

# DEFENCE DIPLOMACY AS STATECRAFT: PROJECTING MALAYSIA'S MIDDLE POWER IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA

<sup>1</sup>Mohd Ikbal Mohd Huda, <sup>2</sup>Mohd Nazrif Bin Mohd Nor

<sup>1,2</sup>Centre For History, Politics and International Affairs, Faculty Of Social Sciences & Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

## Abstract

As a nation-state that is situated at the heart of Maritime Southeast Asia, Malaysia is aware of its long historical presence in the region and the manner in which the polities of Southeast Asia have survived and succeeded by hedging and balancing themselves vis-à-vis the more powerful polities outside the region (Mahbubani, 2018). Aiming to address Malaysia's position in the light of the growing contestation between the great powers of the world, this article argues that Defence diplomacy – understood here in terms of the peaceful deployment of military personnel, capabilities and resources – will play an increasingly important role as a means of both projecting Malaysia's Middle-Power status and as a tool of bilateral/multilateral bridge-building in the ASEAN region and beyond to protect its national interest in the uncertainties and high stakes of major power competition era. Divided into three main section plus conclusion, the first section of this article presents a conceptual discussion of defence diplomacy, meanwhile the next section explain the role of defence diplomacy as soft power in projecting attractive image in international stage and followed by third section that explains Malaysia defence diplomacy approaches bilaterally/multilaterally and analyses its capacity in projecting Malaysia's middle power. Last but not least, the article concludes the main argument.

**Keywords:** Defence Diplomacy, Malaysia, Middle Power, National Interest, Soft Power.

## CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION OF DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

Though the use of the phrase defence diplomacy was regarded as an oxymoron for a long time, in the current international affairs, this is no longer the case. Defense diplomacy has emerged as one of the most important tools of military statecraft amid the effort to look beyond the use of force (Tan and Singh, 2011).

Before discussing on defence diplomacy, we must comprehend the definition of defence diplomacy as several scholars have attempted to offer their own definitions as there is no universal definition of defence diplomacy. According to Andre Cottey and Anthony

Forster (2004), defense diplomacy by definition is the peacetime use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defense ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy. Another scholar, Martin Edmonds (2005) echoes this approach, defining modern defence diplomacy as the use of armed forces in operations other than war, building on their trained experience and discipline to achieve national and foreign objectives abroad.

But the definition by Gregory Winger (2014) is most appealing as he tries to relate the use of defence diplomacy as variant of soft power which is used to co-opt the strategic thinking of another state that makes defence diplomacy an effective geopolitical tool. While attempts to

define the concept vary, defence diplomacy is the cooperative use of a state's defence apparatus to advance the strategic aims of a government through collaborations with other countries. In this regard, as the article is discussing on middle power projection, the definition by Winger is congruent to current situation of global affair with the uncertainties of major power competition.

## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES

In the current practice of international relations, defence diplomacy, a specific variant of diplomacy which focuses primarily on the pursuit of foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defence policy represents one of the most importance forms of foreign-policy activities of most of the states (Pajtinka, 2016). The significant consequence for defence diplomacy is that the military and its related infrastructure becomes a more engaged institution in the practice of diplomacy and foreign policymaking alongside other institutions that traditionally dominated the foreign policymaking process.

Typically used as an umbrella term, activities as diverse as officer exchanges, ship visits, training missions, and joint military exercises have all been denoted as practices of defence diplomacy. Cottey and Forster (2004) provided a clear list of activities that fall under defence diplomacy. These activities include the following:

1. Bilateral and multilateral contacts between senior military and civilian  
defence officials
2. Appointment of defence attachés to foreign countries
3. Bilateral defence cooperation agreements
4. Training of foreign military and civilian defence personnel
5. Provision of expertise and advice on the democratic control of armed forces,

defence management and military technical areas

6. Contacts and exchanges between military personnel and units and ship visits

7. Placement of military or civilian personnel in partner countries'

defence ministries or armed forces

8. Deployment of training teams

9. Provision of military equipment and other material aid

10. Bilateral or multilateral military exercises for training purposes

While some of the activities outlined above have been part of the traditional agenda of all militaries, Robert Bitzinger (2013) added new functions in response to the changing strategic environment of the post-Cold War period- such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, promoting good governance, responding to natural and humanitarian disasters, protecting human rights and, at least in the Western context, supporting liberal democracy. Nevertheless, all these activities point towards strengthened cooperation between militaries as part of the practice of diplomacy.

