

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT PERSIDANGAN ASIA PACIFIC ROUNDTABLE (APR) YANG KETIGABELAS
AT SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR
31 MAY 1999**

It is always a special pleasure to address this annual forum, perhaps the largest of its kind in the region. To all who have come from far and near, I join ASEAN-ISIS and ISIS Malaysia in wishing you a very warm welcome.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2. There are times when it is fitting that we reflect a little. 1999 would be such a time. We are at the end of a millennium. We will soon begin another. We are presented with a fresh opportunity to assess our successes and our failures, and to re-dedicate ourselves to the never-ending task of improving ourselves and the world we live in. It is an occasion for inspiring ourselves with ideals again, for setting new goals, and for contemplating doing things differently if this can bring better results.

3. Our business at this forum is security, and I will confine myself to this sphere. When we look back, it is difficult not to agree with clemenceau that it is easier to make war than make peace. Having made both war and peace himself in his lifetime, he certainly did know. After millennia of existence, one would have thought that one of the first things that civilised human beings would have learnt would have been the simple ability to live in peace with one another. That peace, a sustainable and extended peace, continues to elude us, is therefore indeed confounding. The answer, I suppose, lies coiled in the deepest and darkest recesses of our souls.

4. If we have not been very successful with peace, the same cannot be said for war. We seem to have a strange, perverse fascination with war and violence. Through the centuries we have continued to perfect the art and means of killing each other. This century, it may hearten some of us to know, is the bloodiest yet. Over 100 million perished in armed conflict, and political violence claimed another 170 million lives.

5. If past trends are any guide, there appears to be little cause for optimism in the future. There continues to be ample room for violent conflict within societies and among states in the years ahead. Perhaps more importantly the power to inflict destruction will be even greater. Humankind can yet outdo itself in the twenty-first century. Hopefully it will not also finally undo itself.

6. The factors tending to future conflict are essentially the same as those that led us to conflict in the past. They stem from two main sources: our inability to resolve some of our differences peacefully, and our occasional tendency to resort to violent means to achieve our ends. Conflict can continue to arise from factors such as differences over territory and resources; hostility among cultural groups based on ethnicity, language or belief; failed political systems; economic deterioration; discrimination, oppression and repression; and expansionary and hegemonic inclinations.

7. If war erupts our capacity to do damage to each other has never been greater. Technology, that wonderful key to progress, also serves the cause of war. Never before have we possessed instruments of death of such stupendous sophistication. And we continue to make them ever more perfect in an endless competition for power and superiority.

8. Too often though, especially in the dismal world of security and defence, we prefer to look at the glass as half empty. We consciously tilt towards worse case scenarios, and we build our perceptions, policies and programmes on this premise. I suppose when we come to issues of such dreaded finality as life or death it is better to err on the side of caution. Nevertheless, such practices sometimes also have the unfortunate and unintended result of making things indeed worse. Treating another as a potential enemy can indeed create one.

9. Here in the Pacific though, I think there is indeed room for some optimism. It would not be remiss, I think, to contemplate a glass half full. The region is more quiescent than most others, and more tranquil than ever in recent times. With rare exceptions, our greatest security challenges stem from economic and social factors, not military ones. Nowhere is this point more forcefully illustrated than in the current financial and economic crises afflicting several countries in the region. It takes crises such as these to restore perspective to security. Suddenly issues such as the allegedly threat-driven rising military expenditures, a darling subject of many in the security community and in the media, have receded into the background.

10. But whichever way we choose to look at it, there is no escaping the fact that the glass is still only half-filled. Much remains to be done to make the Pacific truly worthy of its name. I would like to dwell this morning on what I consider to be some of the key issues we should be addressing as we seek to construct a more resilient community of peace, prosperity and friendship in the Asia Pacific region.

11. As you know, the buzzword these days for the proper handling of the economic crisis in the region is "fundamentals". Unless we get our "fundamentals" right, we are not going to make it. Or so we are told. I personally think that this is largely correct, though there are "fundamentally" right economies whose currencies have also been attacked and "fundamentally" wrong economies that have been gone unscathed.

12. What is true for economics is also true for security. Unless we get our security fundamentals right, we are not going to have durable peace or durable prosperity. This is the easy part. The difficult part is agreeing upon what the fundamentals are, for even more than for economics security is essentially seen as a zero sum game. What we acquire for ourselves we would sometimes like to deny others. What we think is reasonable and legitimate for us is not reasonable and legitimate for others. Nevertheless, I think we should work towards building a general consensus on the core fundamentals without which a durable peace will continue to elude us. Indeed, consensus on some elements of these fundamentals already exists, though their observance and application sometimes leaves much to be desired.

13. There can be numerous such core fundamentals for achieving more durable peace and security at the national, regional and global levels. I would like to dwell on what in my estimation would be five such fundamentals involving five fundamental shifts:

- First, a shift from a security order based on amorality to one based on moral

purpose.

