However, the religion played a minor role in the debates on Asian values in the 1990s at government level. Despite Malaysia and Indonesia having Muslim majorities, their position in the 1993 Vienna Conference on human rights stood without reference to Islam (Barr, 2004). The Indonesian state ideology at that time was an expression of secularism (*Pancasila*), and therefore it would have been extraordinary if the Indonesian delegates had done otherwise. As for the Malaysian government, any tendency they might have had towards exaggerating their conceptual reliance on Islam was hamstrung by the fact that Muslims formed only a bare majority of the population, and the non-Muslim minorities contributed critical components to the governing coalition. However, Islam was still relevant to the Asian values debate. Even before the incident on 11 September 2001, Islam was moving to a more central position in Indonesia and Malaysia, both in mainstream and dissident politics. The rise and fall of Anwar Ibrahim and the rise of the PAS has made Islam a central feature of mainstream politics in Malaysia.

The practice of Asian democracy

Debates over the concept of Asian democracy and the differences with Western democracy have continued over the years. According to Carothers (1997), the idea that has gained some trust in East Asia is that Asian democracy is ruled by a dominant and corporatist party that tolerates a limited opposition but will never abandon power. On the other hand, supporters of Asian democracy have focused on the communitarian aspects of the East Asian culture. It is suggested that Asian people have always been more concerned with the welfare of the group over the individual than have Western people (Neher, 1994).

Democracy is generally considered to be the cornerstone of ‘the good’ in terms of contemporary domestic political forms. Democracy as an ideal political system has

achieved overwhelming mass approval in many countries. Even large majority countries in the Asian region, particularly in the Middle East, East Asia, and former Soviet Union are favourably oriented to democracy in principle (Dalton and Ong, 2005; Shin, 2007). Otherwise, Asian democracy refers to the authentic political expression of a set of Pan-Asian norms and values. These values are said to revolve around the concepts of harmony, consensus, community, and the family. Underscoring the promotion of the concept is a new found confidence gained by rapid economic growth in the region, which contrasts with the image of the West which is in economic and social decline (Tanji and Lawson, 1997). Hood (1998) states that the Asian democracy of East Asia is depicted by regimes that have failed to complete the transition to democracy. These regimes have liberalized significantly and in some cases have held regular elections, yet democracy has not fully developed.

The Asian values that have become the main concept of Asia democracy have been discussed by some of the scholars such as Hague and Harrop (2001), Robison (1996), Rodan and Hewison (1996). For Robison (1996) and Rodan and Hewison (1996), the values of Asia will priorities a stable government rather than a more diverse political environment, with more respect towards authority and a harmonized social situation. It will also put aside any form of confrontation, supporting a government that will bring economic progress, and stresses more on the values of the society than the individual. Hague and Harrop (2001) are of the opinion that the values and the concept of Asian democracy, based on respect for the authority, promote avoidance of public conflict and accept the domination by certain groups within the society. This concept will cause the people to give more respect to their leaders and give their full support to the government that will bring improvements and development. This special relationship will ensure a long-lasting government and any criticism towards the government will be seen as criticism towards the country and it should be avoided. The Asian values are also providing the means to accept domination by certain groups in the country.

The Asian values concept has also strengthened the notion of Asian democracy, which has been used as a cultural justification by certain political elites defending authoritarian political systems, not only from external criticism but also from internal criticism. The concept has also been predicated on cultural attributes, such as paternalistic authority, which essentially opposes the Western democracy (Tanji and Lawson, 1997). Also, signs of modernization, such as economic growth and industrialisation, tend to be noted as equal to democracy in a number of Asian countries. Asian democracy, as articulated by authoritarian elites in the region, has therefore combined selected elements of Asian culture, along with industrial, technological, and economic developments. It is this particular combination of elements that has given rise to the concept of Asian democracy, a variant that also presents a challenge to the Western democracy.

The values and the concept of Asian Democracy are highlighted at least in Singapore and Malaysia. In Singapore, political power is controlled by the Chinese residents in

that the position of Prime Minister and other important positions will be given to the Chinese. In Malaysia, the Malays dominate politics, such that important posts such as that of Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, and Finance Minister are given to the Malays. The Malays are also privileged under the New Economic Policy (DEB) program, which was launched in 1970, and the National Development Policy (DPN), which replaced the DEB in 1990. Under the DEB and now under the DPN, the Malays are given access to capital and encouraged to start businesses under the supervision of certain governmental agencies, with help in marketing goods and also in the skills required to run a business.

