

MALAYSIAN STRATEGIC RESEARCH CENTRE



MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE & FOREIGN POLICIES

WITH A FOREWORD BY
Mohd Najib Tun Razak
Minister of Defence, Malaysia

EDITED BY
Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda
Rohana Mahmood

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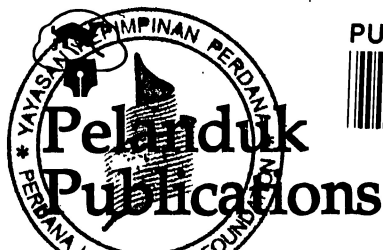
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Foreword

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Razak
Minister of Defence, Malaysia

THE END of the Cold War has indeed brought about significant changes globally. It has meant, *inter alia*, that states have to adapt to these changes, which are still taking place, as the strategic environment is still very much in transition. When things are in transit, it is naturally very difficult to adapt to the circumstances as the shape of the new world is still uncertain. Therefore, given the current state of flux of the global milieu, we have little choice but to try to influence these changes, in order for us, and the region, to continue to prosper and remain peaceful. This I believe is our biggest challenge for the future.

In many respects we are already doing this, whether as a nation, or even as a region. As a nation, we continue to pursue a strategy of growth, based on the principle of equitable growth. Such a strategy, we believe, is sustainable, which will allow us to continue on the same path, with progress, into the 21st century. The vision



of Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, of turning Malaysia into a comprehensively developed nation by the year 2020, encapsulate our strategy of development. I believe this vision has indeed provided us with the direction, which I feel the nation needed, especially after the twenty-year New Economic Policy.

The success of our nation's vision is predicated on a sound and peaceful security environment, be it internally or externally. To put it simply, if there is regional conflict, it would be extremely difficult to realize our vision, as things will be diverted and disrupted. Hence, it is axiomatic that both the domestic and regional security environment have to be stable and peaceful in order for us to sustain growth.

In this regard, both defence and foreign policies are important in ensuring that the strategic environment remains positive. Although the demise of the superpower ideological rivalry has brought about a seemingly much more chaotic world, with various conflicts flaring up, our region seems much more peaceful and that there is an air of optimism and confidence sweeping across the region. One need only to contrast the current situation in the region with a decade ago, in order to see the profound changes taking place. For example, in 1985, the region was seen as being divided between ASEAN, on the one hand, and the three socialist Indochinese states, on the other. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 had caused this divide, and with it, tensions in the region about possible conflicts. In 1985, things are quite different. Not only are there no more curtain separating the two sub-regions, but that co-operation rather than conflict seems to be the order of the day. Vietnam is already in the process of being a member of ASEAN, and soon to be followed by Laos. This, naturally, augurs well for the region.

The region, under the framework of ASEAN, is becoming much more cohesive. It has initiated various forums and mechanisms in order to help sustain peace and growth in the region. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is a platform for regional

countries to discuss security matters, is an effort by ASEAN to promote peace and a better understanding and appreciation of each other's positions. The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) is another ASEAN initiative established to reduce tariff amongst members in order to create a better economic environment for growth to take place.

Internally, Malaysia is certainly at its most peaceful and that there is every reason to suggest that this will continue in the foreseeable future. Since December 1989, with the signing of the Peace Accord with the Communist Party of Malaya, the internal war, which began in 1948, is finally over. This has, *inter alia*, meant that Malaysia could now afford to concentrate on external defences. This has manifested in the current modernization of the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). One of the key goals of this modernization programme is to transform the MAF from an essentially counter-insurgency warfare force to one that is far more conventionally-structured. Naturally, such a programme will require time, needing much effort, sacrifice and, of course, financial commitments. The current domestic and international climate has provided us with the opportunity to embark on this modernization programme, which the military is in dire need of. The military still operates obsolescent and antiquated weapon systems that are urgently in need of upgrading or replacement. It is believed that a strong armed forces will indeed contribute towards regional stability, rather than impede it.