- Second, a shift from state security as the central object of the security order to people security as the central object.
- Third, a shift from the pursuit of narrow national interest to enlightened national interest.
- Fourth, a shift from conflictual security to cooperative security.
- And fifth, a shift from a focus on narrow military security to a focus on wider, comprehensive security.

14. First and foremost among the fundamentals for a more durable peace, I think, would be that the security order must be a moral order. Whether national, regional or global, security must be founded upon a fundamentally ethical base. A security order which is evil or immoral at its core will be undesirable and will not secure sustained peace.

15. A morally conceived security order will be distinguished by a few characteristics. At the national level its objective will be the shared security of all its people. It will not be the security of an oppressive few who comprise the ruling elite. It will not be the security of only the majority, or worse still, only a minority. There will be no tyranny, no coercion, no reign of terror subtle or clearly manifest. A just peace based on the rule of law will prevail over the land, protecting every woman, man and child without distinction as to race, religion or wealth. It will also protect the well-being of the community.

16. At the regional and global levels an ethical security order will provide for the shared security of all states and all peoples. There will be no domination of one state or group of states over others. States will not seek to cause harm or damage to each other. All states large or small, powerful or weak, shall be entitled to equal security, and equal say in common security. States shall pursue not only their legitimate national interests, but also the common interests of the regional or global community.

17. I am aware that the proposition that the security order must have a moral basis appears to run counter to the established realpolitik wisdom with its roots in the works of such political thinkers as Machiavelli and Kautilya before him. In the realpolitik scheme of things relations between states are supposed to be driven by the pursuit of the national interest in an anarchic environment where there is essentially no enforceable law above states. Power is the name of the game. The strong acquire and exercise it in an essentially hegemonic structure, and where this does not yield peace a balance of power approach is to be employed. The system is neither moral nor immoral. It is supposed to be amoral; morality is not its concern.

18. No doubt a system based on these real politic premises has occasionally worked and has occasionally brought peace. But it has also yielded the most terrible wars and brought utter misery to whole nations and millions of people in both victorious and defeated states. It is inherently unstable and tension-laden, and is extremely suspect and vulnerable especially at the fault-lines where interests differ and sometimes collide. Uneasy is the peace that ensues from such an order even in the best of times.

19. Its fundamental flaw is not that it is based on power. Power is a sad part of international life which we are obliged to come to terms with for various reasons. The system's fundamental flaw is that it is based on power without moral purpose. Unless states and the people they represent are governed by credible moral standards in their intercourse with one another the best systems put in place will not yield the desired peace.

20. In this regard it is a matter of some irony that we can more readily accept the moral premise in the domestic sphere, but dismiss it as impractical and unworkable in the external domain. Perhaps we have just not tried hard enough. Perhaps we are too content with working with humankind - and its devices - as they are rather than what they ought to be. Perhaps, despite its demonstrable and serious drawbacks, the strong amongst us found that by and large an order based on power serves our interests.

21. The question may be asked, how is moral purpose to be introduced into the international order? To begin with, the moral content is not altogether absent in international law, in international treaties, declarations and resolutions, and in international organisations both governmental and non-governmental. Too often though, it is mere rhetoric or is manipulated for self-serving ends. We should endeavour to strengthen this moral content appreciably. Governments can consistently apply peer influence upon each other. And civil society within countries and across states can exert sustained pressures upon their own as well as other governments to conform to recognised moral standards and be accountable to these standards. In extreme cases, for outrageous breach of basic moral standards, internationally approved sanctions should be considered if other means fail. The point is, we should shift moral purpose from the sidelines of international conduct to stage centre.

22. Another "fundamental" for durable peace, in my view, would be the absolute centrality of people welfare in any order for sustainable security. Security has been too fixated on the state for far too long. Before I am misunderstood let me hasten to add, I do not believe the state will go away. Its reach is no doubt not as long nor as certain as it was before, but it will almost certainly remain the principal actor in international affairs in the foreseeable future. The security of the state too will continue to be important, even vital considerations.

23. But much has happened since westphalia established the supremacy of the state 350 years ago. The tide of democracy has swept into many countries. Human rights consciousness has grown. The state has been in relative decline. Civil society is continuing to strengthen. There is also a growing awareness that to be fully productive development must be human-centred. All these trends have contributed to the realisation of the fundamental and central importance of the human person. The welfare of the people must lie at the heart of all our struggles, not least the struggle for security.

24. In practice this means many things. The legitimate interests of the people must be addressed and their legitimate aspirations fulfilled. They are best done in democracies, that is democracies which practice good governance. The people must have basic freedoms. Denial or severe constraints eventually lead to serious contradictions and grave confrontations within society.