Some of the Asian leaders like the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, have used the values and the concept of Asian democracy to defend their pattern of ruling. Mahathir was Prime Minister of Malaysia between 1981 and 2003 and is the longest serving Prime Minister in the country's history. He was given the identity as ultra-Malay during his early years of involvement in politics. In his book entitled *The Malay Dilemma*, he has stated that, 'I contend that the Malays are the original or indigenous people of Malaya and the only people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country. In accordance with practise all over the world, this confers on the Malays certain inalienable rights over the forms and obligations of citizenship which can be imposed on citizens of non-indigenous origin' (Mahathir, 1970). However, the Chinese and Indians are still given political and administrative positions and the ethnic leaders are deemed to accept these conditions. In addition, the ruling party of the country is *Barisan Nasional* (BN) which is a distinctive combination of political alliances consisting of multi-ethnic political parties such as the UMNO which represents the Malays, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (GRM) which represent the Chinese, and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) which represents the Indian and also other political parties.

Apart from that, Mahathir has considered that the practice of democracy in Malaysia is quite good and operates based on the rules of Asia. The people directly choose the government, the leader is elected by a majority through representation in the election, and the election is held periodically with participation from various political parties, and allows for individual change in power or of the ruling political party. Next, there is separation of powers between executive, legislative, and judiciary; place checks and balances in the government institution; and a government that is sensitive to the general view (Khoo, 2002). However, his pattern of administration is still criticized from in and out of the country, especially when Mahathir used the International Security Act (ISA) to detain individuals without trial. During his administration, he has been using this act to silence his critics, and using political stability as a justification. This action is consistent with Asian values that stress the importance of the stability of the ruling party and of respect for social harmony. In 1987, he used ISA to detain 119 individuals, including the opposition and NGO leaders for openly bringing up racial issues. The racial issues are categorized as sensitive as they have the potential to cause ethnic tensions, as happened in 1969.

In 1998, Mahathir, the current Prime Minister at that time under the ISA, arrested Anwar Ibrahim, who then started rumours throughout the country to explain the reason he was fired by Mahathir. Many were sympathetic towards Anwar and disputed the action taken by Mahathir (Weiss, 2000; Felker, 2000). However, Mahathir still proceeded with the action in the name of political stability, relieving the anxiety of the people. He has his answer for using ISA during his reign: ‘this government has gone to numerous elections where the ISA was an issue and the people voted for this government with a big majority which means that the people as a whole approve of the ISA. If democracy means majority opinion, then the majority supports the ISA, simply because the majority wants a stable and orderly society’ (Ahmad Sarji, 1993).

Furthermore, issues such as individual freedom, freedom of the press, and social equality and human rights in Malaysia had become the focus of criticism during Mahathir’s reign. His critics claimed that he had not given space for ultimate freedom when enforcing acts that trampled the people. However, he had a well-prepared answer, ‘the curbs on individual freedom and liberties were checks and balances . . . maintained as between individual rights and the public good, with the government of the moment determining what constitutes the public good’ and continued ‘while a citizen is free . . . society must have the right to object to individuals who offend the sensitivities of the society’ (Mahathir, 1970).

Before becoming a politician, Mahathir was a medical doctor who had graduated from the University Malaya Singapore and became the first Prime Minister with a local education. Upon becoming the Prime Minister in 1981, he launched the Look East Policy that made Japan and North Korean examples to Malaysia. Mahathir had no intention of having Western countries as examples and models to Malaysia. In his speech during the General Conference of the UMNO in 1982, he said: ‘for centuries we have been awed by Western strength and ability. We have not only been impressed but we have also accepted the view that it is impossible for us or any Eastern nation to compete with the Westerners’. He added, ‘While generally the Western nations cannot solve the oil crisis and other problems, several Eastern nations can overcome them especially countries like Japan and South Korea’, and continuing, ‘the West had “failed” in the matter of economic competition and therefore we must adjust our attitude and direction, the West can no longer be an adequate example, those that fail cannot be made examples to follow’ (Khoo, 2002).

