On the eve of every general election in Malaysia, the dark cloud of an "Islamic state" will loom large. Certain politicians will project it as if the issue is our only electoral concern. It is inexplicable how a non-issue could repeatedly be raised and be successfully exploited to haunt the majority of our Malaysian voters.

Is it real? Is it important?

"Islamic state", what are we afraid of?

In this third paper of our "Social Analysis Series", the Social Owl seeks to answer the related questions frequently raised by Malaysians, including the following:

What is an "Islamic state"?

Do the majority of the Muslims support the concept of an "Islamic state"?

Is there possibility for PAS to form a government by themselves?

To cooperate with PAS = conspiracy to institute an "Islamic state"?

Why are majority of the non-Muslims wary of an "Islamic state"?

Why are people sceptical about Islam?

How should we handle the issue of an "Islamic state"?

To reject an "Islamic state", we need to vote the BN?

"Islamic state"
What are we afraid of?



Social Comment



As a new millennium dawns, it is unfortunate that Malaysia is immersed in a state of political turmoil and social upheaval. Confronted with the contradicting and controversial speeches and statements made up of rumors, lies and half-truths, there is a sense of loss and confusion amongst Malaysians.

Numerous statements on the current situation are written in the local newspapers: some are mildly assuring; some are excessively critical. There is certainly no lack of statements that sing to the official tune to bring the public under a state of subservience. What is found wanting are rational and objective analyse on the situation to dispel the doubts, fears and confusion of our general public.

In view of the above, a group of university students and youths who are engaged in various professions have come together to discuss, write and edit this series of articles. They aspire to rationalize the situation from its seeming mess, to stay clear of seditious statements, yet to project an objective social analytical perspective on the matters and issues raised in these trying times.

We do not assert that what we present in this series are irrefutable truths. Any constructive criticisms will be most welcomed.

It is our earnest hope that through this series, we would be able to contribute in our limited effort, to provoke rational and analytical thinking, towards realising a better and more judicious Malaysia.

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1 August 1999

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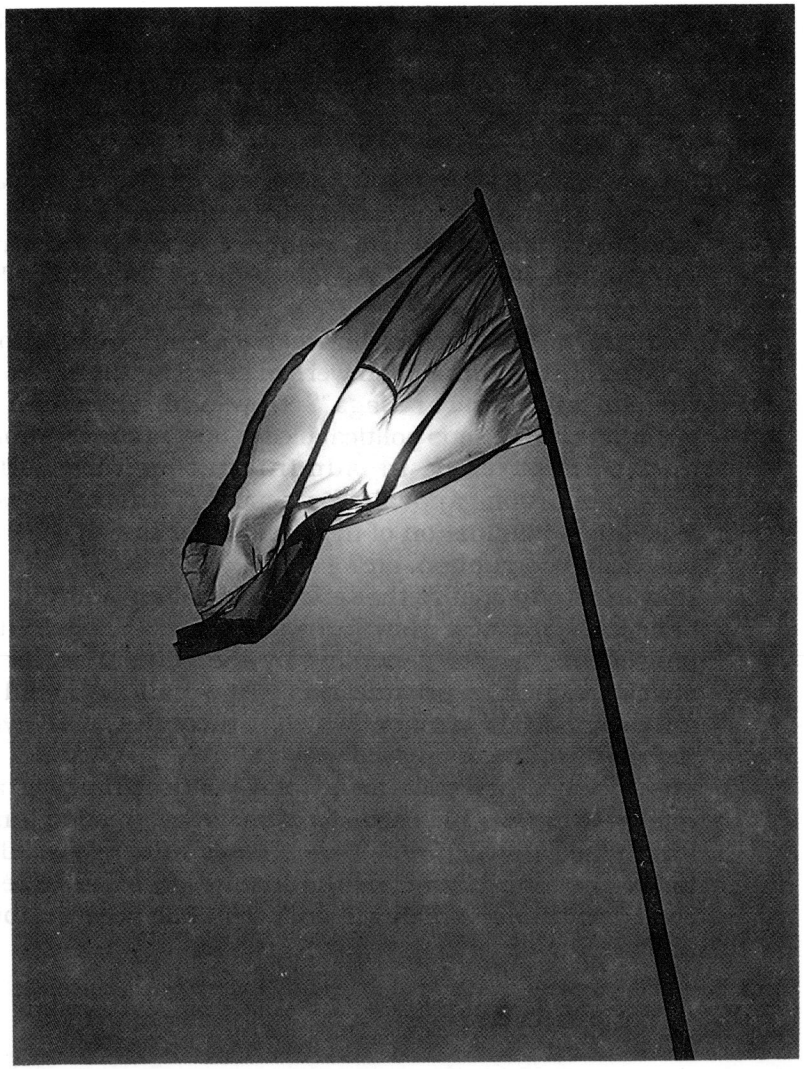
In conclusion, we must reiterate the need to rationally examine the issue of an "Islamic state" in order to dispel the myths surrounding it and find out its truths. In eliminating the confusion over this issue, it will enable a fair and just contest of the ruling coalition parties and the opposition parties. It will also ensure that the voters will vote consciously on the more crucial political concerns aforesaid.



