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To the future, with resolve

THE 13th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement concluded on a complex, multilayered note: its Final Declaration comes across as a single crashing chord of solidarity, amity and resolve, but the Summit was in fact a chorus of several distinct tones. There was the occasionally thunderous sound and fury of the proscenium, and also quiet huddles of national leaders great and small in hotel lounges and over coffee tables.

There was swift consensus on Iraq and Palestine, and also the unexpected (though perhaps predictable) altercation between the heads of government of India and Pakistan over Kashmir - quickly quelled by the tut-tutting of the hosts and other invited guests, with the message to keep family quarrels and bilateral issues out of the world's last multilateral forum not to have been cleft asunder by current world events.

With the North Atlantic alliance split and Europe divided between countries for and against the United States' belligerent assault on NAM members Iraq, Iran and North Korea, NAM has clearly recognised the crucial role it is now positioned to play in restructuring the global discourse.

NAM 2003 can be the seedcrystal of the "new order" mentioned by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his opening speech to delegates, but more immediately the resolutions of the KL Summit may now be expected to flow more purposefully and coherently into the other fora occupied by NAM members, such as the OIC and - preeminently at this seminal pass in history - the United Nations and its all-powerful Security Council (currently featuring six NAM members).

The Summit's Kuala Lumpur Declaration acknowledges the need to "revitalise" the Movement and refurbish its "relevance" in bringing development and security to the world's smallest and poorest nations, through enhanced South-South co-operation. It speaks of strengthening organisational efficiency. And it throws the Movement's increased 116-nation weight behind the "indispensable" UN.

The KL Declaration thus forms the foundation of the 13th Summit's documents on NAM itself, the organisation in the world, and its forthright Statements on Palestine and Iraq. In essence, NAM has been repositioned as a multi-polar point-guard against the unipolar world being created by the US and its allies, and in this the Movement has sent the Western war machine a message of singular intensity: a chorus of voices, in a world of nations, against the dominion of one.