

THE FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION IN WASHINGTON DC
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For sometime now I have been wanting to speak to a Washington audience having heard so much about the political and bureaucratic potency of the national capital. It is therefore with a certain sense of fulfilment that I welcome the opportunity presented to me by the Foreign Policy Association to share with you some thoughts on issues confronting the Third World and the possible role of the United States. I am conscious that this Association is dedicated to instilling greater understanding and awareness amongst the American people, not only of your own government's foreign policy, but also of the foreign policies of other states. It is my hope that by giving you a Malaysian perspective I might be able to contribute to this process. As is befitting any exchange of views between friendly nations, I propose to be free and frank, even candid at times. I trust you will accept my comments in the spirit of close friendship that has been the hallmark of relations between our two countries. Often times we disagree on methods but that should not blind us to the fact that essentially we seek the same objectives: a peaceful and stable international environment based on justice and equality for all nations. In addition, do not forget that Malaysia, no less than the United States, is committed to democracy and the free-enterprise system.

2. Malaysia is perhaps unique in that its foreign policy is driven by several diverse impulses, all of which need to be reconciled and given expression. For example, Malaysia being a predominantly Islamic country has always taken a great interest in development in other Islamic countries. Our people are quite naturally sympathetic with the struggle particularly of the Palestinian people for their just and inalienable rights. We are also a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and we fully share its abhorrence of big-power political and economic bullying and manipulations. As a small Third World developing country we are united with other Third World countries as victims of an unjust and inequitable economic system that seeks to deny us the legitimate rewards of our labour and natural resources. On the other hand, we also enjoy long-standing close and cordial relations with the West with which we share a commitment to democracy and the free enterprise system. While we ourselves benefit from a modest amount of economic assistance and cooperation, we have embarked on our own technical cooperation effort with those countries less fortunate than ourselves. Malaysia's foreign policy is therefore understandably multi-faceted. We straddle many diverse

worlds and we seek to encourage a workable unity between these differing worlds. The common denominator however is moderation based on the conviction that justice and equality for all nations in conformity with the UN Charter is a primary and fundamental necessity for genuine and enduring international stability.

3. Malaysia is a small developing country located in one of the most strategic areas of the world. Our population and our gross national product, however, is less than that of California. But that is not to say we can be taken for granted. While we do not expect and have no illusions about exerting a decisive influence on the global equation, we are nonetheless conscious of our responsibility to play our role in world affairs. Small though we may be, we intend to actively participate in the political and economic life of the comity of nations in an independent manner. We will not abandon this responsibility to friend or foe. Indeed we are convinced that in an era of heightened big-power rivalry and confrontation and with the threat of a nuclear holocaust hanging over us, the small Third World countries, the silent majority as it were, must no longer be silent.

4. The international political situation today has progressively worsened and is a cause of worry and concern to us all. The mechanisms that have evolved since the end of the War for dialogue and detente, imperfect as they were, now appear to have been abandoned. One after the other, in close succession, the major arms limitation talks have been disbanded amidst much recrimination and accusation. Never before have the prophets of doom been louder and who can blame them especially since the super-powers appear to be increasingly confrontative in dealing with each other. These are all important and pressing issues and quite rightly they have preoccupied the attention of the major capitals of the world. However, I would like to address you this afternoon on issues that are of equal concern to us in the Third World. To my mind the issues confronting the Third World are interrelated with all those other issues. As the world community focuses attention on the pressing issues that confront us and perhaps try to forge new mechanisms and systems to preserve and enhance security and stability, it is my hope that the Third World would not be neglected. Accordingly, I have chosen to speak on "The Problems and Expectations of the Third World" at this forum, not only to underscore my belief that the United States has a constructive role to play in this regard, but also share with you my concerns over the direction of some aspects of United States Foreign Policy.

5. Mr. Chairman, it seems to me to be truly unfortunate that a great country like the United States all too often stands on the opposite side

against small Third World countries. Over such issues as the New International Economic Order, the Law of the Sea Treaty, Antarctica, Multilateral Trade Negotiations and more recently UNESCO, the United States has been at odds with the Third World. I say this is unfortunate because to my mind the United States has always had a historic role and the capacity to truly champion the interests of the Third World. The institutions and ideals you have evolved since your own war of independence ought to be an inspiration to struggling Third World countries. The heirs to the American Revolution, one of the truly great revolutions in history, ought to be the precursor of change world-wide. Instead it seems to me that the United States often supports vested interests and opposes much needed international reforms that would bring relief to many small Third World countries. In trying to understand this strange phenomenon, I can only conclude that in your quest for national security, you have placed too much emphasis on keeping your adversaries at bay through purely military means, and too little emphasis on the legitimate hopes and aspirations of the Third World where most of your rivalry unfolds. I would urge therefore that greater attention be paid to the legitimate aspirations of the Third World and to help contribute to the realisation of those aspirations, I am convinced that in so doing, you will find that there is no incompatibility of interest between United States security and the legitimate aspirations of the Third World. On the contrary, I believe that United States security will be enhanced by the progressive socio-economic and political advancement of the Third World.

