

The major security issues in malaysia criminology essay



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The concept of national security involves the 'preparations against threats to a country's national independence, territorial integrity and national sovereignty emanating from internal or external forces or a combination of the two'. The goal of national security is to protect the core values of the state: ideology, sovereignty, territory, government regime and citizens. Buzan et al (1998) suggests that security is effected by 'factors in five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental'.^[3] Since the beginning of World War Two (WWII) there have been many significant events across these five major sectors, which have shaped Malaysia's national security. The most significant of these events include the Japanese occupation during WWII, the communist threat during the Cold War, the Confrontation with Indonesia, the 13 May 1969 race riots and the 9/11 terrorists attacks. There are also many non-traditional threats, both internal and external across all sectors that continue to shape Malaysia's approach to national security today.

The aim of this paper is to outline and critically evaluate the major security issues that have changed the outlook on, and approach to national security in Malaysia.

This essay will discuss major security issues that have shaped Malaysia's approach to national security since the beginning of WWII.

The Japanese influence on Malaya up to WWII had been positive in terms of invigorating Malay Nationalism and brought on the idea that Asian could challenge western powers.^[4] However, the Japanese occupation during WWII created a lasting memory for Malaysia's future elite in that it shaped their

thoughts regarding the need for self-reliance in terms of security and defence.[5]Under British rule after the War, and on the eve of an evolving nationalist movement for independence, Malaya was challenged by a serious internal security threat - communist terrorists.

The First and Second Malayan Emergencies and the threat of communism are significant security events in the evolution of Malaysia's national security. The success of the counterinsurgency (COIN) made it an example for COIN operations around the world.[6]Through KESBAN and RASCOM[7]Malaysia had established a whole of Government approach to internal security issues, primarily focused on communist terrorists, however Malaysia was still dependent on external support against external conventional threats through the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA) and later the Five Powers Defence Arrangement (FPDA).[8]

Malaysia's focus on COIN operations through the Malayan Emergencies made it vulnerable to external conventional threats. Although the Confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960s and the fall of Saigon following the Vietnam War failed to perpetuate into full-scale war for Malaysia these events had two significant impacts on Malaysia's outlook, and approach to national security. Firstly, as Malaysia was still reliant on the British to deal with external conventional threats through the AMDA and from 1971 the FPDA, they needed to assure national security by pursuing regional security through diplomatic means until its Defence Forces were sufficiently matured to deal with conventional threats. Malaysia was a key driver in establishing ASEAN and ZOPFAN as well as normalising ties with China and Vietnam.[9]Secondly,

the events spurred military expansion toward developing a conventional war fighting capability.[10]

It is difficult to determine if Malaysia's continued military expansion and modernisation is the result of an Asian arms race as Soong asserts[11]or just the need to develop one of the smallest Defence Forces in the region[12]to one that is suitably self-reliant in accordance with the desires of the National Defence Policy.[13]Nevertheless, the development and maintenance of a credible conventional war fighting capability does little when the threat to security is from within as Malaysia was sadly to learn on 13 May 1969.

The 13 May 1969 race riots are said to be one of the darkest moments in Malaysian history.[14]The reasons for the riots are many and varied but can be summarised as racial indifference regarding national language, Malay special rights, citizenship rights, and education policy. In essence, the tensions between the Malays and Chinese grew out of the perceived or actual threat posed to each races existence either through a lack of policy or policy itself. In terms of national security, racial tensions had been bubbling away in the background of other more conventional threats such as Communism and the Confrontation with Indonesia.[15]Regardless of the causes of the riots this watershed moment, Malaysian political life was 'refashioned, the whole notion of internal security took on another dimension',[16]based on race relations. Racial tensions have continued to challenge Malaysia's approach to internal security with the 1998 Muslim-Hindu conflict in Kumpang Rawa, Penang; the 2001 Taman Medan Incident; the 'run-ins' with HINDRAF and more recently the protests in Kuala Lumpur on 27 February 2011 regarding disparaging remarks against Malay Indians in <https://assignbuster.com/the-major-security-issues-in-malaysia-criminology-essay/>

