

# **ABILITY OF TRANSFORMATIONS TO ACHIEVE MALAYSIA'S ARMY 4NEXTG**

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The Army 4NextG 2021–2050 is a long-term strategy plan that focuses on capability detection, survival and strike, sustainment, protraction, and nation-building. It is underpinned by a systematic capacity development management approach (MASt, 2019). In the future, the plan would contribute to the force that would enable them to carry out their duties in a multi-domain setting. The Ministry of Defence's Strategic Plan, the Malaysian Armed Forces Strategic Management System 2021–2025, the Defence White Paper, and the Army 4NextG 2021–2050 are all supported by the Army 4NextG 2021–2050 as they remain dedicated to safeguarding the nation's sovereignty against external actors seeking to undermine its peace and unity.

The Malaysian Army (MA) is a contemporary, flexible, and technologically sophisticated military organisation that has experienced a dramatic transition in the last several years (MASt, 2019). The MA was once a conventional army. A changing security environment, financial restraints, and strategic imperatives have all contributed to this transition. The necessity has now grown more urgent, particularly given the precarious state of the intricate international boundary demarcation and the location of Malaysia's two mainland areas, which are divided by the South China Sea (MINDEF, 2019). The MA must also be consistent with the nation's military policy and the future force profile specified in the Defence White Paper.

The MA is an essential component of Malaysia's defence system and is responsible for protecting the security and sovereignty of the country. In order to effectively carry out this

role, the MA must change to better reflect the dynamic and ever-evolving character of modern combat. Ability-oriented transformation is a strategy approach that aims to improve the MA's ability to comply with the MA 4NextG while achieving its goals. The importance of ability-oriented transformation and how it relates to attaining MA 4NextG will be discussed in this study. It follows that the effects of transformation will also be covered. Reports, documents, research articles, studies, and opinion editorials about the state of the military budget and capacity, as well as their implications for the MA transformation, were the main sources of data. Using online academic databases, a thorough search approach was used to locate pertinent materials and sources.

In 2019, the MA initiated the development plan Army 4NextG as an extension of the '2 10 plus 10' initiative. This dynamic plan states that the MA will be developed beginning in 2021 and continuing for the next thirty years. Controlling the future capabilities growth of the MA 4NextG will be challenging, though, especially given the issues surrounding defence procurement. Any nation's security strategy, including Malaysia's, must include the procurement of military equipment.

A minor 10% increase above the initial 2022 allocation of RM 16.14 billion has been proposed for Malaysia's defence budget for 2023, totalling MYR 17.74 billion (USD 3.97 billion) (Ministry of Finance, 2023). According to Grevatt & MacDonald (2023), the cost reported on February 24 consists of RM 11.4 billion for operations and RM 6.3 billion for development costs, including procurement. These indicate gains of 3% and 26% over the previous year, respectively. The prime minister and finance minister of Malaysia stated in their statement about the country's 2023 budget that the purpose of the significant increase in development spending is to improve the preparedness of the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF)

(Ministry of Finance, 2023). The MA has been allotted 16% of the development cost, but the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) and Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) receive 28% and 27%, respectively (Global Data, 2023).

Though its capacity for strategic deterrence is limited, the MA is nonetheless required to protect the country from threats that compromise national interests. If funding for state-of-the-art tools is not provided to the MA, it will be extremely difficult for the fighting force to carry out its objectives in the increasingly dangerous settings of the sea, the air, and the fluid cyberspace (Hamzah, 2023). Due to the extreme weather fluctuations brought on by climate change, the MA is also needed to assist with national disasters, including occasional flooding.

The present course is being dictated by historical legacies since there hasn't been a strong political desire to push defence reforms. The army continues to receive the most resources and attention from the MAF, which is still service-centric. The MA is still shaped by the experience of the jungle combat it successfully engaged in against the communists decades ago, albeit developing a more nuanced perspective over time. The army was directed by the remnants of the Cold War to strengthen the peninsula and, in the eastern theatre, to focus on securing the land boundary with Indonesia. To prevent unauthorised immigrants from entering the nation, the military services have occasionally served as border patrol agents.

