

Chapter V

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

1. Summary

Human being is a political animal. The idea and influence of 'politics' penetrate nearly every aspect of our lives. Therefore, it is an unavoidable fact of life that we must know politics – to understand it, to utilize it and to transform it for our own sake. Politics is like a knife; it depends on how we use it – to do evil (kill somebody) or to do good deeds (defending oneself and others). As Mao Tze-Tung had said, *"Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed"*. But for Dwight P. Eisenhower, *"Politics is a profession; a serious, complicated and, in a true sense, a noble one"*

However, like the old proverb, "the beauty is in the eye of the beholder". So, too, is Lim Kit Siang and his politics. What he is depends on how we judge him. In fact, many of us tend to judge him as we would like him to be. As Anais Nin had said, "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are". Perhaps we have admired Kit Siang for what we cannot become ourselves – vocal, critical and popular as "Mr. Opposition".

In terms of his personality, Kit Siang is definitely outspoken, daring, and firm. Perseverence characterizes his sometimes idealistic stand. But, of course, no politician in this world is a perfect person. Nevertheless, like William Fulbright. Kit

Siang seems to be a living model of the slogan, "*We must dare to think about unthinkable things*", especially in his quest for a "Malaysian Malaysia".

In politics, there are basic features that characterize a successful politician. First, a political fighter should be a nationalist¹. Without this characteristic, he should not be trusted even though he is critical, sharp and full of wisdom; or with other qualifications. Here, nationalism describes patriotic emotion for one's nation and political movements to preserve its culture and win its independence². It is also defined narrowly in association with independent movements : anti-imperial, anti-colonial, anti-federal or anti-everything³. In this context, therefore, the struggle against corruptions, injustice, inequality, authoritarian and racism, together with the basic ideologies like democratic socialism and "Malaysian Malaysia", Kit Siang qualified to be termed a 'nationalist'. Even he himself had said,⁴ "*...because of my love, loyalty and patriotism for Malaysia, I am prepared to lose my personal liberties twice when detained under the Internal Security Act and I am prepared to be detained for a third time.*"

In his book "Malaysia –Crisis of Identity", he suggested to the National Unity Board the 'Ten Basis for National Unity'⁵ some of which are listed below :-

1. Unity of a country must based on a 'multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural' type of policy – a full-scale study as how the policy work.

¹ Wan Mohd Mahyiddin, "Sifat-sifat Seorang Pejuang," Garis Perjuangan Parti Kuala Lumpur : Utusan Publications & Distributors, p. 21.

² G. M. Spencer, op-cit., p. 70.

³ Ibid, p. 71

2. Study how the compulsory subject in local universities could retard national unity.
3. The National Unity Board should consider, how the continued restriction on free cultural expressions, like the restrictions of the lion dance subject to police regulations, could retard national unity;
4. Consider how efforts by various Municipal Councils to introduce new advertising and signboard by-laws requiring certain language's characters on signboards to be one-quarter smaller than the other language's characters.
5. The National Unity Board should accept the Kepayang Declaration.
6. Consider how the indifferent attitude of the Government to the problem of illegal Indonesian immigrant is undermining national unity.

Second, a successful politician must be wholeheartedly and thoroughly committed to his party – its policies, objectives and traditions⁶. As we have said “DAP is Lim Kit Siang” and “Lim Kit Siang is DAP”, so the political life of Kit Siang and history of DAP have become one and unseparable, in union and never dualistic. Thus, Kit Siang has dedicated, and is dedicating, his life, freedom and efforts to forming a ‘Malaysian Malaysia’. In this sense, he is exemplary of this second criterion.

Third, a successful politician should also respect the party's discipline, and to ‘practice what he preaches inside or outside the party’⁷. Kit Siang's character is often

⁴ Lim Kit Siang, *'Battle for Democracy'*, op-cit., p. 41.

⁵ Lim Kit Siang, *Malaysia – Crisis of Identity*, Petaling Jaya : DAP, 1986, p. 31-32.

