

## **PLENARY ADDRESS**

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**THIRD PLENARY SESSION:  
ASIA'S EVOLVING SECURITY ORDER AND ITS CHALLENGES**

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Assalamualaikum and very good morning,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; esteemed participants of Shangri-La Dialogue 2019.

1. Foremost, I would like to thank IISS for the invitation and warm hospitality. This event has always been a conducive platform to synergize ideas and gain new insights on the current global security matters.

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. Last year, for the first time, I came here as a participant to observe and understand the overall perspective and key issues of global security. Now, I am deeply honoured once again to attend and

share my perspective on a topic of **'Asia's Evolving Security Order and Its Challenges'**.

### **Security Order and Its Challenges**

3. The foundations of Asia-Pacific regional order evolve tremendously throughout the years and a new geopolitical landscape has emerged, fuelled among others by high levels of economic growth. Almost a decade ago, China overtook Japan to become Asia's largest economy, second worldwide to the United States in terms of gross domestic product. We observe that this and other forces are shifting the distribution of economic, political and military power across the region. The Asia-Pacific region also witnesses the realignment and restructuring of middle powers' foreign and security policies. Therein exist regional anxiety if smaller nations would be forced to take side; one that has detrimental implications on economic development and nation-building.

4. One of the greatest challenges facing us today is the complex security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. It is the world's fastest-growing economies and the fastest-increasing military expenditures and naval capabilities. These facts reflect a bigger global security risk especially when there is strong evidence of fierce competition over

natural resources and overlapping claims on strategic hot spots. The competition in the South China Sea has undeniably fractured the status quo regionalism and created new coalitions.

Distinguished delegates,

## **STRATEGIC OUTLOOK ON SECURITY ORDER**

5. I would categorise the security order scenario into three strategic outlooks. The first outlook portrays the challenge to oversee the **uncertainty and complex regional order due to geopolitical competition**. This outlook occurs due to multipolar power structure manifested by the new US administration and China's robust economic and security policy objectives for this region. The uncertain relationship between US and China will remain as an explicit factor in shaping the stability of the Asia-Pacific region particularly that of Southeast Asian countries.

6. The second strategic outlook foresees **Southeast Asia and intra-Asian dynamics concerning overlapping border claims, large movement of refugees and the rise of internal conflicts**. The plight of Rohingya is sheer evidence of internal conflict which has snowballed into a major humanitarian crisis. Malaysia's position on the Rohingya issue is well-known and consistent. We believe that the

situation in Rakhine is no longer a domestic conflict. The ASEAN Charter spoke very strongly about the principle of non-interference, and Malaysia will continue to subscribe to this principle. However, beyond the humanitarian dimension, there are also the security and strategic dimensions – the widespread movement of the Rohingyas creates instability in the region, and could easily become a rallying-call for violent extremism in the region.

7. The third strategic outlook foresees the issues pertaining to **Non-Traditional Security (NTS) risks and emerging trends** impacting the Asian region. This outlook will be in the limelight in the coming future as it poses greater challenges. Maritime violence, terrorism and cyber security are main challenges which need to be addressed accordingly.

8. The maritime violence, particularly sea piracy and robbery, requires a more collaborative approach among nations. Maritime issues would be potential threats amongst nations if concerted efforts are not tabled effectively. Obviously, the Southeast Asia waters have faced multi-faceted challenges, ranging from traditional to non-traditional threats within its shores and beyond.

9. The rivalry of the big powers aggravate tensions in the South China Sea. As a result, there is a greater risk of naval ships and aircraft encounters which pose possible clash that could spark major conflicts dragging ASEAN member states into it. One such issue is the South China Sea, which concerns the security and sustenance of many neighbouring nations. The South China Sea should remain an area of peace, friendship and trade; rather than one of confrontation and conflict where ASEAN and the rest of the world can leverage on our strategic location.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. Economic development flourishes in peaceful countries with sound security policies and to achieve this, we need to raise the bar for tighter regional security cooperation, not by being reactive but working strategically together. Within the defence sector, a stronger collaboration would increase our interoperability and capability in facing our common threats.

11. For Malaysia, the nation's well-being is founded on strong and friendly relations with other countries and its commitment to the multilateral system. Malaysia will actively participate in the

deliberations and efforts toward finding solutions to various global issues. Malaysia will continue with the principles of engagement and cooperation rather than isolationism and unilateral action. In responding to the complexity in global affairs and expanding international relations, Malaysia's conduct will be guided by the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the affairs of other nations, peaceful settlement of disputes, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit in relations.

12. Lastly, I would take this opportunity to wish all Muslims, a blessed holy month of Ramadhan and 'Eid Mubarak' in advance for the coming Aidilfitri celebration. Before I end my speech, I wish to stress the virtue of togetherness in ensuring peace retrieved from Henry Ford's quote on working together - "Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success". With that thank you for being with me in this session.

Ministry of Defence Malaysia  
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