On the question of an "Islamic state", what were the comments?

Compared with what are said now, do they still ring true?

After all these years, are we still living in the past ... ?

Gerakan President Datuk Lim Keng Yaik: "Allowing PAS to Islamize the country, the theocratic system will adversely affect our society that is multi-racial and multi-religious ..." – *Sin Chew Jit Poh, 19/7/1986*

Gerakan Central Executive Committee Member Dr. Goh Cheng Teik: "If PAS were to come into power, the Chinese may not be able to rear pigs, sell or eat pork ..." – *Tung Pao, 21/7/1986*

Dr. Chandra Muzaffar: "What we want is not an Islamic state propagated by PAS, or a country that is built on any religious belief ... but a country that is governed in accordance with eternal values and principles ..." – *Kwong Wah Daily, 23/7/1986*

PAS Vice Chairman Nakaie: "Our wish for an Islamic state is irreversible. We will not abandon our objective for anyone or any political party ..." – *Tung Pao, 28/7/1986*

Gerakan National Publicity Chief Dr. Kong: "Gerakan objects to the transformation of a secular state into an Islamic state ..." – *Sin Ming Daily, 9/12/1989*

PRM Chairman Dr. Syed Hussein Ali: "Until today, there is no country in this world that is an Islamic state. In fact, throughout history, there is no such country ever being in existence ..." – *Sin Chew Jit Poh, 6/5/1990*

DAP Chairman Dr. Chen Man Hin: "DAP fervently oppose the setting up of an Islamic state. We will never assist PAS in the setting up of an Islamic state ..." – *Nanyang Siang Pao, 9/11/1991*

DAP Secretary General Lim Kit Siang: "The Federal Constitution will have to be amended to institute an Islamic state. This will require the support of 2/3 majority in Parliament ..." – *China* Press, 28/01/1992

Federal Minister of Housing & Local Government Dr. Ting Chiew Peh: "BN government has reiterated that ours is a secular country ..." – *Sin Chew Jit Poh, 22/05/1992*

MCA Youth President Chan Kong Choy: "If we allow these Islamic fanatics to rule the country, the peaceful and harmonious country that is built by our predecessors will be destroyed ..." – *Kwang Wah Daily, 17/06/1992*

Federal Deputy Minister of Education Dr. Fong Chan Onn: "The Islamic state propagated by PAS is to Islamise the country, negating the fact that our country is multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural ..." – *Nanyang Siang Pao, 28/09/1992*

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir: "The people must strive to maintain peace and prosperity in this country. We want to prove to those countries ruled by non-Muslims that a country that is ruled by Muslims can also be prosperous and progressive ..." – *Sin Chew Jit Poh, 25/02/1994*



issues and eliminate our illogical fears, it is an act of immaturity, no matter who we are voting for in elections.

In general elections, our choice is certainly much more than just choosing between an "Islamic state" and "BN"!

The general elections that are held every 5 years are not about deciding whether we would choose to institute an "Islamic state". In fact, it is utterly irrelevant and pathetic for Malaysians to harp on a non-issue.