⁶ Wan Mohd Mahyiddin, op-cit.

⁷ Ibid.

questioned by colleagues and party members, especially on the issue of whether he is a dictator, ruling the party with a very firm hand! For persons like Kua Kia Soong, Kit Siang is viewed as an authoritative and recalcitrant Secretary General. But for other followers who love and support Kit Siang, he is too excellent, too advance and too unique to be replaced. Therefore, his decisions and viewpoints should be taken as an informal order, since nobody in the party had a better understanding than him.

But, as pointed out before, what we see mainly depends on what we look for, and we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are; therefore, it is quite difficult to judge Kit Siang really meets this third criterion. In the word of Tom Bradley (the former Mayor of Los Angeles, California, United States), "*Hostility breeds hostility*". Thus, the emotional and relationship problems between Kit Siang and his ex-comrades should have alerted him to learn from mistakes, correct his 'attitude problems', and try to find a 'middle way' in solving problems, if there is a conflict or disagreement of views among his party members. As Henry Ford had said, "Don't find a fault, find a remedy", this might be a good advice for Kit Siang.

Fourth, a successful politician should be learned and knowledgeable about subjects like politics, nation, government; or even other economic and social issues⁸. This could be gained by reading, discussion with others or through other self-efforts. In this regard, Kit Siang is a good example for any politician. He is not only learned, but he is also full of fighting spirit, quick to speak out, daring to challenge, analytical, idealistic and dedicated.

Fifth, a successful politician should have a constructive attitude, one that can accept ideas and opinions of others⁹. He should be open minded, objective, friendly, and willing to accept criticisms. Here, Kit Siang should know his own weaknesses and remind himself often about what Sigmund Freud had said, "*Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise*".

Sixth, a successful politician must be a "practical" man¹⁰. He must have his planning and projects for the people and his people, and be aware of what's happening around him. 'Realism' or 'real politics' is originally a German term. It describes a practical, not to say a moral, attitude to politics¹¹. In general, Kit Siang does practice real politics since he is quite familiar with the principle of the 'survival of the fittest'. He mastered nearly every aspects of life : politics, economics, social science, information technology, religions, philosophy and others. His books and critics usually cover a wide range of topics including democracy, human rights, equality, speech freedom, racial issues, elections, economic crisis, haze problems, water-supply, national unity, corruptions, educations, labor, plans and budgets. By publishing at least one or two statements everyday, Kit Siang is the master of the art of politics – by using his pen and mouth to influence the people's mind!

The seventh condition of a successful politician is to be 'sincere' and 'trustworthy'. Kit Siang's comrades and friends, who are touched by his quality of

⁸ Ibid, p.22.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ G M Spencer, op-cit., p. 84

perseverance and reliability, would all agreed on this point. According to his comrades, Tan Kok Wai (MP of Cheras) and Tan Seng Giaw (MP of Puchong), the most attractive quality that Kit Siang has is 'sincerity' towards his political career and the people of this country, and the trustworthiness of his firm and daring character¹².

A brave fighter of politics should have the quality of 'courage' or 'bravery' in order to continue to strive, to fight and to achieve the objectives of his party and his ideologies. 'Bravery' here doesn't mean physical strength or power but it is a 'moral courage' to do something that one thinks is right, and to bring benefits to others. For Kit Siang, he is definitely qualified as an outspoken MP for any issues that he considered important for the welfare and the human rights of the people in Malaysia. As Adlai Stevenson said, "A politician is a statesman who approaches every question with an open mouth" – the most successful politician should be the one who says what everybody is thinking, most often and in the loudest voice! In fact, The Sunday Star of April 6, 1997 has this to say about the outspoken and daring character of Kit Siang¹³, *"Lim has in recent times been the country's most vocal person, bar the Prime Minister maybe, on IT and Internet development"*.

