

## RE-ORIENTALIZING THE GULF: THE GCC AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Every summer, Kuala Lumpur's central entertainment and shopping district, Bukit Bintang, undergoes a remarkable transformation. For most of the year, visitors to the hip district encounter a mix of people speaking Bahasa Melayu (Malay), English, Farsi, Mandarin and Tamil. But during the summer another language emerges: Arabic. In the cafes, money changers' kiosks, night clubs and restaurants, Arabs congregate after dark, frequenting the businesses that have arisen to serve them and feature Arabic menus and Arabic-speaking staff. In recent years, the annual influx of Arab tourists has become so massive that Malaysians call the summer months the "Arab Season."<sup>1</sup> Among the Arabs, those from the Gulf (*khalijis*) stand out, especially those from Saudi Arabia; the *abayas* and *thobes* are a marked contrast to the tight fitting outfits of Asian and Western tourists.

The presence of Gulf Arabs reflects a critical, but often understudied, aspect of the Muslim world: the community of faith that connects Southeast Asia to the Middle East. Islam is not just a faith and identity of the deserts of the Middle East; it is also the religion and central form of identity of millions of people in the tropical climate

of Southeast Asia — individuals who are not from the traditional "core" of the Islamic world, but remain members of the global Muslim community. One need only look at the Kampung Melayu (Malay village) communities in Cairo and Mecca, the generations of Southeast Asian study circles and scholars in Mecca, generations of intermarriage between Arabs and Southeast Asian Muslims, and thousands of Arabs and Iranians living and working in Southeast Asia today.

Despite these cultural and personal ties, Gulf Arabs and Southeast Asian Muslims saw their interests as far more closely tied to the West than to each other until the twenty-first century. At that time, larger changes in the global economy, the Middle East and the Islamic world compelled the Gulf states (and those in Southeast Asia) to "re-orient" their economic and strategic interests. Gulf governments sought new markets for both their capital and hydrocarbon exports that would deliver higher returns than they could get with their traditional Western partners. They also sought opportunities for education, leisure and advanced medical care that were world-class but cheaper than those in the West, and in a place where their religious values would

be respected. For their part, Southeast Asia's Muslim leaders hoped that a greater Gulf presence in their region's economy could help to balance China's growing influence and declining Western markets, and promote growth.

While Christopher Davidson, Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Makio Yamada and others have shown how these types of factors have shaped the ties of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to countries in East Asia, this paper seeks to shed light on how they have shaped GCC links with Muslim Southeast Asia, especially over the last four years and in response to the Arab Spring.<sup>2</sup> During this period, these ties, which had been largely cultural and religious for generations, took on strategic dimensions. Gulf governments increasingly saw Southeast Asians as viable alternative partners after key partners like Mubarak's regime in Egypt collapsed, and political instability spread to Bahrain and other Gulf states; they also had growing markets and valuable agricultural resources. In the eyes of Gulf leaders, the emergence of Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt only reinforced the need for new friends. Events in the Arab world served to reinforce the desire of Southeast Asian leaders to maintain their new ties with the Gulf, even if that meant ignoring popular fury at Saudi Arabia or deploying soldiers to the Gulf. In addition, networks linking the Middle East to the Gulf were not just at the elite level. Ordinary individuals and political opposition groups took their own lessons from events in the Arab world and used them for their own purposes in Southeast Asia.

The networks that have shaped links between the Middle East and Southeast Asia reflect centuries of intellectual exchange and travel between the Muslims of Southeast Asia and the wider Middle East.

The annual Hajj pilgrimage, Arab-Malay marriages, and Islamic seminaries were critical to these Muslim networks. These intellectual and religious ties, however, were not matched by extensive commercial ties, especially in the twentieth century. While Gulf Arabs contributed generously to religious institutions in Southeast Asia in the twentieth century, they made few investments in the region's economy, apparently preferring safer opportunities in the West. The director of the Arab-Malaysian Development Bank observed in 1979 that religion factored little into the economic decisions of Gulf Arabs: "When it comes to paying out money, they take out their Japanese calculators and do their sums."<sup>3</sup>