Apart from that, Mahathir commented on the importance of practicing a more robust democracy in Hong Kong after Britain had given the territory back to China. In *Asia Week* magazine, issue May 1997, he said, ‘I think it is the height of hypocrisy. For more than one hundred years, the British never thought of ruling Hong Kong as a democracy. Now, just before it has to hand Hong Kong back to China, it suddenly decides there must be democracy, and that it is going to defend democracy to the last drop of the Hong Kong people’s blood’ (Khoo, 2002).

Mahathir has otherwise defended the Malaysian government system as being considerably better than the Western system, especially the systems in the United

States of America. The governmental system in Malaysia, according to Mahathir, will produce a stabilized and powerful government because it is chosen democratically by the subjects, although it is dominated by a single coalition. The system of two parties as practiced by the United States of America will only produce a weak and unstable government with a small majority government. The two-party system will also deny the voices and the importance of the people who do not support either of the two parties. However, this opinion is quite awkward and has not been fully accepted by all parties. Critics described the opinion as Mahathir's excuse to justify his stiff and controversial style of leadership. Mahathir also criticized the corruption and inner sickness of America, and noted that the racial riots in Los Angeles in 1992 were far worse than any difficulties that ethnically heterogeneous Malaysia had ever experienced (Neher, 1994).

Asian values in Kelantan's politics: coincidence or strength?

Kelantan state is the fifth largest state in Malaysia, consisting more than 5,000 square miles of territory. It is located in the northeast of the Malaysian Peninsula, bordering the southern boundary of Thailand. Kelantan also has the largest Malay population of all the Peninsula states, and thus it is known as the 'cradle of Malay culture'. More than 93 percent of the Kelantanese are Malays, and the rest are made up of Chinese, Indians, and other races. Kelantan has also come to be known as the most Malay of the states of Malaysia due to its political and economic history. The state represents a vision of what Malaya could have been had not the waves of Chinese and Indian immigration of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries transformed it into the plural society that it has become. Kelantan was also famous for its *pondok* (Islamic school). More than any other Malay state, Kelantan was the adopted home of many learned foreign *ulama* (religious scholars) since the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this study, Kelantan's politics is selected as a representative and significant case to examine Asian democracy and Asian values. This is due to the attitude of Kelantan voters who have been attracted to the authority and personality of their political leaders; they have often selected a party that could efficiently govern the state. These attitudes are close to the Asian values, such as authority, personality, and the position of the leaders. Moreover, the enthusiasm for Islam and religious adherence is said to be higher in Kelantan than in other Malay states. This can be seen in the greater number of people attending the five daily prayers in the *masjid* (mosque) regularly, the many intensive lectures conducted in *masjid*, and the greater manifestation of religious piety and concern with purity (Alghanim, 2002). Although Kelantan is distinguished politically as a long-term battlefield for contests between the PAS and the BN, few aspects of Asian values are seen in the administration of the PAS and also the UMNO in Kelantan.

The PAS is one of the oldest Muslim political parties in the world, having grown out of the *ulama* section of the UMNO in 1951 (Funston, 1980). In the history of elections in Kelantan, the PAS has dominated the state government since the election of 1959 until

its fall in 1978 when the UMNO won the election before being forced to give power back to the PAS the in 1990 election. Since 1990, the PAS has continued to sustain its reign in Kelantan. What are of interest are the reasons why the PAS lost the election in 1978 and the UMNO in 1990.

The PAS has been in power for a total of 41 years: (from 1959 to 1978 (19 years) and from 1990 to 2013 (23 years). However, the UMNO was in power from 1978 to 1990 (12 years). These long reigns are connected to the charisma factor of the main leaders of both parties. During the first reign of the PAS, Mohd Asri was an important figure t, both at the federal and state levels and contributed significantly to the domination of the PAS in Kelantan. The PAS had lost two of its charismatic leaders – Zulkifli Muhammad who passed away in 1964 and Burhanudin Helmi who was detained under the ISA act in 1965 – and the character of Mohd Asri, as the main leader of the PAS, was very appropriate for the time and circumstances (1950s and 1960s). His leadership ensured that the reign of the PAS, especially in Kelantan, was strong.