Besides that, he who is a good politician should also has the quality of steadfastness and perseverance. Kit Siang is a good example of this; as he had said in the 'Rocket' magazine in 1994¹⁴, *"My answer is short and brief. I have no regrets in whatsoever in devoting 28 years of my life in DAP political ideals of a Malaysian*

¹² Interview with both MPs.

¹³ Star, April 6, 1997.

Malaysia... there have been great trials and tribulations, ups and downs, joys and sorrow, elation and disappointment and sometimes despair. However, even though I have been incarcerated twice under the Internal Security Act, I have never felt regret for dedicating the best part of my life to the political struggle to realize the DAP ideals of freedom, justice, equality and well-being for all Malaysians. Even in the darkest and loneliest during my two ISA detentions, when at times I felt despair, I never regretted embarking on the political 'long march' in Malaysia... "

Last but not least, a good politician should also have the personality of being flexible, democratic and open mind¹⁵. Kit Siang is said to be emotional, easily angry, and sometimes like to give order without regards to other people's feeling¹⁶. "When we see the actions of a man", Maculay said in 1829, "we know with certainty that he thinks his interest to be"¹⁷. It is thus assumed that a person always acts on a valid, reasonable inference of how best to achieve a preconceived end¹⁸. As Graham Wallas had said, "Most of the political opinions of most men are result, not of reasoning tested by experience, but of unconscious or half-conscious inference fixed by habit; and to upgrade and to transform one's own habitual form of thinking and action is vital in order to the fixed objectives especially in achieving political goals"¹⁹. Here, Kit Siang may need to learn something about what is EQ (Emotional Intelligence).

¹⁴ The Rocket, PJ : DAP, Vol. 27/2, p.2.

¹⁵ Wan Mohd Mahyuddin, Op-cit., p. 24-25.

¹⁶ See "Inside the DAP 1990-1995" by Kua Kia Soong, p. 55-59.

¹⁷ Sir Lewis Namier, Personalities and Power, New York : Harrish Hamilton, 1965, p.1.

2. *Recommendations*

According to Salvery, as cited in Goleman's book,²⁰ EQ includes the following five domains :

1. The ability to identify your emotion
2. The ability to manage your feeling
3. Persistence and optimism despite setbacks
4. Empathy
5. Social skills

Understanding one's own feelings, empathy for the feelings of others and managing emotions in a way to enhance living are important qualities for both personal and political maturity. Kit Siang may good at domains 1 and 3 but he lacks the ability to manage his feelings, 'empathy' and the 'social skills'. The sense of self-awareness and of being smart about what others feel should probably become the cornerstone of Kit Siang's EQ foundation for future achievements.

Besides EQ, Kit Siang might want to learn something from the contemporary renowned politicians of the world. They are as follows :-

1. His Holiness The Dalai lama, Spiritual Leader of Tibet :

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Daniel Goleman's, EQ-Emotional Intelligence, Taiwan :China Times Publishing Company, 1995.

~ *"I feel honored, humbled and deeply move that you should give this important (Noble Prize for Peace) prize to a simple monk from Tibet. I am no one special, but I believe the prize is a recognition of the true value of altruism, love, compassion, and non-profound gratitude on behalf of the oppressed everywhere and for all those who struggle for freedom and work for world peace. I accept it as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of nonviolent action for change – Mahatma Gandhi – whose life taught and inspired me".*

~*"The problems we face today ... are human created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding, and development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood".*

<Acceptance Speech for "Noble Prize for Peace", December 10, 1989>

2. Martin Luther King,

~*"In any non-violent campaign there are 4 basic steps : collection of facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action...."*

~ *"But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word 'tension'. I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a time of constructive nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that individuals could rise from the bondage of*

²⁰ Ibid.

myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need for non-gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.

<Letter from Birmingham Jail,
April 16, 1963>

3. Mahatma Gandhi, the Great Saint of India,

"Different of opinion should never mean hostility. If they did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another. I do not know two persons in the world who has no difference of opinion... I have always attempted to regard those who differ from me with the same affect as I have for my nearest and dearest".