The military was forced to enlarge its command structure in the eastern theatre after the Lahad Datu event. The army and navy now each have a three-star general in charge of East Malaysia. To attain peninsula-eastern theatre parity in terms of troop deployment and capacities, however, substantial political will is required. The irony of Lahad Datu is that the

police, the civil service, and the armed forces all work together to oversee the security sector on the Eastern Sabah front. Regretfully, the bureaucratic turf fights among the three entities are a regular source of frustration (Liew, 2021).

A robust defence sector and a group of competent defence civilians are prerequisites for significant defence changes. Many of the civilians in the ministry of defence lack specialised knowledge and experience, as they are currently rotated among the ministries. This will need to change with the appointment of a number of senior public servants with security-related training and the retention of the best civilians at the Ministry of Defence for extended periods of time. The defence sector will have to engage in innovation and let go of its sales agent mentality. Once more, for the sector to change, political will is needed.

A comprehensive strategy known as ability-oriented transformation centres on strengthening and expanding the military's capacity to achieve its strategic goals. These competencies cover a broad spectrum of resources, such as staff, equipment, infrastructure, logistics, training, and operational protocols. These are some essential elements of an MA ability to transform.

The MA modernization effort has acquired impetus as the nation emerged from the 1997 economic downturn. The MA became one of the more powerful nations in the area with the purchase of main battle tanks (MBT), armoured personnel carriers (APC), infantry fighting vehicles (IFV), and contemporary weaponry. For the MA to keep a competitive advantage over possible opponents, it is necessary to renew and modernise its technology and equipment. This entails spending on modern weapons, surveillance technologies, communication networks, and cyber capabilities.

The rapid and astounding advancements in technology over the last ten years have encouraged a move away from antiquated procedures and frameworks. The forces behind the modernization and transformation of military tactical capabilities are supporting the trend that future battle environments will inevitably shift towards the hybrid forms of military campaigns mentioned earlier. This trend will have consequences as a result of the availability of cutting-edge weapons and tools that can be used to gain tactical advantages (Venkatachalam, 2019). The MA monitors and collects data on activity along the land border using a variety of surveillance and reconnaissance techniques, including the use of technology like drones, cameras, and radar systems. This assists in the early identification of possible hazards. Although miniature drones have already been utilised for border monitoring at Thailand's and Kalimantan's borders, the actual drones for border surveillance will be purchased in 2026 (Othman, 2023). The MAF anticipates that using drone assets will enable more efficient surveillance and control operations at the nation's borders.

Modern training and development should be provided to military personnel by the MA to prepare them for the changing demands of contemporary warfare. This covers leadership development, ongoing education, and cross-functional instruction. Improving the MA's capacity to meet the demands of hybrid warfare or conflict situations would give the military a tactical edge when facing conventional or unconventional military opponents. Given the increasing likelihood that conflicts will be started or resolved through the tactical advantages these types of campaigns bring about, hybrid warfare strategies may be more effective against the threats that Malaysia faces today (Venkatachalam, 2019).

Over the past few years, MA has been strengthening its skills in response to their growing understanding of the threats in cyberspace. The data unequivocally demonstrates that

MA is not an exception to the rise in increasingly complex hacks that target both businesses and governments. MA formed the Cyber Warfare Signals Regiment (99 RSPS) in 2021 in an attempt to strengthen its capability and readiness in the face of cybersecurity difficulties and cyberthreats from several directions. With the latest tools and equipment acquired, the newly established regiment would strengthen and modernise the country's cyber defence. The MA needs to be able to adjust to changing circumstances and defend against cyberattacks that can jeopardise infrastructure and informational capabilities. The establishment of the regiment showed the Army's dedication to enhancing its capacity and preparedness to counteract cyberthreats and guarantee cybersecurity. The cyber defence gap would be closed, and communication between government agencies at all levels would be improved with 99 RSPS (BERNAMA, 2021).