Malaysia is today a far more confident country than it was a decade ago. Its impressive economic growth as well as its international standing have made it so. Today, Malaysia maintains cordial and friendly relations with all regional countries. Malaysia is closer to China than ever before. Our bilateral relations have improved considerably. Militarily, Malaysia has also maintained good relations with its neighbours. Such a policy augurs well for Malaysia, and contributes to regional stability. After all, it is firmly believed that stable states will contribute to a stable region, and that the prosperity of each state leads to another's. Gone are the days when

we talk and see these things merely in terms of zero-sum game. Today, we should move away from such myopic and archaic thinking and adopt a far more opened attitude towards regional affairs. I believe that by moving away from what I often like to refer to as a “Cold War mentality” to one that is far more benign and accommodative and co-operative would do the region and the world good. Although the larger world and in some parts of the globe, things are looking bleak, at least in this region, things are sanguine, and that we will be able to sustain and prolong our prosperity and stability, which we all cherish.

Preface

Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda

Rohana Mahmood

THIS BOOK is a compilation of proceedings from a conference jointly organized by the Malaysian Strategic Research Centre (MSRC) and the Malaysian International Affairs Forum (MIAF), held in Kuala Lumpur on September 29, 1993. The main objective of this conference was to address the Malaysian defence and foreign policies in the context of the country's vision of transforming itself into a developed nation by the year 2020.

We managed to gather speakers, both from the government and academia together, to address relevant issues pertaining to the subject matter. This book is the result of the majority of papers presented during the conference, which was well attended. The participants represented various sectors, including the international community in Kuala Lumpur, as well as from the mass media and private sector. To us, it was a successful conference, as it was one of the few conferences that have been organized to examine the chal-



lenges facing Malaysian defence and foreign policies leading to the next century.

This volume also contains some relevant speeches which we feel will be useful in the study of Malaysian defence and foreign policies.

We would like to express a caveat on the papers published in this volume. The papers do not reflect the opinion of both MSRC and MIAF. Nor do they reflect the opinions of the organization they are associated with.

MSRC would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors, as well as those involved in the publication of this book. Our special appreciation to Pelanduk Publications for agreeing to publish this book.

Contents

Foreword

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Razak

Preface

Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda

Rohana Mahmood

1. The Malaysian Armed Forces and Vision 2020 1
Abdul Ghani Yunus
2. The Malaysian Armed Forces and Regional Defence 11
Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda
3. The Major Powers and Malaysian Foreign Policy:
Facing the Challenge of Change Towards 2020 25
K.S. Nathan
4. Southeast Asia in Malaysian Foreign Policy:
Some Likely Trends Towards 2020 53
Chandran Jesburun

MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICIES

Appendix 1

Malaysia: The Way Forward 73

Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Appendix 2

Undemocratic Power of the United Nations 91

Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Appendix 3

The United Nations and Its Effectiveness 101

Anwar Ibrahim

Appendix 4

Malaysia and International Affairs 109

Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Appendix 5

The Bosnia-Herzegovina Situation 115

Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Appendix 6

Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the 1990s 123

Abu Hassan Haji Omar

Contributors 135

The Malaysian Armed Forces and Vision 2020

Abdul Ghani Yunus

THE OBJECTIVES of Vision 2020 of creating a united and developed Malaysia and the establishment of a liberated progressive and fully caring society is in keeping with today's new world trends towards seeking political and economic prosperity. The proclamation of Vision 2020 provides a historic opportunity for the Armed Forces to look into their future roles, especially at a time when the utility of the armed forces in some parts of the world have begun to be debated, consequent to the thawing of the Cold War.

The changing international environment has led many to hope that the opportunity now exists for a permanent reduction in armaments and military forces as in the West, with countries putting limits to the growth of their defence budget. Nonetheless, despite the contracting defence budgets and the overall size of the armed forces, the need for countries to maintain an effective defen-

sive and offensive capability has not altered. Nations, as in the case of Malaysia, require conventional forces to protect and project their security interests. The changing international environment has brought with it new uncertainties, instabilities and challenges following fears of the revival of long-standing ethnic, religious or territorial disputes in many parts of the world.