25. The economic and social security of the people must be accorded the highest priority. Basic necessities, clothing, shelter, health, jobs, incomes beyond mere subsistence, and protection from common crime must be among the first responsibilities of the state. Poverty, want and inequity breed instability and violence. When factions within states and states war with one another the people must not be made cannon fodder. The carnage wreaked upon entire villages and cities by internecine conflict and war must cease. States can not launch wars and commit their forces into battle with the abandon they are sometimes used to; they must listen to the voice of the people, and heed it when it is wise.

26. Care for civilian lives and casualties must be an integral and important consideration in the invention, development and utilisation of weapons. We must work sincerely and tirelessly for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons. In this regard the banning of land mines is a welcome and humanitarian move. Over 100 million of them are strewn in a third of the world's countries. They continue to kill and maim humans each and every single day.

27. Third, there needs to be a shift in focus from narrow national interest to enlightened national interest. Along with the deification of the state in international politics beginning in Europe in the seventeenth century has come the legitimisation of the pursuit of narrow national interest. In a predatory environment, counseled the political sages, states must take care of their own interests and pursue and promote them if necessary against the interests of others through the exercise of state power. This idea was best captured by Lord Acton when he asserted that in the life of states there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests.

28. For whole centuries strong states in the pursuit of narrow national interest engaged in the naked expansion of state power among neighbours near and countries afar. In such a system peace could only prevail when a dominant power emerged and enforced its hegemonic pax. When a dominant state was absent, peace was only to be attained by maintaining a precarious and shifting balance of national powers. We had the era of the European balance of power. We had pax Britannica. Now, some say, we have a pax americana, less obtrusive and less coercive, but far, far more profound in its breadth and scope.

The pursuit of narrowly conceived national interest also militates against sustainable peace in other ways. States with a sharp and narrow awareness of their interest are more vulnerable to rabid nationalism and susceptible to aggressive and ugly ethnocentrism. The pursuit of narrow national interest also makes states less mindful of the concerns of others. It gives them little incentive to find common ground and to desire to work with one another in common enterprise for mutual good. It gives even less encouragement to states to help one another except against a common enemy. In an increasingly interdependent and globalising environment which calls for cooperation on a massive and comprehensive scale, this can be a serious incapacity indeed.

29. It would be the height of folly to propose that a political and security order based on the primacy of the state and the primacy of the national interest be abandoned. It would be far more pragmatic and prudent to suggest that states should view their interests in more enlightened terms and pursue them accordingly.

30. In practice, an enlightened conception of the national interest would be reflected among others in greater self-discipline and moderation in the pursuit of the nation's

interests abroad. There will also be greater sensitivity and regard towards the interests of other states and other peoples. Of particular benefit will be a stronger impetus to discover common interest and seek common cause with others. Finally, states that have an enlightened perception of their national interest will be less sensitive and less averse to constructive interest and discrete suggestions from other quarters. These qualities will greatly facilitate the emergence of a more durable peace in the region.

31. This leads me to my next fundamental for sustainable peace in the region, a shift from a conflictual approach towards security to a cooperative approach towards peace. Differences and conflicts of interests will not go away. Even as old ones are resolved new ones seem to take their place. They can and do occur even among the closest friends and neighbours.

32. But differences and conflicts of interests do not have to degenerate into violent confrontations and be resolved, if at all, by force. They can be resolved peacefully. As a culture of peace and cooperation slowly develops and envelops an area, such as in western Europe and southeast Asia, the propensity for violent resolution of conflicts will recede until it even becomes a most unthinkable and repulsive alternative.

33. The peaceful pursuit of security and the pacific settlement of disputes in the region will be greatly enhanced if states begin to regard security as mutual, common and indivisible. When states perceive that their security cannot be attained at the expense of each other but with each other, it will then follow that they will pursue peace through cooperative rather than conflictual approaches.

34. The integrating forces of technology, information, trade, investment, finance and tourism are in fact making neither economic nor security well-being possible without mutual cooperation. In an increasingly interdependent world extremely antagonistic pursuits of national interest and national security come with a heavy and forbidding price. States which are unable to extricate themselves from mutually debilitating hostilities are in fact caught in a time warp as the twenty-first century of the global market, global commerce and ever more resilient regional and global communities beckons.

35. When we sell our goods and services to each other, when we invest in each other's economies, and when our stock markets and currencies are so closely linked to one another, it would be mutual suicide to aggress upon one another in the old way. Europe learnt this lesson the hard way twice this century at appalling cost to national wealth and human life. Chastened, it reversed course and moved in the other direction: Europe united.

36. Our interdependence is therefore forcing us to consider the cooperative road to mutual peace and mutual prosperity not merely as an option, but as an imperative. If this is true, we must significantly and substantively strengthen further the collaborative enterprises of Asean and the Asean Regional Forum. If this is true too, cooperative security also requires that we re-examine conventional ideas regarding threats and enemies.

