



MALAYSIA

Quick Facts

Population: 31,381,992 (July 2017 est.)

Area: 329,847 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Bumiputera 61.7% (Malays and indigenous peoples, including Orang Asli, Dayak, Anak Negeri), Chinese 20.8%, Indian 6.2%, other 0.9%, non-citizens 10.4% (2017 est.)

Government Type: Federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy

GDP (official exchange rate): \$309.9 billion (2017 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated April 2018)

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has long been viewed as a developed, pro-Western, and moderate Muslim-majority country. In recent decades, however, the country as a whole has been experiencing a swing toward Islamic conservatism. This shift appears to be gaining momentum, as evidenced by the increasing popularity of sharia law in public discourse, the state-sanctioned suppression of civil rights and liberties in the name of Islam, the inability of civil courts to stand up against controversial sharia court decisions, increasing cases of moral policing by Islamic religious authorities (including the policing of non-Muslims, in some instances). This increasing visibility of Islam in Malaysian society and politics is driven not only by the Islamist opposition party Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (Islamic Party of Malaysia, or PAS), but also by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), whose members were apparently the architects of Malaysia's brand of progressive, moderate Islam.¹ Alternative actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups likewise are increasingly participating in the politicization of Islam in Malaysia today, at times even eclipsing mainstream political parties in terms of intensity.

Islam in Malaysia is arguably fragmented and variegated in both substance and expression, with religious vocabulary and idioms being mobilized by the state, opposition forces, and a wide array of civil society groups. While Malaysian Islamists nominally operate within the boundaries of the country's mainstream political processes, they also work to define those boundaries. Moreover, even as the Muslim opposition attempts to shed its doctrinaire image in pursuit of an agenda of reform, the "moderate" UMNO-led government has pursued an agenda that has resulted in the constriction of the country's cultural and religious space.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

PAS - Parti Se-Islam Malaysia (Pan Malaysian Islamic Party)

PAS was established as the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party in 1951 by dissidents from UMNO's Bureau of

Religious Affairs, and has participated in every Malaysian parliamentary election since 1955.² Since its inception, PAS has advocated for the promotion of Malay interests and the protection of Muslim rights. In its early days, PAS maintained a more rural constituency, particularly among ethnic Arabs and religiously-educated Malays.³ By 1982, however, PAS's political stance was infused with Islamist aspirations. During this time, old-guard ethno-nationalists were voted out via party elections and replaced by ulama (religious scholars). This transformation coincided with burgeoning sentiments among Malay-Muslims that Islam is *addin* (a way of life), and had to be accorded greater prominence not only in their personal lives, but in the public sphere as well.⁴

The global resurgence of Islamic consciousness during the 1970s and early 1980s, coupled with the religious leadership epitomized by the likes of Fadzil Noor, Abdul Hadi Awang, and Nakhai Ahmad, contributed to the party's pronounced Islamic agenda.⁵ The result has been a public battle between PAS and UMNO that hinges on the discourse of morality, with PAS admonishing UMNO for marginalizing the position of Islamic laws and the political leadership's failure to observe Islamic ethics and morals. From the outset, the party's goal was a sharia-based state in which economic, political, and social systems conformed to Islamic values.

While PAS's commitment to its religious agenda had in the past prevented the party from fruitful cooperation with secular opposition allies,⁶ a steady expansion of PAS's support base in states such as Terengganu, Kedah, and Perlis and in the universities throughout the country in the 1990s indicated the party's rising popularity and the appeal of sharia-centered politics. The party's outlook is buttressed by its unyielding belief that the creation of an Islamic state is both a viable and necessary alternative to the UMNO-dominated secular state. Since 1990, when it was returned to power in the state of Kelantan, PAS has presented draft proposals to the parliament for the introduction of hudud criminal law in Kelantan.⁷ Similar efforts were made after the PAS electoral triumph in Terengganu in 1999. However, as criminal law falls under the jurisdiction of the federal and not the sharia courts, the motions were withdrawn on both occasions.