The same thing also happened to the UMNO due to the character and integrity of the charismatic leader, Tengku Razaleigh, who became the main leader in Kelantan during the 1970s and 1980s. Even though Tengku Razaleigh has not directly involved with the state administration, his contribution in defeating the PAS at the 1978 election is seen as his biggest service towards the Kelantan UMNO.

During the second reign of the PAS in Kelantan from 1990 to 2013, Nik Abdul Aziz, who possesses stature and credibility, has contributed considerably in his role as the Chief Minister of Kelantan and the Spiritual Leader of the PAS. His distinctiveness and greatness has caused the PAS to continue to reign even though facing the obstacles and restrictions from many parties. All these leaders have their very own advantages and strengths that have caused the people to respect and appreciate their leadership of the state government under the administration of the respective parties.

When such leaders start to lose influence, due to the internal problems of the party, the strength of the party will also decline. This happened to the PAS during the early 1970s when the PAS joined the BN government in 1972. An internal crisis happened when Muhammad Nassir was appointed as the Chief Minister of Kelantan after the 1974 general election. He was not the candidate suggested by the PAS but claimed the position with help and strong support from the Kelantan UMNO. His administration and decisions as the Chief Minister of Kelantan always caused controversy with the PAS state leaders. This situation worsened with the intervention from Mohd Asri, the PAS Kelantan's state and national leader. The peak of the controversy occurred among the supporters of Mohd Asri and Muhammad Nasir and caused the latter to be stripped of the title as Chief Minister on 15 October 1977. Muhammad Nasir was then fired from the PAS which led to the emergency proclamation in Kelantan on 8 November 1977. This event led to dismissal of the PAS from the BN as a result of actions taken by some of the parliamentary members of the PAS who did not support the emergency bill of Kelantan in the Parliament. After the bill was withdrawn on 12 February 1978, the general election

on 11 March 1978 was held and the result witnessed the PAS government in Kelantan losing its power and the UMNO took over the Kelantan state government. The conflict between the internal leaders of the PAS revealed a weakness and later caused the fall of the PAS government in Kelantan during the 1978 election.

After the 1978 general election, the UMNO dominated the Kelantan state government and the main player behind the success of the UMNO was the leadership of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Even though he did not get involved directly in the administration of the UMNO in Kelantan, he was an important determinant in Kelantan politics together with Abdullah Ahmad. Muhammad Nasir was even suggested by the UMNO as the Chief Minister of Kelantan to the current Prime Minister at that time, Abdul Razak Hussin. During the early stage of the UMNO government, Tengku Razaleigh also played a vital role by planning and bringing progress to Kelantan based on his capacity as the Finance Minister (between 1976 and 1984), Minister of Trade and Industry (1984–1987), and the Vice President of the UMNO (1976–1984).

In 1987, Tengku Razaleigh competed for the post of President of the UMNO, opposing the current Prime Minister at that time, Mahathir Mohamad. Unfortunately, he lost to Mahathir with a small difference in number of votes. This caused dissatisfaction among his supporters who believed fraud had taken place. This led to this case being taken to court, which later declared a ban on the UMNO. Tengku Razaleigh even chose to leave the UMNO and became an important figure in the establishment of the *Semangat 46* party (S46). This internal crisis weakened the UMNO in Kelantan, when most of its members and leaders chose to join S46 under the leadership of Tengku Razaleigh. The S46 party merged with the PAS to form *Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah* (APU) which took part in the 1990 election. In that election, the candidates of the APU defeated the UMNO, which marked the end of the reign of the UMNO after 12 years. The main reason for this fall was the internal crisis.

