Intellectual Discourse

Volume 34 Number 2 2026

International Islamic University Malaysia
https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/id

Intellectual Discourse

Volume 34 Number 2 2026

Intellectual Discourse is a highly respected, academic refereed journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is published twice a year by the IIUM Press, IIUM, and contains reflections, articles, research notes and review articles representing the disciplines, methods and viewpoints of the Muslim world.

Intellectual Discourse is abstracted in SCOPUS, WoS Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), ProQuest, International Political Science Abstracts, Peace Research Abstracts Journal, Muslim World Book Review, Bibliography of Asian Studies, Index Islamicus, Religious and Theological Abstracts, ATLA Religion Database, MyCite, ISC and EBSCO.

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

https://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/id
Email: intdiscourse@iium.edu.my; intdiscourse@yahoo.com

Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298
Website:http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop

Intellectual Discourse
Vol. 34, No. 2, 2026

Contents

Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
◌َ	a		◌ًا، ◌ًى	an
◌ُ	u		◌ٌو	un
◌ِ	i		◌ٍي	in
◌َا، ◌ٰ، ◌َى،	ā		◌َوْ	aw
◌ُو	ū		◌َيْ	ay
◌ِي	ī		◌ُوّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			◌ِيّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: http://rotas.iium.edu.my

Intellectual Discourse, 34:2 (2026) 265–291

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

Ubuntu and Madani in Dialogue: Ethical Encounters, Lived Experience, and the Moral Realities of Malaysia–Africa Relations

Muhammad Danial Azman*
Kevin Fernandez**

Abstract: Malaysia's relations with Africa have conventionally been framed through the discourse of South–South cooperation, Bandung-era solidarities, and postcolonial affinity. However, the lived experiences of Africans in Malaysia—particularly among Nigerian and Sudanese communities—reveal a more complex and ethically charged reality. Drawing on documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews conducted between February 2023 and November 2025, this article examines how African migrants interpret Malaysia's diplomatic identity through everyday encounters with immigration authorities, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and Malaysian society at large. While many participants reported experiences shaped by racialised perceptions, administrative inconsistency, and episodic prejudice, others highlighted forms of safety, hospitality, and religious solidarity. Situating these narratives within the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF), this article argues that meaningful Malaysia–Africa relations must extend beyond rhetorical solidarity to encompass institutional fairness and ethically grounded relational practices. The findings illuminate both the tensions and the ethical potential embedded in Malaysia's aspiration to position itself as a moral actor within the Global South.

---

*Deputy Executive Director for Academic & Student Affairs, International Institute of Public Policy & Management (INPUMA), Universiti Malaya, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: danial@um.edu.my. *Corresponding author*.
**Deputy Executive Director, Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), Universiti Malaya, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Email: kevin@um.edu.my

Keywords: Malaysia–Africa relations; Ubuntu; Madani; African diaspora; South–South cooperation; ethical governance

Abstrak: Hubungan Malaysia–Afrika secara konvensional dibingkai melalui wacana kerjasama Selatan–Selatan, solidariti era Bandung, dan pertalian pascakolonial. Namun begitu, pengalaman hidup warga Afrika di Malaysia—khususnya dalam kalangan komuniti Nigeria dan Sudan—menunjukkan realiti yang lebih kompleks serta sarat pertimbangan etika. Berdasarkan analisis dokumen dan temu bual separa berstruktur yang dijalankan antara Februari 2023 dan November 2025, makalah ini meneliti bagaimana migran Afrika mentafsir identiti diplomatik Malaysia melalui pertemuan seharian mereka dengan pihak imigresen, agensi penguatkuasaan undang-undang, institusi pendidikan dan masyarakat Malaysia secara umum. Walaupun ramai peserta melaporkan pengalaman yang dibentuk oleh persepsi berunsur perkauman, ketidakselarasan pentadbiran dan prejudis yang bersifat episodik, sebahagian yang lain menekankan pengalaman keselamatan, keramahan dan solidariti keagamaan. Dengan menempatkan naratif ini dalam Rangka Kerja Perkongsian Ubuntu–Madani (UMPF), makalah ini berhujah bahawa hubungan Malaysia–Afrika yang bermakna perlu melangkaui solidariti retorik kepada keadilan institusi dan amalan hubungan kemanusiaan yang beretika. Dapatan kajian ini menyerlahkan kedua-dua ketegangan dan potensi etika dalam aspirasi Malaysia sebagai aktor moral di Selatan Global.

Kata kunci: hubungan Malaysia–Afrika; Ubuntu; Madani; diaspora Afrika; kerjasama Selatan–Selatan; tadbir urus beretika

Introduction

Malaysia–Africa relations have evolved across three distinct phases: post-Bandung solidarity, post-Cold War economic engagement, and contemporary strategic diplomacy under renewed Global South leadership narratives. These relations encompass trade, education, Islamic diplomacy, and emerging technological cooperation, positioning Malaysia as a bridge between Asia and Africa. However, this macro-level engagement contrasts with the micro-level realities experienced by African communities within Malaysia (Hamidin, 2003a, 2003b, 2009; Jeshurun, 2008; Saravanamuttu, 2010; Karuppannan & Yacob, 2020; Stenecke, 30 May 2016). Emerging from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and post-colonial diplomacy, Malaysia positioned itself as a development-oriented partner committed to equality, mutual

respect, and political autonomy among developing states (Abidin et al., 2014; Mahathir, 1985; Persaud, 2018; *Tricontinental Institute for Social Research*, 8 April 2025). These orientations informed Malaysia's engagement with Africa through technical cooperation, trade, education, and cultural exchange (Padayachee & Valodia, 1998; Devadason & Govindaraju, 2017; Mohamed Elfaki et al., 2012; Stenecke, 30 May 2016).

In the post-Cold War period, Malaysia–Africa relations expanded into economic, political, and religious domains (Pratihari, 2023; Shuriye, 2020; Eissa et al., 2019; Haron et al., 2022, 2002). Recent developments—such as Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's official visits to Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa—have further reaffirmed Malaysia's strategic and normative interest in Africa (Faiz Abdullah, 25 November 2025; *SABC News*, 27 October 2025; *Bernama*, 31 July 2025; Koya, 18 November 2025). Malaysia's vocal advocacy for Palestine and opposition to forced displacement have also reinforced its self-image as a justice-oriented Global South and Muslim-majority actor (*Reuters*, 6 February 2025; *The Guardian*, 31 January 2025; Waikar et al., 2021; Delfolie, 2012).