A turning point in the party's Islamic-state agenda came in the run-up to the March 2008 elections. Given the party's dismal showing in the 2004 elections, PAS leaders promised to soften the party's stance on the Islamic-state issue.⁸ Ex-deputy prime minister of Malaysia and current PKR adviser Anwar Ibrahim echoed this shift, claiming that "PAS's intention to establish an Islamic state is no longer an issue."⁹ In the 2008 election, PAS distanced itself from the Islamic-state objective and attempted to leverage the disenfranchisement of Malaysia's ethnic minorities in the wake of UMNO's rallying call of Malay primacy.¹⁰

In an obvious effort to woo non-Muslim votes, PAS leaders made clear that their campaign at the national level would focus on a manifesto that holds out the promise of a welfare state system, known as *negara kebajikan*, accessible to all Malaysians.¹¹ Components of this agenda included populist initiatives such as free education, free water utilities throughout the country, cheaper fuel, and health subsidies.¹² Furthermore, wealth and income distribution would be pursued through a taxation policy that targeted revenue from large businesses in order to offset subsidies earmarked for the poor.¹³ Not only was the welfare-state concept intended to dull the edges of its Islamist agenda, the PAS hoped it would enhance the appeal of the party across the electorate, particularly since specific reference had also been made to issues of meritocracy and the importance of the presence of non-Malay ministers.¹⁴ Indeed, these were all important developments in ensuring non-Muslim support for PAS in the 2008 elections, in which the party made considerable gains and raised its total number of seats in the National Parliament from seven to twenty-three. In a continuation of this trajectory, the party also created a non-Muslim wing in 2010 and planned to field non-Muslim candidates in mixed seats during the next election.

PAS fulfilled its promise and fielded non-Muslim candidates during the 2013 general elections.¹⁵ When the election took place on May 5, 2013, the incumbent coalition Barisan Nasional (BN), led by incumbent

Prime Minister Najib Razak, maintained a majority in Parliament despite a resurgence of the opposition. In protest, Pakatan Rakyat (PR), the minority coalition of which PAS is a part, demonstrated against the election results. Although the PR coalition's other constituent parties—the secular Democratic Action Party (DAP) and the moderate PKR—agitated on the basis of electoral malfeasance, the PAS took the opportunity to advocate for an Islamic state, and rumors of a possible “Malaysian Arab Spring” circulated among opposition leaders.¹⁶

Within PAS, rumblings of dissatisfaction over the party's less than stellar electoral performance began to grow. It had not gone unnoticed by some PAS leaders that the party was defeated in areas with a Malay-majority populace. The party has since lost two seats of the twenty-three it won in 2008. Some PAS leaders later attributed the decline in the party's popularity among its core Malay base to its support for the dismantling of longstanding race-based affirmative action policies.¹⁷

At the PAS muktamar (annual congress) held at the end of 2013, the gulf between those who wished to return to a more conservative religious stance and the progressives who wished to continue building on inclusive political engagement widened considerably. Although several conservatives were voted into PAS's central committee at the 2013 muktamar, the overall make-up of the party did not change. As such, despite resentments held by a sizeable segment within PAS, the party nevertheless remained with the PR coalition.¹⁸

However, by 2015, PAS conservatives had actively renewed their hudud implementation agenda, with the PAS-dominated Kelantan state assembly unanimously passing amendments to the Syariah Criminal Code that would approve hudud.¹⁹ Inevitably, this move met with strong condemnation from PAS's coalition allies, DAP and PKR. After PAS leadership was firmly secured by the conservatives at the 2015 muktamar, PAS severed its ties with PR. Several months later, the progressive faction, which was sidelined within PAS, split to form a new political party, the Parti Amanah Negara.

PAS's strategy of cooperation with the secular-oriented opposition coalition did not result in further electoral gains in 2013, and this failure likely provided the impetus for conservatives within the party to re-establish their dominance. Since then, PAS has redoubled its efforts to pursue the implementation of its hudud agenda. In 2016, PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang succeeded in having his private member's bill, which proposed amendments that would increase the penalties meted out under the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, tabled in Parliament. Meanwhile, at the behest of the party president, PAS has adopted a more accommodating stance towards UMNO in the name of Malay-Muslim unity. This gravitation towards UMNO however, has not been popular with the party grassroots and will likely emerge as a major issue that will weaken the party at the next general election in 2018.