The APU government in Kelantan that won the 1990 election is led by Nik Abdul Aziz, the main leader of the PAS. He joined the election during the by-election for the Kelantan Hilir Parliament in 1967 and became a parliament member, Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) or State Legislative Assembly member as well as holding an important position in the PAS. His charisma especially as the leader of the PAS in Kelantan was highlighted when Mohd Asri resigned both his positions as the main the PAS leader at the national and state level in 1982. In the early 1980s, there was a transformation in the PAS that involved promoting the leadership. This was an opportunity that led to Nik Abdul Aziz being more respected and becoming an important asset to the Kelantan PAS. His leadership was tested and the obstacles solved by him. For instance, even though there was a quite dismal relationship between the PAS and the S46, the APU was still able to withstand and maintain their reign in Kelantan. The harmonized relationship between the PAS and the S46 deteriorated after the 1995 election and reached its peak during the 1996 election when Tengku Razaleigh dissolved the S46 and rejoined the UMNO. At the same time, the relationship between the PAS and the royals was becoming sour, which was a significant reason behind the re-entry of Tengku

Razaleigh into UMNO. This situation had the potential to have adverse effects on the PAS government in Kelantan.

However, the temperature of politics in Kelantan was getting cooler at the end of 1990s due to the Asian economic crisis in 1997 and the dismissal of Anwar Ibrahim from the UMNO in 1998. At that time, the political situation of the country moved more towards the opposition, and during the 1999 election the PAS government won comfortably in Kelantan. But, the political atmosphere in the country again changed in 2000. The incident of the bombardment of the World Trade Centre in the United States of America in 2001 placed the followers of Islam as the guilty party. Everything related to Islam was seen as violent and extreme and the PAS felt the heat as well. The issue of Islamic countries had become polemic until the opposition party, the DAP, left the opposition alliance at that time, the *Barisan Alternatif* (BA). At the same time, the country's economic situation had improved and Mahathir resigned from his position as the Prime Minister in 2003. His successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi introduced a policy of administration and rule which he claimed to be people friendly. All of this gave a good image and boosted support for the UMNO throughout the country, including Kelantan.

Consequently, during the 2004 election, the PAS only won with a majority of two seats and only a majority of one seat in the by-election of Pangkalan Pasir held in 2005, which witnessed the UMNO/BN win their respective seats. In this situation, the PAS government, under the leadership of Nik Abdul Aziz, could still stand until the 2008 general election. In this election, the PAS has won with a bigger majority compared to the 2004 general election.

Figures such as Mohd Asri, Tengku Razaleigh, and Nik Abdul Aziz evidently possessed enough strength to sustain the reign of their parties. Their statures were also strengthened by the ample support from their respective party members. However, when their influence declined or when the party had an internal crisis, due to their opposition towards other leaders (except for Nik Abdul Aziz), their party that had been dominating the state government lost the election. Parties need to have leaders that will play an effective role that will strengthen their respective parties.

The UMNO used to have leaders such as Mohamad Yaacob, who became the Chief Minister of Kelantan after the 1978 election. Even though he had the experience of being Cabinet Minister for the Federal Government, it was not enough for him to empower the Kelantan UMNO. He even had a cold relationship with the royals in early the 1980s, which certainly did not help in empowering the UMNO as the state government. In the 1990s, the UMNO proposed Annuar Musa as the state leader. However, he also made the big mistake of being confrontational with the royals, which certainly did not help in promoting the UMNO as a stable state government. In addition, the UMNO also proposed Awang Adek Hussin and Mustapha Mohamad as the main leaders of the state.

During the 2008 general election, the UMNO touted Awang Adek Hussin as Chief Minister if they were to win in Kelantan. This statement was premature and did not

take into consideration the opinions of the royals in the appointment of the Chief Minister. This was unfavourable to many parties and got even more complicated when the UMNO lost the election. It was not good for the UMNO's image as a strong government. Mustapha Mohamad was then re-presented as the main leader of the state, which strengthened the UMNO government in Kelantan. However, he has yet to show his own distinction that will boost the UMNO in Kelantan.

The PAS is also seen as having the same problem. After the era of Mohd Asri, few of the PAS leaders have been highlighted such as Muhammad Nasir who became the Chief Minister of Kelantan between 1974 and 1978. He had to face opposition from the internal PAS, which caused him to be stripped of his position as the Chief Minister and even eliminated by the PAS itself. Only Nik Abdul Aziz is seen to have been successful as the Chief Minister of Kelantan. Acceptance by all supporters and leaders of the PAS helped in strengthening the state government under the leadership of the PAS in Kelantan. The PAS has been in the most stable position under his leadership, which has retained the PAS in Kelantan since 1990.