Yet state-level diplomacy provides only a partial account of Malaysia–Africa relations (Azman, 2021; Daniels, 2014; Gardiner, 1989). For Africans living in Malaysia, these relations are experienced not through official communiqués but through everyday encounters with immigration systems, policing, educational institutions, workplaces, and neighbourhoods. Existing scholarship documents the racialisation of African migrants, patterns of hypervisibility, administrative precarity, and securitised imaginaries (Taylor, 2010; Daniels, 2014; Ambikaipaker, 2021; Suleiman & Mikail, 2020). Media reporting has further contributed to public perceptions that associate Africans with crime, deviance, or regulatory violations (*Malay Mail*, 19 July 2019; *The Star*, 3 September 2009; 10 October 2019; *The Straits Times*, 27 June 2021; *Study International*, 11 August 2022).

While these studies illuminate structural and sociocultural challenges, less attention has been paid to how African individuals ethically interpret their experiences in relation to Malaysia's moral self-presentation. This gap is particularly striking given Malaysia's contemporary Madani governance discourse, grounded in Islamic ethics

and the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* tradition (Neo, 2015; Michael & Salleh, 2023; Musa, 2023), and African moral traditions such as Ubuntu, which emphasise relational personhood, dignity, and mutual recognition (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019; Metz, 2019; Ogude, 2019).

This article conceptualises the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF) as both an analytical and normative lens. Analytically, the framework provides a structured approach to interpreting how African migrants evaluate their lived experiences as moral encounters shaped by institutional and sociocultural dynamics. Normatively, it reflects ethical expectations grounded in Ubuntu's relational humanism and Madani's governance principles. By integrating these dimensions, the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF) bridges empirical analysis with ethical critique, enabling a deeper understanding of how Malaysia's diplomatic identity is interpreted through everyday lived realities.

Literature Review

The study of Malaysia–Africa relations remains an evolving and relatively under-systematised field of inquiry (Azman, 2021). Existing scholarship is fragmented across diplomatic history, migration studies, and postcolonial analysis, with limited integration across these domains. Much of the documented literature is relatively recent and often situated within colonial and postcolonial encounters involving African and Malaysian leaders and societies (Hamidin, 2003a; Haron, 2002). As a result, comprehensive accounts that capture the full spectrum of Malaysia–Africa interactions—particularly those that bridge long historical trajectories with contemporary lived experiences—remain limited (see also Haron et al., 2022; Jeshurun, 2008; Lee, 2015). Continuous and systematic scholarly inquiry is therefore necessary to deepen understanding of how historical linkages, diplomatic engagements, and everyday encounters intersect across time.

Notwithstanding these limitations, three broad attributes shape the contours of Malaysia–Africa relations across historical and contemporary contexts. First, before the expansion of European colonial modernity, the Malay World occupied a strategic position within transregional trade networks linking the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea (Hamidin, 2003b). Precolonial Malay polities and sultanates in the Malay Archipelago were embedded within wider

Afro–Asian exchange systems connecting African kingdoms, the Middle East, India, and Chinese empires through both maritime and overland routes. The spread of Islam across the Malay World further suggests the presence of intellectual and commercial linkages involving Muslim traders, scholars, and Sufi networks from the Middle East and North Africa (Azman, 2021). Although historical documentation remains limited, recorded Afro–Asian exchanges indicate that early forms of interaction likely predated modern diplomatic relations. The subsequent emergence of colonial economies intensified these linkages, as commodities such as palm oil from West Africa, cotton from Japan, and spices from the Malay Archipelago circulated within global trade systems in which colonial Malaya occupied a strategic nodal position (Devadason & Govindaraju, 2017). These trajectories suggest that contemporary Malaysia–Africa relations are embedded within longer histories of transregional exchange.

Second, modern Malaysia–Africa relations were shaped by political solidarities emerging from decolonisation and Cold War geopolitics. Interactions among African and Malaysian leaders—documented through diplomatic memoirs, biographies, and informal exchanges—reflect broader Afro–Asian solidarities associated with the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Hamidin, 2009; Karuppannan & Yacob, 2020; Saravanamuttu, 2010; Agustian et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2020; Persaud, 2018). A particularly significant moment occurred during Indonesia's Confrontation against the formation of Malaysia in 1963, when Malaysia sought diplomatic recognition from newly independent African states through the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). This period marked an early phase of Malaysia's formal engagement with Africa. These ties expanded more systematically during the premiership of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, particularly in the late 1980s and 1990s, when Malaysia intensified diplomatic, economic, and technical cooperation with Sub-Saharan African countries (Padayachee & Valodia, 1998; Devadason & Govindaraju, 2017; Mohamed Elfaki et al., 2012; Stenecke, 30 May 2016). More recent developments point to expansion into new domains such as digital cooperation and artificial intelligence partnerships (Bernama, 31 July 2025; Dike, 2025; Dorigné-Thomson & Lin, 2025; TV BRICS, 1 August 2025), alongside renewed diplomatic engagement under Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (*Reuters*, 6 February 2025; *The*

Guardian, 31 January 2025; *The Star*, 18 November 2025; SABC News, 27 October 2025).

Third, beyond elite diplomacy, Malaysia's people-to-people interactions have increasingly shaped relations with Africa since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hamidin, 2009). What began as a limited diplomatic and trade engagement has expanded into higher education, professional mobility, intercultural relationships, and everyday social life (Interview with an officer from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Putrajaya, 12 July 2023). African nationals—particularly from Nigeria and Sudan—have become among the most visible communities within Malaysia's migrant population. Estimates before the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that up to 300,000 African nationals resided in Malaysia, with Nigerians and Sudanese forming the largest groups (Interview with an officer from the Department of Immigration of Malaysia, Putrajaya, 18 February 2024). At the same time, issues related to visa overstays, undocumented status, and involvement in certain criminal activities—often disproportionately emphasised in media reporting—have contributed to the formation of negative public stereotypes, particularly towards Nigerians (Interview with an officer from the Embassy of Nigeria in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 14 June 2024). These dynamics highlight the coexistence of opportunity and stigma, underscoring the complexity of Malaysia–Africa relations as everyday moral judgements rather than purely diplomatic constructs.