37. If security will become more and more mutual and indivisible and states will be forced to cooperate rather than to fight to enhance common security, should we still regard each other as enemies in the old way, or as challenges? Will the theory that

rising powers will always challenge the status quo, leading to war, still hold? Or will the challenge of these powers against a perceived unfavourable order be grudgingly but peacefully accommodated in an adjusted order of mutual acceptance? And in this emerging environment, how much emphasis must still be placed upon military power for prudent deterrence, for law and order, and for the unforeseeable war launched by a leader moved by phantom voices that whisper in his ear?

38. These will be interesting questions for us to ponder. Let me move on now to what I consider the fifth fundamental, the shift from a narrow preoccupation with military security to a wider concern for comprehensive security. Our fascination with war to which I alluded earlier is perhaps responsible for the predilection in some quarters to give virtually exclusive attention to questions of military security. These questions are no doubt important. In environments of armed conflict and potential armed conflict they can in fact be paramount considerations.

39. We must not forget the military dimension of the problem of the divided state of Korea, the unresolved issue of Taiwan, the disputes in the South China Sea, and the pockets of violent conflict in some countries of Southeast Asia. These issues continue to require the closest attention.

But perceiving security in the Asia Pacific region in military terms alone can be misrepresentative and, more importantly, dangerous. In essence, security encompasses the security of all the fundamental needs, core values and vital interests of the individual, the society and the state. Any threat or challenge to these is a threat or challenge to their security. They subsist in every field - political, economic, social, cultural, environmental as well as military.

40. For instance, I would think that at this very moment the greatest threat to the national security of a particular state in Northeast Asia is hunger and starvation. For the millions of the acutely poor in Asia too, their gravest security problem is scarcity of food, clothing, shelter and health. Again this year and the next a serious security concern in some Southeast Asian countries including mine could well be the haze from forest fires. For many thousands of people in the region it is the AIDS virus. For yet many others in numerous cities, villages and jungles it is the abuse and denial of basic civil and political liberties.

41. Unless we see security in such varied and comprehensive terms we will not understand the real nature and the true import of the security problems confronting much of the region. And until then we run the risk of having our assessments flawed, our prescriptions ill-conceived and our priorities misplaced.

When we begin to see our security in such comprehensive terms, the logic of cooperating for mutual security in an interdependent world will become even more persuasive and compelling.

Ladies and gentlemen,

42. Let me conclude with the most serious security problem confronting some of the countries in the region including mine. I refer to the present economic crisis. Although things appear to be improving now, this crisis is having profound consequences upon our security well-being. Stresses of varying severity have been inflicted upon our economic, social, political and security institutions by the depreciation of our currencies and of our wealth, the steep rise in the ranks of the

unemployed and the poor, and the appreciation in the price of essentials are exacting. In one country, its very geographical moorings are being shaken loose.

43. We have all taken measures to overcome the crisis. They appear to be working. Our economies have stopped nose-diving. Our challenge now is not to be lulled. We must remain fully firm in our resolve to continue with the sometimes painful remedial measures that need to be taken before we can safely say we are fully out of the woods.

44. I can speak only for my country. The recovery of our economy remains by far our number one priority for the immediate future. It underpins our security, our stability, and our well-being in every field. Malaysia is fully committed to completing the agenda it has set itself in its national economic recovery plan.

45. What we do within our respective borders alone however, can not fully ensure our continued well-being. Our economies are too interlocked by global financial flows, investment and trade to make this possible. The very notion of a "national" economy itself is becoming increasingly untenable in a globalised environment. We are too seamlessly wedded on many fronts with other economies near and far.

46. Let there be no illusions. Asia is not the first to be hit by the crisis. It will most definitely not be the last. Even the best of us are vulnerable and can succumb. We need to work together. We need to agree on what the problems are on the international front. We need to agree on the reforms that are necessary. And we need to move quickly and resolutely to introduce these reforms.

47. In this regard, there is now universal agreement that reform is necessary to the international financial architecture. Malaysia is no longer virtually the lone voice advocating this. Yet progress is excruciatingly slow. It appears that some of us lack sufficient political will. In the meantime, as the latest bank of international settlements study has shown, the global daily volume of trade in foreign exchange continues to grow ever larger. The capacity for destabilisation continues to mount.

48. I believe that unless we move with the greatest sense of urgency, we will prolong the risks to the economies of countless nations. The greatest calamity will occur when the largest economies are hit. The resulting tremors can rock virtually every other economy on earth.

49. We therefore need to mobilise opinion and weight in every regional and global forum to secure solid commitment to global reform. This forum is as important as any other. I trust we will not fail, for our collective welfare in the coming century depends on this.

Ladies and gentlemen,

50. I wish you a most rewarding conference.

Thank you.