

Towards a US Sponsored “Regime Change” in Malaysia?

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In his widely read blog (13 February 2012), the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, criticizes the politics of regime change pursued by the United States of America.

He is concerned that Malaysia may also be a target for regime change. And the US candidate to head the new regime, which will be in full, complete support of US policies, he says, is none other than the Leader of the Opposition, Anwar Ibrahim. Why should the US government seek regime change in Malaysia when the present Prime Minister, Najib Razak, has sought to further strengthen ties with Washington? He has even employed a Washington based public relations firm, Apco, to boost Malaysia’s image in the US. Najib’s personal relations with US President, Barack Obama, are supposed to be “excellent.” And yet it is quite conceivable that the forces that shape Washington’s attitude towards Malaysian politics and political leaders may prefer Anwar to Najib for a number of reasons.

One, while Najib may have some rapport with formal leaders and the formal state, it is Anwar who has intimate links with the “deep state” in the US system. It is the deep state represented by powerful interests such as the Zionist lobbies, the Christian Right, the big wigs on Wall Street, the oil barons, the arms merchants and the media Moghuls which is in effective control. To appreciate the distinction between the two, one has to reflect on Obama’s Cairo speech on 4th June 2009 which stated explicitly that “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements” but in reality the formal leader has had to yield to the Zionists and the Christian Right who are enthusiastic promoters of Zionist expansion at the expense of the Palestinians. Anwar’s entry into the deep state was through his close friendship with Paul Wolfowitz, the former US Deputy Secretary of Defence and one of the staunchest champions of Zionist power. It was mainly because of Wolfowitz that Anwar became the first Chairman of the Foundation for the Future in 2005, an organisation established ostensibly to promote democracy in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) whose real purpose is to perpetuate US-Israeli hegemony over the region. Even before this, in 1998, in the midst of the Asian financial crisis, Anwar was espousing an IMF type solution to the nation’s economic woes thus revealing his political orientation.

This is why during his first two trials for abuse of power and sodomy between 1998 and 2004 and during his recent trial for sodomy, the mainstream Western media went out of its way to demand that the Malaysian authorities acquit Anwar. Wolfowitz and former US Vice-President, Al Gore, even penned a joint opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal on 4th August 2010 urging the US government to persuade the Malaysian government to “act with wisdom” in Anwar’s trial. A day before he was acquitted, on 8th January 2012, The Washington Post in an editorial warned that “If the verdict fails that test (Malaysia’s

commitment to democracy and the rule of law) there should be consequences for Mr. Najib's relations with Washington." This was an undisguised, unabashed attempt by one of the media pillars of the deep state to pressurize a sovereign nation to submit to its will. Two, if Anwar is the darling of the deep state in the US, it is partly because of his stand on Israel. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal on 26 January 2012, he reiterated his support for "all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel." It should be emphasised here that support for Israeli security— contrary to what he is saying now— was not contingent on "Israel respecting the aspirations of the Palestinians." In the interview Israel's security stands by itself. It is diplomatic recognition of Israel that Anwar links to Palestinian aspirations.

Placing Israel's security on a pedestal is the sort of gesture that the deep state and Zionists the world over laud, especially if the advocate is a Muslim leader. For Israel's security has become the justification for all its policies of occupation, annexation and aggression in the last 63 years. Israel's security is the albatross around the neck of the dispossessed Palestinians and other Arabs who have lost their land and dignity to the occupying power. It is obvious that by acknowledging the primacy of Israeli security, Anwar was sending a clear message to the deep state and to Tel Aviv and Washington— that he is someone that they could trust. In contrast, the Najib government, in spite of its attempts to get closer to Washington, remains critical of Israeli aggression and intransigence. Najib has described the Israeli government as a "serial killer" and a "gangster." This has incensed the deep state. Anwar, on the other hand, told Zionist friends in Washington two years ago that he regretted using terms such as "Zionist aggression" (Jackson Diehl "Flirting with zealotry in Malaysia" The Washington Post 28 June 2010).

Three, Anwar is the choice of the deep state for another reason which in its own reckoning is becoming almost as important as Israel. This is the rise of China and what it means for US global hegemony. Elements within the deep state appear to have convinced Obama that China is a threat to its neighbours and to the US's dominant role in the Asia-Pacific. Establishing a military base in Darwin, resurrecting the US's military alliance with the Philippines, coaxing Japan to play a more overt military role in the region, instigating Vietnam to confront China over the Spratly islands, and encouraging India to counterbalance Chinese power, are all part and parcel of the larger US agenda of encircling and containing China. In pursuing this agenda the US wants reliable allies— not just friends— in Asia. In this regard, Malaysia is important because of its position as a littoral state with sovereign rights over the Straits of Melaka which is one of China's most critical supply routes that transports much of the oil and other materials vital for its economic development. Will the containment of China lead to a situation where the hegemon determined to perpetuate its dominant power seeks to exercise control over the Straits in order to curb China's ascendancy? Would a trusted ally in Kuala Lumpur facilitate such control?

The current Malaysian leadership does not fit the bill. It has sustained and deepened the bond of friendship between Malaysia and China through increased bilateral trade and investments. China is Malaysia's biggest trading partner globally and Malaysia is China's biggest trading partner within ASEAN. China is most appreciative of the fact that Malaysia under the late Tun Razak was the first non-communist country in Southeast Asia to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1974. When his son Najib became Prime Minister in April 2009, China was the first country outside ASEAN that he visited. In a number of regional and international forums, Malaysia has maintained that China is not a threat to its neighbours and does not seek global dominance. These are views that do not accord with the deep

state's bellicose stance towards China. It explains why the deep state may be inclined towards regime change in Kuala Lumpur.

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