

The Role of Parliament and Defence Budgeting

Country Study Malaysia

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Official Documents on Defence Budget

- Annual Malaysia Budget
- Defence Ministry (MINDEF) Annual Report
- National Audit Report

Defence Budgeting

- Part of the Annual Malaysia Budget.
- In 2008, total allocated is RM14.5 billions.
 - RM9.8 billion for OE
 - RM4.6 billion for DE
- The budget must be passed by the Parliament.
- The parliament is seldom informed on the money spent.
- Overspent

Annual Budget Debate

- 20 days allocated to pass the Annual Budget proposal.
- Attention to education, religious and other issues closely related to public
- Defence budget is seldom raised by parliamentarians (RM14 billions!)

Resources Allocation

- OE and DE
- Money spent on Army, navy, air force and etc.
- Revenue from various activities?
- Procurement ?
- Personnel Expenditure?
- Expenditure on training, exercise, visiting and etc?
- National Service programme?

Monitoring Defence Budget and Defence Expenditure

- Procurement:
 - Second-hand SkyHawk fighter aircrafts (US)
 - ‘Scorpene’ Submarine (France)
 - Sukhoi-30MKM fighter aircrafts (Russia)
- Maintenance:
 - Adnan APV – Lack of Spare-parts
- Manufacturing:
 - Near Coast Patrol Vessels (NCGVs) – mismanagement and faults

Roles of Parliamentarians I

- Restricted by the parliamentary system
- Racial based issues and general interest
 - Malay – religious, Malay rights
 - Chinese – Education, Security, Economy
 - Indian – religious, Income
 - General Interest: Petrol price, toll, urban traffic congestion, corruption
- The number and the role of opposition parliamentarians
- Limited questioning time in the parliament.
- Parliamentary Select Committee on Defence

Roles of Parliamentarians II

- The quality of Parliamentarians
 - Expertise in the relevant fields
 - Attention to local constituents issues
 - Time spent on various activities
 - Funding available and human resource spent on defence related issues

Example:

‘Scorpene’ Submarine and Sukhoi-30MKM fighters.
The most expensive among buyers?

Roles of General Public

- Limited information due to historical reasons:
 - Fighting the communists, internal security
 - Konfrantasi
- Lack of interest from the public (not directly related, not an critical issue)
- General education level (science, philosophy, strategy)
- Mentality (government and general public)
- NGOs

Roles of Media

- Limited information given by the ministry in the past.
- Self-censored (OSA, Press Publication Law and etc.)
- Emphasis on other issues by editors
- Passive news > positive news?

Major Challenges

- Transparency within MINDEF
- Time allocated in the parliament in debating defence related issues.
- NGOs for monitoring defence budget
- Interest among general public
- 'Shadow Cabinet' by opposition parties

Conclusions

- Lack of transparency in defence budget in Malaysia
- Obviously, parliamentarian plays no role in defence budgeting
- The defence budgeting does not work in Malaysia
- Parliamentarians, general public and media has important role to play
- Parliamentary System Reform