

Security for Development: Tun Abdul Razak's National Security Strategy

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Abstract

In the case of Malaysia, even though, *First Emergency* (1948-1960) was declared over in 1960, the communist illegal activities led by Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) were still continuously active. Their illegal activities were the major threats towards the fragile structure of multi-ethnic society in Malaysia. The objective of this paper is to identify the national security strategy crafted during Tun Abdul Razak's premiership in 1970s that contribute to the success of countering communist insurgents. This period of low-intensity conflict between the Government of Malaysia and CPM also known as the *Second Emergency* (1969-1989) was a tough and challenging phase of Malaysia to ensure its survival as the sovereign state. For the purpose of this research, focus on case study of Northern State Peninsula of Malaysia to analyze the implementation and consequences of strategy. The paper discovers Tun Abdul Razak's national security strategy to counter communist insurgents does not solely rely on the usage of hard power but together with non-kinetic approaches through the internal development strategy led to victory on the side of government to end the illegal guerrilla activities of Communist insurgents and unite the population in Malaysia. The collapse of CPM in Malaysia, with the signed treaty of surrender for peace or known as Hatyai Peace Accord in year 1989 indicated the efficacy of national security strategy crafted by the Malaysian government.

Keywords: National security, socio-political, socio-economic, second emergency

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Introduction

The *Second Emergency* (1968-1989) was the most critical period for the survival of Malaysia. It is because even though the state of Malaysia had obtained its 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 authorities. The undeclared *Second Emergency* or low-intensity conflict (LIC) between the Government of Malaysia and CPM was then further continued and lasted until the CPM surrendered through the Hatyai Peace Accord in December 1989.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the strategic approaches crafted by the Malaysian Government through Security and Development (KESBAN) strategy deployed throughout the period of Tun Abdul Razak's era. KESBAN was taken from the combination of Malay words: Security or '*Keselamatan*' and Development or '*Pembangunan*'. KESBAN's strategic approaches were originally crafted by the Second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak Bin Hussien Al-Haj in the early 1970s during his tenure as *Premiership* and his strategy was carried forward by his successors. His belief that both defence and development are two sides of the same coin was then indoctrinated in KESBAN strategy.

It is noted that being a multi-ethnic society, it is a very tough and challenging task for Malaysia's authorities to control the infiltration of CPM's propaganda to subvert the population using ethnic propaganda. CPM's technique of propaganda gained support from the majority ethnic Chinese as most of their leadership and membership were from the Chinese ethnic group (Ruhanas, 2009).

The case of CPM's continuous aggression in Malaysia was mostly in literatures of Counterinsurgency (COIN) portrayed more during the *First Malayan Emergency* (1948-1960). The COIN operation by the British from their experiences in the *First Emergency* was somehow being the classic military references of COIN as a rare model of an insurgency defeated by the state and a successive COIN operation (Kaplan, 2013). This left a huge gap in the literatures of COIN between the *First* and *Second Emergency* in the case of Malaysia, which consists of a multi-ethnic society. For the purpose of this paper, the COIN strategic approaches by the Malaysian government will be discussed using the KESBAN strategy as one of the successful COIN paradigms in countering the communist insurgents.

Second Malaysian Emergency: Communist Insurgents & Racial Riot

The undeclared *Second Emergency* period started after the incident of a racial riot in May 1969 (Yadi, 2004). The study of KESBAN strategy in the structure of a multi-ethnic society in Malaysia is a unique case on how the state deployed strategy to ensure their survival. Taking example from Samuel Huntington (1997) on his clash of civilizations in the case of Malaysia, somehow, back in 1969, the clash between two major ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malay and Chinese, seems that his hypothesis is almost correct but then looking back, Malaysia as a sovereign state still survives until this day.

CPM's guerrilla warfare strategy as highlighted on the report prepared by National Operations Council (NOC) after the incident of racial riot 1969 was sleek cunning as they able to manipulated racial issues via politics and economic to mobilize support of population and weaken the nation by instill hatred through their propaganda of the *hearts and minds* towards the population. CPM is the organized Communist party and was formed in April 1930 after the dissolution of Nanyang Communist Party of Singapore and their struggle is to transform Malaysia into the Communist Republic (Comber, 2009). But then after *First Malayan Emergency* ended, the Malaysian government did not acknowledge their guerrilla activities and this led them to continue their subversion strategy toward population. Taking the definition of Insurgency from Dictionary of International Relations (1998) Insurgency is an armed rebellion against an establishment system of government and this definition suits with CPM continuous guerrilla struggle to topple the government of the day (Evans & Newnham, 1998).

It is a challenging period for Malaysia government especially during Tun Abdul Razak's premiership to find the right strategy that 'fit' into the conceptualization of Malaysia's national security. Looking back the security posture in International politics was not stable because of the Cold War and the financial support of People's Republic of China (PRC) to CPM's guerrilla activities in Malaysia motivated their second wave of Communist armed struggle (Ward & Mirafior, 2003).