## THE RISING OF DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

According to See Seng Tan and Bhubindur Singh (2011), three important developments helps to boost states' defence diplomacy activities especially in Southeast Asia. First, the understanding of the nature of security challenges among states has evolved. No longer are states preoccupied in addressing the traditional (military) challenges, but also non-traditional ones (food, climate, environment, economics and a range of other examples). On top of the widened composition of national and international security agendas, states also have to incorporate the transnational and trans-boundary effects wrought by the intensification of globalisation processes into their security calculations.

Following from the first point, states have increasingly accepted the need to engage in multilateral diplomacy and institution building in order to better defend and promote their national interests. This is evidenced by the flourishing of multilateral institutions at both the regional and international levels focusing on a range of issues in international affairs. Third, the role of the military has evolved in the post-Cold War period. Due to the impact of the new security challenges, militaries of today have had to diversify their primary mission from the traditional focus of war fighting to incorporating a range of new and diverse roles, such as peacekeeping, disaster relief and greater engagement, in defence diplomacy efforts.

**DEFENCE DIPLOMACY: SOFT POWER BY OTHER MEANS**

Hans Morgenthau in his work on Politics Among Nation in 1948 explains that the initial premise of international statecraft is that the world exists in a state of anarchy in which countries are responsible for protecting and promoting their own interests. In international relations, the ability to get others to do what you want is called power and statecraft is the process through which a country wields power in order to shape the conduct of others in a manner that favors its interests. Joseph Nye (2003) identifies three specific varieties of power: Hard power, economic power and soft power. Each of these three forms of power illustrates a unique mechanism which allows one country to shape the action of another.

Type of Power	Mechanism	Illustration
Hard Power	Coercion	Country B does what Country A wants because Country A would harm B if it does not comply
Economic Power	Incentive	Country B does what Country A wants because Country A will reward Country B for complying
Soft Power	Co-Option	Country B does what Country A wants because B is convinced that what A wants is best.

Table 1: The Types of Power

Based on the table 1, the concept of hard power has ceased to be an independent concept but has become identified with any use of the military. For their parts, economic power has

become tied to financial resources and soft power to the influence of culture or popular opinion. While the link between the armed forces and hard power is fairly well established, the use of a country’s defence apparatus as a source of economic or soft power remains largely unexamined.

In this regard, Winger (2014) argues that the question of the military’s use as a tool of soft power is a bit more difficult and requires us to revisit the actual process through which soft power is applied. With the other two forms of power, a clear causal pathway exists: “do what I want or face the consequences of hard power” and “do what I want and you’ll profit for economic power,” respectively. But with soft power the actual pathway is more obscure and harder to grasp.

To understand the relations between military and soft power, the work of Nye in In The Future of Power (2011) is useful. Nye addresses soft power by identifying two causal pathways through which soft power can be used to influence government policy. The first method, known as the indirect model, relies on one country (the practitioner) cultivating support for a preferred position within the general public of another country (the target).



Once the general public of the target country is convinced to support the preferred position of the practitioner, they will then mold the political atmosphere of the target country in a manner that benefits the interests of the practitioner. This can occur when a population asserts pressure on their government officials either through democratic processes (where they exist), forms of civic engagement like street protests, or the creation of conditions which limit the policy options available to leaders (Nye, Future of Power 94-97). The study of the indirect model of soft power focuses largely on the use of public diplomacy

where governments use education, development and social programs to communicate directly with foreign populations as a means of gaining their support.

Nye's second method of soft power application is the direct model with a government directly appealing to the governing elites of another country in an effort to get the leaders of that country to embrace a favoured position.



Traditional practices of diplomacy such as state visits and international conferences fall into this category of soft power as they are direct government-to-government measures designed to produce a preferred outcome. Such dynamics often take on a personal quality with friendship between leaders being used as a means of achieving an objective.

## MILITARY AS SOURCE OF SOFT POWER

Nye's two causal pathways of soft power in influencing government policy helps the analyses on military initiatives in both direct and indirect pathways approaches. According to Winger, indirect approach under military initiative is part of public diplomacy practices. Missions like disaster relief, development assistance, and humanitarian aid are not simple acts of charity but a way of developing favorable relations between the military and a foreign country. These efforts to use military forces and development projects to win public support have been particularly prominent within the counterinsurgency literature and the ubiquitous efforts to win "hearts and minds."