But this dynamic changed at the start of the twenty-first century, when Gulf states "re-oriented" their focus eastward — towards not only China, but also the Muslim nations of Southeast Asia. Ironically, that process began with an advertising campaign on international and Arab broadcast networks that featured images of modern cities, jungles, beaches, mosques and other attractions set to uplifting music and the catchy phrase, "Malaysia — Truly Asia."<sup>4</sup> The advertising campaign "branded" Malaysia as a tropical paradise, a nexus of Asian cultures, and a nation that blended modernity and Islam in a way Arabs could emulate.<sup>5</sup> For many in the Gulf, Malaysia was an attractive alternative destination to the West for education, healthcare, investment and leisure — especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Dubai Ports World affair, and the 2008 global financial crisis.<sup>6</sup> Malaysia also offered two additional benefits: an entryway to Indonesia and the other growing economies in Southeast Asia and a way to check the growing influence of Iran in the region. There are 70,000 Iranians living in Malaysia alone.<sup>7</sup>

Among the earliest indicators of the Gulf's shift to the "Orient" was trade. Between 1996 and 2011, Malaysian-GCC trade rose from \$1.6 billion to \$14.5 billion, while trade with Indonesia grew from \$2.3 billion to \$5.9 billion.<sup>8</sup> Although the steep rise in oil prices and Indonesia's declining supplies of petroleum help explain part of the surge, Southeast Asian exports to the Gulf played an important role in trade for the first time in many years. Malaysian exports to the GCC rose from \$1.2 billion in 1999 to over \$6.3 billion in 2011,<sup>9</sup> while Indonesian exports to the Gulf nearly doubled, from \$1.2 billion in 1999 to \$2.3 billion in 2009.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, the growth in bilateral trade reflected increasing commercial and diplomatic ties between the GCC and the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN), a regional political organization that includes Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>11</sup> Since 2009, senior ministers from both organizations have met annually, and there was a fivefold increase in trade from 2004 to 2011 among member states.<sup>12</sup>

As trade grew, well-known financial companies based in the Gulf — such as al-Rajhi Bank, Kuwait Finance House, the Islamic Development Bank, Abu Dhabi National Energy and Gulf Investment, and the Qatar Islamic Bank — established footholds in Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup> In 2006, Qatar's al-Jazeera television opened a regional bureau in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>14</sup> In 2011, Saudi Arabian investors poured \$733 million into Malaysia, making the kingdom one of its top foreign investors.<sup>15</sup> Emirati investments in Malaysia now stand at nearly \$2 billion.<sup>16</sup> In Indonesia, Saudis are also some of the top foreign investors, having put nearly \$8 billion there since 2007.<sup>17</sup> In 2011, Saudi Arabia's Dubai Saudi Telecom invested \$1.2 billion in

Indonesia's Axis cell-phone company.<sup>18</sup> In 2009, the Bin Laden Group announced a \$4.3 billion project to develop 2 million hectares of land in Indonesia to grow rice, while Oman's GFH Global Financial has invested \$335 million in rice and palm oil in Indonesia.<sup>19</sup> Gulf Arabs have also invested heavily in Islamic banking in Malaysia and Indonesia and in the Takaful market in Malaysia.<sup>20</sup> Together, Malaysia's Islamic finance and Takaful markets are second in size to that in Saudi Arabia.<sup>21</sup>

Nor was investment in one direction only. Over 80 Malaysian companies operate in Saudi Arabia.<sup>22</sup> Between 2007 and 2010, Malaysians made \$4.5 billion in investments in the kingdom, and Malaysia's Federal Land Development Authority in 2009 became the first foreign entity to be given a license to form a 100 percent foreign-owned company in the kingdom.<sup>23</sup> Malaysia also has \$100 million worth of investments in the Emirates.<sup>24</sup> Malaysian companies have secured contracts worth \$2.5 billion for Qatar's World Cup preparations for 2022,<sup>25</sup> and have secured several projects in Saudi Arabia. Among the most important are a \$30 billion contract for the Jazan Economic City in Jizan Province, the \$200 million Malaysia Mall in Jeddah, and a \$5.6 billion contract for the Jabal Omar project to improve accommodations for Hajj pilgrims in Mecca.<sup>26</sup>

The Jabal Omar project points to an important component of the relationship between the Gulf states and Southeast Asia that has also grown in the twenty-first century: interpersonal and religious ties. A quarter of a million Indonesians and 30,000 Malaysians travel annually to Saudi Arabia to fulfill their religious obligations.<sup>27</sup> One million Indonesians worked in Saudi Arabia in 2011,<sup>28</sup> and 6,000 Malaysians in the UAE.<sup>29</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an