6. I believe that a satisfactory solution to the pressing and often crippling problems that confront the Third World, problems that are often compounded either by the big-powers or the industrialised states, is a major challenge not only for the Third World but for United States Foreign Policy as well. I have long sensed that increasingly Third World countries are unable to accept the monopolisation of political and economic power by a few nations at the expense of the rest. As leaders of our respective governments, we in the Third World have a duty and responsibility to secure for our peoples the best possible socio-economic standards in an environment of peace and stability. I believe that at the present time the majority of Third World countries do not favour the politics of radicalism in resolving these problems. All those who cherish peace and progress must therefore encourage and maintain the momentum towards peaceful negotiations based on fair give and take. The big-powers, the industrialised economies, should not look upon this process with trepidation. It is not meant to deprive them of their legitimate gains, but rather it would help protect those gains from precisely the sort of radicalism that prolonged deprivations and exploitation, whether political or economic, ultimately generates.

7. Mr. Chairman, all too often when leaders of the Third World seek the assistance of the industrialised countries there is the tendency on the part of the industrialised countries to adopt a patronising attitude as if we come to ask for charity. I must stress that charity is not our objective though sometimes the sheer magnitude of the problems besetting some Third World countries may make this inevitable. Rather, what we seek is a fair and equitable international economic system and principled political behaviour. It must be recognized that all too often, our economic and political problems are compounded by the policies pursued by developed nations. Perhaps I can illustrate this point with an example taken from Malaysian-United States relations. As you are aware, Malaysia is faced with threats to its national security from both within and without. My government has placed great emphasis on strengthening national resilience to meet these challenges. We expect our friends to appreciate this and, even if they cannot help, at least we expect that they will not jeopardised our efforts. And yet this is precisely what is happening. I refer in particular to the GSA's release of tin from your strategic reserves without proper consultations with us, the largest tin producer. I can tell you frankly that this actions, while infinitesimally small in terms of the United States economy and probably representing a few dollars to balance your defence budget, had an enormous and substantially negative impact on Malaysia's economy. Our export earnings and government revenue were adversely affected. A number of our tin mines were forced to close and hundreds of people in the tin industry were retrenched. It is actions such as these that undermine our efforts at stability and cohesiveness. I submit that apart from its effects on us, it is also not in your interest to undermine our economic and political stability. Your best defence must ultimately lie in cohesive and stable states in Asia and not on the last minute infusion of arms or naval forces.

8. Another Third World concern, in which I believe the United States could take the lead, is the preservation and defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Third World countries, and particularly small countries. The world community has already witnessed military might trample underfoot Afghanistan and Kampuchea. Resolutions and condemnations have failed to restore to the people of Afghanistan and Kampuchea their basic rights. If the small countries of the world that constitute the majority in our comity of nations cannot count on respect for their territorial integrity and sovereignty, then I fear the very basis of the international political system that has evolved is in dire jeopardy. Already the ramifications of Afghanistan and Kampuchea are being felt in the Third World. Countries are arming themselves, diverting badly needed economic resources from development to defence. New power

alignments are taking shape as countries seek to augment their defence through alignment. This is a dangerous trend which can only result in polarisation and heightened tension. What is therefore urgently needed is a comprehensive and workable system for regional peace which is recognised and respected by the international community, to preserve and protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty particularly of small states.

9. In mentioning that the United States take the lead in this endeavour, I am not suggesting that the United States police the Third World, or for that matter deputise other states to play the role of regional gendarme. This, I am sure, would be unacceptable both to the American people and to the people of the Third World. The United States could however take the lead in working out with the other big-powers an acceptable code of conduct in dealing with the Third World. Such a code of conduct must incorporate strict respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty and non-interference. It would lay the ground-rules, so to speak, for big-power dealings with the Third World. This should be an integral part of the agenda of detente between all the big-powers. To my mind, any framework of detente that is limited in its application only to Europe or to East-West relations cannot be enduring. Detente in Europe is inseparable from detente in the Third World. Surely this must be the lesson of earlier such unsuccessful attempts at detente.

10. Mr. Chairman, thus far I have touched on broad issues where I believe the United States can play a constructive role in support of the Third World. I would now like to focus on Southeast Asia which is after all my corner of the world, and an area wherein the United States is superbly equipped to contribute meaningfully to the peace process.