On the other hand, indirect approach under military initiative is what Winger sets out as defence diplomacy practices- the military-to-military activities which defence diplomacy was created to encompass are all characterized by the use of defence institutions to co-opt

foreign government institutions. Military diplomats, officer exchanges, training programs, joint exercises, and ship visits are not merely peaceful means of using military force, but efforts to directly communicate the ideas, worldviews, and policy preferences of one country to another. The ultimate objective of such endeavors is not just to foster cooperation as a universal good, but to build partnerships that are beneficial to the interests of the practitioners.

Having said that, by approaching the concept of defence diplomacy from the perspective of statecraft rather than limiting our perspective to the defence diplomacy activities currently employed by governments, we can identify it directly as an exercise in the direct application of soft power.

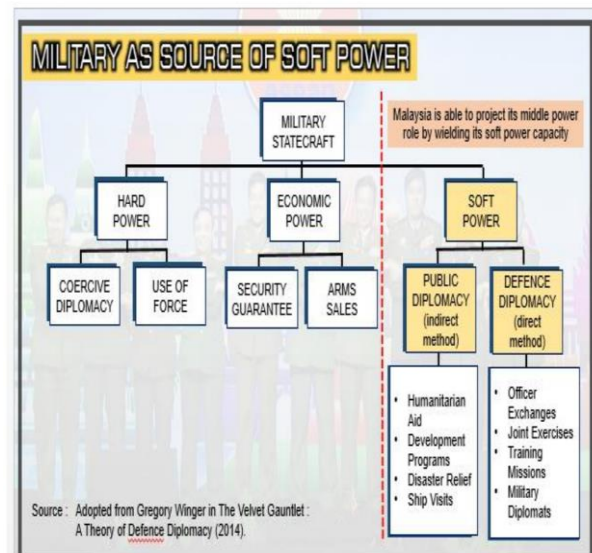


Diagram 1: Military Statecraft Source of Power

## DEFENCE DIPLOMACY AND GRAND STRATEGY

As the relations of military statecraft and soft power (derived from public diplomacy and defence diplomacy) are well developed by employing Nye's work, it is beneficial to further scrutinize the importance of using defence diplomacy as part of military statecraft in grand strategy. In this regard, cognizant of the limits of violence or hard power as a means statecraft, every major world power, including the United States, Australia, China and the

United Kingdom, has in turn adopted defence diplomacy as a core mission of their military doctrine and a primary component of their grand strategy.

In Strategy (1967), Liddell Hart analyses the relationship between strategy, grand strategy, and policy. According to Hart, strategy is best defined as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy”. Having said that, it should now be clear that strategy is subordinate to policy, and given that the government is responsible for policy that the commander in military is subject to control by the government.

In relation to strategy, then, grand strategy is more encompassing, Hart argues that strategy is only concerned with the problem of winning military victory, but grand strategy must take the longer view for its problem- the winning of the peace. This difference in horizons implies that strategy sometimes has to be restrained for the sake of grand strategy, particularly when the pursuit of military decision toward which the state may need to uses all its available force results in self-exhaustion and a more bitter, resolute, and united opponent.

In Malaysia, the struggle against transnational crime by The Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM) along Eastern Sabah Security Zone (ESSZONE) border in Eastern Sabah is the best case to illustrate the merit of grand strategy initiative against non-traditional threat- terrorism. The battle along ESSZONE is battle to win hearts and minds, and overreliance on hard power alone by ESSCOM is not the path to success as the threats in ESSZONE is linked to terrorism activities originated from the southern Philippines (it is widely accepted that through soft power that terrorist gain general support as well as new recruits).

In addressing the threats in eastern Sabah, Malaysia have leveraged greatly on our soft power through defence diplomacy activities which already in place in the Philippines- firstly, our commitment in International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao and secondly, humanitarian assistance by military forces through ASEAN Coordinating Centre

for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) during Typhoon Nargis in 2008. Both defence diplomacy and public diplomacy activities has projected our good neighbour images and as a means to promote our country's soft power to gain external support especially from people of southern Philippines. The support and deference from the area is important for Malaysia as this will refrain them from threatening our sovereignty and security especially in Sabah. Projecting our soft power through military statecraft is an important part of Malaysia's grand strategy- the winning of the peace- as discussed by Liddell Hart in 1967.