Egyptian imam long based in Qatar, is an influential figure in Southeast Asia whose teachings frequently appear in the work of Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin (Dr. Maza), one of Malaysia's top young imams and public intellectuals.<sup>30</sup> While Dr. Maza and others have continued the centuries-old tradition of studying in the Arab world,<sup>31</sup> tens of thousands of Gulf nationals and expatriates study, seek medical care, and vacation in Malaysia and Indonesia. In January 2010, King Abdul-

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lah gave the Malaysian prime minister Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honor: the King Abdul Aziz Medal

of the First Order.<sup>32</sup> A year later, Malaysia's king (or the Yang di-Pertuan Agong) presented Abu Dhabi's crown prince and the head of the UAE armed forces, Shaykh Muhammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan, with Malaysia's most prestigious award: Grand Commander of the Order of the Defender of the Realm, with the title of "Tun."<sup>33</sup>

In the eyes of Gulf and Southeast Asian politicians, these ceremonies and expanded ties were invaluable policy tools. For Southeast Asians, the ties reaffirmed their Islamic identity and links to the wider Muslim world. They also promised economic growth in a period of global instability and balance against China, whose rise is at once welcomed as a way to check Western hegemony but which also threatens domestic and regional political balances in Southeast Asia. Significantly, Malaysia and Indonesia maintain extensive commercial links to China, have important populations of Chinese descent, and con-

trol international seaways vital to Chinese commerce. In fact, Malaysia claims a portion of the South China Sea; the July 2012 meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers collapsed because of disagreements over Chinese claims to the strategic waterway.<sup>34</sup> For Gulf leaders, Southeast Asia offered an alternative partner to a still economically stagnant West and strategic allies in the Muslim world to replace those that collapsed during the Arab Spring. Indonesia's

abundant farmland also offered the possibility of addressing the Gulf's growing insecurity over its ability to feed its bur-

geoning population, especially with rising global food prices and the possibility that a war with Iran could close off trade in the Strait of Hormuz.<sup>35</sup> Equally important, Malaysia and Indonesia could help to offset domestic instability and the rise of Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Muslim world, both of which are mistrusted by Gulf governments.

Both sides sought to build on these new ties — ties that were strong enough to withstand revolutionary events and public anger. GCC leaders frequently visited Southeast Asia with generous investment packages in 2011, and they opened their airspace to planes evacuating Malaysians from Egypt and other Arab states in 2011.<sup>36</sup> Malaysia strongly supported the GCC intervention in Bahrain and offered to deploy its military to the island if requested in May 2011.<sup>37</sup> (It had previously supported the 2009 Saudi intervention in Yemen and signed agreements to share intelligence,

crime and counterterrorism information in 2010 and April 2011.)<sup>38</sup> Only weeks after Saudi Arabia executed an Indonesian maid in 2011 for killing her abusive boss — an act that set off popular fury in Indonesia<sup>39</sup> — Indonesia's top university, Universitas Indonesia, conferred an honoree doctorate on King Abdullah.<sup>40</sup> Attending the ceremony in Riyadh were senior Indonesian officials, whose government had just issued a special executive order to protest the maid's execution; the order also banned issuance of new visas for Indonesians to work in the kingdom.<sup>41</sup>

While Bahrain has never requested Malaysian military assistance, the relationship between the Gulf and Southeast Asia looks set to grow. When a Saudi blogger, Hamza Kashgari, wanted in Saudi Arabia for defaming the Prophet Muhammad on Twitter, arrived in Kuala Lumpur in February 2012, Malaysian authorities arrested him, made him appear before an immigration judge, and deported him to the kingdom.<sup>42</sup> During July and August 2012, Gulf officials lent political and financial support to a cause that is important to Muslims leaders and publics in Southeast Asia and which has divided ASEAN almost as fiercely as competing claims to the South China Sea: the Rohingya of Myanmar.<sup>43</sup> For much of 2012, Muslim regional social and medical aid organizations extended assistance to Rohingya, government leaders appointed special envoys for them, and leading politicians sent letters expressing their outrage at their treatment.<sup>44</sup> They also expressed their dismay at the silence of Aung San Suu Kyi on the plight of the Rohingya.<sup>45</sup> Not only did Gulf governments issue proclamations in support of the Rohingya, but Saudi Arabia also provided \$50 million in aid for Rohingya refugees.<sup>46</sup> Gulf governments supported a

resolution that condemned the treatment of the community in Myanmar, which was adopted at an Extraordinary August 2012 meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.<sup>47</sup> That resolution was one of three adopted by the conference; the others dealt with the violence in Syria and statehood for the Palestinians.<sup>48</sup>