What is Vision 2020?

The basic quest of Vision 2020 as expounded by the Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his address entitled "Malaysia: The Way Forward" (see Appendix 1) at the inaugural meeting of the Malaysian Business Council on February 28, 1991 was to make Malaysia a developed country within the next thirty years, that is, by the year 2020. The objectives to be met are outlined in the nine strategic challenges, aimed at creating a united Malaysian nation which is territorially and ethnically integrated, a psychologically liberated and secure society that is self-confident, a mature democratic society, a moral and ethical society imbued with religious and spiritual values, a liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians respect each other's creeds and customs, a scientific and progressive society that is innovative and forward-looking, a caring society in which the welfare of people revolves around the family and not the individual or state, an economically just and prosperous society with a competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient economy.

Vision 2020 clearly reflects the Prime Minister's rising confidence of the country's 34-year track record of basic stability, economic development and social harmony and his desire to ensure the continued growth of this success. Vision 2020 may also be viewed as his national grand strategy for the long-term development of Malaysia into a fully developed country with specific focus on the economic and social betterment of the people.

While on the whole the list of challenges appears to be quite comprehensive, there has indeed been a significant omission on the security and defence aspects. One can only infer at this point as to why such an omission was made. The fact that the embodiment of

defence and security are predetermined essentials in the overall Vision seems to be the most logical explanation. Indeed, it has been historically proven that any nation that wishes to be united and strong and continue to develop must have peace and stability, both internally and externally, and this cannot be achieved without the appropriate security umbrella. In this respect, the Armed Forces, as an instrument of a developing nation-state, has the vital role of providing the general security which the government needs to fulfil its responsibilities to the people, and to provide stability to enable the country to concentrate on socio-economic development. Both security and development are twin necessities in ensuring the survival of the nation and are also part of an all-encompassing drive for modernization and modernity to secure a stable socio-political situation in order to generate a great incentive for investment, trade and other business activities which in turn will boost development. In other words, national development and security are inseparable and the Armed Forces cannot be divorced from the objectives of national development. The fact that the vital role of the armed forces is already inherent in the nation's search for prosperity, it has always been assumed that the defence of the nation and the security of the people to be the unwritten "tenth challenge" of Vision 2020.

Role of the Armed Forces *vis-à-vis* Vision 2020 and the National Defence Policy

While the role of the Malaysian Armed Forces continue to be guided by the National Defence Policy (NDP) guidelines, the challenges as enshrined in Vision 2020 provided an additional impetus for the Armed Forces to focus its contribution towards the nation's internal development. The fundamental pillars of the NDP, that is, the need for self-reliance, regional co-operation and external assistance, are indeed consistent with the objectives of Vision 2020 for the Armed Forces.

Self-Reliance. Internally, self-reliance in the context of Vision 2020 would mean our ability to sustain the foundation of national

The thawing of the Cold War has brought about significant changes globally. It has meant that states have to adapt to these changes, which are still taking place, as the strategic environment is still very much in transition. When things are in transit, it is naturally very difficult to adapt to the circumstances as the shape of the new world is still uncertain. Therefore, given the current state of flux of the global milieu, Malaysia's biggest challenge for the future is to try to influence these changes, in order for the nation, and the region, to continue to prosper and remain peaceful. To sustain growth, both domestic and regional security must be stable. And to ensure that the strategic environment remains stable, both defence and foreign policies are important.

This book examines the challenges facing Malaysian defence and foreign policies leading to the 21st century against the country's vision of transforming itself into a developed nation by the year 2020. It looks at the future roles of the Malaysian Armed Forces in the context of regional defence in the post-Cold War era as well as determine the implications for Malaysia's defence and foreign policies in the thrust towards Vision 2020. The importance of Southeast Asia and the role of major powers like the United States, China, Japan, Russia and India in influencing the formulation of Malaysian foreign policy are also analysed.

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