

The 47th ASEAN Summit

Between Inclusive Rhetoric and Major Power Plays

(Translated)

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The 47th ASEAN Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur from October 26 to 28, 2015, was hailed as a triumph for regional unity under the banner of “Inclusivity and Resilience.” However, despite the polished speeches and ceremonial handshakes, the meeting revealed the continued subjugation of Southeast Asian nations—particularly those with Muslim majorities—to the secular capitalist order of global politics. Instead of being a celebration of independence, the summit demonstrated how ASEAN remains an instrument of external domination rather than a vehicle for the liberation of the nation, even though Malaysia, a Muslim-majority country, was the host.

Trump’s presence at the summit was the clearest symbol of this reality. His Asian tour, which coincided with the summit, was publicly described as a mission that was described by the White House on October 26 as “President Donald J. Trump Secures Peace and Prosperity in Malaysia.” Behind this diplomatic facade lies America’s deeper objective: to restore its waning influence by strengthening economic and defense ties with committed partners. What the media labeled diplomacy was, in reality, a renewal of neo-colonial control through agreements and smiles.

At the summit, Malaysia signed two major agreements with the United States. The first, a reciprocal trade agreement, commits Malaysia to sharing customs data, harmonizing export controls, and aligning domestic standards with US regulations. The second, a new memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation within the framework of Indo-Pacific security, integrates Malaysia more deeply into US-led military networks.

These steps are being marketed as moves toward “modernization” and “strategic partnership,” while in reality, the trade agreement effectively places Malaysia’s sovereignty under American control, granting the US influence over policy, data, and investment flows. This kind of subservience contradicts the divine command, **﴿وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾**

“And Allah does not grant the disbelievers a way of authority over the believers” [TMQ Surah An-Nisaa: 141].

By institutionalizing foreign control over its economy, Malaysia is granting itself the very “path” that God forbids. It is trading independence for access to markets that perpetuate dependency.

Even more alarming is the defense memorandum, which allows America—a machine for killing Muslims—to participate in Malaysia’s training, intelligence, and logistics. According to Islamic law, seeking protection or alliances with actively hostile aggressor states is forbidden, as it places the security of Muslims in the hands of those who undermine it. Allah (swt) says, **﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ﴾** **“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is one of them”** [TMQ Surah Al-Maaidah: 51].

Integrating the defense system of the Islamic Ummah into that of a colonial aggressor is a direct violation of this principle. As the Asian Defense and Security Organization 2025 points out, the Memorandum of Understanding allows the United States to expand its access to Malaysian ports and airspace under the guise of “capacity building.” This capacity building only serves to bolster American military influence throughout the region, using Malaysia as a strategic hub in its rivalry with China. This is not cooperation; it is surrender. From the perspective of Islamic law—a dimension that Malaysia has not considered—this alliance constitutes a form of explicitly forbidden cooperation, as it involves collaborating with those who wage war against Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw).

Trump's presence at the signing of the Kuala Lumpur Peace Agreement between Thailand and Cambodia highlighted America's ambition to position itself as a regional arbiter of peace. However, history demonstrates that "peace" brokered by America is a mechanism for maintaining its influence, not for achieving justice. Every handshake brokered under the American flag ties the region more closely to the global structure of dependency.

The summit's official slogan, "Inclusivity and Resilience," appears devoid of any real meaning. In contemporary discourse, inclusivity has come to mean participation within Western-established trade and security frameworks, while sustainability has come to mean maintaining a capitalist system based on structural inequality. Malaysia's participation in such arrangements highlights a troubling reality: post-colonialist Muslim countries have merely refined the mechanisms of dependency. By accepting these partnerships, they are relinquishing not only their material sovereignty but also their moral agency.

From an Islamic perspective, the measure of success is not foreign investment, GDP growth, or diplomatic applause, but rather obedience to divine Shariah Law and independence from tyranny. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) warned, «مَنْ اسْتَجَارَ بِقَوْمٍ بِغَيْرِ إِذْنٍ مَوَالِيهِ فَهُوَ مِنْهُمْ» **"Whoever seeks refuge with a people without the permission of his masters is one of them"** (Narrated by Abu Dawud, Book of Jihad). These new Malaysian alliances are precisely this forbidden subservience.

True independence cannot coexist with subjugation. Islam recognizes only one form of collective security: that which arises from the unity of Muslims under the rule of Shariah. For centuries, the Khilafah (Caliphate) protected trade routes, secured the seas, and ensured justice without relying on foreign fleets or loans. Its strength stemmed from Iman, Deen, and the application of divine Shariah Law, not from treaties with non-Muslims.

Today, Muslim countries describe these values as "unrealistic," yet it was precisely this system that once unified the Malay Archipelago under a single civilization. A return to Islamic ruling governance is not nostalgia; it is a necessity. Without it, Muslim countries will remain caught between Beijing and Washington, between dependence on capitalist markets and fear of military coercion.

Allah (swt) says, «إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ» **"The ruling belongs only to Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him"** [TMQ Surah Yusuf: 40]. This verse embodies the essence of political sovereignty in Islam: ruling governance belongs to Allah (swt) Alone. Any law, treaty, or alliance that violates this principle is considered invalid, regardless of any diplomatic praise.

Thus, the 47th ASEAN Summit represents both a political performance and a moral indictment. It demonstrates how Muslim-majority governments have erred in conflating slavery with progress. While claiming neutrality between the great powers, they are in reality caught between two idols—capitalist materialism and secular nationalism—both far removed from divine guidance. This region will only regain its dignity by rejecting these idols and re-establishing the ruling governance of revelation.

Until this transformation occurs, "inclusivity" will remain a euphemism for subservience, and "sustainability" will mean preserving the very structures of injustice that keep the nation divided and weak. The Quran offers the final reminder and warning, «فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ» **"So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior, and Allah is with you"** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 35].

Undoubtedly, only the re-establishment of the Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the Method of Prophethood can restore true power, dignity, independence, and justice to the Muslim world. Under this divine system, the political, economic, and military strength of the Ummah will be unified under a single leadership that governs by divine revelation, confronts injustice globally, and protects the interests of Islam across all borders. This leadership alone can end the fragmentation imposed by the nation-state system and revive a civilization guided by the principle of mercy to all mankind.

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