The process of aligning the strategic interests of the Gulf and large Muslim states in Southeast Asia extended to former government leaders. Following a May 2012 address by Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed to a prominent international-relations conference in Kuala Lumpur,<sup>49</sup> an Emirati government official<sup>50</sup> questioned the former Malaysian prime minister about the Muslim Brotherhood and asked if Malaysia would join the UAE in opposing the rising influence of the organization in the Muslim world. He observed that the Muslim Brotherhood was synonymous with Islamic extremism and implicitly tied it to Malaysia's Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Mahathir, who had many political battles with PAS over Islam when he was prime minister,<sup>51</sup> denounced extremism and pledged to resist it at home and abroad. Although he has been out of office since 2003, Mahathir's words carry weight. He is given prominent coverage by Malaysian and international media and has influence in Malaysia's ruling party, the United Malay National Organization (UMNO).

Mahathir and his allies, however, represent only a portion of Malaysia's politics, which boasts a multiethnic and vocal opposition: the Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact or Alliance, PR). It has long controlled the northern state of Kelantan and since 2008 has governed wealthy Malaysian states such as Penang and Selangor.

In 2011, Anwar Ibrahim, the de facto PR leader, and his allies realized that enhanced ties with the GCC and the Arab world generally meant that events there were front-page news in Southeast Asia. This allowed them to draw parallels between their demands in Malaysia and those of

Arab protesters. They consciously adopted the same language used by protesters in Arab states and rhetorically linked Malaysian national lead-

ers to Qaddafi and other Arab leaders who had faced mass uprisings.<sup>52</sup>

Equally important, Anwar Ibrahim and his colleagues have also emulated how young Arab protesters employed social media to fundraise and coordinate mass rallies and other political activities at home and abroad, including in Mecca and Medina.<sup>53</sup> Anwar's party, the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice Party) was the first to buy advertising space online for an online political event.<sup>54</sup> In August 2012, Anwar became the first Malaysian politician to host a session on Google Hangout, an online video forum that uses video feeds and videos uploaded to YouTube.<sup>55</sup> Social media is a natural platform for Malaysians and Indonesians: Facebook and Twitter usage in both states is among the highest in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Without question, the most successful Malaysian opposition party to harness social media (and the example of the Arab Spring) was Anwar's Chinese partner, the Democratic Action party (DAP). Its Ubah

(change) campaign for the 2011 state elections in Sarawak employed elements of the Arab Spring along with Sarawakian and Asian elements. The campaign featured a two-minute YouTube video in Mandarin Chinese and English.<sup>57</sup> It opens with a jasmine flower (the symbol of Tunisia's

democratic revolution) pushing over the pictures of dictators whose regimes had fallen. The video then focuses on Pehin Sri Haji Abul Taib

Mahmud, Sarawak's chief minister or governor. (Taib has been in that position since 1981, the same year Mubarak became Egypt's president).

In the video, Taib appears as a giant, comical and demonic figure. His eyes glow and he claims to "own Sarawak." He has seemingly brought a reign of destruction akin to the apocalypse to Sarawak, a message accentuated by the use of a movie clip in which Godzilla destroys a Japanese city.<sup>58</sup> But Taib is challenged by a small hornbill, a bird with a large beak that is the traditional symbol of the state of Sarawak.<sup>59</sup> The bird wears a t-shirt with the DAP's rocket-ship logo and a kalambi, a cape-like vest worn by the Iban, an indigenous people of Sarawak. Taib at first dismisses the bird and punches it away. Undeterred, the hornbill comes back, asserts "power to the people" and becomes bigger than Taib as the words "Ubah" flash across the screen. The hornbill then pushes the now scared Taib into outer space. The previously terrifying music transforms into

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an uplifting crescendo with the hornbill and the message “Sarawak4Change” emblazoned over a map of Sarawak.

