

**Security For Development:  
Tun Abdul Razak's National Security Strategy**

Amelia Yuliana Abd Wahab  
Wan Hashim Wan Teh  
Abdul Rahman Abdul Razak Shaik  
National Defence University of Malaysia, Malaysia

**Abstract**

Tun Abdul Razak's counterinsurgency (COIN) through security and development (KESBAN) strategy, in contending the illegal communist activities led by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), was a successful COIN strategy. In the case of Malaysia, even though the *First Malayan Emergency* (1948-1960) was declared over in 1960, the communist insurgents were still continuously active in expanding their covert agenda. Thus, their subversive movement gave a significant threat to national security during the Malaysian Second Premiership, of Tun Abdul Razak Bin Hussien Al-Haj. The objective of this paper is to highlight the national security strategy crafted during Tun Abdul Razak's premiership in the 1970s, that contributed to the success of countering communist insurgents. This period of low-intensity conflict between the Government of Malaysia and the CPM, also known as the *Second Emergency* (1969-1989), was a tough and challenging phase for Malaysia, to ensure its survival as the sovereign state. KESBAN, taken from the Malay words *KESELAMATAN* and *PEMBANGUNAN*, or security and development, was originated during Tun Abdul Razak's premiership, *albeit* KESBAN was formally much later legislated in 1980 by the National Security Council (NSC). The paper discovers Tun Abdul Razak's national security strategy to counter communist insurgents did not solely rely on the usage of hard power; the concentration of his strategy was on internal development, that led to victory on the side of the Malaysian government, to end the illegal guerrilla activities of Communist insurgents, and unite the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia. KESBAN was an admirable COIN strategy for a small country with a multi-ethnic society.

**Keywords:** COIN, Strategy, Security, Internal Development, Second Emergency

*High mountains, we'll climb together,  
Deep seas, united we'll swim,  
Let us with one heart endeavour,  
To overcome our difficulties and win.*

## **Introduction**

The *Second Emergency* (1968-1989) was the most critical period for the survival of Malaysia. Even though the state of Malaysia had obtained independence in 1957, the Communist insurgents' illegal guerrilla warfare activities led by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) were still active. Their activities contributed as a major threat to the Malaysian authorities. The undeclared *Second Emergency*, or low-intensity conflict (LIC) between the Government of Malaysia and the CPM was then further continued, and lasted until the CPM surrendered through the *Hatyai Peace Accord* in December 1989. For Malaysia, post-independence was a tough period to maintain its survival. Moreover, in the condition of world politics, the Cold War conflict between the super powers, and their involvement to expand influence and hegemonic power, in this paper focuses on Southeast Asia, precisely Malaysia. The ideological race between the Western bloc, the United States Of America (U.S.A.) and its allies, against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the People Republic of China (PRC), coloured world politics in that period, especially on their direct involvement in 'Third World' countries. During that *détente* period, Washington was concerned over 'domino theory' and the collapse of Southeast Asia to Communism, and believed all Communist lines of command eventually ran back to Moscow (Weatherbee, 2010).

On the contrary, Communist parties throughout the world were urged to pursue a militant policy towards imperialism, that is, the Western capitalist bloc. The situation became more acute with the inclusion of Communist ideology in Southeast Asia. Communist uprisings started in Malaya, Burma, the Philippines and Hyderabad in India, right after the Southeast Asian Communist parties held a meeting in Calcutta on March 1948 (Comber, 2009). As asserted by Jackson (2011), Chinese Communist agents quickly infiltrated third world countries, and gained control of emerging labour movements. Their intention was to overthrow governments and establish Communist-controlled republics.