the school text book and novel ' Interlok'.[17]In sum, there were 1060 racial incidents in 2010 involving Malays, Chinese and Indians that continue to threaten Malaysia's ' political stability and social harmony'.[18]In so much as the 13 May 1969 was a ' wakeup call' to significant internal security issues that threaten ' political stability and social harmony' the ' fix' appears to be more oriented on policing rather than policy.[19]Hence, a ' ticking time bomb' remains so long as the ' lid' of policing on the ' boiling pot' of racial inequity has a political[20]' flame' that remains unattended.

The 11 September 2001 attacks not only changed Malaysia's outlook on, and approach to national security but that of the West and much of the developing world.[21]The threat to Malaysia from this event and later the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, the Jakarta JW Marriot bombing in 2003 and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombing in Jakarta was two fold. First was the fact that Malaysia, like any other country, could be a target of violent non-state actors (VNSA).[22]Secondly, and more alarming was that Malaysia was a predominantly Muslim state and could be linked to radical Islamic groups such as Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and their alleged connection with Al-Qaeda. Such allegations and proof of links could erode investor confidence in Malaysia and be economically and politically devastating.[23]These fears were later realised when it was discovered that two of the masterminds behind the Indonesian bombings were Malaysians. [24]Malaysia's response was to establish the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT) in July 2003.[25]

Today there are a number of security issues that continue to shape

Malaysia's approach to national security. The complex overlapping claims
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over the resource rich Spratly Islands (and the claim to Sabah by the Philippine's) has seen the Malaysian Armed Forces commit significant air, sea and troop assets in the region to defend and protect its claims, particularly on the Ardasier, Mariveles and Swallow Reefs'. [26] Further civil (through the Maritime Enforcement Agency (MEA) and Naval sea and air assets remain committed to patrolling and enforcing Malaysia's sea lines of communication and its Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZ) from piracy and illegal fishing. Stretching these security assets further are issues such as organised crime, illegal immigrants, smuggling, and sea pollution. Malaysia's Navy, Airforce and MEA continue to receive sizeable proportions of the Defence and Security budgets to modernise and expand to deal with these threats. [27]

Other non-traditional and non-military threats continue increasing and thus shape Malaysia's approach to security. These include smuggling goods and services, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, communicable diseases, deviant and cult groups, extremism, refugees, ethnic conflicts, environment disasters, cyber crime and several other illegal activities that can be categorised as organised crime. These threats have seen Malaysia's approach to security focus more toward non-military threats in recent years. [28]

If there is a lesson to be relearned from the past for Malaysia regarding an approach to national security it is the need for a holistic approach as was evident with the implementation of KESBAN in response to the Second Malayan Emergency. Malaysia's defence management has a clear chain of command from the National Security Council (NSC) through to the lowest

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rungs of the Armed Forces and Police Force.[29]Security management is problematic, however. Eight ministries/agencies and 12 departments are responsible for the security of Malaysia.[30]Thus creates the problem where interagency barriers hinder the timely application of force against a threat from a particular threat sector based on the untimely dissemination of intelligence[31]and generally poor coordination.[32]Although, there is a significant level of cooperation between individual agencies responsible for national security it is only achieved at an interagency level rather than through the chain of command[33].

Conclusion

There have been several major security issues that have shaped the outlook and approach to security in Malaysia since WWII. The Japanese invasion shaped thought and provided the desire for self-reliance, the Malayan Emergencies shaped and drove a whole of Government approach to national security, the Confrontation and the US withdrawal from Vietnam drove Military expansion for security and defence toward countering external conventional threats and the bloody 13 May 1969 shaped Malaysia's approach back toward internal security issues. More recently, the 9/11 attacks and myriad other non-conventional and non-military threats continue to challenge and shape Malaysia's approach to national security. Of note are the internal threats to security where the approach appears to be policing over policy. The author believes that unless positive and clear progress is made in these areas that racial tensions will again boil to the surface.