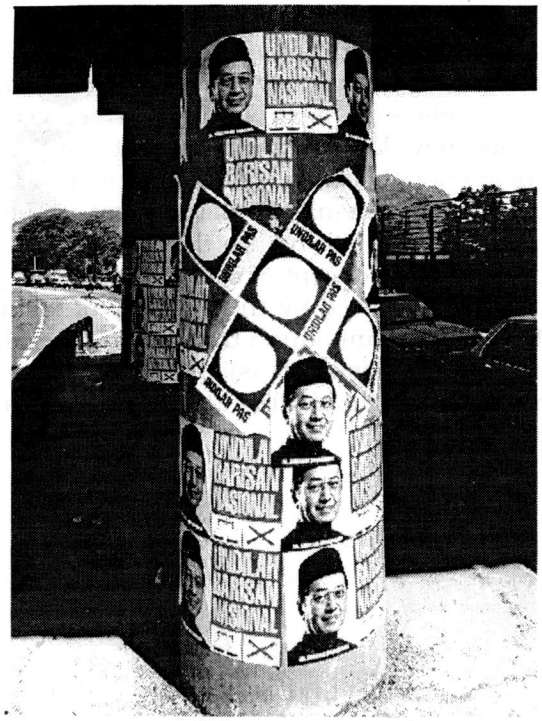
As the nation marches into the new century, the coming election offers an opportunity for us to examine and vote on more pressing political issues, each of which is crucial to the future being of our nationhood. Examples of these issues are:

a) Do we need a strong opposition alliance to check and supervise the functions of the ruling coalition government, to ensure renewal and reforms in the country's administration, political system and policy implementation?
b) How are we to address the weaknesses in our national policies and politics which were exposed by the economic turmoil and "Anwar Saga"? How and when can we effectuate the various political pleas such as accountability and transparency in administration and policy implementation, appeals for repeal of the oppressive legislation, elimination of nepotism, checking of abuse of power and corruption, etc?
c) How are we to ensure that efforts on nation-building will benefit the masses? How can we ensure fair distribution of economic wealth generated by the state? How do we check frailties in privatization? How can we avoid an authoritarian government which is turning a blind eye to the needs of the oppressed masses?
d) The new century calls for a total political renewal and reform to answer the needs for democracy, freedom and a healthy social structure. We owe it to our future generations to lay the foundations for the institution of an order of good governance which will ensure public accountability and confidence.

16. To reject an "Islamic state", we must support BN?

The BN is trying to project an oversimplification that "Opposition = Islamic state" and "To reject Islamic state = Support BN". With the misconception and confusion fueled by the BN controlled media, the fallible logic seems to have worked. The fact that our Rakyat have this blind fear towards an "Islamic state" and refused to seek its truth reflects our weakness in political education and immaturity in awareness towards democracy.

There is no logic to equate the opposition with an "Islamic state". With the exception of PAS, no other opposition party in Malaysia has propagated for an "Islamic state". It is also erroneous to equate PAS with "Islamic state" because it would have unfairly negated the invaluable political contributions of PAS to the country's democratic process. If we do not try to rationalize the



Mohd Fuad, A university student

Q: What do you think of an Islamic state?

A: A true Islamic state will have an excellent system of governance, just like the City of Medina under Prophet Muhammad. People of all races lived together harmoniously. This is because Islam propagates justice, peace and despises oppression.

Q: Non-Muslims are uneasy with an Islamic state. Why is that so?

A: They have the misconception that in an Islamic state, they will be forced to give up their culture and religious beliefs; that they will not be allowed to consume alcoholic drinks and gamble. In actual fact, only the Muslims will be prohibited to drink or gamble, the non-Muslims will not be subject to these prohibitions.

Q: Many Muslims also feel uneasy with the notion of an Islamic state. Why?

A: This is because they don't really understand Islam. As a Muslim, we must adopt the living of Islamic values in politics, economics, education and legal system. Islam is a complete system of living; we cannot accept a portion and reject the others. Allah created man and He knows what is good for us.

Q: Is it a necessity to enforce 'Hukum Hudud' in an Islamic state?

A: Yes, because it is part of Islam. Hukum Hudud must be enforced. However, the non-Muslims shall have the right to choose to observe the civil legal system.

Ahmad Faiz, Researcher and writer

Q: What do you think of an Islamic state?

A: It is an abstract deliberation. In fact, the idea of an Islamic state was mooted only after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is concerned with liberty, justice and humanity. An Islamic state should have been a means to this end. Unfortunately, it has become an end in itself. The ideals and humanity that were propagated by the Prophet have been largely ignored.

Q: In an Islamic state, the non-Muslims will continue to practise their culture and religious belief?

A: Of course. They can wear clothing as they do now, and they can drink. There is such liberty in public places and functions. However, they will continue to show respect to Islam in functions and places that are predominantly Muslim, such as the mosques.

Q: Must Muslims observe Hukum Hudud?