Radical Salafi groups

Malaysia has been home to a pair of notable radical Islamist groups that adhere broadly to the exclusionary Salafi strain of political Islam:

The KMM (Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia/Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, or Malaysian Mujahidin Group/Malaysian Militant Group), an alleged underground militant group, was uncovered as a result of its attempted bombing of a shopping mall in Jakarta in August 2001. The group is reported to favor the overthrow of the Malaysian government and the creation of a regional Islamic state.²⁰

KMM differs from other militant organizations in Malaysia in terms of its reach. Though established in Malaysia, several sources have indicated that KMM enjoys close links with Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia.²¹ Nevertheless, the exact nature of this relationship remains murky. Despite inconclusive evidence, Malaysian intelligence sources also revealed that KMM allegedly participated in religiously inspired riots in Maluku and Ambon in 2000 and supplied arms to radical Muslims involved in those incidents.²² Subsequent arrests found leaders having in their possession “documents on guerrilla warfare and map reading, along with studies of militant groups in the Philippines, Chechnya, Afghanistan and

Indonesia.”²³ In response, Malaysian security forces launched a nationwide operation to detain remaining KMM members. Eventually, up to seventy KMM members were detained without trial under the ISA (Internal Security Act) for allegedly trying to overthrow the government through violent means in the name of jihad.²⁴ Most of the detained members have since been released, and the organization has been outlawed.

Al-Maunah (Brotherhood of Inner Power) was a non-governmental organization involved in the teaching of martial arts, particularly the development of one’s inner powers and the practice of Islamic traditional medicine. At its most prolific, it was said to have more than one thousand members in Malaysia and overseas, particularly in Tripoli, Libya.²⁵

In June 2000, the al-Maunah movement managed to successfully carry out an arms heist from two Malaysian Armed Forces military camps in Perak. The heist served as a major source of embarrassment for the government, given that the members of the group managed to penetrate the camp’s security infrastructure by dressing up in military fatigues and driving jeeps painted in camouflage green, indicating the likelihood that the heist was an inside job.²⁶ According to police reports, the group had at least several hundred members led by a former army corporal, Mohammad Amin Razali. Several other sources revealed that civil servants, security services personnel, and even some UMNO members numbered among its ranks.²⁷ Upon ascertaining al-Maunah’s responsibility for the arms heist, Malaysian security forces embarked on a high-profile operation against the organization’s camp in Sauk, Perak, in July 2000 where nineteen members were eventually captured. Apprehended members of al-Maunah were subsequently charged with treason and plotting to overthrow the government, with the intention of establishing an Islamic state. Al-Maunah no longer exists.

It is important to note that both KMM and al-Maunah cited local issues as the primary causes of their grievances, pursuing a predominantly domestic political agenda. For example, the al-Maunah perpetrators demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Mahathir and his cabinet, while in the case of the KMM, its three key objectives—“to seek religious purity among Malay-Muslims,” “to ensure that PAS’ political struggle was maintained and encouraged,” and “to implement *shari’a* within Malaysia”—all pertained to domestic political concerns, despite efforts on the part of the government to link them to a transnational terrorist agenda.²⁸

Additionally, evidence linking these militant movements with external organizations remains nebulous and inconclusive. Although these domestic movements share some degree of ideological affinity as well as rudimentary contacts with external organizations, they are purportedly not controlled by any outside group.²⁹ Therefore, despite attempts to associate KMM with external groups and regional objectives such as the grandiose vision of Darul Islam Nusantara in the region, the formal charges leveled against the organization made no mention of links with either Jemaah Islamiyah or al-Qaeda. KMM was charged under the Internal Security Act (ISA) solely for its attempt to overthrow the government.³⁰