The DAP’s hornbill, now renamed Ubah, became a media star. Stuffed versions of the hornbill quickly appeared in cars, homes and offices in Sarawak.<sup>60</sup> Ubahs were soon available in the outfits of Malaysia’s various ethnic groups.<sup>61</sup> The Ubah also appeared at DAP rallies, started a Facebook page and a Twitter account,<sup>62</sup> and conducted an interview with one of Malaysia’s top opposition news websites, *Malaysiakini*.<sup>63</sup> (The interview revealed that Ubah was female and uses a Blackberry to tweet.)<sup>64</sup> In the Sarawak state elections, Taib remained in power, but the DAP reached its goal: it defeated Chinese candidates allied with him and UMNO. Buoyed by the DAP’s success in Sarawak, the party’s partners in the opposition alliance adopted the Ubah as their mascot for the thirteenth general elections to be held in 2013.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, Anwar Ibrahim predicted in June 2012 that the PR would win control of the Malaysian national government, thanks to substantial victories in Sarawak and the other Malaysian province on the island of Borneo, Sabah.<sup>66</sup>

Here it is worth noting that UMNO has ruled Malaysia continuously since independence and that there is little question that political change in Southeast Asia will occur under very different circumstances than in the Middle East. Southeast Asian societies have political and socioeconomic structures that do not exist in the Middle East. The per capita income of Malaysia is vastly higher than that of most Arab states, and Indonesia and Malaysia have experienced solid economic growth in recent years. Both nations have democratic political structures that have accommodated the needs of Muslims and non-Muslim popu-

lations, the latter accounting for nearly a quarter of the population in Malaysia. Chinese and other non-Muslims also have a substantial say in social and economic life. Furthermore, a prominent Malaysian attorney and civil-society leader, Ambiga Sreenevasan, told CNN’s *Christiane Amanpour* in November 2012, “We don’t want to cause an Arab Spring” in Malaysia and aim to bring political change “through the ballot box.”<sup>67</sup> Nor has UMNO ceded social media to the opposition.<sup>68</sup> Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak retains support in the country and has substantially more likes on his Facebook page and among his Twitter followers than Anwar Ibrahim does.<sup>69</sup> As one of Indonesia’s top Muslim scholars, Azyumardi Azra, half jokingly, told me in June 2011: “Friday, the day of protest in the Arab world, is not a holiday in Southeast Asia.” Strikingly, Azra’s country has been largely unaffected politically by the events in the Arab World, and there has been nothing like the Ubah phenomenon there.<sup>70</sup>

While Southeast Asian governments are unlikely to face rebellions or calls for change equivalent to those in the Gulf or the wider Arab world, they (and their partners in the GCC) will face real challenges as their strategic partnership grows. Public anger in Indonesia at the treatment of maids in Saudi Arabia remains raw, while a number of senior Malaysian figures criticized the government’s decision to return Hamza Kashgari to Saudi Arabia.<sup>71</sup> Complaints about the absence of significant new Gulf investment in Malaysia have also begun to appear in the country’s media in 2012.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the failure of Indonesia’s government to bring stability to West Papua has forced the Bin Laden Group to look to other nations for farm land to meet Saudi Arabia’s food-security needs.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, the Gulf's bilateral trade with Southeast Asian nations is still smaller than its bilateral trade with China, Europe, Japan and the United States. Although the number of Gulf tourists have grown rapidly in recent years, even the number of Saudi tourists (87,000) were dwarfed by those from Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and China in 2011.<sup>74</sup> One sees similar numbers in Indonesia, where only a fraction of the 7 million tourists annually come from the Gulf.<sup>75</sup> Although the number of GCC students in Southeast Asian colleges and universities has risen, and the fees at Malaysian universities are a fraction of those at Western institutions,<sup>76</sup> there are now 50,000 Saudis studying in the United States — many more than in Malaysia.<sup>77</sup>

That said, the ongoing political challenges in the key nations of the Arab world and Turkey's growing involvement in Syria's civil war suggest that the Gulf rela-

tionship with Southeast Asia is set to grow, if only by default. Both enjoy warm ties with the West, and the trade numbers don't include important linkages: one Malaysian University, the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM), has educated and provided a place to teach for scores of business and political leaders in the Middle East, such as Turkey's influential foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu.<sup>78</sup> IIUM has received contributions from Gulf Arabs and retains strong ties to the region.<sup>79</sup> The Gulf states and Southeast Asia also have important status in the twenty-first century as wealth and power shift to Asia. They have positive trade balances with Asia's rising superpower, China. Gulf petroleum and Southeast Asian raw materials are not hard to find in China. But, remarkably, one can also find Chinese-themed candy with panda bears sold in the gift shops of Beijing's International Airport bearing the label "Product of Malaysia."<sup>80</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Noel Achariam, "Middle-Eastern Tourists Prefer Arab Cuisine to Local Fare," *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 20, 2011, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Davidson, *The Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia: From Indifference to Interdependence* (Columbia University Press, 2010); Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The GCC States and the Changing Balance of Power*, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar *Occasional Paper no.6* (Doha, Qatar: Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2010); and Makio Yamada, "Gulf-Asia Relations as 'Post-Rentier' Diversification?: The Case of the Petrochemical Industry in Saudi Arabia," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 1 no. 1 (2011): 99-116. The classic text on the subject remains Fred R. von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam: Interaction between Southeast Asia and the Middle East* (University of Florida Press, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Von der Mehden, *Two Worlds of Islam*, 36-37.