A: Indeed, but Hukum Hudud will only be enforced when the social conditions favour. If the society is unjust, causing one to steal due to hunger, we cannot penalise him.

Madam Koh, owner of a news stand in KL

Q: What do you think of an Islamic state propagated by PAS?

A: Impossible! This is a multi-racial country. Any political party that does not have the support of all races will never become the government.

Q: Aren't you wary of an Islamic state?

A: Any religion will not oppress the people, and Islam will not be enforced on the non-Muslims. My assistant is a Muslim, wearing a 'Tudung'. She is one of the best assistants that I have ever had. But her parents are more conservative, they don't encourage her to work for a non-Muslim.

the Sitting Buddha and Standing Buddha were also erected in the state.

Hence, under PAS, even though the habitual practices of many people have been affected, Kelatanese of all races live in peace, harmony and security. It is certainly a far cry from what many people have perceived.

15. Facing the issue of "Islamic state", what should we do?

As was observed in past elections, non-Muslims generally are anxiety-ridden when the issue of "Islamic state" is raised. Very few people have really wanted to discuss and understand the issue rationally. In this information age where people try to rationalize everything, it is ridiculous why our Malaysians are blinded by such fears and refuse to seek the truth about this issue.

If our predecessors were frightened by lightning and they mystified it instead of seeking its cause, we would have remained backward and there would not have scientific discoveries and modernization. Hence, we must try to understand Islam and dispel the myths surrounding an "Islamic state" for our progress.

Therefore, when we are faced with the issue of "Islamic state"; we must be bold enough to confront the issue, rationalize it, try to understand Islam and demand to know what an "Islamic state" is. If we can do that, we will realize that an "Islamic state" is a pure delusion, that the concept of an "Islamic state" propagated by PAS will not be approved by the majority of Malaysians. It's only through rational examination that we would realize that the purpose of raising this issue of "Islamic state" is purely to pull wool over our eyes to inculcate fear in us and cow us into subservience.

14. In Kelantan, what policies have been implemented by PAS?

In Kelantan, the PAS government emphasizes on the balance of materialistic and spiritual development. For most of us who are used to the development policies of BN, it is inevitable for us to misconstrue that PAS accentuates spiritual development at the expense of material wealth generation.

Undoubtedly, PAS is concerned with the moral values of Muslims and their observance of religious obligations. Governing Kelantan in the last eight years, PAS has introduced controls and restrictions on entertainment outlets and imposed a statutory requirement that supermarkets be closed between 12.00 noon to 2.00pm every Friday to enable Muslims to attend their prayers. Under PAS, the operation of nightclubs, bars, massage parlours and gambling outlets are under specific restraints. However, owing to the fact that the state borders Thailand, residents in the state go to the neighbour country for entertainment.

Apart from the aforesaid, it can be seen from the governance of PAS that Islamic principles recognize and respect the values of our society that is multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural.

In the development of Chinese education, even though the PAS government does not take initiatives to provide state assistance, it is proven that it does not impose unnecessary restraints and obstructions as the BN government does. It is under the PAS government that the Kelantan Chung Hua Secondary School has successfully obtained its approval to convert the status of land its stands on from that of agricultural use to that of educational purpose. During the BN's rule, the said application was persistently turned down and faced all sorts of unnecessary obstructions.

In religious worship, PAS has also shown greater tolerance and flexibility in handling the related matters. Temples can be seen in all parts of the state especially in the districts bordering Thailand. The biggest statue of the Sleeping Buddha in Malaysia is located in Kelantan. Recently, two other mammoth statues of

Q: You are not afraid of PAS?

A: The present government is unjust, it is time for a change. They have been there for too long, so they thought they are irreplaceable. Same in business. Same for the workers, once they are there for too long, they start to play tricks ...

PAS President Fadil Nor

Q: PAS still insists on the setting up of an Islamic state?

A: This is our political objective. However, the institution of an Islamic state cannot be achieved overnight. The people must understand Islam and accept its ideals, only then can we mold an Islamic state based on Islamic principles.

Q: In general, non-Muslims are wary of an Islamic state, how would PAS work to dispel such fears?

A: We hope we can have the chance to explain to them (non-Muslims), to ask them not to be worried of PAS or reforms, because what we are aiming for is beneficial for all and justice. We hope that they are not misled by the BN propaganda. In governing Kelantan, it is for everyone to see that PAS is actually practising politics of tolerance. Now, more and more non-Muslims and non-Malays are beginning to understand and know about Islam, especially those who are literate. If the people realise what Islam encompasses, they will know that it aims to ensure justice to everybody.