### **PROJECTING MALAYSIA'S MIDDLE POWER THROUGH DEFENCE DIPLOMACY**

Over the last few decades, Malaysia has put its national interest first and to that end Malaysian foreign policy has sought to present Malaysia as a Middle Power at both the regional and international arena. As a founding member of ASEAN, Malaysia's primary security agenda has been to ensure neutrality and peace in the ASEAN region and to increase co-operation and understanding among the ASEAN states in order to minimize the risk of external threats to Malaysia's sovereignty from within the ASEAN region itself. Beyond the ASEAN region, Malaysia has sought to make its voice heard on matters of global importance and to insist on the fundamental principle that all states are entitled to protect their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. This article will look at the historical background of Malaysia's security that laid down the establishment of defence diplomacy initiatives.

#### **Key Security Issues and Challenges of Newly Independent Malaysian**

After Malaysia's independence declaration in 1957, Malaysia as a newly born country has been actively engaged with wider world in ensuring its own security and sovereignty threats. There were two key security issues and challenges that has taken place in Malaysia during the period of right after independence.

The two were communist insurgency by Malaya Communist Party and “Ganyang Malaysia” Konfrontasi by Indonesia.

#### Communist Insurgency

The Malayan Communist insurgency had its origins in the Communist dominated guerrilla group, led by Chin Peng and recruited largely from the Chinese community, which operated in Malaya during World War II. In the late 1940s, Chin Peng reactivated and expanded this guerrilla force, which was known officially as the Malayan People's Liberation Army and operated under the political banner of the Malayan Liberation Front. Chin Peng and his followers were able to cause a great deal of trouble in Malaya from 1948 through the late 1950s, when they were finally forced by Commonwealth police and military forces to flee across the northern border and into Thailand.

#### Ganyang Malaysia Konfrontasi

Konfrontasi (or Confrontation,) was Indonesia's response to the formation of the Federation of Malaysia, arising from the British decolonisation process in Southeast Asia 1963 until 1966. From then, until Malaysia came into being in September 1963, Indonesia criticised the Malaysia plan as a British “neocolonialist project” and a threat to their country's security. Konfrontasi involved armed incursions, bomb attacks and other subversive acts aimed at destabilising the states that were to be included in the Federation, namely, Singapore, Malaya, Sarawak, Brunei and North Borneo (Chia, 2005).

In responding to those security threats, Malaysia had established defence cooperation under defence diplomacy strategy with numerous like-minded countries. Through that prudent strategy, Malaysia sagaciously managed to suppress and contain both threats efficiently. Malaysia received military assistance from Australia, New Zealand and former colonial master- The United Kingdom.

Through bilateral defence ties, the Australian Armed Forces helped to fight against the communist terrorists throughout the Malayan

Emergency and aided Malaysia during the Konfrontasi. The defence partnership between Malaysia and Australia has continued to develop under the auspices of the FPDA that started in 1971. Through FPDA, Defence cooperation with New Zealand is also began. The relationship between both countries was further strengthened through a bilateral arrangement in 1996. The UK played a very important role in shaping Malaysia's defence system. The UK was involved in defending Malaysia during World War II, Malayan Emergency and also Konfrontasi. The Republic of Fiji Armed Forces and Papua New Guinea had served in Malaya under the British during the First Emergency.

### **MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE DIPLOMACY INITIATIVES**

Ministry of Defence Malaysia (MINDEF) launched its first Defence White Paper (DWP) in 2020. This document is a government document about the country's strategic direction and defence planning and presenting country's security assessment, defence posture and military capability development. Throughout the document, MINDEF places greater emphasis on diplomacy in dealing our traditional and non-traditional security threats with other countries. MINDEF and the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) have actively conducted defence diplomacy and other international engagement activities with regional and global partners. The MAF has participated in a number of the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) around the world and has also assisted civil authorities in addressing security challenges whilst supporting nation building (Defence White Paper, p.13).

In his foreword, former Minister of Defence, YB Tuan Haji Mohamad bin Sabu emphasized defence diplomacy approaches by putting:

As a neutral and peace-loving nation that seeks to befriend with all nations, Malaysia is committed to enhance credible partnership through inclusive international diplomatic initiatives. Through defence diplomacy,

Malaysia and other countries that share the same aspirations can collaborate and combine our collective strengths and resources to achieve national security as well as regional global stability.

In this regard, as mentioned in DWP, to protect Malaysia's interests in the face of current emerging challenges with the rise of major power competition, MAF is determined to pursue a proactive, long-term national strategy through 3D spheres Defence, Developmental and Diplomatic. In this regard, as explained above, Malaysia has been leveraging on defence diplomacy as another source of power apart from its own traditional security (hard power).