<sup>4</sup> For an example of this commercial, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEFkFyIo9LY>.

<sup>5</sup> Ironically, the advertising campaign was initially intended to stress Malaysia's position in Asia and to downplay the nation's Islamic roots.

<sup>6</sup> "Malaysian Services Sector Eyes Further Inroads in GCC and Beyond," *Malaysia Economic News*, February 2, 2010; and "Malaysia's East Coast Economic Region Eyes GCC Market," *Islamic Finance News*, January 29, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Melissa Chi, "Malaysia, the Perfect Bridge for Iranians to Escape Home," *The Malaysian Insider*, October 26, 2011.



<sup>8</sup> Compilation of statistics drawn from statistics available from the International Monetary Fund, *Directory of Trade Statistics (DOTS)*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “GCC, ASEAN Step Plans to Enhance Economic Ties,” *The Saudi Gazette*, July 27, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “Malaysia’s Zarinah Anwar Calls for Greater GCC-Asian Connectivity,” *Arab News*, June 19, 2011; Indonesian Government News, “Indonesian Islamic Finance Sector Attracting Investments from Middle East, Europe,” February 9, 2012; and “Saudi Arabia’s Al Rajhi Eyes Malaysian Islamic Market,” *Islamic Finance News*, April 28, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> “Malaysia/Qatar: Al-Jazeera Executives Meet Malaysian Information Minister,” BBC Monitoring World Media, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, May 22, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Malaysian Investment Development Authority, *Malaysian Investment Performance 2011* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Malaysian Investment Development Authority, 2012), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Damian Reilly, “Gulf Looking East Not West for Investment, Says Malaysia PM,” *ArabiaBusiness.com*, January 31, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> “Indonesia Independence Day Special: Kingdom-Indonesia Ties Strong and Cordial,” *Arab News*, August 17, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Sudip Roy, “Islamic finance: Saudi Telecom’s Axis Scores Record Deal,” *Euromoney*, July 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Maywa Montegro, “Hungry for Land,” *Seed Magazine*, April 27, 2009; and Nick Lord, “Land Grab Raises Concerns about Food Security,” *Euromoney*, September 2011.

<sup>20</sup> “Takaful Mart: M’sia Stands at No 2,” *The Malaysian Reserve*, April 12, 2011, 3.

<sup>21</sup> “Saudi Arabia Emerges Top Market for Islamic Investors with 42.4% Share,” *Islamic Finance News*, March 12, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> “Malaysian PM Says Ties with Saudi Arabia Important, Strategic,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, January 18, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Lokman Mansor, “Coming Together for the Betterment of Muslims,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), January 24, 2010, 26.

<sup>24</sup> “Malaysian Companies Have Strong Presence in UAE–Muhyiddin,” *Malaysia Economic News*, May 8, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> “Malaysia to Open Trade Centre in Doha Come September,” *Malaysia Economic News*, April 30, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Mansor, “Coming Together for the betterment of Muslims,” and Azlan Abu Bakar, “Mall to Mark New Milestone in Business Ties with Saudis,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), March 2, 2009, 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Indonesia Independence Day Special: Kingdom-Indonesia Ties Strong and Cordial*; and “Malaysia Woos Saudi Tourists, Students,” *Arab News*, September 2, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> “Saudi Arabia Apologizes over Indonesia Maid Beheading,” BBC News—Asia Pacific, June 22, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> “Muhyiddin’s Visit Strengthens Ties, Widens Malaysia-UAE Cooperation,” *Malaysia General News*, May 16, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Dr. Maza has over 61,000 followers on Twitter, and his articles frequently appear in Malaysian newspapers. To see Qaradawi’s influence on Maza’s thinking, see Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin, *Islam in Malaysia: Perceptions and Facts*, trans. U-En Ng (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Matahari Books, 2010) or visit [www.drmaza.com](http://www.drmaza.com).