Q: Among all the nation states, are there countries that can be role models for an Islamic state?

A: Until today, except for the principles that were taught by the Holy Koran and the Prophet, there is no such suitable role-model yet. The ideals of an Islamic state emphasize the principles of Islam. Countries like Iran and Sudan have yet to achieve the status of an Islamic state even though they strive towards that direction. When we discuss the same question with their leaders, they themselves do not consider their country an Islamic state, but they are working towards achieving the same objective.

DAP Secretary-General Lim Kit Siang

Q: How do you regard an Islamic state and what is your stance?

A: On behalf of DAP, I have repeatedly emphasized the Party's firm opposition to any attempt in the instituting of an Islamic state in Malaysia because it goes against the very fundamental root of our national ideology. In Malaysia, freedom of religious belief is accorded a constitutional guarantee and all Malaysians should be able to practise such a constitutional right. But, opposition to an Islamic state does not necessarily mean anti-Islam. In our country, there are many Muslims who are against the idea of an Islamic state too.

Q: Do you think that PAS can realise its objectives of an Islamic state in Malaysia?

A: In our country which is multi-racial and multi-religious, any attempt to institute an Islam state will fail because it will not garner the support of non-Muslims who make up of half the population in Malaysia. Moreover, not all Muslims are in favour of an Islamic state. Furthermore, it requires a 2/3 majority in the Parliament to effect a constitutional amendment.

Q: Do you think that it is possible for the opposition parties to forge an alliance to battle with the Barisan Nasional in the coming general election? Will the issue of an Islamic state be a major obstacle to the formation of such an opposition front?

A: To establish such an opposition front, there are inevitably the existence of numerous obstacles which we will need to overcome, including the issue of an Islamic state.

This issue has highlighted the conflict of political ideologies between DAP and PAS. However, in reiterating our stance against an Islamic state in our country which is multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual, it is also clear that DAP is not anti-Islam. In the same manner, we will also object to the institution of an Christian state, a Buddhist state or an Hindu state.

In the coming election, DAP and PAS will hope to work together on the basis of restoring justice, freedom, democracy and good governance in Malaysia. An opposition electoral front

For example, the Taliban in Afganistan has made use of the religion to effect numerous unreasonable restraints on women and has become a cause of global concern, especially amongst the women movement and concerned groups. In addition, many scholars have pointed out the confusion between cultural practices and Islamic values. It was pointed out by them that the 'tudung' which is commonly worn by Muslim women are actually a part of the customary costume of the Persians and Paijan of Eastern Rome, that this is not part of Islamic practice. Further, many feudal kingdoms have made used of the religion to justify their authoritarian command. These are part of the causes of others' misconception towards Islam.

The resurgence of Islam like the rise of China in recent years, has being regarded as a challenge to established western civilisation. The western superpowers, especially the United States of America, are bent on supporting the autocracy of their political stooges to obstruct the resurgence movement. With the media which were and are under their control, the movement which was portrayed as 'fundamentalists' was painted as conservative and antagonistic.

Muslims and Christians have fought numerous wars in history. Since the defeat of the Roman empire by the Muslims in the 7th Century to the rise of the Ottoman kingdom in the 16th Century, the colonization of nation states by the European super powers in the 18th Century to the dominance of the US at present, there were and are persistent conflicts which inter alia have exposed weaknesses of the various forces. The western superpowers have the upperhand in this respect due to their dominance of the global media which have never cease to project Islam in a negative light.

Therefore, it is unfair to accept in toto such distorted views on Islam as propagated by the media without appreciating history in its proper perspective.

colonial forces. In the Arabian and Northern African countries where Muslims constitute the majority, there were persistent battles against the warlords, colonial oppressors, battle for independence and self-governance. Ethnicity and religion were the main factors that mobilized the people behind these battles for sovereignty and liberation. Hence the general misconception that Muslims are confrontational.

13. Why are people skeptical about Islam?

a) Certain Muslims have construed Islamic principles and values narrowly, occasioning misunderstanding and confusion amongst the non-Muslims;
b) Certain quarters who are wary of Muslim fundamentalist and resurgence movements are keen to project the negative outlook of Muslims, concocting an image which is not theirs.