There are various numbers of diplomatic programs and initiatives through bilateralism and multilateralism approaches. In this regard, bilateral defence cooperation complement effective multilateral mechanisms, serving Malaysia's national interests. ASEAN and ASEAN-led mechanisms provide an essential platform for Malaysia to work closely with our neighbours and other international partners to address shared security challenges while pursuing common goals.

## **BILATERAL DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT**

Malaysia's bilateral engagements cover a wide range of activities including institutionalised high-level committees on defence cooperation, sharing and exchanging information, defence and security discourse, border cooperation, exercises and joint operations, training and capacity building programmes, defence industry cooperation, procurement and transfer of military assets, as well as exchanges of visits.

### **Southeast Asia**

Malaysia's bilateral ties with Southeast Asian countries have progressed and strengthened through two phases. The first phase was during the early decades of its independence when the world was still divided along the Cold War ideological lines. During this era, Malaysia's bilateral security cooperation in the region was

concentrated on the immediate neighbours, the fellow founding member states of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The second phase started after the 1990s when Malaysia gradually developed bilateral defence engagements with Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam.

### **Brunei**

Malaysia's close defence relationship with Brunei, formalised in 1992, is built on the shared history, common roots and culture as well as geographical proximity. Guided by the Joint Defence Working Committee (JDWC), the defence relationship has continued to develop at the strategic, operational and tactical levels through defence and security discourses, joint operations, exercises, training and exchanges of military personnel. Members of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) have been embedded in the Malaysian Contingent to the UNIFIL since 2008. Brunei has also joined the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao since 2004, to monitor the implementation of the agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and to provide assistance in the socio-economic development of Mindanao.

### **Indonesia**

Malaysia's defence ties with Indonesia can be traced back to 1972 when the countries initiated the General Border Committee (GBC) to govern the implementation of activities along the common borders. The defence cooperation has broadened through frequent exchanges of visits and military personnel, combined exercises and operations, joint military training and participation in defence exhibitions. The mechanisms for sharing and exchanging information between the two countries have increased from tactical to strategic level, with countering terrorism and maintaining peace as the main focus of this joint effort. The Government aspires to further strengthen the existing relationship through a more comprehensive defence cooperation instrument

that covers various aspects, including the defence industry.

#### The Philippines

Defence relations with the Philippines was formalised by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation in 1994, which established the Combined Committee on Defence Cooperation (CCDC) that oversees the defence cooperation ranging from military training and exercises, courses, exchanges of visits and military personnel, and defence industry cooperation. The two countries have also enhanced cooperation in maritime security, border control and non-traditional security areas, especially through sharing and exchanges of intelligence to address the piracy and militant threats in the east coast of Sabah and the southern Philippines. The establishment of the Trilateral Intelligence Exchange (INTELEX) among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines in 2017 has also provided a platform for more active information sharing and exchange among the three countries.

#### Singapore

As neighbours who share the same historical roots, Malaysia and Singapore have maintained professional and cordial defence relations. Bilateral defence engagement revolves around combined training and exercises, exchanges of visits and military personnel, strategic discourse and participation in defence exhibitions. Defence relationship between both countries is mainly undertaken under the ambit of FPDA, ADMM and ADMM-Plus.

#### Thailand

Based on shared interests in promoting stable borders and common regional interests, Malaysia and Thailand have enjoyed a relationship that is based on confidence and trust between the two countries. The defence relations with Thailand can be traced back to the establishment of the GBC in 1965. The GBC is an annual platform where both sides confer on measures to maintain security along their common border. In addition to military training, exercises and operations, exchanges of

visits and military personnel, the bilateral defence partnership is also featured by the conduct of Coordinated Maritime Patrol (CMP) and Joint Border Patrol (JBP) operations. The patrol operations aim to combat transnational crimes, such as smuggling activities and human trafficking.

#### Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV)

Despite the relatively late starting point compared to other ASEAN countries, Malaysia's defence engagements with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam have progressed steadily since the 1990s. Malaysia will continue to offer training and courses to military personnel from these countries in the future. Malaysia-Cambodia defence cooperation began with the signing of a Letter of Intent on Defence Cooperation in 2015, which spells out, among others, the enhancement of defence cooperation through more active military training and exchanges of personnel. Malaysia has also signed an MoU with Lao PDR in March 2019 to further improve the existing bilateral defence ties. Malaysia and Myanmar have embarked on collaboration through military training and exchanges of visits. Malaysia is also exploring to enhance its defence cooperation with Timor-Leste. A strong and comprehensive relationship with Vietnam is important to Malaysia. The Government will continue to develop defence cooperation with Vietnam, based on the MoU on Defence Cooperation that was formalised in 2008. Both countries have demonstrated a commitment to forge a stronger partnership and elevate it to a strategic level by establishing the High-Level Committee (HLC) on Defence Cooperation. Among the major areas of cooperation identified are strategic affairs, military cooperation, maritime security, defence industry and non-traditional security.