Nevertheless, such narratives obscure the experiences of a substantial number of African residents who live, work, and establish families in Malaysia as law-abiding members of society (Interview with a Malaysian historian, Gombak, 5 October 2023). For many, Malaysia represents an opportunity, safety, and a long-term place of settlement. The coexistence of opportunity and stigma underscores the complexity of Malaysia–Africa relations as everyday moral judgements rather than purely diplomatic constructs (Interview with an officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Putrajaya, 18 August 2023). It is therefore analytically important to examine the experiences of key communities—particularly Nigerians and Sudanese—not only because of their demographic significance, but also because their lived encounters reveal deeper insights into the experiential ethics, institutional, and sociocultural dimensions of Malaysia–Africa relations. Thus, the following literature

subsection emphasises more recent, complex yet delicate encounters for Nigerian and Sudanese communities in Malaysia.

Malaysia–Africa Relations, South–South Cooperation and Diplomatic Narratives

Since 1957, Malaysia's engagement with Africa has largely been articulated through the framework of South–South cooperation, Bandung-era solidarity, and postcolonial partnership (Hamidin, 2003a, 2003b, 2009; Jeshurun, 2008; Saravanamuttu, 2010; Agustian et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2020). Rooted in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Malaysia positioned itself as a development-oriented partner emphasising equality, sovereignty, and mutual respect (Mahathir, 1985; Persaud, 2018; Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, 8 April 2025). These principles informed diplomatic, economic, and educational engagement with African states (Padayachee & Valodia, 1998; Devadason & Govindaraju, 2017; Mohamed Elfaki et al., 2012; Stenecke, 30 May 2016).

Contemporary developments indicate a broadening of these relations into emerging sectors such as digital governance, artificial intelligence, and Global South cooperation (Bernama, 31 July 2025; Dike, 2025; Dorigné-Thomson & Lin, 2025; TV BRICS, 1 August 2025). However, while diplomatic narratives emphasise solidarity and partnership, they provide only a partial account of Malaysia–Africa relations. Migrants often evaluate these narratives through everyday institutional and social encounters. As one Nigerian professional observed, "We hear Malaysia talk about justice and partnership, but what matters to us is how those ideas appear in daily life" (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 9 September 2025). This highlights the analytical need to move beyond state-centric perspectives towards lived experiences.

Racialisation, Migration and the Lived Realities of African Communities

Within this broader context, a substantial body of scholarship documents the racialised experiences of African migrants in Malaysia, characterised by hypervisibility, institutional scrutiny, and administrative precarity (Daniels, 2014; Suleiman & Mikail, 2020; Ambikaipaker, 2021). Media representations further reinforce these dynamics by associating Africans with criminality or deviance, shaping public perceptions before direct

social interaction (Malay Mail, 2019; The Star, 2019; The Straits Times, 2021; Study International, 2022).

Empirical accounts illustrate how these structural dynamics are experienced in everyday life. A Sudanese postgraduate student noted, "People move away slowly on the train… the silence has a message," while a Nigerian respondent observed, "People decide who we are before meeting us." These experiences demonstrate how racialisation operates simultaneously at institutional, sociocultural, and symbolic levels, influencing perceptions of belonging and exclusion.

Research focusing on Nigerian and Sudanese communities further highlights challenges related to immigration procedures, higher education governance, labour-market access, and social integration (Kadouf, 2017; Umar et al., 2014; Mohd Umar, 2014; Suleiman & Mikail, 2020). These structural constraints are often experienced as administrative inconsistency and unpredictability, transforming bureaucratic processes into sources of ethical anxiety. As one respondent remarked, "Every renewal requires something different. I have never submitted the same documents twice" (Interview, Petaling Jaya, 9 June 2025). At the same time, African diasporic communities demonstrate agency by mobilising religious networks, student organisations, and cultural associations to construct alternative forms of belonging (Nganje, 2014; Haron, 2002; Mohamed Elfaki et al., 2012). However, these lived experiences remain marginal within formal foreign policy discourse, revealing a persistent disjuncture between elite narratives and everyday realities (Wan Mohd Nor & Wan Mohd Nor, 2024).

Ubuntu and African Moral Philosophy

Beyond structural explanations, African moral philosophy—particularly Ubuntu—provides an important lens for understanding how migrants interpret their experiences. Ubuntu emphasises relational personhood, shared humanity, and communal responsibility, offering a moral grammar through which dignity and belonging are evaluated (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019; Metz, 2019; Mutongoreni et al., 2025; Ogude, 2019; Qobo & Nyathi, 2016; Walwema, 2025; Madondo & Dhobha, 2025). Complementary traditions further highlight the ethical significance of ancestry, taboo, and communal restraint (Ajayi, 2022; Mekoa, 2020; Kuada, 2020; Vervliet, 2020; Lee, 2015).

Interview evidence suggests that these experiential ethics remain salient among African migrants in Malaysia. As one Sudanese academic explained, "Back home, we acknowledge each other's humanity first. When that is missing here, it feels like something deeper is wrong" (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 12 September 2025). Such reflections indicate that migrants interpret their encounters not merely as administrative or social interactions, but as moral experiences.

Madani Governance, Islamic Ethics and Moral Expectations

In parallel, Madani governance represents Malaysia's contemporary ethical discourse grounded in Islamic political thought and the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* tradition, emphasising justice (*ʿadl*), compassion (*raḥmah*), benevolence (*iḥsān*), accountability (*amānah*), and social solidarity (*ukhuwwah*) (Neo, 2015; Michael & Salleh, 2023; Musa, 2023). Scholars situate Madani within Malaysia's constitutional framework and socio-political development (Muslim, 2012; Hamid, 2018; Mangiarotti, 2023), as well as its projection of Islamic soft power (Delfolie, 2012; Waikar et al., 2021; Nisa, 2023; Noordin & Syed Jaafar Alhabshi, 2023; Shukri, 2025).

These ethical narratives shape migrants' expectations of fairness and justice. As one Nigerian respondent noted, "Malaysia speaks for justice globally, so we assumed justice would also apply to us" (Interview, Kuala Lumpur, 9 September 2025). This illustrates how national moral discourse informs migrants' evaluations of institutional conduct and everyday interactions.

Literature Gap and Contribution

Despite extensive scholarship on Malaysia–Africa relations, migration, and ethical governance, three key gaps remain. First, existing literature remains predominantly state-centric, privileging diplomatic narratives over lived experience. Second, while racialisation and migration challenges are well documented, the ethical interpretation of these experiences remains under-theorised. Third, Ubuntu and Madani have not been systematically integrated as a unified analytical framework for understanding Malaysia–Africa relations.