In actual fact, the negative perception that we have on Islam is largely due to the movement of the Islamic fundamentalists twenty years ago, which has since lost their appeal.

However, the resurgence of Islamic fundamental movement be appreciated through its historical and cultural settings. As is experienced in numerous third world countries, 'modernization' of the nations has brought the intrusion of western culture, which was considered a threat to the revered culture of Muslims. In an effort to preserve their cultural dignity, religious belief becomes an efficacious platform and Islamic values and characters have become a means to counter the intrusion of these values and cultures.

However, there are differences in the values attributed to Islam amongst the Muslims, and these have led to confusion and misconception of others towards the religion.

that involves both parties will work towards such common objectives.

If we are unable to work out such a ground for electoral cooperation, we will continue with our efforts to ensure that an alliance that may be formed in the immediate or near future will work on such issues and objectives to bring greater benefits to the country and the general populace.

(Excerpts from Sin Chew Jit Poh 12.04.1999, New Sunday Times interviews 11/04/1999)

PRM Chairman Dr. Syed Husin Ali

Q: How do you look at this issue of an Islamic state?

A: The Islamic state propagated by PAS is an abstract concept. Many Malaysians, whether they are Malays or non-Malays, Muslims or non-Muslims, cannot visualise or understand the concept. Hence, the issue has aroused fear and confusion. This will again be exploited by the ruling coalition for their electoral gains.

Q: Are there any country which may claim to be an Islamic state?

A: Some Islamic scholars have claimed that the Holy Koran professes an Islamic state. They asserted that in Islamic history, Prophet Muhammad had inculcated such ideals of an Islamic state in governing Madina, and people see it as a model of an Islamic state. In later development, the kingdoms of Ummayah and Abbasiah had also claimed to be Islamic states. However, they were more feudalistic in their way of governing the country and there clearly were in existence such measures and policies implemented which were un-Islamic. Presently, there are numerous countries which claim to practise as an Islamic state, but they are in actual fact more capitalistic or feudalistic in their political system. In Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran, even though they assert that theirs are Islamic states, it is clear that they differ greatly in politics, economic policy

and socio-cultural policy. They emphasize Islam and religious functions but this is superficial. They do not observe Islamic and teachings in the shaping of their country's system of politics, economic and socio-cultural content.

Q: Do you think that PAS can realise its objectives of instituting an Islamic state in Malaysia?

A: In reality, our Malaysian society is multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural. Besides, with our electoral constituency delineation, electoral ward allocation and other factors will effectively deny PAS's aim of capturing 2/3 of Parliamentary majority in order to amend the Constitution and institute an Islamic state. More importantly, the majority of Malaysians, including Malays and non-Malays, Muslims and non-Muslims, do not accept such an idea of an Islamic state.

It is my hope that a series of rational discussions on this issue will dispel the people's misunderstanding and unwarranted fear, which has repeatedly being exploited by the ruling parties to agitate greater confusion and threats amongst the people and to split the opposition parties, all for the BN's selfish gains.



irresponsible politicians. On top of it, "Hukum Hudud" has largely been depicted as synonymous to inhuman treatment. These have caused those who have not been to Kelantan (including Malays) to feel uneasy.

c) Most Chinese do not realise that the majority of Muslims have reservations towards the concept of an "Islamic state". They do not realise that the instituting of an "Islamic state" in Malaysia is politically impossible.

d) Most Chinese fail to appreciate the concept of democracy; they have the misconception that the ruling parties can abuse their political mandate to do what they wish. In actual fact, a healthy democratic state allows the minority to be heard. It has been seen from minority movements everywhere that for as long as the people are willing to fight for their rights, their interests will be ably preserved.

11. Islam is oppressive towards women?

Looking at the historical development of the Arabian countries, women were enslaved and submissive under the feudal rulers. They have insignificant dignity and social status. Their position has only improved gradually with the emergence of Islam which propagates justice and equality before Allah. However the feudalistic system of authority, culture and domination of the masculine sex has persisted. Hence, oppression of women is largely due to feudalistic culture and embedded an patrimonial system of social control, which is not a part of Islamic principles and teachings.

12. Islam advocates violence?

Throughout history, the Muslim countries have to endure decades of oppression and brutal invasions from neighbouring feudal lords. Hence, there were persistent warfare in defence of their sovereign states and to battle oppression. In the latter decades, such armed conflicts continued with the intervention of

9. UMNO does not care much about "Islamic state"?

Religious and racial issues are most popular amongst our politicians, to exploit for their own gains. PAS regards religion as their political mainstay while UMNO wagers on racial issues.