In recent years, a growing concern for the influence of the Islamic State’s (ISIS) ideology has enveloped Malaysia. Unlike in Indonesia and the Philippines, however, where pro-ISIS sentiments have coalesced around existing extremist groups, in Malaysia the phenomenon has mostly taken the form of self-radicalized individuals, most of whom have had little to no prior affiliation with any extremist groups. On June 28, 2016, a grenade was tossed into the Movida Restaurant and Bar in Puchong, Selangor state, in Malaysia. The perpetrators of the attack were arrested several days later and upon investigations, it was revealed that they had received instructions from Muhammad Wanndy Muhammad Jedi, a Malaysian jihadi believed to be based in Syria fighting with ISIS.³¹ Muhammad Wanndy was killed in April 2017 in Raqqa province, Syria. Another prominent Malaysian with ISIS links is Mahmud Ahmad. A soft-spoken university lecturer, Mahmud Ahmad would emerge as a major fundraiser for ISIS-related activities in Malaysia, such as the recruitment and deployment of Malaysians to the Islamic State. Mahmud Ahmad was one of the leaders during the siege of Marawi City in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao, and

was killed during that siege in October 2017.

Salafi activism in Malaysia is not only confined to extremist or violent groups. Salafism in Malaysia has its roots in the 1920s Islamic reform movement known as Kaum Muda (Young Generation). Inspired by Islamic reform and intellectual ferment taking place in the Middle East during that time, a segment of the Muslim intelligentsia in Malaysia advocated a literalist interpretation of Islamic scripture. This movement experienced something of a revival in the 1980s on the back of Saudi, Jordanian, and Kuwaiti provision of scholarships for Malaysians to further their education in Salafi Islamic tertiary institutions in these respective countries. Many among the prominent Salafi preachers active in Malaysia today were recipients of such scholarships. Others were drawn to Salafism when they were students on Malaysian government scholarships in the United Kingdom, where Salafism had gained a foothold in the 1980s.

In an attempt to centralize and homogenize Islam, the Malaysian state has moved to circumscribe Salafi influences. It has done so by prohibiting Gulf funding and periodically imposing bans on Salafi preachers from preaching in public. This has however not stopped foreign Salafi preachers appearing on Malaysian shores either through personal invitations, or via “dawa tours” which are popular avenues through which foreign clerics preach in the country.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Muslims constitute some 60 percent of the Malaysian population, with Buddhists accounting for nearly 20 percent, Christians nearly 10 percent, and Hindus just over 6 percent. Malaysian society on the whole has been experiencing a swing toward Islamic conservatism. This swing seems to be gaining momentum, as demonstrated by the increasing popularity of sharia in public discourse, state-sanctioned curtailment of civil rights and liberties in the name of Islam, the incapacity of civil courts to challenge controversial sharia court decisions, increasing incidences of moral policing by Islamic religious authorities (including policing of non-Muslims in some instances), and the alarming regularity of references to an Islamic state.

With the changing complexion of PAS and the UMNO-led government’s systematic Islamization of the bureaucracy, social consciousness and political discourse in Malaysia has assumed a much more religious dimension. This has resulted in an intensification of the UMNO–PAS competition where the focus is on linking credibility and legitimacy to Islam. However, there is also a concurrent Islamic discourse rooted in an increasingly vibrant civil society that encompasses NGOs as well as alternative expressions of Islamic consciousness (namely, alternative media sources beyond the mainstream government-controlled channels). Even as the heavily contested politics of UMNO and PAS began to converge, a parallel form of civic activism was emerging, which has brought together not just political parties but also professional, civil society, educational, and religious institutions.