Fred Kaplan (2013) highlighted that the British experiences in the Malayan Emergency in countering the communist insurgents as being the classical military reference. The case of communist guerrilla activities in Malaya (later Malaysia) was mostly in literatures of Counterinsurgency (COIN), portrayed the battles during the First Malayan Emergency (1948-1960). There is a lack of discussion on the national security strategy deployed by the Malaysian government in dealing with the second uprising of communist insurgency in Malaysia after independence. Thus, this left a huge gap in the literature discussing the national security strategy deployed between the First and Second Emergency. For the purposes of this paper, the COIN strategic approaches by the Malaysian government will be discussed, using the KESBAN strategy during Tun Abdul Razak's premiership, as one of the successful COIN paradigms in countering the communist insurgents in the Second Emergency.

## **Second Emergency: Communist Insurgents & the 1969 Racial Riot**

In Malaysia, the Communist movement was still active in spreading their illegal guerrilla warfare activities under the control of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). The CPM was formed in April 1930, after the dissolution of the Nanyang Communist Party in Singapore. The main aim of the CPM was to transform the country into a Communist republic. At that time, the CPM was not legally registered, and their guerrilla warfare activities were done 'underground', without recognition by authorities. Mentioned by Ward & Miraflor in the *Memoirs of Chin Peng* (2003), financial support from the PRC amounted to USD \$100, 000, which led to the second Communist armed struggle in the country.

Zakaria Yadi (2004) highlighted that the Second Emergency started in 1969, after the racial riot on May 13<sup>th</sup>, and ended after the CPM signed a peace accord with the Malaysian Government in Haatyai, Southern Thailand in 1989. The peace treaty was an effort and collaboration by the Malaysian Government and the Thai Government with the CPM, witnessed by two representatives from the PRC.

In the National Operations Council (NOC) report signed by Tun Abdul Razak in the aftermath of the racial clash incident on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1969, it indicated the CPM strategy to weaken the nation by manipulating sensitive issues, including economic and racial issues. The CPM subversion strategy was a tactic to obtain support of their guerrilla activities from a segment of the population, especially from the Chinese ethnic group, to fight against Malaysian authority. The majority numbers of membership and leadership of the CPM were from the Chinese ethnic group, and the involvement of minority Malays were perceived as symbolic only (Ruhanas, 2009). The racial conflict of 13<sup>th</sup> May, instigated by the CPM, hindered national unity and stability, and was a threat to national security (Yadi, 2004 & Sharom, 2001). The National Consultative Council (NCC) highlighted after the racial riot three matters that needed to be addressed urgently; which included the need for reconciliation and restoration of goodwill among various races, and the need to reaffirm the social contract that was embodied in the Federal Constitution, as well as the need to close socio-economic divides between different races (Jawhar, 2011). Thus, in a multi-ethnic society, the racial issue is a sensitive matter, and if not managed properly, it may destroy the harmonious prosperity of a nation.

## **KESBAN : The Malaysian COIN Paradigm**

Security and Development, or KESBAN, was the strategy used by the Malaysian government during the premiership of Tun Abdul Razak to counter Communist insurgents, and unite the population after the racial riot. It is clear that Tun Abdul Razak, through his vast experience as the Minister of Rural Development and Minister of Defence before he became the Prime Minister of Malaysia, realized that internal development is important to ensure the better security posture of Malaysia. His COIN strategy focused on development in Malay Language, *pembangunan*, to ensure a better security posture, in order to stabilise the multi-ethnic society in fraction, and protect the state from external threats. He believed that to ensure better security for the state, development in aspects of the economy and politics were essential. With that belief, development was a shield and protector to the population from easily being the target of enemies.

The core of COIN is '*winning hearts and minds*' of the population. According to David Petraeus, successful COIN must focus on population, in terms of their needs and security,

isolation of insurgents and population, an emphasis on intelligence, and amnesty of insurgents (Kaplan, 2013). Malaysia did not follow the conventional method by using strong armed forces for a better security stance during Tun Razak's administration. His strategy of COIN, quoted in his speech:

*'I don't care about Socialism, Communism, Neo-Colonialism or Capitalism. I give you what is the most important-ism not only in Malaysia but in Southeast Asia today. It is Alliance-ism. It is the unity of purpose of every-clear thinking citizen of this country. It is an example to the world of what real progress can be made. Development is our defence, discord is our danger, Give us your support-together we will secure the destiny of Malaysia!'* (Tun Abdul Razak, 1960).