Taken together, the literature reveals three key limitations. First, existing scholarship remains predominantly state-centric, privileging diplomatic narratives over migrants' lived experiences. Second, while

racialisation and migration challenges are well documented, the experiential ethics of these experiences remain under-theorised. Third, there is limited engagement between African moral philosophy and Malaysia's governance discourse. By integrating Ubuntu and Madani within a unified analytical framework, this study reconceptualises Malaysia–Africa relations as lived moral realities, bridging the gap between diplomatic rhetoric and everyday experience.

By incorporating lived experiences into the analysis and advancing the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework, this study bridges these gaps and reconceptualises Malaysia–Africa relations as lived moral realities shaped by both institutional structures and everyday encounters.

Table 1

Comparison of Ubuntu and Madani Ethical Framework

Dimension	Ubuntu (African Communitarian Philosophy)	Madani (Malaysia Islamic-Governance Ethos)	Convergence/ Divergence
Philosophical roots	*Grounded in sub-Saharan African moral worldviews, it emphasises personhood as relational ("I am because we are").*	*Grounded in Islamic civilisational ethics, particularly maqāṣid al-sharīʿah, ʿadl, iḥsān, raḥmah and good governance principles.*	*Both are communitarian and relational but emerge from distinct civilisational traditions (African–humanist vs. Islamic–ethical)*
Core ethical principle	*Human dignity realised through interconnectedness, mutual care and collective well-being.*	*Human dignity is upheld through justice, compassion, moral governance and societal balance.*	*Similar in moral purpose; differ in metaphysical grounding (humanist–anthropological vs theocentric–Islamic).*
View of the individual	*The individual exists through the community; personhood is socially earned.*	*The individual is morally responsible before God and society; personal virtue contributes to communal harmony.*	*Both reject atomistic individualism, but Ubuntu emphasises communal recognition, while Madani emphasises personal accountability to God and society.*
View of the community	*Community is the primary site of moral reasoning, identity and responsibility.*	*Community functions as a moral ecosystem shaped by justice, cooperation (taʿāwun), and social solidarity (ukhuwwah).*	*Strong convergence: both prioritise communal flourishing over individual gain.*

Dimension	Ubuntu (African Communitarian Philosophy)	Madani (Malaysia Islamic-Governance Ethos)	Convergence/ Divergence
Moral drivers	*Empathy, shared humanity, reciprocity, reconciliation.*	*Justice, compassion, benevolence (iḥsān), trustworthiness (amānaḥ)*	*Overlaps in compassion and reciprocity; Madani has more institutional/ legal articulation.*
Conflict resolution	*Emphasises restorative justice, reconciliation, and rebuilding social bonds.*	*Encourages conflict mitigation through shūrā (consultation), fairness, and community-centred solutions.*	*Parallel approaches: dialogical, restorative, anti-retributive.*
Governance Implications	*Emphasises restorative justice, reconciliation, and rebuilding social bonds.*	*Promotes accountable, transparent, ethical governance aligned with Islamic values and public interest (maṣlaḥah).*	*Both favour ethical governance; Madani emphasises state institutions more explicitly.*
Economic and Development Ethos	*Development rooted in communal welfare, shared resources and mutual upliftment.*	*Development guided by justice, sustainability, balanced growth and social equity.*	*Convergent concern for social equity; Ubuntu is less institutionalised, Madani policy-driven.*
Approach to Diversity	*Celebrates the plurality and interconnectedness of all humans.*	*Recognises diversity within an Islamic ethical framework that emphasises justice and mutual respect.*	*Complementary but shaped by differing cultural origins.*
Global Solidarity	*Advocates an ethic of collective humanity and anti-oppression beyond borders.*	*Frames Malaysia's role in the world through Islamic values, South–South solidarity and humanitarian justice.*	*Strong synergy: both support global justice, anti-colonialism, and moral responsibility to others.*

Source. Compiled by the Authors from various Afro-Asian literature and Malaysian government documents.

Locating Ubuntu–Madani Partnership in Malaysia's Africa Policy

This study advances the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF) to analyse how African migrants in Malaysia ethically interpret their lived experiences. The framework brings into dialogue Ubuntu, a relational African moral philosophy, and Madani, Malaysia's contemporary discourse on governance grounded in Islamic ethics. While these traditions emerge from distinct intellectual genealogies,

their convergence provides a powerful ethical lens for understanding everyday encounters at the intersection of diplomacy, institutions, and social life.

Ubuntu is fundamentally anthropocentric and relational, emphasising shared humanity, mutual recognition, and communal responsibility (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019; Metz, 2019; Ogude, 2019). Moral worth, within Ubuntu, is realised through social relations rather than solely through individual autonomy (Qobo & Nyathi, 2016; Walwema, 2025; Madondo & Dhobha, 2025). Complementary African ethical traditions further stress the role of ancestry, taboo and moral restraint in sustaining social cohesion (Ajayi, 2022; Mekoa, 2020; Kuada, 2020; Vervliet, 2020; Babola & Shittu, 2020). For African migrants, these ethical orientations shape expectations of dignity, recognition, and humane treatment.

Figure 1

The Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF)

Source. Created by the Authors from comparative literature and fieldwork observations of Africans in Malaysia.

Madani, by contrast, is theocentric and institutionally articulated. Rooted in the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* tradition, it prioritises justice (*ʿadl*), compassion (*raḥmah*), benevolence (*iḥsān*), accountability (*amānah*) and social solidarity (*ukhuwwah*) as guiding principles of governance (Neo, 2015; Michael & Salleh, 2023; Musa, 2023). Scholars situate Madani within Malaysia's broader Islamic political thought and constitutional order (Muslim, 2012; Hamid, 2018; Mangiarotti, 2023), as well as its projection of Islamic soft power and moral leadership internationally (Delfolie, 2012; Waikar et al., 2021; Nisa, 2023; Noordin & Syed Jaafar Alhabshi, 2023; Shukri, 2025).

When placed in dialogue, Ubuntu and Madani illuminate both interpersonal and institutional dimensions of moral life. Ubuntu foregrounds relational warmth and recognition in everyday encounters, while Madani frames expectations of fairness, consistency, and justice within public institutions. This duality enhances the analytical reach of the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF).

