

Identity dynamics and diplomatic narratives: Malaysian Chinese perspectives

ABSTRACT

Objectives: This research provides a comprehensive analysis of Malaysia-China relations during Najib Razak's administration, examining the political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of bilateral cooperation. Under Najib's leadership, Malaysia pursued a multifaceted approach to strengthening ties with China, characterized by frequent high-level visits, extensive economic engagements, and collaborative initiatives. The study explores political cooperation, focusing on efforts to address maritime security and territorial disputes in the South China Sea through dialogue and bilateral channels. Economically, it examines the significant growth in Malaysia-China relations, increased trade volumes, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, and collaborative investment projects. Socio-culturally, the research looks at educational exchanges, tourism cooperation, and initiatives like the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) Program, which facilitated closer ties and mutual understanding between the two nations. The study concludes with policy implications for policymakers and researchers, emphasizing the need to address trade imbalances, prioritize dialogue and cooperation in addressing regional challenges, and expand bilateral cooperation beyond traditional sectors to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Methods: The research methodology employed in this study involves a qualitative analysis of secondary data sources. Data from reputable sources such as government reports, academic publications, and international organizations' databases were collected and analyzed to provide a comprehensive overview of Malaysia-China relations during Najib Razak's administration. This qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the political, economic, and socio-cultural dynamics shaping bilateral cooperation, offering valuable insights into the complexities of Malaysia-China relations. Through rigorous analysis and interpretation of the available data, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing perceptions of diplomatic engagements between the two countries, contributing to the scholarly discourse on international relations and bilateral cooperation.

Results: The study found that during Najib Razak's administration, Malaysia-China relations experienced significant growth and development across various dimensions. Politically, both nations engaged in constructive dialogue to manage maritime security and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, emphasizing bilateral channels to address these issues. Economically, the relations flourished with a marked increase in trade volumes, substantial Chinese FDI inflows, and numerous collaborative investment projects. However, the study also highlighted challenges such as trade imbalances and the need for greater transparency

in mega projects, which necessitate policy adjustments for sustainable economic cooperation. Socio-culturally, the research indicated strong bilateral ties fostered through educational exchanges, tourism cooperation, and initiatives like the MM2H Program, which enhanced mutual understanding and appreciation between the Malaysian and Chinese populations. Conclusion: The research concludes that Malaysia-China relations during Najib Razak's administration were characterized by multifaceted cooperation and significant achievements in political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. To ensure a resilient and dynamic partnership that promotes mutual prosperity and development, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing trade imbalances, prioritizing dialogue and cooperation in addressing regional challenges, and expanding bilateral cooperation beyond traditional sectors to capitalize on emerging opportunities. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and researchers, contributing to a deeper understanding of Malaysia-China relations and offering a basis for future strategies to enhance bilateral cooperation.