"I am, indeed, a practical dreamer. My dreams are not airy nothings. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible."

<The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi>

In many ways, Kit Siang is similar to these politicians : to strive for truth, peace, freedom, justice, democracy and other holy human values. But the difference is

that Kit Siang lacks spirituality, flexibility and open mind – which are basics of any revolutionary political nonviolent movements. He should extract their wisdom and experiences, and adopt their words into his political life, just as Clarence Darrow had said, *“The pursuit of truth shall set you free – even if you never call up with it”*.

Perhaps Kit Siang may take Gandhi as his model and example for “Gandhi was **inevitable**. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is **inescapable**. He lived, thought and acted, inspired **the vision of humanity** evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore Gandhi at our own risk”, quoting the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

As for Lim Kit Siang and his politics, there is still a long way to go. The DAP should also go through the process of reform and re-structuring in order to transform itself into a new DAP. Kit Siang and his comrades should also put more efforts in eliminating various problems like leaderships, favoritism and functionalism, outflow of elites and other party issues such as succession.

The DAP suffered its worst defeat in the April 1995 general elections, seeing the DAP virtually wiped out in the Penang State Assembly Election except for the sole survival of the lone DAP Assemblywoman for Batu Lintang, Chong Eng. Nationwide, the DAP and Kit Siang suffered their worst defeat in party history. But Kit Siang vowed,²¹ *“The battle to uphold democracy, justice and integrity, however, is not over... In fact, we are still in a very preliminary stage of the battle.”* “DAP leaders, member and supporters must realize that the world has changed radically since the

party's establishment 31 years ago, that DAP must not be seen to be a party to restore the part but one to chart out the future, that DAP of yesteryear cannot meet the aspirations of the new young generations and that the DAP must make itself relevant to needs and dreams of Malaysians in NEW DAP".

In the new era of transforming the party, Kit Siang has urged his old comrades (the veterans) to create space for the DAP's new blood²². He also declared that he has no intention to be the DAP Secretary General for the next two decades²³. He proposed to step down as the Secretary General after the next general elections, unless the Party wants him to relinquish the post earlier²⁴. He emphatically stated ²⁵ that, "This is the new challenge of the party leadership and membership – whether we can collectively create a NEW DAP, comprised of veterans and new blood – to meet the challenges of new era, to make the DAP the automatic hope for the new generations of Malaysia for a better tomorrow as the DAP had been such a beacon to the young generation in the first three decades of the DAP"

But the making of New DAP also depends on the following factors :-

1. Reforming the party – by upgrading the strength of competition, through the basis of political education to the members.

²¹ Lim Kit Siang, SG's Speeches and Statements, PJ;DAP, September, 1997 (SS46), p. 16.

²² Ibid, (ss48), p.1.

²³ Ibid, p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, (ss46), p. 14.

2. Getting more 'down to earth' – more practical and realistic policies, ideologies and topics to be highlighted on.
3. Spiritual transformation – a mental revolution by the old, middle and young generations of DAP in having awareness to move towards a New DAP.

For Lim Kit Siang and the DAP, the ideas of "Malaysian Malaysia" and "Democratic Socialism" are a very practical ideologies. As the great philosopher, Thoreau had said, *"If you have castles in the air, your work need not be lost. That is where it should be. Now put the foundries under them."* The battle for Kit Siang and the DAP can be seen in two phases. The first phase is to continue the role of constructive opposition²⁶ - exposing the unfairness and gaps in existing policies and pointing out the correct and fair way to achieve political equality, a better life for 'have-nots' and general social and cultural stability. The second phase is to make a determined bid for power at the general elections. However, it would not be unrealistic to admit that there will be a delay between now and the time when the DAP can expect to hold power in Malaysia.