Support of Kelantan voters for the PAS leader increased in the early 1980s when the PAS was preparing itself for the 1982 general election. The PAS thus took on a more avowedly purist tone, enshrined in a new epithet of *kepimpinan ulama* or leadership by *ulama* (Case and Liew, 2006). The 1982 general election was also significant for the PAS because it heralded the coming of a new leadership. The new PAS leaders at the time are generally known for their credentials as *ulama*. Among the key leaders of the PAS during that time were Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang, Ustaz Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, Ustaz Fadhil Noor, and Ustaz Nakhaie Ahmad. They seemed bent on wanting to do what the PAS leaders had failed to do earlier when the party governed Kelantan from 1959 to 1978 (Hussin Mutalib, 1993). After the PAS general assembly in April 1989, the PAS public image heightened to Islamize the country in all its aspects.

During the 1990 general election, the PAS also managed to retain all the seats in the Kelantan state, and its *ulama* leaders were also determined to transform Kelantan into an Islamic state. The PAS began to look to Islam as an alternative basis on which society and the state should be built. The charisma and considerable acumen of Nik Abdul Aziz as a political leader had made the support for the PAS highly impressive. Much of the support for the PAS in Kelantan came from an acknowledgement of Nik Abdul Aziz's own personal and political behaviour. He lived in a simple house, gave almost half of his monthly allowance to the PAS and the State Treasury, refused his RM3,000 monthly housing allowance, placed similar obligations on State Exco members, disallowed them any gratuities and insisted on their availability for *masjid* and teaching activities (Hilley, 2001). The new image of the PAS and their success in the election after the 1990 general election increased the support of Kelantan voters towards the PAS.

The Kelantan voters choose a party that had political leaders with Asian values and authority and that could efficiently govern the state.. Voters were also more influenced by the religious bonds and the culture of Malay-Muslim people, that is the majority

population in Kelantan. The above are basic to the existence of Asian values and their practice of democracy, at least in Kelantan.

The uniqueness and distinctiveness of politics in Kelantan are more influenced by the characteristics and role of certain political parties. A political party that has a clear and concrete ideology, a leadership figure with integrity and competence, a system of ruling and an administration that is efficient and unlikely to get involved in a serious internal crisis will become the choice of the voters in Kelantan. They will give their support to parties that have such qualities and these values will be strengthened by the Asian values that exist within the people and voters in Kelantan and in this way will strengthen Asian democracy.

In addition, the voters in Kelantan are not affected by political campaigns with materialistic characteristics, such as promising progress and development, and big projects that will make Kelantan a more developed and wealthier state. Such campaigns have been used by the Alliance from the 1950s until the present, but they have not helped the Alliance or BN itself to dominate in Kelantan. This does not mean that the PAS has not pushed for development and progress in Kelantan. The agenda for development, modernisation, and progress still happens in the framework prescribed by the PAS government since the 1990's general election. As long as the PAS in Kelantan is able to maintain the integrity and dynamics needed for effective leadership, as well as the internal strength of the party, the chance of succeeding in the next general election will be there.

Conclusion

The existence of Asian values is an important component of political practice in Kelantan. Such values have ensured and strengthened the position of political parties that dominated and ruled for a certain period of time. The erosion of Asian values due to internal crisis in a party will cause the people not to give their support to the party that forms the government. As a result, the party will lose the election and have to transfer their powers to the opponent. The combination of the leader's charisma, stability, support, and trust from the people to the leader are manifestations of Asian values that have become the source of political strength, at least in Kelantan.

This study will contribute to our understanding of Asian democracy and the wider study of democratization in the non-Western world. It reinforces the views of several scholars and supports the concept of Asian values, which are said to be the primary basis in forming Asian democracy. In addition, this study shows the importance of the characteristics of Asian values that determine the success of a political party in Kelantan. The characteristics of Asian values, if not maintained, will lead to the party losing voter support, and hence losing the election. This study also describes the behaviour of Kelantan voters who are attracted by the personalities of the leaders, leadership potential, and the internal strength of a party, and not by a political campaign with materialistic characteristics, whether the candidate is from the PAS or the UMNO.

When any one of the Asian values appears weakened, either of the parties will face problems in their ruling and will eventually lose in the next election.

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