NGO activism in Malaysia generally peaks during periods of major social upheaval in this otherwise comparatively peaceful sociocultural environment. Recently, the issues of apostasy, religious freedom, and the sanctity of the sharia have spurred a round of NGO political activism that has challenged the hegemony of the state along with the policies of the opposition PAS. Muslim and non-Muslim groups that extend across the political spectrum have, in their own way, spoken for and against the positions and policies of UMNO and PAS, at times compelling these mainstream political parties to negotiate their politics and recalibrate their narratives. At the same time, a potent combination of ethno-nationalism and radical Islamism has given rise to vocal Malay-Muslim NGOs like Perkasa and ISMA (Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia or Malaysian Muslim Solidarity). These groups advocate the primacy of Islam and the defense of the faith against other faith communities, and often rally publicly in the name of Islam and against perceived encroachment by non-Muslims, especially Christians. Notably, their public protests often go unmolested by government authorities. This has given rise to suspicion of complicity on the part of UMNO with these radical Islamist NGOs. These NGOs have proven useful for the ruling regime to mobilize segments of the majority Malay-Muslim community in a climate where it (the ruling regime) has seen their share

of the popular vote erode considerably since 2008. Scholars who study Malaysian election trends have concluded that this informal alliance between the ruling regime and radical Malay-Muslim NGOs have contributed to strategic electoral success in crucial Malay-Muslim constituencies.³² This has, however, had the predictable effect of further polarizing Malaysian society along religious and ethnic lines.

Islamic NGOs and civil society organizations are not the sole challengers of the religio-political agenda of both UMNO and PAS. Considering the demographic realities of Malaysia, any debate on Islamism elicits responses from the non-Muslim community as well. In recent times, non-Muslims have voiced concerns over their place in Malaysian society and their ability to hedge against the intensification of Islamist discourse and its increasingly hegemonic nature.

The Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) is an example of a non-Muslim interfaith organization that seeks to enhance dialogue and cooperation, not only among Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs, but also between these communities and Muslims in Malaysia. Since 2001, the MCCBCHS has been leading an effort driven by the non-Muslim community to establish an Inter-Religious Council (IRC) that would encourage dialogue across religious boundaries. In particular, the MCCBCHS felt that the “proper procedures” regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody issues relating to converts to Islam required clarification from Islamic clerics.³³ The group believed that there were “several gray areas in this matter, which has caused much emotional suffering and confusion for family members of converts,” aside from the tension it placed on intercommunal relations.³⁴

In Malaysia, civil society groups represent popular discourse in its most organized and mobilized form. Conversely, cyberspace and various alternative media sources are the new outlets and pathways of political expression that take Islamist debates deeper into Malaysian society.³⁵ Controversies related to various judicial rulings on the matter of apostasy, declarations by Malay-Muslim political leaders that Malaysia is an Islamic state, and the government’s apparent intolerance for open discussions on the “sensitive” issue of Malay-Muslim rights and primacy, have highlighted the increasingly vital role these new forms of expression play on the Malaysian political scene. They can both provide a forum for contrarian views, or for support of the government’s policies couched as a defense of the faith. Weblogs (henceforth referred to as blogs), chat rooms, and listservs have been shown to contribute to the shaping and constraining of larger political debate.

It is important to note that some of the most intense national debates spanning a range of issues at the heart of the rise of Islamism in Malaysia—namely apostasy, Islamic governance and government, and the sanctity of the constitution and of sharia law—are taking place not in the sphere of mainstream partisan politics but in cyberspace among ordinary citizens. This situation points to how Malaysian society is polarized over the question of Islam’s salience as an ordering principle for law and politics.

There is a noticeable schism between the opinions and perspectives found on Malay-language blogs and English-language blogs regarding Islamic state declarations and high-profile murtad (apostasy) cases. While individuals from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds comfortably write English-language blogs, Malay-Muslims seem to largely monopolize Malay-language blogs.³⁶ Another discernible trend is that, regardless of ethnicity and religion, there is a general consensus on English-language blogs that Malaysia is an Islamic state. A comparison with Malay blogs shows a clear disjuncture of perspectives on the issue. In the same vein, reactions to the high-profile apostasy cases that have emerged in recent years show that sentiments are divided along religious lines, regardless of language. In general, Malay and English blogs show an acute contrast in opinions, with the former expressing decidedly more conservative and exclusionary views and the latter conveying more openness to the idea of conversion out of Islam and to the principle of religious freedom writ large.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Islamization in Malaysia is essentially a social-change phenomenon with significant political implications.