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Maza earned a B.A. in Sharia Law at the University of Jordan in Amman, Jordan.

<sup>32</sup> “Malaysia, Saudi Arabia to Enhance Ties in Dealing with Terrorism - MP Najib,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, January 18, 2010.

<sup>33</sup> “King Receives Visit from Abu Dhabi Crown Prince,” *Malaysia General News*, June 17, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> The disagreements were sufficiently bad that ASEAN members failed to agree on a conference communiqué. That had never happened before in the organization’s forty-five-year history. “Asean in Crisis: Divided We Stagger: Can Indonesia Heal the Deepening Rifts in Southeast Asia,” *The Economist*, August 18, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Carl Mortished, “Quest for Food Security Breeds Neo-Colonialists,” *The Times* (London), March 5, 2009, 49.

<sup>36</sup> “PM Thanks Saudi Arabia for Nod to Use Airspace,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), February 5, 2011, 2.

<sup>37</sup> “Malaysia Announces Support for the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain,” *Bahrain News Agency*, May 14, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> “Malaysian PM Expresses Solidarity with Saudi Arabia on Border Unrest,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, November 20, 2009; Alang Bendahara, “Saudi Arabia and Malaysia to Share Crime, Terror Info,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), January 20, 2010, 9, and “Malaysia and Saudi Arabia Sign Security Pact: Report,” Agence France-Presse—English, April 20, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Higgins, “Beheading Fuels Backlash in Indonesia,” *The Washington Post*, August 9, 2011, A06.

<sup>40</sup> “King Receives Doctorate Degree from University of Indonesia,” *Arab News*, August 21, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Receives Princes, Ministers, and Officials,” *States News Service*, August 22, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> “Deported Saudi Blogger Faces Blasphemy Charge: Report,” Agence France Presse—English, February 13, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> “UAE Urges International Community to End ‘Tragedy’ of Muslim Minority in Myanmar,” BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political, supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, August 13, 2012, (Source: WAM news agency website, Abu Dhabi, in English August 11, 2012); “Gulf Cooperation Council Meeting Raps Iranian ‘Interference,’” BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political, supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, September 3, 2012, (Source: SPA news agency website, Riyadh, in English September 2, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> “Putra Malaysia to Aid Rohingya,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 12, 2012; “Dr M: Rohingya Issues Can Be Handled Diplomatically,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 16, 2012, 4; “Indonesian Red Cross Sends Aid to Rohingya Refugees in Burma,” BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific Political, supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, August 27, 2012 (source: *The Jakarta Post* website, Jakarta, in English August 26, 2012); Kavi Chongkittavorn, “Rohingya Plight Further Divides Asean,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), September 5, 2012; and Rozanna Latiff and Eunice Au, “Recognize Rohingya as Citizens, Dr. M tells Myanmar,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), September 18, 2012, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Deva Mohd Ridzam, “World Still Silent on Plight of the Rohingya,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 6, 2012, 17.

<sup>46</sup> “Saudi King sends £32m to embattled Burma Muslims,” *The Independent*, August 13, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Lokman Mansor, “OIC Suspends Syria,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 17, 2012, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> The conference was the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Asia-Pacific Roundtable. For more on Dr. Mahathir’s speech, see Mior Kamarul Shahid and Kamrul Idris, “It Is Success In Terms of Change,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), June 3, 2012, 10.

<sup>50</sup> The UAE government official was Dr. Tarek Shayya. He is the Director of Strategy, United Arab Emirates, Minister of State Office.

<sup>51</sup> For more on these battles, see Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Piety and Politics: Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 46-72.

<sup>52</sup> One regularly hears phrases like “regime change” among PR figures. They also use subtle rhetoric that tries to link repressive Arab regimes to Malaysia’s government. For example, a journalist for the *International Herald Tribune* noted in December 2011 that “Anwar Ibrahim ‘said Malaysia was not comparable to Libya under Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi’s regime or Syria under President Bashar al-Assad. But...all the ingredients of a repressive regime, an authoritarian regime, are there.’” Liz Gooch, “Expecting Conviction, Malaysian Opposition Head Is Defiant,” *International Herald Tribune*, December 14, 2011, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Akil Yunus and Phuah Ken Lin, “Riyadh: Respect Sacredness of Holy Land,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), May 29, 2012, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Jahabar Sadiq, “On Google Hangout, Anwar Seeks to Widen Youth Appeal,” *The Malaysian Insider*, August 8, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> By May 2011, 40 percent of Malaysia’s population was on Facebook. For more on this issue, see Sean Foley, “Maher Zain, Technological Change, and Southeast Asia’s Role in the Modernization of the Muslim World,” *Focus On Essay: Oxford University Press Islamic Studies Online*, January 2012.