In order to increase threat assessments, early warning systems, and situational awareness, the MA needs to strengthen its intelligence-gathering capabilities. Decision-making and resource allocation are aided by this. The MA's intelligence and strategic capabilities can be improved via the Intelligence Fusion Centre's (IFC) operations. One of the five objectives of the MA capabilities, detection, is the foundation for the development of IFC TD, which is led by the strategic capabilities of the MA 4NextG (2021–2050). The MA will be outfitted with its information operation (IO) and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and targeting (ISRT) capabilities. With the current capabilities, it is possible to identify any kind of adversary threat as soon as possible and to more effectively distribute precise information in real time, assisting the MA in making timely decisions. The MA will have an advantage in information dominance, battlespace awareness, decision advantage, and decision superiority because of its continual tracking and channelling of information. The

enhancements will persist in their implementation in accordance with contemporary technical advancements and environmental hazards (Military Times, 2022).

For the MA logistic system to be of outstanding preparedness, it needs to function effectively. Readiness is the ability of a group or organisation to do a task within a given time frame. It matters because the military and technology are dynamic fields that demand constant innovation and development (Mustapha et al., 2020). For the MA to effectively support military operations, a strong logistical infrastructure should be developed. This calls for maintenance, the capacity to work in a variety of environments, and supply chain management.

The MAF Chief Defence Force claims that the MA 4NextG Strategy Plan has completely enhanced the force's capabilities and operational levels. As a result, the force is now obtaining firepower elements, such as self-propelled howitzer (SPH) 155mm artillery and 4x4 armoured vehicles (The Sun Daily, 2023). Additionally, the MA will get weapons, mobility, and communication assets to increase its degree of readiness, particularly for combat troops, and to meet its requirements for firepower, mobility, communication, and logistical elements to become a balanced, respectable force.

The MA will update military doctrine and tactics to take into account novel methods of combat and adjust to shifting security conditions. The MA has concluded that the counterinsurgency warfare concept needs to be re-evaluated in the context of conventional warfare. Therefore, MA may choose to employ asymmetric warfare, which is covered by the doctrine of counterinsurgency warfare, as a means of addressing uncertainty. The MA cannot engage in this type of battle without a combination of material and immaterial elements. Due

to the MA's inferiority to developed nations in terms of command, control, communications and computers (C4) also intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), asymmetric warfare is thought to be a viable option (Ali, 2001).

The overarching objectives of MA 4NextG are closely aligned with the capability-driven transformation approach. This approach ensures the effective execution of the transformation strategy. To begin with, the plan prioritizes the enhancement of the MA's preparedness and its ability to respond to potential threats. This involves bolstering training, equipment, and the organization of the military to effectively address emerging security challenges. Strengthening MA's deterrence capabilities is also a central component, as a modern and proficient MA can act as a strong deterrent against potential aggressors, demonstrating Malaysia's commitment to maintaining robust defence, thereby contributing to conflict prevention and deterring aggression.

Additionally, the plan allows the MA to adapt to evolving security dynamics, including cyber warfare, terrorism, and regional instability, ensuring the MA's continued relevance and effectiveness in countering contemporary threats. Moreover, the plan may optimize resource allocation by focusing on acquiring the most pertinent and efficient equipment, minimizing resource wastage, and enhancing cost-effectiveness in military operations. Ultimately, a well-equipped and proficient MA enhances Malaysia's standing on the global stage, potentially paving the way for increased international cooperation and partnerships with other nations.

The MA has been going through a major process of transformation in order to improve and modernise its capabilities. The necessity for the MA to start developing a credible, well-

balanced force capable of handling a wide range of responsibilities through the abilities-oriented transformation approach is further supported by the increased scrutiny that yearly defence funds are subject to. A change of this kind can have a variety of effects.