#### The Asian Region

Malaysia is also committed to enhance bilateral defence relations with countries in other parts of the Asian region, including East Asia, South Asia and West Asia.



## China

Malaysia's relations with China have been shaped by long historical links, tracing back to the Malacca Sultanate and the Ming Dynasty in the 15th century. Malaysia was the first ASEAN member to establish diplomatic relations with China in 1974. Malaysia played an instrumental role in engaging and bringing China into the ASEAN-led dialogue process in the post-Cold War era. The MoU on defence cooperation was signed in 2005 and subsequently renewed in 2016, which translated into increased activities between both countries including military training and exercises.

Both countries also signed the Framework of Cooperation between the MINDEF and the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence of the People's Republic of China (SASTIND) on Joint Development and Construction of Littoral Mission Ships for the Royal Malaysian Navy in the same year. The upgrading of the bilateral defence relations ties is in line with the introduction of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) initiative in October 2013 between Malaysia and China. Malaysia and China have established a forum to share and exchange information on various security topics. Both countries will continue to promote constructive defence cooperation through productive confidence-building measures and elevation of the current defence cooperation to the strategic level.

## Japan

Malaysia's relation with Japan is strong and mutually beneficial. Malaysia welcomes Japan's active and constructive role in regional affairs which includes defence. The first bilateral discussion on defence cooperation was held in 1999. Malaysia-Japan defence engagement is realised through continuous exchanges of visits, training as well as sharing and exchanges of information. In September 2018, Malaysia and Japan signed the MoU on Defence Cooperation, which encompasses defence equipment and technologies, exchanges of personnel, joint maritime security

and disaster relief operations. Both sides also inked the Agreement between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of Japan Concerning the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology in the same year. Japan and Malaysia have forged close cooperation on a wide array of security aspects, ranging from HADR, counter-terrorism to PKOs. Based on this strong foundation, the Government will continue to enhance bilateral defence cooperation by exploring potential collaboration in capacity building in defence science

and technology, including education, research and development, as well as the transfer of defence equipment and technology.

## Republic of Korea

Malaysia's defence cooperation with the Republic of Korea takes the forms of procurements, training, exchanges of visits as well as sharing and exchanges of information. Malaysia foresees prospects with the Republic of Korea in defence capability building in the future. Therefore, the two sides have also agreed to bolster cooperation in the field of defence industry formally through defence cooperation instruments.

## Bangladesh

Malaysia enjoys friendly defence ties with Bangladesh. Bilateral defence ties have been strengthened following the operationalisation of Malaysia's Field Hospital that has provided humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar since 2017.

## India

Malaysia's close defence relations with India, formalised in 1993 is defined through the Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Meeting (MIDCOM) that focuses on defence activities at all levels including defence science, technology and industry. This cooperation is important as both countries share similar defence assets that boosts interoperability between both forces. In 2018, Malaysia and India signed an MoU between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of India on United Nations Peacekeeping Cooperation to

exchange information and experience in peacekeeping operations.

#### Pakistan

Malaysia's close defence ties with Pakistan were formally established in 1997 with the signing of MoU on Defence Cooperation. The MoU outlines a Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation (JCDC), which emphasises on bilateral military cooperation as well as cooperation in the field of defence science, technology and industry.

#### West Asia

In West Asia, Malaysia has maintained strong bilateral defence relations with several countries, including Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Government is exploring the possibility of expanding defence cooperation with other countries in the region. Malaysia's bilateral defence engagement with Saudi Arabia focuses on counter-terrorism and extremism, exchanges of personnel and capacity building in defence science, technology and industry. Both countries formalised their cooperation in 2016 through the MoU on Technical Defence Industry Cooperation and held the first Joint Committee Meeting on Defence Industry. The cooperation between Malaysia and the UAE started in 2013 through an MoU on Defence Cooperation, followed by the second MoU (revised) in 2014. The focus of cooperation includes military training that involves all three Services, Malaysian Peacekeeping Centre (MPC) and the MAF's Department of Health Services. Malaysia has been interacting with Iran since 1993 to look into potential areas of cooperation in defence science and technology. Malaysia and Qatar signed a Letter of Intent in 2017 to explore potential defence cooperation in the field of military-to-military activities as well as defence science, technology and industry.

