

## ABSTRACT

**Title:** Malaysia - US Security Cooperation Post 9/11: The Impact on Malaysia's Defence Policy

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This study explores and analyses the dynamic evolution of Malaysia - US relations and security cooperation pre and post 9/11 period until 2020 by using qualitative research method in analysing both the pre and post 9/11 relations and security cooperation between Malaysia and the US as a comparative basis. Theoretically, the study found that Malaysia as a small state is exercising its balancing and hedging act in an uncertain big power relations post 9/11 against major powers like US and China. Security cooperation with the US was used by Malaysia to balance the emergence of China both overtly and covertly.

The international and regional geostrategic environment influenced Malaysian leaders to act as such, whilst maintaining strong security cooperation with the US at the same time Malaysia also maintained a strong economic relation with China. Malaysia's strong security cooperation with US was influenced by the need for security due to its lack of capability for defence against major powers like China. The behaviour of leaders from both sides in charting their relations was influenced by domestic perceptions and

sensitivities. However, the convergence of national interests between Malaysia and the US overtime has been the driver for a tighter and stronger cooperation between the two countries despite minor disagreements on less important issues such as human rights. In conclusion, the Malaysia - US security cooperation post 9/11 has impacted Malaysia's defence policy in many ways such as capacity building for the MAF towards self-reliance, enhancing counter-terrorism effort, contributing to the security in Straits of Malacca, act as a confidence building mechanism for Malaysia in the regional and international fora and most importantly act as a deterrence against the assertiveness and aggression of Chinese forces in the South China Sea (SCS).

The findings of the study are significant in determining Malaysia's future directions in an uncertain big power relations in the region as well as identifying Malaysia's approach towards conflict resolution especially with China in SCS.