

COMPLETION REPORT

This research seeks to compare between two outstanding dominant parties in Asia, namely UMNO in Malaysia and LDP in Japan. The study finds that both parties exhibit significant similarities between themselves, particularly in historical parallels and the capacity of retaining power. UMNO, as the chief component of the ruling *Barisan Nasional* coalition, often refers to the LDP as a development model worthy of emulation, so much so that a close relationship between them had blossomed ever since the introduction of Malaysia's Look East Policy by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003). Consciously or not, UMNO was influenced by LDP's method of preserving power through interlocking mechanisms between business and politics. This element leads to excesses in the political systems they respectively head, following the rampant instances of graft, factionalism, machine politics, corruption, cronyism and pork barrel politics. As a consequence, a system filled with vested interests emerges while efforts to reform and improve it constantly encounter resistance. In short, the conservative ideology is reflected not only via LDP's and UMNO's roles as the *ancien regime* but also through their ability to institutionalise the belief that regime change does not necessarily benefit the country's stability and development. Hence, when LDP lost the reins of government for the very first time in 1993, the very much visibly affected UMNO seriously heeded LDP's downfall as a lesson to be learnt. Research however has shown that the application of such lessons is translated in an unduly limited manner, thus serving as a poor reflection of the real improvements so painfully needed by UMNO then. The scenario was repeated when Mahathir's successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009) failed to follow the footsteps of his Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) who acted more firmly and boldly in effecting change in LDP amidst resistance from party conservatives. Abdullah's failure contributed in large measure to the astonishing results of Malaysia's 12th General Elections in 2008 when *Barisan Nasional* lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority and five states to the opposition coalition.

From a different angle, although Koizumi managed to revolutionise LDP, his reforms were reversed by the three leaders who succeeded him. In consequence, LDP lost the elections again to the DPJ in 2009, after which the UMNO-LDP comparison drew the interests of not only political analysts but also the top brass of UMNO leaders who began to fear the possibility of UMNO meeting the same fate as LDP in the forthcoming 13th General Elections. UMNO thereafter looked to the LDP model as a lesson in a more holistic sense. From the Prime Minister Najib Razak to grassroots UMNO members, LDP's defeat in 2009 became a ritual reminder of the urgency of effecting change in UMNO. Yet, although lessons pertaining to the fall of LDP were better and more greatly applied in 2009 than in 1993, the extent and nature of the problems besetting UMNO remain an enigma for many party insiders and outsiders alike.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1. 26 November 2012, Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-Jetro), Chiba, “The Misconception of Political Lessons: How UMNO Perceives the Fall of LDP in Japan”, presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail as part of requirement for a visiting fellowship (see Appendix 1)
2. 14 January 2013, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia, “Pertukaran Rejim: Pilihan Raya Jepun 2012 dan Fast Forward ke Pilihan Raya Umum Malaysia ke-13 [Regime Change: The 2012 Japanese General Election and Fast Forward to Malaysia’s 13th General Election], presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail at the Pre-13th Malaysian General Election Seminar (see Appendix 2)

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

1. *Pacific Affairs*, March 2013 (Vol.86, no.1, pp.73-94), “Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Malaysia’s Neo-conservative Intellectuals”, authored by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. *Pacific Affairs* is one of the leading international journals in the broad field of Asian studies. Some data in the article were adapted from this research (see page 74-78 and 94 on Appendix 3).
2. **Update** - “Beyond Look East Policy: UMNO and the fall of LDP in Japan”, authored by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid (article will be published by *Asian Politics and Policy*, a peer-reviewed journal in January 2014 issue – see Appendix 6).
3. **Update** - “Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Junichiro Koizumi as Neoconservative-Reformists: A Comparison” (in Malay) authored by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid (will be published as chapter in book in 2014 – see appendix 7).

Discussion Paper

1. “The Misconception of Political Lesson: How UMNO Perceives the Fall of LDP in Japan”, authored by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, IDE-Jetro Discussion Paper No. 377 December 2012 (see Appendix 4)

Newspaper Article

1. “Pilihan raya Jepun, pengajaran kepada politik Malaysia” [Japan’s Election: Lesson for Malaysian politics], authored by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, published by *Sinar Harian Online*, one of the leading daily newspapers in Malaysia, 24 December 2012 (see Appendix 5).