Malaysia has elevated its defence relations with Turkey to the strategic level and is committed to augmenting defence relations, especially on defence science, technology and industry. Since Turkey is one of Malaysia's main partners in the development of defence capabilities, both

countries will continue to explore ways of widening defence cooperation between the industry players in all domains. To achieve this goal, Malaysia and Turkey will provide a conducive environment to encourage collaboration between both countries' defence industry players.

## MULTILATERAL DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT

Throughout DWP, MAF is committed to multilateralism at both regional and global levels that provide an indispensable platform to mitigate power inequality among sovereign states, institutionalise norms, as well as protect national interests and uphold Malaysia's position internationally.

#### ASEAN and ASEAN-led Mechanisms

A strong and united ASEAN is at the core of Malaysia's security and defence resilience. This solidarity is the foundation for ASEAN centrality and the key for Southeast Asia to play a central role in regional affairs. Malaysia has embraced ASEAN and all ASEAN-led mechanisms as the critical platforms to pursue security and other interests, including ensuring regional peace, security and stability. These ASEAN-led mechanisms are the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus. These mechanisms serve a number of functions: forging dialogue and confidence building measures, pursuing collective actions, enhancing capacity building, deepening group cohesion and managing Non-Traditional Security challenges.

An example in point is the sharing and exchange of high-level information with all Southeast Asian armed forces through the Intelligence Exchange (INTELEX) Seminar and Analyst-to-Analyst Exchange (ATAX). These relationships mark the efforts to strengthen the solidarity among regional countries, as well as fostering the development of an ASEAN community. Although ASEAN possesses limited capabilities to solve issues

faced by its members, nonetheless many important issues, such as the trans-boundary challenges have been resolved successfully through the ASEAN platform.

#### Sub-Regional Cooperation

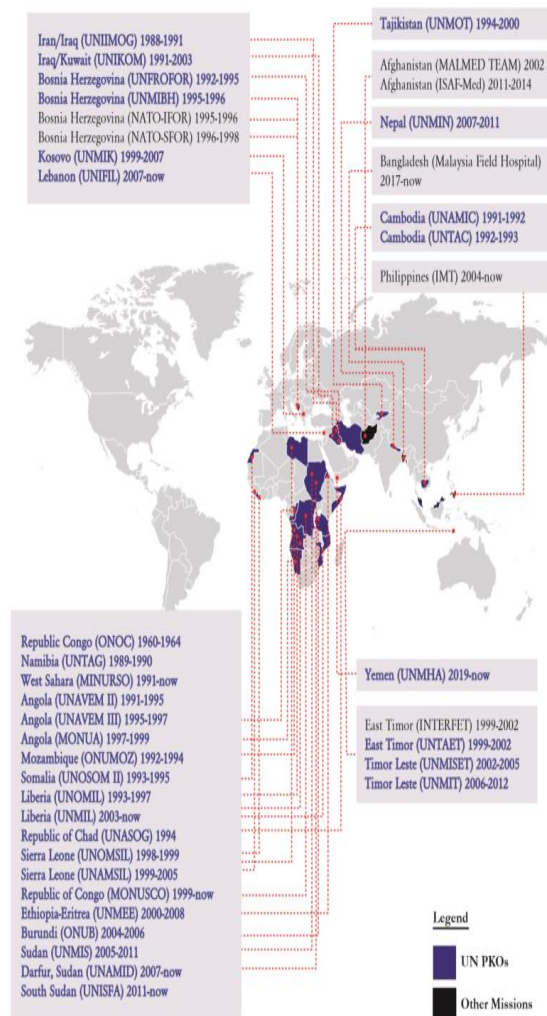
Malaysia will continue to play a pivotal role in several security cooperative arrangements that are undertaken at the sub-regional level, including the Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP) and the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement (TCA). The MSP initiative is a mechanism started by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in 2004 and joined by Thailand in 2006, to counter sea robbery and piracy. The MSP comprises of several joint operations, namely the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG), the Malacca Straits Sea Patrol (MSSP), as well as the Eyes in the Sky (EiS). The IEG serves to support the sea and air patrols through intelligence and information sharing between the participating countries. The MSSP entails coordinated maritime patrols and information sharing between ships and their respective maritime operation centres. The EiS involves the conduct of joint maritime air patrol with Combined Mission Patrol Team (CMPT) over the straits to reinforce maritime patrols through air surveillance. The collaboration among the littoral states has been a success, as evidenced by the decline of piracy and armed robbery incidents in the Malacca Straits since the initiative was implemented.