While UMNO does not advocate an Islamic state, it emphasizes on issues of ethnicity, Malay supremacy and the classification of Bumiputra and non-Bumiputra. These are the major impediments for the nurturing of good racial relations and true racial harmony. By exploiting racial sentiments, BN has effectively caused DAP to be regarded as a Chinese party which is shunned by the other races.

Even though the issue of an "Islamic state" does not feature prominently in UMNO's politics, UMNO has to a large extent been implementing Islamic policies in Malaysia. More and more public building structures are being built to reflect distinct Islamic features, the segregation of food for Muslims and non-Muslims, the promotion of Muslim rituals and ceremonies, the elevation of Syariah judicature, etc. in order to garner support of the Muslims.

10. Why are majority of non-Muslims wary of "Islamic state"?

The following are reasons why most Chinese feel threatened by the notion of an "Islamic state":

a) In Kelantan, the PAS government has implemented policies such as the ban on gambling, the restriction on selling of alcoholic drinks and imposing controls on entertainment outlets; this is one of the reasons for their anxiety. They are worried that if PAS comes to power, their style of living (though hardly Chinese culture) may be affected.
b) These policies have been negatively projected by some

1. Why talk about "Islamic state"?

When we were young and acted in defiance, our elders will threaten: "Here comes the police", that would cow us into subservience. Now when we are older and we protested because of discontent, some people will threaten: "Here comes the Islamic state!" This has the same effect of suppressing dissent.

The fear of the Chinese towards an Islamic state is fallaciously hysterical. This is why the DAP has repeatedly tried to distance itself from PAS. In addition, the issue of an Islamic state will certainly feature prominently in every election. It never fails to instill fear in the majority of the electorate. Hence it is pitiable that after so many years, the people have shown no maturity in their political awareness.

It is our suspicion that the people's fear of an Islamic state is an irrational emotional reflex rather than an intellectual comprehension. Therefore, we find a necessity to take up this issue and analyse it rationally. If there is truth in the threat of an Islamic state, there is even more reason for us to tackle the issue. If there is no truth in such a threat, why are we making such a big fuss about it? Why don't we just brush it aside and focus on more important matters?

2. What constitutes an "Islamic state"?

In this country, an Islamic state remains an abstract notion. Nobody can tell us what an Islamic state is like. In order to serve their own ends, different politicians tell us different versions of what an "Islamic state" is like. This has not been of any help to the people.

From our studies, Muslims in our country have two different views about an Islamic state:

a) The issue of an Islamic state was never raised in the Holy Koran, hence it is not part of Islamic values. The idea of an slamic state came about only after the demise of Prophet

Muhammad. Islam as a religion does not need the realisation of an Islamic state to spread its religious teachings, but was advanced by the close relationship of Allah and His subjects.

b) The City of Madina under the rule of Prophet Muhammad was a role-model of an Islamic state. With this view, an Islamic state is real and hence it is part of Islam. It is the mission of all Muslims to work towards instituting an Islamic state; to adopt the system of politics, economic, education and judiciary in accordance with Islamic values. Non-Muslims are free to choose whether to practise their own cultural values and religious beliefs. A consultative council will be responsible for looking into the affairs of non-Muslims.

The two views on an "Islamic state" are fundamentally different. There are more disparities in understanding of the concepts. This is why even though there are countries portraying theirs as an "Islamic state", they practise different systems of governance. To understand the differences better, readers may read the work of Abdulrahman Abdulkadir Kurdi, 1984. *The Islamic State: A Study Based on the Islamic Holy Constitution.* London, New York: Mansell Publishing Limited.

In Malaysia, the concept should rightly be posed to our Muslim friends. Here, we are more concerned with the fact that, the concept of an Islamic state being so vague, it has been exploited by certain politicians to instill fear into the people, to highlight the differences in political ideologies amongst opposing political parties and to impede their effort of forging a constructive front. It has served the interests of certain ruling elite and enhanced their stranglehold on political power. This is a major hindrance to the augmentation of our country's democratic system.

As it is today, the DAP, PRM, PAS, the newly inaugurated Parti KeAdilan and other opposition parties can forge a strong opposition front on the political grounds of promoting justice, democracy, freedom and good governance. But if the people fail to recognise such positive political efforts, the deceptive non-issue of an "Islamic state" will continue to be a liability to the opposition alliance.