It has been accelerated by the UMNO and PAS's search for an Islamic ideal that would translate into legitimacy, popularity, and electoral support. By placing greater significance on Islamic laws, values, and practices, UMNO and PAS entered a race in the 1980s to determine which of the two parties' visions of Islam would be most successful in Malaysia.

When Mahathir Mohammad assumed office in July 1981, the global Islamic resurgence was at its peak. In an effort to build on this trend, Mahathir set out to Islamize the Malaysian government, enacting a number of policies to achieve this end. This Islamization campaign was made public during the UMNO general assembly in 1982, when Mahathir announced that the party would embark on a new strategy that aimed "to change the attitude of the Malays in line with the requirements of Islam in this modern age."³⁷

The UMNO government not only ordered the restructuring of a range of Islamic institutions (both in scale and in scope), it also expanded the state bureaucracy to accommodate the return of a growing number of Malaysian students sent abroad on government scholarships during the Mahathir administration for degrees in Islamic studies, as well as the graduates of local Islamic institutions. The government also transformed the operations of sharia courts and mosques, and reorganized banking structures, foundation and charity work, zakat collection, and educational institutions. Making religious knowledge a regular subject (in other words, one that could be tested like history or math) in the mainstream school curriculum was one of the Mahathir administration's most significant and controversial endeavors. The Islamic Teachers Training College was established in 1982 to accommodate this change in syllabi. Another notable high point of Mahathir's enterprise of creating and restructuring Islamic institutions was the introduction of Islamic banking.³⁸ With the creation of an Islamic bank, the larger objective of Islamizing the economy was achieved; it was also an important expression of Mahathir's interpretation of Islamic values (*Nilai-nilai Islam*), whereby Malays can "seek wealth in a moral and legal way" and "obtain prosperity in this world and hereafter."³⁹

At the same time, Mahathir worked actively to suppress other interpretations of political Islam at odds with his own. Events like 1987's Operation Lallang,⁴⁰ the banning of al-Arqam (a Muslim minority religious sect) in 1994, and the arrests of several prominent political figures, particularly from PAS, demonstrated the Mahathir administration's willingness to use the Internal Security Act to remove all obstacles perceived to be standing in the way of the government's Islamization policies and broader political agenda, even when the actual threat posed by some of these actors was questionable.

In the ongoing debate over the appropriate role of sharia law, there are unresolved structural tensions related to jurisdiction and enforcement powers over alleged wrongdoings that have a religious aspect. The legal governance system can cause confusion, as it is often a combination of sharia and constitutional law. Essentially, states may have the power to formulate religious laws, but these formulations require ratification by the federal Parliament in order to be codified as legally binding and enforced.

The second is the dynamic that defines the relationship between civil and Islamic law. In a 1988 constitutional amendment, Article 121 1(A) stipulated that federal high courts "shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within the jurisdiction of the *shari'a* courts." Criminal law falls under federal jurisdiction, but the constitution is ambiguous in such a way that it assigns power to create and punish offenses against the laws of Islam, which has allowed many state religious authorities to interpret their jurisdiction expansively.

The boundaries of Muslim politics in Malaysia may seem straightforward, with PAS on one end as the Islamist opposition that demands that Malaysia's public spaces be governed by sharia, and UMNO on the other end as the secularist Muslim government that is apparently set on restricting Islamism and keeping religion within the private sphere. However, this is an illusion. As recent controversies over apostasy and the right of non-Muslims to use the word "Allah" show, differences between UMNO and PAS are not set in stone. While PAS has begun taking inclusive positions on issues relating to Islam, UMNO has become discernibly strident and fundamentalist in its defense of the primacy and exclusive rights of Muslims.

