

## **Essential factors influencing Malaysia's relations with the United Arab Emirates**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyses Malaysia's relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as one of its important partners and the most rapidly developing country in the Middle East. It seeks to understand the bilateral relationship by identifying the essential factors that influence them. Apart from the systemic structure that presents no obstacle for the relations, the study has found two essential factors that play pivotal roles in solidifying Malaysia's relations with the UAE. They are political–diplomatic engagements and socioeconomic opportunities. Hence, this study touches first on Malaysia's early interactions with the UAE from an overview of foreign policy orientation and is followed by examining the political– diplomatic engagements and socioeconomic interactions, which shape the character of the relations. The findings show that besides significance of political– diplomatic engagements and socioeconomic interactions, the religious element is still germane. Though not in the manner of Malaysia's traditional–religious interactions with some Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt, it visibly appears in the form of 'Islamic commercial brands' vis-à-vis the UAE that economically bind both countries to embrace more in Islamic finance and investment, halal industry, tourism, and education.