The strategy of KESBAN emphasizes two most important facets, internal security and internal development. The divisions of strategy involve security forces, both Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and police, in safeguarding internal security and civil governmental agencies, taking role of the development aspect. KESBAN strategy was deployed by the Malaysian government as early in 1970, but it was formally legislated later as Directive No 11, in February 1980.

*'KESBAN constitutes the sum total of all measures undertaken by the Malaysian Armed Forces and other government agencies to strengthen and protect society from subversion, lawlessness and insurgency'* (Jawhar, 2011).

There were three objectives of KESBAN, as the COIN paradigm included: closing the linkage between the communist insurgents and population; gaining the trust of the people, not only the Malays, but also the minority ethnic groups; and enhancing the twining agenda of security and development. Tun Razak's concept of security through development was further developed later by the National Security Council (NSC), and enshrined in the national security concept of KESBAN, taken from the combination of two Malay words, *keselamatan dan pembangunan*, or security and development. The basic premise of this concept, security and stability, were crucial preconditions for development as reflected in National Security Directive No. 11:

*'KESBAN constitutes the sum total of all measures undertaken by the Malaysian Armed Forces and other government agencies to strengthen and protect society from subversion, lawlessness and insurgency..'* (Jawhar, 2011).

Although KESBAN was formally legislated by the National Security Council (NSC) as Directive No 11, in 1980, the Malaysian government since 1970 adopted the concept of security through development during Tun Razak's premiership, to combat and counter the CPM's insurgency activities, and maintain harmony among the multi-ethnic society. A revisit of Tun Razak's COIN strategy is a *sine qua non* to understand the present and perhaps, future situation in Malaysia.

### **Implementation of National Security Strategy**

First and foremost, in order to capture the *hearts and minds* of the population, Tun Abdul Razak concentrated on internal development in the aspect of the economy. It is noted that to obtain support of the population, the government needed to find a better way to ensure the strategy and policy could enhance the economic well-being of the population. Poverty would induce the population to support the Communist ideology.

The economic pattern within the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia in the 1960s reflected the wide disparity among the majority ethnic group, the Malays, and minorities. The economic

disparity between ethnicities and races was a major security and political problem in Malaysia. In 1970, the Malays received the lowest income compared to Chinese and Indian households. Monthly income indicated \$179 received by Malay households, Chinese \$387 and Indian \$310, despite their status of the 'sons of the soil' or '*bumiputera*' (Second Malaysian Plan, 1971).

Wan Hashim (1983) highlighted apart from the racial socio-economic imbalance, the unemployment rate rose from 6 percent in 1960 to 8 percent in 1970, and there was a high portion of foreign domination in the Malaysian economy, of approximately 62 percent. During this time, the Malays were poorer, compared to Chinese, as most of them stayed in rural areas, whereby Chinese lived in semi-urban and urban areas. He pointed out, traditional notions portrayed the Chinese held economic power and were much more wealthier than Malays, whereas Malays held more political power, and this perception created fear, mistrust and antagonism between these two majority ethnic groups.

Thus, National Economic Policy (NEP) was crafted to reduce the economic gap over ethnicity, as well as to correct and improve the socio-economic imbalance. The NEP took twenty years to implement, starting from 1970 until 1990, for Malaysia's economic development and also to enhance national unity and national security (Jawhar, 2011). National unity for Malaysia from 1970 onwards can be defined as:

*'Unattainable without greater equity and balance among Malaysia's social and ethnic groups in their participation in the development of the country and in the sharing in the benefits from modernization and economic growth. National unity cannot be fostered if vast sections of the population remain poor' (2MP, 1971).*