In other words, the track record of PAS is considerably more inconsistent than its strident rhetoric about exclusivist Islamism suggests, while the ostensibly secularist UMNO party harbors many Islamist tendencies. This latter trend has been especially noticeable since the Mahathir administration, as that administration supported many elements of a conservative and orthodox Islamic government. Even more telling was an UMO state assemblyman's suggestion in July 2012 that the state government in Johor seriously considered implementing "true hudud law" that would govern non-Muslims as well. This represents a striking departure from PAS's position on the implementation of hudud in Malaysia, which PAS has always claimed would be applicable only to Muslims.⁴¹

Nevertheless, since the 2013 general elections, there has been a notable convergence of interests, at least on the surface, between the two long-standing political rivals. For instance, all twelve UMNO state assemblymen in Kelantan chose to support the amendment by PAS that approved hudud, which was unanimously passed in the state assembly in 2015.⁴² This was followed by the UMNO-led government's decision in 2016 to fast-track hearings in Parliament on PAS president's private member bill, which would increase penalties for crimes under the Sharia Court (a court of Islamic law).⁴³ Given the negative impact on its public image stemming from corruption allegations involving Prime Minister Najib Razak, UMNO could very well be motivated by a desire to signal to the largely conservative Malay electorate that it too is serious about hudud and willing to cooperate with PAS for the greater good of Islam in Malaysia.⁴⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Consider, for example, how former UMNO president and Malaysian prime minister Abdullah Badawi regularly made references to Islam in his public speeches, or how *Mingguan Malaysia* [*Malaysia Weekly*], a best-selling government-linked daily, has weekend columns offering advice on various matters pertaining to religion in everyday life. Malaysia has also regularly hit the country-level limit set by the Saudi government for Hajj pilgrims, and there is now a three-year waiting list for Malaysians wanting to make the pilgrimage.
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4. Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Political Islam in Malaysia: Problematising Discourse and Practice in the Umno-PAS 'Islamisation Race,'" p. 186, *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 42, no. 2, July, 2004.
5. Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Political Islam in Malaysia."
6. Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Political Islam in Malaysia."
7. See Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Piety and Politics: The Shifting Contours of Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia*, p. 58–64, Oxford University Press, 2008.
8. Beh Lih Yi, "PAS to 'Soften' Stance on Islamic State," *Malaysiakini*, January 20, 2005, <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/33013>.
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10. Azamin Amin, "Hindraf: PAS kesal hak asasi rakyat dicabuli" ("HINDRAF: PAS regrets human rights abuses"), *Harakah Daily*, November 25, 2007, <http://arkib.harakahdaily.net/arkibharakah/index.php/arkib/berita/lama/2007/11/11038/hindraf-pas-kesal-hak-asasi-rakyat-dicabuli.html>. PAS was careful to warn, however, that it did not agree with all of Hindraf's demands either. See Dato' Seri Tuan Guru Abdul Hadi Awang, "Hak berhimpun diakui, tetapi sebahagian tuntutan Hindraf melampau" ("HINDRAF's right to assemble must be respected but some of its demands are unacceptable"), *Harakah Daily*, December 3, 2007, <http://arkib.harakahdaily.net/arkibharakah/index.php/arkib/berita/lama/2007/12/11146/hak-berhimpun-diakui-tetapi-sebahagian-tuntutan-hindraf-melampau.html>.
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35. See, for example, Marc Lynch, *Voices of a New Arab Republic: Iraq, Al Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, Columbia University Press, 2006.
36. Needless to say, this general remark is made based on the comments of bloggers who actually sign their names to their posts.
37. See Mahathir’s speech at the 33rd Annual UMNO General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, September 10, 1982.
38. See Norhashimah Mohd Yasin, *Islamisation/Malaynisation: A Study on the Role of Islamic Law in the Economic Development of Malaysia: 1969–1993*, p. 261–64, A. S. Noordeen, 1996. The bank did not offer any interest on deposits it received. Instead, it would share the profits earned from investing the deposits with the bank’s customers. The bank was also not charging interest on credit that it extended.
39. Hajrudin Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, p. 164, Pelanduk Publications, 2004.
40. Operation Lallang was carried out on October 27, 1987, by the Malaysian police to prevent the occurrence of racial riots due to the provocation by the ruling government towards DAP. The operation saw the arrest of 106 persons under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and the revoking of the publishing licenses of two dailies, *The Star* and the *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, and two weeklies, *The Sunday Star* and *Watan*.
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