

**KLEPTOCRACY**  
**AND MALAYSIA'S**  
**FOREIGN POLICY**  
CHANGE TOWARDS  
**CHINA**  
A POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE  
RELATIONS ACCOUNT

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PENERBIT UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA  
BANGI • 2024  
[www.ukm.my/penerbit](http://www.ukm.my/penerbit)

Cetakan Pertama / *First Printing*, 2024  
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Diterbitkan di Malaysia oleh/ *Published in Malaysia by*  
PENERBIT UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA  
43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA  
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*MALAYSIAN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING COUNCIL*  
PERSATUAN PENERBIT BUKU MALAYSIA/  
*MALAYSIAN BOOK PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION*  
No. Ahli/ *Membership No.* 198302

Atur huruf oleh/ *Typeset by*  
PENERBIT UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA  
43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA

Dicetak di Malaysia oleh/ *Printed in Malaysia by*  
PERCETAKAN INFO MEDITASI SDN. BHD.  
No. 25, Jalan Balakong Jaya 1,  
Taman Industri Balakong Jaya,  
43300 Balakong, Selangor Darul Ehsan, MALAYSIA



Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the National Library of Malaysia

ISBN 978-629-486-373-6

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## Preface

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The study of international relations (IR) and foreign policy often centers on the dynamics of power, diplomacy, and the intricate balance between national interests and global interactions. Yet, within these realms, there exists a critical yet often overlooked dimension: the influence of internal governance structures, particularly when marred by corruption and kleptocracy, on a nation's foreign policy. This book, *Kleptocracy and Malaysia's Foreign Policy Change towards China: A Political-Administrative Relations Account*, delves into this complex intersection, offering a thorough examination of how political-administrative relations mediate the effects of kleptocracy on foreign policy decisions. Malaysia's foreign policy shift towards China during Najib Razak's administration, amidst his infamous kleptocracy case, serves as a poignant case study. This period saw significant alterations in Malaysia's foreign economic and defense policies, raising broader theoretical questions relevant to scholars and practitioners in IR, foreign policy, and public administration.

The essence of this book lies in understanding how high-level corruption and the subversion of bureaucratic processes can steer a country's foreign policy in directions that may not align with national interests but serve the personal gains of those in power. Despite the presence of high-caliber bureaucrats in Malaysia, their ability to influence key decisions was severely undermined. The over-inflated loans from China, which ended up bailing out the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) debt, and the fire-sale of Edra Energy to China, exemplify the sidelining of competent officials in favor of Najib's allies. These allies not only proposed and facilitated these loans but also manipulated the foreign economic policy to their benefit. In the realm of defense, similar patterns emerged. The decision to procure Littoral Mission Ships from China, contrary to the Navy's domestic building plans, and the unprecedented Chinese attack submarine port calls negotiated by Jho Low, highlight the extent of kleptocratic influence bypassing established military bureaucratic channels.

This book aims to provide a comprehensive insight into these dynamics, illustrating how one of the largest cases of kleptocracy influenced Malaysia's foreign policy towards China. By examining these events, the research sheds light on the broader implications for other nations, particularly smaller powers, as they navigate the complex waters of global power rivalries, such as the ongoing US-China strategic competition. It underscores the critical need for robust and transparent political-administrative relations to safeguard national interests and maintain the integrity of foreign policy-making processes. As it explores the intricacies of Malaysia's foreign policy transformation under the shadow of kleptocracy, this book invites readers to reflect on the lessons learned and the importance of institutional integrity in the conduct of international relations. It is my hope that this work will contribute to a deeper understanding of the profound impact that internal governance issues can have on a nation's external engagements, providing valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike.

My utmost gratitude to God the Almighty for the immense strength He has granted me during the course of my Doctorate studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands (2018-2022). I owe a profound appreciation to my both supervisors, Prof. Dr. Kutsal Yesilkagit and Dr. Johan Christensen for their unequivocal support. I deeply appreciate our inspiring and informative discussions that led to the two high-impact publications in *Contemporary Politics* and the *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*. Kutsal and Johan, I honestly cannot thank you enough for your kindness and patience. To the members of my Doctorate Committee, Prof. Dr. Erwin Muller, Prof. Dr. Frits van der Meer, Prof. Dr. Anchrit Wille, Prof. Dr. Martin Lodge, and Dr. Kohei Suzuki, thank you for your time and effort in going through my work and for providing constructive comments.

My extended gratitude to the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for the scholarship they provide to support my studies in the Netherlands. I also would like to express my humble gratitude to Malaysian officials at the Economic Planning Unit, the Prime Minister Office, Malaysian Ministry of Finance, Malaysian National Security Council, Malaysian Defense Ministry, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commissioner, Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Malaysian Navy, and Bank Negara Malaysia for their willingness to provide valuable insights for this book project. My sincere thanks to my mentors and colleagues at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Leiden University.

My greatest appreciation to my dearest wife, Adauwiah, as well as to my two little princess Ayarikha and Ayasofya, for their continuous support and love. I have fond memories and the greatest honors for my beloved parents, Abadi bin Chik and the late Zainun binti Ali, through whom I learn diligence, perseverance, and sincerity. A heartfelt thank you to Malaysian family in the Netherlands. Last but not least, to my siblings as well as my in laws, the late Salih Ludin & Rosidah.

*Abdul Muein Abadi*