Tun Abdul Razak noticed the '*divide and rule*' pattern of disintegration within the multi-ethnic society, designed and left by the colonial power, which threatened the multi-ethnic society of Malaysia in the long run. Therefore, the NEP was deployed to redesign the pattern of society in aspects of economics, towards fairer distribution of wealth and income. Tun Razak made an effort to strengthen Malaysian internal politics. His administration shouted the slogan of '*less politics, more development*' (Hussain, 1997). This strategy was to ensure full concentration towards leading the state and population to prosper and unite in the multi-ethnic society. In political development, Tun Abdul Razak made an effort to strengthen the *Alliance Party*, that consisted of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), by rebranding the *Alliance* to the *National Front*. This was the greatest political strategy deployed in obtaining the support from the population. Inviting more Opposition Parties to sit under the same umbrella of the *National Front*, portrayed the genius strategy in capturing the hearts and minds of the population to cast their vote towards *National Front* in general elections.

In uniting the multi-ethnic society, *Rukunegara*, or 'Pillars of the Nation' was created to encourage devotion of the population towards the state, and to improve the relationship among different ethnic groups within the society. Wan Hashim in his book *Race Relations in Malaysia* (1981) stated *Rukunegara* could help the government in galvanizing the country, and guide it towards national unity and help in blunting the edges of conflict among different races. The Five Principles of *Rukunegara* are: believe in God, loyalty to King and Country, supremacy of the Constitution, Rules of Laws, Courtesy and Morality. As stressed by the late Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, former Minister of Home Affairs, *Rukunegara* is not just the five principles, it is the totality of beliefs and rule, of commitments and principles (Ghazali Shafie, 1985).

In dealing with international and regional politics, Tun Abdul Razak changed the norm of foreign policy from too pro-Western and anti-Communist into a more neutral foreign policy. This strategy was translated by making an effort to make friendlier and less rigid approaches to the Communist states, and therefore Tun Abdul Razak had an official bilateral visit to the People's Republic of China (PRC). This historical strategy was made in 1974, and the visit gave an opportunity for him to discuss some issues with the Prime Minister of the PRC, Chou En-Lai, and President Mao Tze Tung. In his official visit, Tun Abdul Razak talked over several issues, including: the role of the PRC in supporting the CPM's activities in Malaysia; the dual citizenship of 200,000 Chinese in Malaysia; and the prospect of economic relations between two states. The fruitful discussion successfully resolved several issues. Malaysia was the first state in Southeast Asia that had formal relations with the PRC. Tun Abdul Razak later made official visits to North Korea, North Vietnam, East Germany, and the Republic of Mongolia.

In ensuring the better security posture in the region, Tun Abdul Razak proposed the idea of *neutralization* of Southeast Asia from interference by the superpowers. The Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand signed a declaration of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) on November 1971. The strategy was to ensure that the Southeast Asia region was free from any manner of interference by outside powers (Weatherbee, 2010). Malaysia also played an active role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

The CPM's involvement in crimes and subversion activities gave threats to the state and society. Their guerrilla activities included bombing of the National Monument in Kuala Lumpur, and the assassination of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Hashim, in 1974, marking their aggression in Malaysia. In the KESBAN concept, the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and the police played a pivotal role in managing the internal security and defence of the state. For this, General Tan Sri Dato Sri Panglima Zulkifli Zainal Abidin mentioned the importance in ensuring internal security, by collaboration and coordination between various government agencies in accomplishing their task on the development:

*'KESBAN operation is like conducting an orchestra. The musical instruments are of diverse types. Yet they all contribute toward creating the same music. Every single musician has to be good at playing his musical instrument. They all read the same note. They also follow the lead from one single conductor who is in charge of the performance'* (Zulkifli Zainal Abidin, 2015).

Yadi (2004) concludes that an overall Malaysian government containment policy towards the CPM was a successful effort. Tun Abdul Razak laid the groundwork of security for development, and it is carried forward by his successors. Tun Abdul Razak believed security and development work hand in hand in creating a good posture of security.