DAP leaders have paid heavy price for their political battle in the defence of their democratic, multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious Malaysia – in the past and at present. These efforts of shaping a Malaysian Malaysia would definitely continue into the next millennium. The 'minor and limited liberalizations' achieved in the last few years, and the sacrifices made by the DAP leaders, especially Lim Kit Siang, have not been in vain.

Lim Kit Siang and his politics now have a new and even greater political challenge in the future – to translate the ‘minor and limited liberalizations’ into ‘full and major liberalizations in the country, and to make this country a “Malaysian Malaysia”. Only time and history will tell about the efficacy of Lim Kit Siang and his politics. Nevertheless, his personality and political contributions would have affected this country, making it a better place for future Malaysians – As the great American Politician, William Seward attests,

“I know, and all the world knows, that revolutions never backward.”

²⁶ Alex Josey, Asia Pacific Socialist, Singapore : Asia Pacific Press, 1973, p. 46.

3. *Conclusion*

An interview was conducted with Lim Kit Siang on Wednesday, March 25, 1998 after he had delivered a Parliamentary speech. Q represents questions, A represents Kit Siang's answers. The following is the whole interview ad verbatim. And the answers will provide us the concluding insight into Lim Kit Siang, the man and his politics for the next century.

Q : Who are the people, and what are the incidents or books that have affected you the most in your life?

A : (silence a while) What do actually you want ?

Q : What is your basic ideology of politics?

A : Leave this question to 'more academic' time.

Q : What is "NEW DAP"?

A : OK. A "New DAP" is not a personalized problem, neither is it an 'age' issue, but is the matter of 'the new age' of the party. I announced on a 'NEW DAP' because the DAP is already 32 year-old, it is facing a new millennium, new generation and new era now. Problems in the 90's and the next decade are very different from those in 70's and 80's. These include the new needs of the people, the vision of

new generation, and the tendency of the whole community. In 70's and 80's, people are concerned about basic issues such as the demand for basic needs and nation building, issues regarding language, culture, religions, non-bumiputera and bumiputera, and equity participation. Now, there are big changes. There is no more 'assimilation', although there are still some obstacles to the 'integration'. Even our Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, had openly admitted his own mistakes. We dare not say that we had achieved what we wanted to, but at least there are some achievements, some results.

The problem of 'political power' is actually not a problem between the Opposition and the governing party. Here is a basic fact, "whether the things that you want can be realized or not"; this is the a more important question. Of course, when you talk about money, influence and action, Opposition parties have no control of it. Power has two sides : positive and negative. You cannot have direct power to control the government, but if you act as a 'watch-dog' to safeguard the people's rights, to make sure there is equality and fairness in freedom, human rights, religion, culture and others. There was an urgent need in 60's and 70's for this political awareness. But now, we are solely concerned about 'economic crisis', that's all, nothing else! We don't have any political awareness; so instead we talk about "IT for all" and 'globalization'. We are indeed facing a new era now. That's why I have called it the NEW DAP in the hope that all the members would strive to cope with these new challenges that are now surfacing to change our lives.

The 'NEW DAP' ideal doesn't mean the ditching of party veterans and the promotion of young blood. It is a strategy to *strengthen* the party in facing new challenges for growth, and for all who want to see Malaysia continue to prosper in the next millenium.

Q : Do the veterans understand this? Do they have feelings of *inferiority* or misgivings?

A : I think they have some feelings ..., but I'll explain to you. If we are not progressing, we will move backwards. It is just like the 'New Labor Party' – not abandoning any principles or ditching any old member; it's just a new way, new aim, and new direction.

Q : How will the DAP reform itself to realize the 'NEW DAP'?

A : It has to be an on-going process. It's not an easy task. In terms of policies, 'reaching out to the people', discipline and organizational reforms are some aspects to be considered. Anyway, it's not easy.

Q : Most supporters of the DAP are Chinese and Indians. What do you think about the Malay? Don't they like the DAP?