Figure 1 presents the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF), illustrating how Malaysia's foreign policy narratives are mediated through ethical governance principles and translated into the everyday experiences of African communities in Malaysia. These lived encounters—shaped by institutional practices and social interactions—ultimately inform perceptions of trust, dignity, inclusion, and legitimacy in Malaysia–Africa relations. Many Africans, including those from Muslim-majority contexts, arrive in Malaysia with moral expectations grounded in Islamic and humanistic values, further reinforced by Malaysia's vocal advocacy for global justice, particularly regarding Palestine. When institutional conduct or societal behaviour falls short of these ideals, migrants interpret the resulting disjunctures not simply as administrative lapses, but as ethical contradictions (see also Mangiarotti, 2023; Mekoa, 2020; Metz, 2019). Despite their distinct intellectual origins, this article argues that Ubuntu and Madani converge as ethical convictions underpinning Malaysia–Africa relations, sharing core commitments to human dignity, compassion, communal responsibility and justice (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Four Dimensions of Ubuntu-Madani Peaceful Framework in Malaysia-Africa Relations

Source. Created by the Authors from comparative literature and fieldwork observations of Africans in Malaysia.

Their divergences are nonetheless instructive. Ubuntu is anthropocentric and relational, whereas Madani is theocentric and grounded in divine accountability. In dialogue, they illuminate both interpersonal and institutional dimensions of moral life, thereby strengthening the framework's analytical capacity. The Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF) consists of four interlocking dimensions: ethical foundations (Ubuntu and Madani), which shape migrants' moral expectations; institutional structures, including immigration, policing and universities, which influence experiences of security and trust; sociocultural realities, encompassing media narratives and everyday interactions that affect belonging or marginalisation; and foreign-policy narratives, through which Malaysia's global commitments frame migrants' evaluations of lived experience. Together, these dimensions provide the analytical foundation for examining the experiences of Sudanese and Nigerian residents in Malaysia.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative interpretivist methodology to examine how African migrants construct moral meaning from their lived encounters in Malaysia. Interpretivist approaches are particularly suited to ethical inquiry, as they privilege subjectivity, relational experience and normative evaluations (Azman, 2016, 2021; Owojori et al., 2020). Our proposed Ubuntu-Madani Peaceful Framework guided the formulation of interview questions, the organisation of thematic categories, and the analytical interpretation of data. The selection of Nigerian and Sudanese participants reflects both empirical and analytical considerations (Interview with an officer from the Department of Immigration of Malaysia, Putrajaya, 18 February 2024). Beyond their status as among the largest African communities in Malaysia, these groups represent diverse migration trajectories, including students, professionals, and entrepreneurs, as well as differing linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. This diversity enhances the study's ability to capture a broad spectrum of lived experiences and ethical interpretations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between February 2023 and November 2025 with 130 Nigerian and Sudanese migrants residing in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang, and Johor. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling via diaspora networks, university contacts, and community leaders. Interviews explored experiences across the four dimensions of the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF), including encounters with immigration procedures, policing practices, educational administration, public attitudes, and perceptions of Malaysia's diplomatic role.

Data collection proceeded iteratively alongside analysis, allowing emerging themes to inform subsequent interviews. Thematic saturation was observed after approximately 130 interviews, at which point no substantially new themes emerged. The remaining interviews confirmed the pattern's stability and deepened interpretive insights, thereby ensuring analytical robustness. Interviews were conducted in English and typically lasted 45-90 minutes. Field notes were taken to capture affective cues, contextual observations, and reflexive impressions. To contextualise interview data, the study also drew on documentary and media analysis, including government statements, public speeches, and

Malaysian news coverage related to Africa and African communities (Malay Mail, 19 July 2019; *The Star*, 3 September 2009; 10 October 2019; *The Straits Times*, 27 June 2021; *Study International*, 11 August 2022).

Data analysis proceeded through thematic analysis, beginning with open coding to identify recurring ideas, emotions, and ethical concerns, followed by axial coding to map themes onto the four dimensions of the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF). Interpretive synthesis was then employed to analyse how participants evaluated encounters as moral events rather than purely administrative or cultural interactions (Knight et al., 2023).

Ethical protocols were strictly observed, including informed consent, anonymisation, confidentiality, and secure data storage. As a Malaysian academic researching African communities, the researcher adopted a reflexive stance attentive to positionality, institutional proximity, and potential bias, with a commitment to accurately representing participants' moral perspectives.

While the qualitative sample is not statistically representative, its thematic richness offers analytical depth. Triangulating interview data with documentary and media sources enhances interpretive robustness and provides a nuanced understanding of how African migrants construct moral meaning within Malaysia's evolving socio-political and diplomatic landscape.

Findings

The findings reveal a dynamic interplay among institutional, sociocultural and diplomatic narratives, interpreted through the ethical expectations of Ubuntu and Madani. These selected interview excerpts illustrate how migrants make moral sense of their encounters in Malaysia. These findings demonstrate both ethical contradictions and ethical possibilities within Malaysia–Africa relations.

Navigating Institutional Structures: Immigration, Policing and Bureaucratic Precarity

Participants reported occasional uncertainty and procedural inconsistency within the immigration system, contributing to a sense

of insecurity even among long-term residents. Such encounters were interpreted not merely as administrative challenges but as shaping broader perceptions of fairness and institutional trust. As one Nigerian postgraduate student interviewed in Petaling Jaya on 9 June 2025 observed, "Every renewal requires something different. I have never submitted the same documents twice."

This interview excerpt echoes Daniels' (2014) observations on bureaucratic unpredictability and aligns with Suleiman and Mikail's (2020) discussion of immigration precarity among Africans in Malaysia. Comparable concerns also surfaced in accounts of encounters with law enforcement. As a Sudanese professional interviewed in Kuala Lumpur on 12 June 2025 noted, "They were not rude, but I could feel suspicion before I even spoke. You feel like you must constantly prove innocence."

Participants interpreted such encounters as moral events, assessed against Ubuntu's expectation of mutual dignity and Madani's ethic of justice (*ʿadl*), viewing repeated scrutiny as a departure from both ethical traditions. Administrative inconsistency was also evident within educational institutions, as reflected in one account: "My application was suddenly flagged as incomplete, and no one knew why. It felt arbitrary." Taken together, these experiences underscore the institutional dimension of the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework (UMPF), highlighting the moral significance migrants attach to administrative clarity, fairness, and procedural transparency.

Encountering Malaysian Society: Public Perceptions, Media Narratives and Everyday Interactions

Racialised imaginaries of Africans—shaped in part by sensationalist media reporting (*Malay Mail*, 2019; *The Star*, 2019)—were found to exert a significant influence on everyday social interactions. As one Sudanese undergraduate interviewed in Kuala Lumpur on 5 July 2025 observed, "People quietly shift away on the MRT. No words, but the silence says everything." A Nigerian respondent interviewed in Kuala Lumpur on 6 July 2025 similarly noted, "Before people meet us, the media has already shaped who they think we are."