Malaysia remains committed to developing the capabilities and functions of the TCA, an initiative to address the common maritime security threats, specifically Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR), sea robbery and terrorism incidents in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas. Under the 2016 Framework on TCA, the three littoral countries, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines agreed to establish collaboration on Maritime Command Centres (MCC), Trilateral Maritime Patrol (TMP), Trilateral Air Patrol (TAP) and Intelligence Working Group (IWG). Through the TCA, the three countries have established a transit corridor for ships and allowed the conduct of hot pursuit beyond maritime borders. Malaysia has also placed two forward sea bases, Kapal Auxiliary Tun Azizan

and Pangkalan Laut Tun Sharifah Rodziah to strengthen the maritime defence in the area.

## PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (PKOS)

Malaysia reaffirms its long-standing commitment to further enhance its global involvements and contributions towards international peace. Malaysia's active contributions to international Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) is well recognised. Malaysia has participated in numerous PKOs since 1960 until today, including a battalion at UNIFIL in Lebanon, as well as Staff and Observers in a few countries in Africa. Malaysia also has its own peacekeeping training centre located at Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan that show the seriousness of our MAF to be part of international community in maintaining global peace and stability.



## PROJECTING MIDDLE POWER THROUGH DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

In the context of ASEAN, it is imperative that Malaysia continues to develop its cultural-political bridges with its closest neighbors, as the whole region now faces a range of combined challenges that may in time threaten the safety, security and neutrality of ASEAN as a whole. In such a situation, defence diplomacy can play a crucial role in developing mutual understanding and knowledge of each other and trust between the member states of ASEAN, thereby opening channels of dialogue – both formal and informal – that may pre-empt the possible escalation of crises and also bolster fellow-feeling and a sense of a collective ASEAN identity which can be a buffer against centrifugal, divisive tendencies in the region. As extensive discussion on Malaysian defence diplomacy approach in ASEAN, it will develop and maintain a rapport with their counterparts across the region.

On a wider international level, Malaysia has also lent its weight and support to peace-keeping initiatives that have had the universal sanction of the member states of the United Nations and other international bodies. Complementing Malaysia's foreign policy – which has been consistent from the creation of the Federation of Malaya/Malaysia in 1957/63 until today, Malaysia's defence diplomacy at the international level has been proactive and non-partisan, thus conveying Malaysia's intent to be taken seriously as a Middle Power that has no territorial ambitions beyond its borders, a reliable partner in international peace-keeping initiatives and a state that has a foreign policy that is consistent.

Having said that, the projection of Malaysia's middle power capacity through its defence diplomacy platform in the post-Cold War era has benefitted the country's national interest. First, ADMM+ that was established in 2009 has managed to bring China as one of major power into the negotiation table to discuss on Declaration of Code of Conduct on Southeast Asia (COC)- defence diplomacy protect on our territorial integrity in South China Sea. Secondly, Non-traditional threats in Eastern

Sabah has been gradually reduced with the role of Malaysian Armed Forces in IMT peace keeping mission in Mindanao Conflict- defence diplomacy help improving our security in Eastern Sabah and lastly as one of the busiest strait in the world, Malacca strait, is now well secured from piracy and sea bandits through Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP).

## CONCLUSION

Defence diplomacy activities by Malaysia through its active participation in multilateral defence dialogue, peace keeping mission around the globe, sending military aids under HADR programs and yearly military joint exercises with neighbouring countries armed forces are source of Malaysia's soft power and boost its capacity and capability as Middle Power that can influence international affairs.

Defence diplomacy as tool of statecraft is no longer a choice but a necessary component in world affairs. In the light of today's growing uncertainties and the potential eruption of Great Power rivalry that can manifest in the form of proxy wars– it is vital that Malaysia maintains its image as a principled country that seeks peace and stability within and without its borders, and a state that is not beholden to the interest and agenda of any particular Great Power. Malaysia has also demonstrated that it will not be drawn into the proxy conflicts of other states and this has been demonstrated by its conduct from the Cold War until the present, and whenever possible Malaysia has sought wider international consensus and support on matters related to conflict and humanitarian crises in other parts of the world.

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