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India-Malaysia Strategic Dialogue: Enhancing Maritime Security Partnership

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Abstract

Given the uncertain state of contemporary maritime security, the international community must be committed to ensure freedom of navigation, peace and stability on the high seas. For this reason, both India and Malaysia are equally concerned to promote peace and stability in the maritime domain. This discussion on India-Malaysia strategic dialogue examines the mechanisms to further enhance maritime security. Firstly, the discussion will examine on the commonality of security interests or commitments towards international peace and security. Secondly, what are the security maritime cooperation to strengthen the strategic partnership. This would enhance freedom of navigation and strengthen confidence building measures between the two countries. Finally, the discussion will examine the modalities of strategic partnership to promote capacity building in the maritime domain. In conclusion, a concerted effort to cultivate and strengthen strategic partnerships between India and Malaysia, further contribute toward peace and security in Southeast Asia.

India-Malaysia Strategic Dialogue: Enhancing Maritime Security Partnership

Regional stability is as essential to Malaysia as well to other ASEAN members. Maritime security is an integral component for realizing this objective. After all, goods and services are ultimately connected to free trade by seas. Approximately 90 per cent of total international trade is currently transported by sea with the value of US $155 billion annually.[1] Oceans or seas are the primary sources of hydrocarbons in an increasingly energy-deprived world. They are also the domains of such varied but incessant maritime threats such as acts of terrorism, piracy and environmental degradation. Therefore, securing and stabilizing important international waters including chokepoints by minimizing threats and encouraging strategic partnership is a critical dimension of this region's maritime security.

My discussion on the India – Malaysia Strategic dialogue shall examine on the mechanisms to further enhance maritime security. Firstly, the discussion will examine on the commonality of security interests or commitments towards international peace and security. Secondly, more specific on India and Malaysia maritime security cooperation on security and safety of international waters will be discussed. Finally, I shall examine the modalities the India-Malaysia strategic partnership to promote capacity building in this regard.

Commitment in International Peace and Security

It is essential to recognize the contribution of India and Malaysia toward the maintenance of international peace and security under the auspices of the United Nations. These contributions vary but none are insignificant. In 2009, for example, India's contribution of troops in the United Nations peacekeeping operations totaled 8,757 personnel while troops contributed by Malaysia was 1,067 personnel.[2] However, the contribution of troops by the two the members states of the UN constituted 10 percent of the total deployment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces

[1] David D.Zhang, et al, " Global Climate Change, war, and Population Decline in Recent Human History ", Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 104, no 49 (4 Decmber 2007)
[2] United Nations Department of Peacekeeping, " Troop and Police Contributors ",http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko (accessed 20 Jan 2010)

during 2009. This was a substantial and honorable commitment to peacekeeping efforts undertaken by the two countries.

Increasingly, stabilization missions involving international peacekeeping contingents are responses to the possibilities of terrorist elements exploiting or dominating 'failed state' regimes. As part of the international counter- terrorism effort that intensified substantially in the aftermath of 9/11, many UN Security Council Resolutions on various aspects of terrorism were enacted. Among the most noteworthy were Security Council Resolution1373 on 28 Sep 2001 and SC 1540 (28 Apr 2004). Both of these resolutions represented landmarks in the global war on terror because all the Member States fully recognized the mechanisms and tools to eliminate terrorism for implementation. These resolutions are also important elements in the maritime domains, and both India and Malaysia fully addressed the contents of the resolutions.

Unfortunately there is no unanimous agreement on the *definition of terrorism* by the 192 Members of the United Nations. But, there is an international agreement on the condemnation of any particular incidents as 'acts of terror' and there should be no double standard in the efforts to counter such incidents. The international community continues to initiate and to participate in a wide range of countermeasures against perpetrators of such acts under the banner of the United Nations. At the same time, at international level, the Members States of the United Nations continue to differ over their interpretations on the concept of *terrorism* as it is waged upon by the United States and its allies. This lack of unity over policy purpose and posture undermines the international community's overall capabilities to alleviate, or at least modify, this security threat to the extent that it otherwise might. As stated by Javier Ruperez , the " profound differences of opinion on the *definition of terrorism* have, prevented Member States from reaching agreement on a general convention against this threat to international peace and security ." [3]

Malaysia stands out as a particularly viable example of an ASEAN state effectively implementing counter-terrorism networking. With the legacy of its predecessors fighting against terrorism during the Emergency from 1960 to 1989, Malaysia's government has established not only intelligence sharing with the littoral states of Indonesia and Singapore, but also the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT) in Kuala Lumpur in November 2003. Seminars and training courses relating to interdiction of terrorists organizations

[3] Javier Ruperez, " The UN's Fight Against Terrorism: Five Years After 9/11, *Real Institute Elcano of Spain*, ^ September 2006.

have been conducted by the Centre in collaboration with the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Germany. The Centre is most beneficial to the members of the Southeast Asia countries and continues to expand its activities to provide effective counter-terrorism training to law enforcement officers throughout the region.

On the other hand, as one of the founding members of Non Aligned Movement (NAM), India was unwilling to assume the chairmanship of the Movement since September 2007, and has become less committed to the Movement's original rationales and postures, as its desire intensifies to play more dominant regional and global security roles. Its intention to bid for a Permanent Seat in the expansion of the United Nations Security Council underscores this transition in its geopolitical approach.

Promoting Peace and Security in International Waters

With regard, to promoting peace and security in the international waters, both India and Malaysia participated in the so-called coalition of the willing to combat maritime scourge in the Gulf of Aden. As a case in point, These criminal activities in the international route in the Gulf of Aden, have become a major threat to shipping industries and justified for the international community's intervention as the only way forward in curbing the maritime scourge in the region. In this context, the adoption of the United Nations Security Resolution (UNSC) of 1816 (2008) unanimously by the Security Council Members on 2 June 2008, which authorized " all necessary actions " to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, is a commitment of the international community. Malaysia sent its naval Task Force to the Gulf of Aden to protect the safety and security of the vessels in this strategic sea lane. India not only contributed in the coalition of the willing but also a member of Task Force 150 to combat terrorism in this maritime domain.

Equally important is the cooperative maritime engagement in the form of multilateral naval exercise codenamed Exercise AMAN in the Indian Ocean since 2007 participated by both countries. The objectives of this engagement, among others are to improve inter-operability, tactical proficiency in conducting defence of port infrastructures against an asymmetric threat.