Nevertheless, participants' accounts reveal a social landscape that is neither uniform nor wholly negative. Several respondents described

experiences of everyday hospitality, such as neighbours who offered greetings and personal engagement, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Another Sudanese interviewed in Kepong on 8 July 2025 articulated a more ambivalent assessment, suggesting that social distance often stemmed from unfamiliarity rather than hostility: "Malaysia is not hostile, but unfamiliar with Africans. People are cautious out of ignorance, not hate."

Taken together, these excerpts illustrate the coexistence of warmth and discomfort in everyday encounters, indicating that sociocultural attitudes towards Africans in Malaysia remain contingent and potentially malleable rather than fixed or uniformly exclusionary.

Lives of Possibility: Positive Experiences and Everyday Hospitality

Amid these challenges, migrants also recounted meaningful forms of inclusion and everyday affirmation. A 27-year-old Sudanese postgraduate interviewed on 27 August 2025 highlighted the sense of personal safety afforded by life in Malaysia, noting, "Here, I walk at night without fear. That peace is priceless." A 31-year-old Nigerian professional interviewed in Gombak on 13 August 2025 similarly emphasised experiences of religious solidarity, observing, "During Ramaḍān, colleagues invited me to *ifṭār* every day. They treated me as family."

Other respondents offered broader positive reflections on their living experiences. One Nigerian interviewed on 5 September 2025 remarked, "Malaysia is still the best place I have lived. People are friendly once they know you. The difficulties are real, but the kindness is real too." Likewise, a Sudanese participant interviewed on 8 September 2025 reflected that social distance often stemmed from unfamiliarity rather than hostility, stating, "Many Malaysians do not know the differences between African nationalities. When they do, their attitudes change. It is ignorance, not racism, in most cases."

Taken together, these affirming narratives underscore the ethical potential within Malaysian society, aligning closely with Ubuntu's relational ethos and Madani's emphasis on compassion (*raḥmah*) and social solidarity (*ukhuwwah*).

Reading Malaysia Through Ubuntu and Madani: Moral Interpretations of Belonging and Exclusion

What distinguishes this study is not only what migrants experienced, but how they ethically interpreted these experiences. As one Nigerian professional interviewed on 9 September 2025 observed, "Malaysia speaks for justice globally. So, I assumed justice would also apply to us." Migrants frequently evaluated institutional practices against Malaysia's moral self-image, and when discrepancies emerged, these were often perceived as ethical contradictions rather than mere bureaucratic shortcomings.

Ubuntu rendered relational warmth—and its absence—particularly salient in these interpretations. As a Sudanese academic interviewed in Kuala Lumpur on 12 September 2025 reflected, "We acknowledge each other's humanity back home. When that is missing here, it feels like something deeper is wrong." Viewed through the Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework, such testimonies constitute a moral critique, suggesting that Malaysia's diplomatic ideals acquire meaning and legitimacy only when consistently enacted through social relations and institutional practice.

Malaysia's Africa Policy Implications

The findings suggest that strengthening Malaysia–Africa relations requires attention not only to diplomatic and economic engagement, but also to the ethical quality of everyday governance. First, greater administrative consistency and transparency within immigration and educational institutions would reduce perceptions of arbitrariness and enhance institutional trust.

Second, public communication strategies and media engagement should move beyond securitised narratives to promote more balanced representations of African communities. Third, intercultural initiatives—particularly within universities and local communities—can foster familiarity, reduce ignorance and activate the ethical potential already present in Malaysian society.

Aligning institutional practices with Madani principles and nurturing Ubuntu-informed relationality would reinforce Malaysia's credibility as an ethical actor within the Global South.

Table 2

Policy Considerations under the Ubuntu-Madani Partnership Framework

Policy Area	*Key Issue*	*Recommended Actions*
Ethical governance	*The gap between values and institutional behaviour.*	*Ubuntu-Madani training, an intercultural programme, and integrating ethics into foreign policy.*
Immigration and visa system	*Distrust, profiling, and administrative opacity.*	*Africa desk, standard procedures, feedback channels and anti-profiling guidelines.*
Media and public narrative	*Stigmatising portrayals of Africans.*	*Media fellowship, Africa-focused research, diaspora-government task force.*
Diaspora engagement	*Under-utilised networks and expertise.*	*Advisory councils, business incubators, cultural and academic festivals.*
Higher education	*Student welfare concerns, limited Africa-focused content.*	*African Studies curricula, pastoral support, scholarships, and anti-racism protocols.*
Diplomacy beyond trade	*Overemphasis on economic cooperation.*	*Include insights from the diaspora, ethical cooperation frameworks, and value-based diplomacy.*

Key areas for improvement include humanising immigration procedures through transparent processes and dedicated units, transforming media narratives to counter suspicion, and leveraging diaspora communities as strategic partners. Additionally, strengthening higher education by developing joint African Studies programs and addressing discrimination can boost Malaysia's standing as an educational hub. Beyond trade, the framework advocates for a shift in diplomacy towards ethical, people-centred partnerships that incorporate diaspora insights and align with Ubuntu and Madani values, fostering a genuine, morally grounded South–South cooperation.

Conclusion

This study reframes Malaysia–Africa relations through the lived experiences of African migrants in Malaysia, revealing a complex interplay of hospitality, suspicion, opportunity, and constraint. This study contributes to broader debates in international relations by

demonstrating how foreign policy legitimacy is increasingly mediated through everyday ethical experiences rather than solely through state-level diplomacy. Selected interview excerpts and recurring themes across 130 interviews show that institutional inconsistencies and imagined racialised perceptions coexist alongside meaningful gestures of warmth, safety, and inclusion.

The Ubuntu–Madani Partnership Framework offers a distinctive ethical lens that foregrounds human dignity, relational accountability, and moral coherence. Migrants interpret their encounters not only through procedural expectations but through ethical imaginaries shaped by Ubuntu and informed by Madani. This dual ethical structure reveals that Malaysia's diplomatic rhetoric of justice and solidarity must be matched by domestic practices that affirm the dignity of African communities.

Malaysia possesses the institutional capacity and moral resources to move toward greater ethical consistency. The presence of compassion, safety, and acceptance in migrant narratives suggests that positive transformation is both possible and already underway. Aligning Malaysia's proclaimed values with everyday realities will strengthen its credibility as a moral actor in the Global South and cultivate deeper, more humane ties with African partners.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the future of Malaysia–Africa relations will be determined not only by state-level diplomacy and Malaysia's diplomatic missions in Africa, but also by everyday moral encounters that shape the lives of Africans in Malaysia.