A : This is the DAP's major problem. We always get very few members or votes from the Malay. There are several reasons for this. Basically, politics in Malaysia

is still very much the 'politics of race' and the influence of the media. Any Malay who becomes a DAP member will normally be treated awkwardly; they look at us as 'anti-Malay' and 'anti-Islam'.

Q : Did you try to attract them ?

A : It is not that we don't need the Malay support, we do. As a single political party, we are the first party in Malaysia which succeeded in the 'pan-Malaysia' membership; Barisan Nasional is only a coalitional party. So, we have our commitment and vision here. We didn't emphasize 'one race, one culture' kind of thing. There are still some mass media 'black-out' of our stand on various issues, including the 'politics of religion' in Malaysia. However, we're doing quite well , In fact, in the 90's, we campaign for 'justice', and 'justice' transcends 'race identity'; except for the issue of religion. For example, if Malays have problems such as the Felda issues, some of them did look for the DAP but not PAS. Why? Because PAS emphasizes on Islam and we don't. We don't have any discrimination. We are always prepared to speak out. *We (DAP) are not a monster as such it ought to be!* I think it will take some more time for us to attract the Malays. But for us, this is part of the whole process of nation-building.

Q : You said in your 'Time Bomb in Malaysia' that racial problems will occur if there is an 'economic crisis' – when we will blame one and other for the cause. What do you think now?

- A : We're going through a 'test' now. After the May 13 riots, at least all Malaysians have developed a political awareness that we should avoid racism in politics; but this doesn't guarantee that there would not be another May 13th. Some politicians try to create an illusion that the DAP is trying to 'destroy' the Malay's rights; this is very dangerous. It's very hard to say. Issues like religion, language and culture are still very sensitive now.
- Q : What are the chances of the DAP in the next election? How do you intend to 'transform' the DAP from the Opposition party to a governing one?
- A : This is indeed a big issue, the great challenge. Under the current political system and environment, it is hard to realize this goal right now. In fact, no single party can hope to control the government and work alone. There are dramatic changes in politics anyway. It depends on the will and wisdom of the people.
- Q : Dr Kua Kia Soon, in his book "Inside DAP", had highlighted and criticized the weaknesses of the DAP under your leadership; what are your comments?
- A : Every organization has its own problems and weaknesses. Even the Barisan Nasional has its own problems. But they have always managed to overcome them, at least, the problems have not become a prevailing issue for long. I dare not say that the DAP is perfect, without any weakness; but we need to sit down and discuss. Basically, I would not like to comment much on this aspect.

Q : What is the most precious experience in your life as a politician?

A : Nothing special; there are ups and downs. Since my school days, I have been very interested in politics. I have always thought that I needed to do something for my country. When I was in Form V, a few of my friends and I often discussed, especially when we 'lepak' after examinations. We would talk about forming a party and getting involved ourselves politically. That was 1959. I have continued my ideal and aspirations until now.

Q : You often criticized the Government directly; but for some people like Dale Carnegie, the method of 'don't find faults, find remedy' is advocated. What do you think?

A : Sometimes it applies, of course. But sometimes you need a harsher method. As the end, we want a more accountable, just, free, fair and honest society. It's from this spirit that we move and continue to move forward. Different situations require different methods, of course!

All said and done, the findings of the interview suggest that Lim Kit Siang, the "watch-dog" of Malaysia's sensitive, multiracial and multireligious political arena and economic well being is still very much the man and the politician he started out to be – a fire-power of enthusiasm tempered with idealistic aspirations that remain, to him, an attainable goal, as long as he is still active in politics. Alert and articulate, firm and resolute, critical and

unwavering (even uncompromising), realistic and hopeful, self educated and confident, and smiling and cynical, Kit Siang remains a “thorn in the side of the government” (who sees him as being fanatical and nonconstructive). However, he also continues to be one of the longest and most effective opposition leaders who “dares the devil” to come to him for a good fight. The next election could see him make a few bold moves to revitalize the sagging fortune of the DAP statewide and nationwide, via a New DAP.