7. Work with PAS = Conspiring to institute an "Islamic state"?

When other opposition parties and other social organisations work with PAS to from an opposition front, the aim is to provide an effective challenge to the strong electoral stranglehold of the Barisan Nasional; it does not mean that these political parties and social organisations support the Islamic state propagated by PAS. It is illogical to conclude that they are conspiring to institute an Islamic state.

Despite the political differences, it is normal for political parties to work together on common grounds. The Barisan Nasional comprises of more than 10 component parties, and PAS had once been one of them. Hence, if there exists common grounds for the cooperation of oppositions parties, for the benefits of the general populace, cooperation of oppositions parties should be encouraged.

The pursuit for justice, equality, democracy, freedom and the quest to combat corruption and abuse of power are such fundamental principles on which the opposition can find as common grounds for a meaningful cooperation.

8. "Islamic state" is a liability to the opposition front?

On first impression, an "Islamic state" is a liability for PAS. However, on closer observation, there is more.

In Malaysia, the comparatively weaker opposition parties must work together in order to confront the resource-rich Barisan Nasional. When the BN exploits the issue of an "Islamic state', any opposition alliance of which PAS is a component will be tainted with theocracism. Voters who are wary about the realisation of an "Islamic state" will choose to vote for the BN. It is illogical and fallacious but unfortunately, it happens in Malaysia. Hence, the issue of "Islamic state" does not only affects the electoral performance of PAS, it concerns the other opposition parties as well.

3. Who talk about "Islamic state"?

In the 3 months between 1 January to 31 March 1990, the issue of an "Islamic state" was raised by the ruling and opposition parties in the newspapers. Our survey on the frequency of it being raised by the parties in the Chinese daily Sin Chew Jit Poh has shown as follows:

Party	Frequency
UMNO	5
MCA	13
DAP	9
PAS	2
Semangat 46	1

It can be seen that the non-Muslims are more keen to talk about the "Islamic state" than their Muslim counterparts. Have we been spending unduly much time and concern over this issue, to the neglect of other more important issues?

4. "Islamic state" a political tool in the general elections?

It is a fact that in our multi-racial society, the people are detached in racial and religious understanding. Hence, ethnic and religious issues are frequently being exploited by certain political parties to create more confusion amongst the rakyat and to camouflage the real pressing issues which affect them.

As the concept of an "Islamic state" propagated by PAS is vague, certain component parties of the Barisan Nasional chose to

highlight "hukum Hudud", which is only a part of the Islamic legal system, to infuse fear amongst the non-Muslims, inducing them to seek 'political refuge' in the Barisan Nasional.

In the 1986 and 1990 general elections, the issue of an "Islamic state" was the single most effective weapon used by the BN to prevent the cooperation of PAS and other opposition parties in forging a united opposition front.

In advocating the concept of an "Islamic state", PAS projected itself as different from UMNO, hence successfully garnering a strong support from a section of the Muslim voters.



5. Majority of the Malays will support "Islamic state"?

The fact that the "Islamic state" is a mere abstract concept, the majority of the Malays do not support or has yet to express support for this concept. This is reflected in the few parliamentary constituencies captured by PAS in the general elections in 1986, 1990 and 1995.

Those Malays who do not support or have yet to be convinced about the "Islamic state" may be categorised as those who:

a) support UMNO, despise PAS and do not support an "Islamic state";
b) do not support UMNO, but also abhor PAS and do not support an "Islamic state";
c) adore capitalism and western culture;
d) believe in socialism, despise capitalism, and oppose theocracism;
e) support PAS to express their discontent, but do not support an "Islamic state";
f) support PAS, but do not support an "Islamic state";
g) PAS members who do not support an "Islamic state".

Considering the above categories, there will only be few Malays who are really advocating the instituting of an "Islamic state".

6. Can PAS form the government by themselves?

Our Malaysian Parliament has 192 seats; in the 1995 General Elections, UMNO captured 96 (7 seats from former Semangat 46), PAS 7. Assuming that PAS can defeat UMNO in all the constituencies and retain all its present seats, it will have 103 seats, it 'theoretically' can form the government single-handedly. However, in reality, this political feat is an impossibility.

Furthermore, for realisation of an "Islamic state", there is a need to amend the Federal Constitution and this requires the support of a 2/3 majority in Parliament. In our Malaysian context, this is utterly infeasible.