Racial riot incident in 1969 gave hint to the political leaders of Malaysia, to take a necessary action and abandon 'divide and rule' strategy, which does not work well anymore in the multi-ethnic society in Malaysia. Thus, Malaysian government crafted KESBAN strategy to protect national security and provide national unity within the society.

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 better security posture of Malaysia.

“...the primary task of armed forces is to fight the communists, but at the same time they must also help implement the government development plan. This is part of the fight against communists. Defence and development go hand in hand” (Yadi, 2004).

The strategy emphasizes two most important facets, internal security and internal development. The divisions of strategy involve of security forces, both military (MAF) and police in safeguarding internal security and civil governmental agencies taking role for the development aspect.

KESBAN strategy deployed by 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 are three objectives of KESBAN as the COIN paradigm includes 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 program of security and development.

Implementation of KESBAN Strategy: A Case Study

At this juncture it is appropriate to provide a general and historical background of the area of our case study. The Upper Perak district bordering 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 Peninsular Malaysia 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 – cum – guerrilla fighters.

CPM with communist guerrillas as its military wing had its beginning during the Japanese occupation of the then colonial Malaya between January 1942 and September 1945. Its predecessor was The Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army or MPAJA, formed by the British to help the latter fight against Japanese invasion during World War II. After Japanese surrender, the MPAJA as an organization continued to exist in the form of CPM, but with a different aim, that was to fight the British colonialist 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, 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. Way back in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, ambush towards military vehicles or the burning of busses and derailed of trains were quite a common occurrence. The discussion for this paper shall be narrowed down to only three government development programmes namely the **Felda land scheme**, the **East West Highway** and the **Temenggor dam** projects which falls under the KESBAN special projects. All these have a long-term effects of curtailing the activities of communist guerrillas, and at the same time having a long term benefits to the population at large.

The Federal Land Development Authority Scheme (FELDA)

The Felda land scheme formulated in early 1960s was 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 poor 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 *heart and mind* of the people so as not to be attracted to communist ideology.

At the end of Tun Razak's stewardship as a Prime Minister in 1976, there were already 108 FELDA settlement schemes located all over Peninsular Malaysia with a total 41,288 households settled in these state farms. Approximately 50% of the schemes were planted with rubber trees while the other 50% 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 10km from the town of Gerik on the Gerik-Jeli or East-West Highway which was constructed in the 1970s. This scheme had 320 households was one of the earliest FELDA schemes in the country, opened in early 1960s (Wan Hashim, 1976). In a fieldwork conducted in 1975, out of a total of 160 household interviewed, 64% were formerly engaged in agriculture as landless peasants, 15% consisted of ex-servicemen (police and armed forces), and 6% were engaged in miscellaneous economic activities (Wan Hashim, 1976).

Without doubt, FELDA settlement scheme has been one of the success stories of Malaysian style 'land reform' with the main aim of improving the living standard of landless peasants and workers by transforming them into middle peasants-smallholders, each owning some 10 acres of rubber land or palm oil. 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 as bastion or protector of democratic form of government and liberal-capitalist socio-economic system.

East -West Highway between Gerik and Jeli

Before the completion of a federal highway in middle of 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 Peninsular Malaysia 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 its wider programme. More important was to transfer people into this undeveloped jungle area to become a developed region with 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 construction of this highway did not undergo smoothly without incident and harassment by the militant communist guerrillas. 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 being formed at a certain distance along the highway. Clearly, the CPM had 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' to them.

The Temenggor Dam Project

The third KESBAN program that saw a direct encroachment of government development project into the so-called 'safe haven' of CPM communist insurgents was the Temenggor hydro-electric dam project which started construction in 1970s. It was also a two pranged approaches, 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 under construction, there was a process of resettlement of Malay and the aboriginal or Orang Asli (original people) villages into areas uphill not effected by the formation of man-made lake in the area. Two Malay villages, Kampung Belum and Kampung Kuala Temenggor were re-located in the more development 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 so-called 'safe haven' of the communist guerrillas and cutting its 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 was greatly reduce. But from the view point of development, the construction of Temenggor dam had a long-term consequences that the area had since became a tourist attraction not because of the natural beauty of the surrounding environment, but also because the area which has been gazetted as 'The Royal Belum' appear to be one of the oldest and well preserved rain-forest in the country.

Conclusion

For a new nation-state like Malaya and later Malaysia, the struggle to maintain the nation's integrity in facing threats from the CPM 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 heart and mind of the people*". By cutting off contact between Chinese rural population and the communist guerrillas confining them into 'new villages' which were surrounded by barbed-wires, the guerrillas were denied of food supplies and including man-power. This had helped to confine their activities in the jungle.

But then, during the *Second Emergency* period, government of Malaysia had to find a new and more effective strategy to counter communist insurgents through a guard design strategy of security and development. Overall, the security and development strategy deployed especially during Tun Abdul Razak premiership helped to ensure the survival of Malaysia.

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