### **Consequences of Tun Abdul Razak's National Security Strategy: Northern States of Perak**

At this juncture, it is appropriate to provide a general and historical background of the area of our case study. The Upper Perak district borders Kelantan state on the east, Thailand in the north and Kedah in north-west. In the past, Upper Perak was among the least developed areas

of the Malaysian Peninsula, as well as a sparsely populated region. At the same time, it was also known as a region of 'safe haven' for the Communist insurgents or guerrilla fighters. The CPM, with Communist guerrillas as its military wing, had its beginning during the Japanese occupation of then colonial Malaya between January 1942 and September 1945. Its predecessor was The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), formed by the British to help the latter fight against Japanese invasion during World War II. After the Japanese surrender, the MPAJA as an organization continued to exist in the form of the CPM, but with a different aim; to fight the British colonialists in order to free Malaya from foreign domination. Its covert aim was to convert Malaya into a socialist-Communist republic, aligned with China and the Soviet Union.

As mentioned above, the Upper Perak region or district had been regarded as a safe haven by the Communist insurgents, whereby a corridor was formed in the deep tropical jungle as an escape route into Thailand. In 1970, there were about 1,000 Communist guerrillas operating along the Malaysia-Thailand border; their numbers were increased in year 1975 to 2,054 Communist guerrillas operating in the Thailand border (Sindhu, 2009). In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, ambushes of military vehicles or the burning of buses and derailing trains were quite a common occurrence. For the purpose of this paper, the discussion shall be narrowed down by looking on the consequences of the Razak's national security strategy on his development programmes namely the *Felda land scheme*, the *East West Highway*, and the *Temenggor Dam* projects, which fell under the KESBAN special projects. All these had long-term effects of curtailing the activities of Communist insurgents, and at the same time had long term benefits to the population at large.

### **The Federal Land Development Authority Scheme (FELDA)**

The Felda land scheme was formulated in the early 1950s with the aim of providing land to the landless rural population, where the government had a direct involvement in the selection of settlers, providing the necessary infrastructure and financial aid as a form of loan to be repaid on a long term basis. The basic aim was to ensure a successful amelioration of the conditions of the rural population from poverty. The programme had been implemented nationwide in all the nine Malay states in the Malay Peninsula. The indirect or latent aim was to win the hearts and minds of the population, so as not to be attracted to Communist activities, and concentrate on improving the standard of living.

At the end of Tun Razak's premiership as a Prime Minister in 1976, there were already 108 Felda settlement schemes located all over the Malaysian Peninsula, with a total 41,288 households settled in these state farms. Approximately 50 percent of the schemes were planted with rubber trees, the other 50 percent with oil palm (Baharin & Parera, 1977). By 1980, the area cultivated had reached 1,301,382 acres. In the sub-district of upper Perak, there was a Felda settlement located some 10 kilometres from the town of Gerik on the Gerik-Jeli or East-West Highway, which was constructed in the 1970s. This scheme had 320 households, and was one of the earliest Felda schemes in the country, opened in the early 1960s (Wan Hashim, 1976). In fieldwork conducted in 1975, out of a total of 160 households interviewed, 64 percent were formerly engaged in agriculture as landless peasants, 15 percent consisted of ex-servicemen (police and armed forces), and 6 percent were engaged in miscellaneous economic activities (Wan Hashim, 1976).

Without doubt, the Felda settlement scheme was one of the success stories of Malaysian style land reform, with the main aim of improving the living standards of landless peasants and

workers, by transforming them into middle-class peasants-smallholders, each owning some 10 acres of rubber or palm oil plantation. Surely, these rural 'middle peasants' would never be attracted to any propaganda or attempts to convert them as followers of Communism. In fact, they became a bastion or protector of democratic forms of government and the liberal-capitalist socio-economic system.

