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## MALAYSIAN IMAGE IN THE GLOBAL POLITICAL CONTEXT

As a practising diplomat, I do not wish to proffer any theoretical or conceptual explanation to my approach in tabling my paper today. I will not be using terms familiar to you like *realism*, *pluralism* or *structuralism*, nor will I attempt to get involved in the inter-paradigm debate, or of conflicting and competing models and approaches to explain Malaysia's role in international relations. The reason for my avoiding such approaches is simple. First, I am not a theorist but a practitioner and I have been fortunate to be involved in the formulation and practice of Malaysia's foreign policy and foreign relations for some 35 years. Second, I feel that international relations are so unsettled and difficult to reduce to an intellectual order because of their changing character. Some may claim foreign policy to be predictive, yet it is not, nor is it scientific or deductive. I therefore prefer to leave it to the intellectuals to provide the theoretical explanations to the course of Malaysia's foreign relations.

Given that assumption, I will proceed to discuss my paper in the context of the challenges facing Malaysia's foreign relations as we move towards the new millennium. In doing so, I plan to touch on a number of aspects that are as much empirical as they are normative. Given the advance in technology, one need only to switch to the CNN channel to know what is going on in other parts of the world. The Internet equally provides abundant information about the happenings around the world today. But international politics are more than just all that, for diplomatic reporting, to a certain extent, is a mixture of unclassified facts on the one hand, and classified comments and interpretations, on the other.