Acknowledgement and Declaration

This research is indebted to the Africans in Malaysia who generously shared their experiences, allowing us to glimpse the moral and cultural textures of Africa–Malaysia relations. Ethical approval from the Universiti Malaya Research Ethics Committee (UMREC) ensured that all contributions were protected and handled with integrity. We are grateful to our interlocutors for enriching our understanding of dignity and solidarity, and to the anonymous peer reviewers whose insights strengthened the final manuscript. We remain humbled by the privilege of learning from others.

References

Abidin, I. S. Z., Jantan, M. D., Satar, N. M., & Haseeb, M**.** (2014). Trade linkages between Malaysia and the OIC member countries: Empirical evidence based on gravity model. *American Journal of Applied Sciences, 11*(11), 1910–1917.

Abrahamsen, R**.** (2017). Africa and international relations: Assembling Africa, studying the world. *African Affairs, 116*(462), 125–139.

Agustian, I., et al**.** (2024). Identity and foreign policy: Comparative studies of Indonesian and Malaysian foreign policies in relation to Israel. *Revista UNISCI, 65*, 53–77.

Ajayi, S. D. (2022). Rejuvenation of taboo as a mechanism for curbing immorality in African society. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 3*(2), 73–91. https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-7644/2022/v3n2a5

Ambikaipaker, M. (2021). Antiblackness in Malaysia, the Bandung spirit and African–Asian decolonial critique in *The Color Curtain*. In Z. Ibrahim, D. Richards, & V. T. King (Eds.), *Discourses, agency and identity in Malaysia: Critical perspectives* (pp. 231–248). Springer.

Azman, M. D. (2016). Conducting political research in a highly sensitive post-conflict environment: Reflections from the internally displaced camps in Kenya. *Malaysian Journal of International Relations, 4*(1), 13–36.

Azman, M. D. (2021). Connecting South–South communities: The narratives of South African–Malaysia relations. *Kajian Malaysia, 39*(1), 193–196.

Babalola, S., & Shittu, W**.** (2020). Foreign aid and economic growth in West Africa: Examining the roles of institutions. *International Economic Journal, 34*(2), 241–260.

*Bernama***.** (2025, July 31). UAE, Malaysia, Rwanda seek to boost AI adoption in Global South. *Bernama* [Malaysia].

Daniels, T. P. (2014). African international students in Klang Valley: Colonial legacies, postcolonial racialization, and sub-citizenship. *Citizenship Studies, 18*(8), 855–870.

Delfolie, D. (2012). Malaysian extraversion towards the Muslim world: Ideological positioning for a "mirror effect". *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 31*(4), 3–29.

Devadason, E. S., & Govindaraju, V. G. R. C**.** (2017). Bridging Asia with Africa: The case of Malaysia. In P. A. Raposo, D. Arse & S. Cornelissen. (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of Africa–Asia relations* (pp. 208–224). Routledge.

Dike, A. F. (2025). Artificial intelligence, ethics and erosion of human integrity. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 6*(2), 115–133.

Dorigné-Thomson, C., & Lin, J. (2025). Catalysing ASEAN–Africa relations and South–South cooperation. *ISEAS Perspective, 2025*(8). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Eissa, G. S., Abdelsalam, E. A., & Omar, M. F. B**.** (2019). South–South cooperation: A case study of contemporary Sudanese–Malaysian relations. *Intellectual Discourse, 27*(2), 365–388.

Ewuoso, C., & Hall, S**.** (2019). Core aspects of Ubuntu: A systematic review. *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law, 12*(2), 93–103.

Faiz Abdullah, M**.** (2025, November 25). Malaysia and Africa's arc of opportunities. *Free Malaysia Today*.

Gardiner, P. B**.** (1989). Racial dilemmas in Malaysia: A message for South African development. *Development Southern Africa, 6*(2), 214–226.

Hamid, A. F. A. (2018). Shifting trends of Islamism and Islamist practices in Malaysia, 1957–2017. *Southeast Asian Studies, 7*(1), 73–93.

Hamidin, A. H**.** (2003a). In pursuit of equality: Malaysia–Africa relations in the 1990s. *JATI: Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 8*(1), 67–84.

Hamidin, A. H**.** (2003b). *Malaysia–Africa relations: Searching for common goals*. Kuala Lumpur: Rhythms Publishing & Co. Sdn Bhd.

Hamidin, A**.** H. (2009). Malaysia–Africa relations: Emerging trends. *SARJANA, 24*(2), 1–20.

Haron, M. (2002). The Cape Malays: An imagined community in South Africa – A bibliographical essay. *Africa Research & Documentation, 88*, 35–58.

Haron, M., Abdul Hamid, A. F., Azman, M. D., Zainol, S., & Mohd Shafik, H. H**.** (2022). Remembering Hamidin Abdul Hamid: His contribution to Africa–Malaysia relations and the development of African studies in Malaysia. *SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs, 2*(2), 206–226.

Hong, M., Sun, S., Beg, A., & Zhou, X. (2020). Malaysia's exports to China: Does diplomatic relationship matter? *Economic Papers, 39*(1), 72–88.

Jeshurun, C. (2008). *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957-2007*. Talisman Publishing.

Kadouf, H. A**.** (2017). Quest for education and the problems facing Sudanese students in the diaspora: The Malaysian scenario. *International Journal of Sudan Research, 7*(2), 137–157.

Karuppannan, I. & Yacob, S. (2020). Malaysia-Indonesia Konfrontasi: The struggle for influence in the Middle East. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 93(*318), 67–90.

Knight, R. L., Mackintosh, K. A., Hudson, J., Shelley, J., Saynor, Z. L., & McNarry, M. A. "Battling the unknown: Using composite vignettes to

portray lived experiences of COVID-19 and long-COVID." *PLoS One,* 18, No. 4, (2023): Article e0284710. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0284710

Koya, Z. (2025, November 18). PM on official visits to Ethiopia, South Africa and Kenya. *The Star* [Malaysia].

Kuada, J**.** (2020). Culture and economic development in Africa: Opportunities and challenges. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 1*(1), 83–99.

Lee, H.-A**.** (2015). Affirmative action in Malaysia and South Africa: Contrasting structures, continuing pursuits. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 50*(5), 449–464.

Madondo, E., & Dhobha, H**.** (2025). Integrating Ubuntu philosophy into communication practices: Enhancing connection and understanding in the Sub-Saharan context. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 6*(4), 219–236.