### **East -West Highway between Gerik and Jeli**

Before the completion of a federal highway in the middle of the 1970s that linked Gerik in Upper Perak with Jeli in Kelantan, people from the east-coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu, who wished to travel to the west coast states of the Malaysian Peninsula, like Perak, Kedah, Pahang and Perlis, had to travel via southern Thailand, or through Kuala Lumpur in the south, and proceed north, making a travelling distance of more than 600km. After the completion of the East West highway, the distance had been reduced to only one-third, or approximately 200km.

Facilitating the movement of population between the east coast and west coast states was only a part of a wider programme. More important was to transfer people into this undeveloped jungle area, to become a developed region with a settled population. This would end the remoteness and isolation of this thickly covered jungle area. In other words, it was a direct encroachment of the government and the civilian population into the so-called safe haven of the Communist guerrilla fighters. The aim of the development of this highway was to separate the Communist insurgents and the population. The construction of this highway did not go smoothly, with incidents and harassment by the militant Communist insurgents. Workers travelling daily into and out of the area under construction had to be escorted by military personnel and vehicles. There were several military outposts formed at a certain distance along the highway. Clearly, the CPM realised that the presence of the East-West highway would affect their freedom of movement in the area, and the Upper Perak equatorial forest was no more a safe haven for them.

### **The Temenggor Dam Project**

The third KESBAN program that saw a direct encroachment of a government development project into the safe havens of CPM insurgents was the Temenggor hydro-electric dam project, which started construction in the 1970s. It was also a two-pronged approach, that was to provide electric power supply nation-wide, and at the same time to flood the river valleys in the surrounding areas of Perak river with a huge man-made lake, such that a relatively large land-mass in the area between the states of Perak and Pahang would be covered with water. While the dam was under construction, there was a process of resettlement of Malays and the aboriginal or Orang Asli (original people) villages into areas uphill, not affected by the formation of the man-made lake in the area. Two Malay villages, Kampung Belum and Kampung Kuala Temenggor were re-located in the more developed part of the district, acquiring a new name of Kampung Belum Baru and Kampung Ganda Temenggor. All families were provided with agricultural land for cultivation.

The creation of Temenggor Lake had achieved its intended consequences of encroaching and destroying the safe haven of the Communist guerrillas, and cutting the entire jungle path that connected southern Thailand with north and central Perak. After the completion of the Temenggor Dam in late 1970s, Communist guerrilla activities were greatly reduced. But from the viewpoint of development, the construction of Temenggor Dam had long-term effects, as the area has since become a tourist attraction, not just because of the natural beauty of the

surrounding environment, but also because the area, which has been gazetted as '*The Royal Belum*' appears to be one of the oldest and well preserved rainforests in the country.

## **Conclusion**

For a new nation-state like Malaya, later Malaysia, the struggle to maintain the nation's integrity in facing threats from the Communist insurgents to overthrow the democratically elected government was a hard and bitter one. At its early phase after the declaration of emergency rule in 1948, when Malaya was still under the British, General Sir Gerald Templar, the British High Commissioner, had introduced the concept or principle of "*winning the hearts and minds of the people*". By cutting off contact between the Chinese rural population and the Communist guerrillas, confining them into '*new villages*', which were surrounded by barbed-wire, the guerrillas were denied food supplies and man-power. This had helped to confine their activities in the jungle.

But then, during the *Second Emergency* period, the government of Malaysia had to find a new and more effective strategy to counter Communist insurgents, through a strategy known as security and development. Overall, the security and development strategy, deployed especially during the Tun Abdul Razak premiership helped to ensure the survival of Malaysia from internal and external threats. Thus, defence and security must not solely rely only on the usage of hard power; the combination of other factors such as economic, political, societal, and psychological may contribute to the better security position of a state. In this paper, it was highlighted that security and development was the essence of Tun Razak's leadership. His national security strategy to combat the CPM through non-aggression tactics and population-centric approaches indicated the success of his well-crafted national security strategy.

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**Contact email:** amelia4433@yahoo.com