Modernising the MA to handle fresh and developing threats, like cyberwarfare, urban warfare, and growing marine difficulties, is a major focus of the MA 4NextG. The three services must work together to produce a comprehensive joint capacity development plan in order to make sure that the most outdated equipment is phased out and replaced on schedule. In the meantime, it's important to maintain well-maintained systems. It is anticipated that the MA's reform will lead to the procurement of more sophisticated and contemporary military hardware and technologies. By doing this, the army would be better able to defend itself, deter attacks, and respond to them. The MA may become better equipped and ready as a result of the modernization and transformation initiatives. Maintaining national security and efficiently handling any possible threats or crises depend on this.

A number of improvements and strategic purchases were suggested as part of the progressive 30-year MA 4NextG modernization strategy to increase the MA's firepower in order to stay relevant and credible. A total of 257 DEFTECH AV8 Gempita 8X8 multipurpose armoured vehicles, produced locally in cooperation with Turkey, have been acquired by the MA in batches (David, 2021). With the formation of 883 PUTD and the delivery of 6 MD530G helicopters in February 2022, the MA's air tactical capabilities to deliver efficient fire support increased (Jennings, 2022). Under the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021–2025), newer assets are being purchased, primarily to guarantee that Sarawak and Sabah have enough firepower in light of the growing threats to their sovereignty. In accordance with the restructuring of MA units based on the MA 4NextG, the MA formed the Eighth Royal

Artillery Regiment (8 RAD) in Sarawak in 2021. This will improve the ability to provide artillery fire support to both theatres concurrently more effectively and efficiently (David, 2021).

For a considerable amount of time, vendor-driven initiatives that have overcharged the taxpayer and provided insufficient support to soldiers in the field have dominated the military procurement landscape. Military capability development must be properly steered if it is to be sustainable and fulfil national goals. The process of transformation frequently entails large financial outlays for military hardware, software, and infrastructure. The magnitude and management of the investment might determine the favourable or unfavourable economic effects of this. Malaysia should, in particular, aim to become somewhat self-sufficient in terms of basic military hardware, but it should also be able to establish a highly valuable supply chain in certain specialised fields with dual applications, including electronics and information technology. Long-term economic benefits will also result from the creation of new, well-paying jobs.

In the defence business, one area of concentration is the land sector, particularly with regard to armoured vehicles (AVs). As of right now, the two local private businesses in charge of manufacturing, supplying, and assembling AVs and other logistical vehicles for the MA are DEFTECH Sdn Bhd and DSSB Sdn Bhd (Kwong, 2014). The local automotive sector is directly and indirectly affected economically by the outcomes of the government-led AV offset purchase. The surrounding towns, particularly the residents of Pekan, Pahang, and Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, are given several job opportunities by it. They can, for instance, accept the opportunity to work for DSSB Sdn. Bhd. and DEFTECH Sdn. Bhd. They are able to start making their own money and develop into effective industry workers. Additionally, the

upgrading of rural infrastructure might enhance their quality of life. For example, the establishment of DEFTECH in Pekan has increased activity in the public and military vehicle industries, with the goal of becoming DRB-HICOM Automotive City. The well-being of the community, and the workers in particular, is also improved by DSSB's proximity to several factories at Nilai Industrial Estate. These findings suggest that the expansion of these businesses has given the local population a large number of employment prospects (Roslan et al., 2018).

Malaysia is a maritime republic with continental roots that is encircled by the South China Sea, the Sulu Sea, and the Straits of Malacca. It is connected to both mainland Asia and Europe. Malaysia has faced both possibilities and challenges as a result of its unique geographic location, which has allowed it to serve as a bridge point between the Pacific and Indian oceans via the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca. Malaysia's position in regional and international geopolitics may be improved by having a more capable and advanced military. It may contribute to the fortification of strategic and diplomatic relations with foreign countries.