11. As you are aware, since the December 25 1978 invasion and occupation of Kampuchea and the attendant big-power involvement and interference in Indochina, Southeast Asia has once again become an area of tension and rivalry. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea represented a severe set-back to our hopes of forging a new era of peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the region. Undaunted by this setback, Malaysia and its partners in ASEAN, convinced that purely military solutions are either unpractical or unenduring, have sought to find ways to bring the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. Several encouraging developments both external and internal, have taken place. Externally, the United Nations sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea has given us an internationally backed political framework for resolving the Kampuchean issue. Internally, the Kampuchean people have concretised their resistance to invasion and occupation by the

formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk. But these developments though important are not nearly enough. While we already have a programme in the ICK Declaration to realise a political solution, what is sadly lacking is the political will especially amongst the big-powers to implement it. I believe that it is here that the United States can contribute meaningfully. The United States could, in the context of East-West discussions, persuade the Soviet Union to cooperate in helping to realise a political solution. I am convinced that once the global strategic underpinings of big-power involvement in Indochina are removed, a solution to the Kampuchean problem would be that much nearer. The United States could also hold out the prospects for a normal relationship with Vietnam and for reconstruction aid if Vietnam actively participates in a negotiated settlement. In view of the imperative necessity of a political solution, ASEAN will be intensifying its efforts for the resolution of the Kampuchean problem. The attitude and support of the United States to these regional endeavours will be important. The United States in as much as it is a Pacific power with an enormous economic and political stake in the region, must act decisively with wisdom and foresight and help us resolve this long-standing issues.

12. At the same time, we should look ahead to the post-Kampuchean era and give some thought to the kind of Southeast Asia that we should like to see emerging. We must learn from past mistakes and seek to evolve a political system in Southeast Asia that would preclude future Kampuchesas from occurring. This implies that the countries within the region must reach consensus on acceptable intra-regional behaviour. It also implies that the big-powers must reach consensus on acceptable behaviour towards the region. All these elements are contained in the ASEAN concept of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, or ZOPFAN. We in ASEAN believe that this concept holds out the best hope for peace and stability in the region, both in the interests of the countries of the region as well as for the big-powers. In this respect, the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union have not come out in support of ZOPFAN is cause for concern to us in ASEAN. I would urge that you re-examine the ZOPFAN concept within the context of the changing geopolitical climate in Southeast Asia and find the political will to help us realise our aspirations for peace and stability. We appreciate your concerns on this matter but we ask you to trust our judgement on this. It is after all our future that is first and foremost at stake.

13. Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to cover all the other issues of concern to us in the Third World. I fear I will not do justice to them in the time allotted me. However I feel compelled to raise one other issue, if only

because no other capital city is perhaps more appropriate to discuss it. That issue is of course Palestine, and in a wider sense the whole question of peace in the Middle East. This issue is I think too familiar to you all to warrant further elaboration. What I would like to say is simply that there can be no peace in the Middle East for the United States, for the Arabs or for the Israelis, unless and until the basic and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are restored to them. Unless this basic issue is resolved, I fear that no amount of peace-keeping forces can bring peace to the Middle East. In the meantime this unresolved problem will provide opportunities for greater outside involvement and interference. The United States can no longer afford to ignore this basic fact. I am fully aware that Americans are deeply committed to the security of Israel. I can appreciate your sympathy for the horrendous sufferings that were inflicted on the Jewish people by Nazi Germany and your determination to ensure that this never happens again. But surely you cannot ignore the uprooting of an entire people from their homeland and the denial of their fundamental rights. Surely you cannot turn a blind eye on Sabra and Shatilla, the countless refugee camps, the persecution and calculated slaughter of the Palestinian people. Is the systematic persecution and mass killing of the Palestinian people less objectionable than the persecution and mass killing of the Jews at the hands of Nazi Germany? Must the Palestinian people who for decades now have known nothing but bullets, fear and desperation continue to pay the price for Adolf Hitler's tyranny? As a friend of the United States, I say with all regret that your refusal to acknowledge the basic rights of the Palestinian people greatly undermines your credibility world-wide. There is already in existence an internationally acceptable programme of action to resolve the Palestinian problem in a manner that would safeguard the rights of all parties. I refer specifically to the Geneva Declaration and Programme of Action. Indeed it provides the long overdue basis for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East in a clear and specified manner, and within an applicable and realistic framework, one that seeks peace for the Palestinians within an independent and sovereign state of their own, coexisting with all other countries in the region within secure and internationally recognised boundaries. What is now needed is the political will and the courage to implement it.

14. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Third World is now moving towards an important cross-roads in deciding the future course it will take. Under the impact of decades of an unjust international economic system and political manipulations from outside, old patterns of alignment and values are changing. It is true that there are problems aplenty for the United States in the Third World, but there also exist many opportunities to build a peaceful and cooperative partnership that would be mutually beneficial. It is my hope that the United States would be more responsive to the aspirations of the Third World, even championing their cause. The problems that I have touched upon, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, self-determination and a fair and equitable economic system could be the basis a new "Bill of Rights" for the Third World with the United States as its most ardent advocate. That I respectfully submit would be the greatest and most rewarding challenge for the United States in the Third World.

Thank you.