<sup>57</sup> To see the video, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4BQGdPqo6Q>.

<sup>58</sup> The clip is taken from opening scene of the 2005 Japanese movie *Always Sanchōme no Yūhi* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEEXydQc9KE>). I thank Ai Kawamura of the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan for telling me which Japanese film the Ubah video incorporates.

<sup>59</sup> The hornbill is the traditional symbol of the state of Sarawak and is on its official coat of arms. The state is

widely known in Malaysia as Bumi Kenyalang, or the “Land of the Hornbills.”

<sup>60</sup> Each Ubah doll sold for about three U.S. dollars. Teo Cheng Wee, “Disgruntled Chinese Voters Likely To Back Opposition Heavily,” *The Straits Times* (Singapore), March 17, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> For more go to, <http://store.dapmalaysia.org/index.php?route=common%2Fhome>; Clara Chooi, “Election Gimmicks Colour DAP’s Sarawak Campaign,” *Malaysian Insider*, April 10, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.facebook.com/#!/Ubah4Sarawak>.

<sup>63</sup> Ubah’s language in the interview is similar to that used by Malaysian young people on SMS messages, complete with emoticons. Regina Lee, “A Hornbill Joins the Battle for Change,” *Malaysiakini*, April 1, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Raymond Tan, “Ubah Declared DAP’s National Mascot for Coming Polls,” *The Borneo Post*, April 3, 2012; Rita Sim, “Taiwan-style Politics May Backfire on Opposition,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), May 3, 2012, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Datuk Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, “Bent on Getting Best of Both Sides,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), June 12, 2012, 15; and Joniston Bangkuai, “‘Defections’ Anger Grassroots Leaders,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), August 1, 2012, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Clara Chooi, “Bersih Not Looking for an Arab Spring, Ambiga tells CNN’s Amanpour,” *Malaysian Insider*, November 9, 2012.

<sup>68</sup> Alang Bendahara, “Winning the Social Media War,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), November 24, 2011, 10; “Use New Media to Reach Public Better,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), February 27, 2012, 17.

<sup>69</sup> As of August 8, 2012, the prime minister had 1,135,529 “likes” on Facebook and 801,833 followers on Twitter, while Anwar Ibrahim had 379,612 “likes” on Facebook and 179,830 following him on Twitter. Sadiq, “On Google Hangout, Anwar Seeks to Widen Youth Appeal.”

<sup>70</sup> For more on recent political and religious issues in Indonesia, see Imtiyaz Yusuf, “The Middle East and Muslim Southeast Asia: Implications of the Arab Spring,” *Focus On Essay: Oxford University Press Islamic Studies Online*, Summer 2012.

<sup>71</sup> *Deported Saudi Blogger Faces Blasphemy Charge: Report.*

<sup>72</sup> Zaidi Isham Ismail, “The ‘Absent’ Arab Investors,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), April 23, 2012, 2.

<sup>73</sup> “West Papua: An Agribusiness Attack in West Papua — Unraveling the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate,” *Newstex LLC*, April 25, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> “Inbound Tourism Malaysia Not Islamic,” *Business Trends Asia*, March 26, 2012.

<sup>75</sup> Fouzia Khan, “Indonesian Mission Holds Road Show to Lure Saudi Tourists,” *Arab News*, May 3, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Fees at Malaysian universities are as little as \$5,500 annually. “Malaysian Universities Court UAE Students.”

<sup>77</sup> “Record Number of Saudi Students Now Studying in the U.S.,” PR Newswire, December 1, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> For more on IIUM and its role in the Islamic world, see Sean Foley, “Islamic Modernism in Southeast Asia,” *Oxford University Press Islamic Studies: Regional Update*, April 2012.

<sup>79</sup> IIUM received a donation of \$1 million each from the Prince Sultan Charitable Foundation in 2001 and from Prince Alwaleed bin Talal in 2007. Abdul Ghafour, “IIUM: Striving for Academic Excellence,” *Arab News*, April 10, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> In November 2011 “Panda Chocolates” were sold at Beijing’s Capital International Airport. The chocolates were distributed by Manly Trading Company (Singapore) and bore the label “Product of Malaysia.”