Malaysia is positioned to play the role of a middle power in the area thanks to its lengthy history of diplomacy and tight relationships with its neighbours and other countries. Malaysia's security and military objectives will be furthered by creating these trustworthy alliances, which will also reinforce international rules and standards. Opportunities for enhanced coordination and partnerships with the armed forces of other nations may arise as a result of the MA's restructuring. In terms of information exchange, cooperative training, and cooperation on security and military matters, this can be advantageous.

Through its active participation in multilateral defence dialogue, peacekeeping missions around the world, sending military aid under HADR programmes, and holding annual military joint exercises with the armed forces of neighbouring countries, Malaysia engages in defence diplomacy activities that enhance its capacity and capability as a Middle Power that can influence international affairs. These activities are the source of Malaysia's soft power. Malaysia and Bangladesh have cordial defence relations. The Malaysia-India Defence Cooperation Meeting (MIDCOM), which focuses on defence activities at all levels, including defence research, technology, and industry, defines Malaysia's close defence connections with India, which were established in 1993 (Huda & Nor, 2022).

To sum up, the MA ability-oriented transformation plays a critical role in accomplishing the objectives mentioned in the MA 4NextG. The defence and security of the country depend heavily on having a well-trained and equipped military. Through investments in modernization, training, and cooperation, Malaysia can guarantee that its armed forces are equipped to adapt to a constantly evolving security environment. This strategy not only supports the nation's resolve to defend its interests and sovereignty, but it also fits in with the MA strategic plan.

The MA transformation initiative is designed to enhance the capabilities of the MA in several crucial areas, including modernization, training and professional growth, intelligence and surveillance, logistics and sustainment, interagency collaboration, and strategic planning and doctrine. This strategy's successful execution is expected to yield a range of positive outcomes, including improved readiness and capability development, enhanced civil-military relations, economic benefits, strengthened international cooperation, professional growth, and

better preparedness against non-traditional threats. This transformation is essential for safeguarding the country's security in the face of contemporary challenges and bolstering the MA's readiness and effectiveness.

Like any other military organisation, the MA is undergoing a complex and diverse reform that needs to be carefully planned and carried out. Modernising tools and capabilities, raising the armed forces' overall effectiveness, and adjusting to new strategic and operational difficulties are all necessary for a successful military reform. We must work in a globalised world where local and international events are inextricably intertwined in complicated and unpredictable ways, as dictated by the current political-security landscape. In terms of the MA, their responsibilities have expanded beyond simply amassing more soldiers in the jungle to include encouraging regional cooperation and stability, helping to uphold peace and security throughout the world, and creating networks and information-based forces. The evolution of the MA is currently required because of the impending dangers, both traditional and non-traditional. The MA staff will need to adjust its force structure and asset readiness to a rapidly changing environment as they proceed. They will also need to comprehend existing operational doctrines and key competencies.

The MAF needs certain assets and capabilities outlined in the MA 4NextG for the Future Force in order to implement the National Defence Vision. The MAF's realistic standards for projecting concentrated deterrence based on actual capabilities are outlined in the MA 4NextG. In order to enable the MA to safeguard Malaysia's national interests, particularly to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the government will fortify the force structure and posture. The MA's national defence capabilities will be strengthened by its continued development of reliable alliances.

Simultaneously, the MA will re-evaluate its supporting roles, including nation-building and the use of its extremely precious and vital equipment and assets to support civil authorities. The plans for defence capability will serve as a catalyst for the restructure and give the MA the tools it needs to build its future force. The MA will be able to accomplish the goals set forth in accordance with national interests through the development of the defensive capabilities mentioned below, and the successful execution of this plan will be ensured by a steady budget.

To sum up, transformation is a continuous process. Review and update the plan often to keep it up-to-date with new threats and technological advancements. Achieving a successful military transformation is a long-term project that calls for dedication, strategic vision, and flexibility in response to shifting conditions. It is crucial to preserving the MA's efficacy and preparedness in the face of changing security threats.

(3,816 Words)