Mahathir, M. (1985). North-South dialogue: Mahathir Mohamad. (Interviewed by Altaf Gauhar, August 1985). *Third World Quarterly,* 8(1), 1–15.

*Malay Mail***.** (2019, July 19). Malaysia an increasingly favourite destination for African students, says the ambassador. *Malay Mail* [Malaysia].

Mangiarotti, E**.** (2023). Malaysia 2023: A reform agenda overshadowed by identity politics. *Asia Maior, 34*, 187–202.

Mekoa, I. (2020). Ancestors as guardians of morality in African traditional religious thought. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 1*(1), 31–47.

Metz, T**.** (2019, September 8). The African ethic of Ubuntu. *1000-Word Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*.

Michael, F. L., & Salleh, S. F**.** (2023). National sustainability planning in Malaysia. In R. Brinkman. (Ed.), *Palgrave handbook of global sustainability* (pp. 1331–1350). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mohamed Elfaki, N. A., Jawan, J. A., Ahmed, Z. B., & Ku Seman, K.-H. (2012). Sudan–Malaysia political and cultural relations. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 6*(13), 250–257.

Mohd Umar, A**.** (2014). Education migration among Africans: A case study of Nigerian postgraduate students in International Islamic University Malaysia. *IOSR Journal of Humanities, 19*(5), 99–105.

Musa, M. F**.** (2023). *The evolution of Madani: How is 2.0 different from 1.0?* Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Muslim, N. (2012). The implications of the provisions in the Federal Constitution for Islam and the Malays for ethnic relations in Malaysia. *Kemanusiaan, 19*(2), 19–40.

Mutongoreni, N. A., Gwiza, A., & Jarbandhan, V. D. B**.** (2025). Interfaith dialogue, AI, and conflict resolution in Africa: Exploring the potential of religious leadership. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 6*(1), 161–185.

Neo, J. L**.** (2015). Competing imperatives: Conflicts and convergences in state and Islam in pluralist Malaysia. *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion, 4*(1), 1–24.

Nganje, F**.** (2014). Paradiplomacy and the democratisation of foreign policy in South Africa. *South African Journal of International Affairs, 21*(1), 89–107.

Nisa, E. F**.** (2023). Transnational halal networks: INHART and the Islamic cultural economy in Malaysia and beyond. *Global Networks, 23*(4), 867–885.

Noordin, N. H., & Syed Jaafar Alhabshi, S. M**.** (2023). Stakeholder engagement for value-based banking: The case of Malaysian Islamic banks. *Journal of Public Affairs, 23*(3), e2856.

Ogude, J. (Ed.). (2019). *Ubuntu and the reconstitution of community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Ong, A**.** (2000). Graduated sovereignty in South-East Asia. *Theory, Culture & Society, 17*(4), 55–75.

Owojori, A. J., Azman, M. D. & Balakrishnan, R. K. S. (2020). Vested interests and politicization of terrorism in Nigeria: A critical terrorism studies perspective. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 28*(4), 2823–2841.

Padayachee, V. & Valodia, I. (1998). Malaysian investment in South Africa: Some initial observations. *Third World Quarterly, 33*(38), 2435–2437.

Peiffer, C., & Englebert, P**.** (2012). Extraversion, vulnerability to donors and political liberalization in Africa. *African Affairs, 111*(444), 355–378.

Persaud, R. B. (2018). The racial dynamic in international relations: Some thoughts on the Pan-African antecedents of Bandung. In Q. N. Pham & R. Shilliam (Eds.), *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial orders and decolonial visions* (pp. 133–140). New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Pratihari, B. K**.** (2023). Africa–Malaysia relations in the post-Cold War period. *Scientific Research Journal, 10*, 703–710.

Qobo, M., & Nyathi, N**.** (2016). Ubuntu, public policy ethics and tensions in South Africa's foreign policy. *South African Journal of International Affairs, 23*(4), 421–436.

Reuters. (2025, February 6). Malaysia says forced displacement of Palestinians would be ethnic cleansing. *Reuters*.

SABC News. (2025, October 27). Universiti Malaya confers an Honorary Doctorate in international relations on Ramaphosa. *SABC News* [South Africa].

Saravanamuttu, J. (2010). *Malaysia's Foreign Policy, the First Fifty Years: Alignment, Neutralism, Islamism.* ISEAS-Yusof-Ishak.

Shukri, S. (2025). Islamic soft power: Malaysia well-positioned to consolidate its global leadership on halal branding and governance. *ISEAS Perspective, 2025*(89). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Shuriye, A. O. (2020). Trade and investment between Malaysia and Africa. *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies, 11*(2), 29–42.

Stenecke, T. (2016, May 30). Malaysia–Africa's silent partner. *The Diplomat*.

Study International. (2022, August 11). Living and studying in Malaysia: A Nigerian student perspective. *Study International*.

Suleiman, Y., & Mikail, I. K. (2020). Investigating the plights of Nigerians in diaspora: A case study of Nigerians studying in Malaysian universities. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education, 4*(1), 223–245.

Taylor, I. (2010). *The international relations of Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Continuum.

The Guardian. (2025, January 31). South Africa and Malaysia to launch campaign to protect international justice. *The Guardian*.

The Star. (2009, September 3). Globalisation brings more Africans to Malaysia. *The Star* [Malaysia].

The Star. (2019, October 10). Nearly half facing the gallows are foreigners, Nigerians the majority. *The Star* [Malaysia].

The Star. (2025, November 23). Malaysia to set up Centre for African Studies to enhance ties, says PM. *The Star* [Malaysia].

The Straits Times. (2021, June 27). Six Nigerians among eight people nabbed as Malaysia-based cross-border love scam syndicate is busted. *The Straits Times* [Singapore].

Tricontinental Institute for Social Research. (2025, April 8). *The Bandung spirit* (Dossier no. 87). Tricontinental Institute.

TV BRICS. (2025, August 1). UAE, Malaysia and Rwanda forge AI alliance to empower Global South. *TV BRICS*.

Umar, A., Noon, N. A. M., & Abdullahi, M. (2014). Challenges confronting African students in Malaysia: A case of postgraduate Nigerian students at International Islamic University Malaysia. *Journal of African Studies and Development, 6*(9), 161–168.

Vervliet, C**.** (2020). A personalist approach to the dialogue of civilisations: African Ubuntu, social Catholic personalism and Muslim Shakçânyya compared. *African Journal of Religion, Philosophy and Culture, 1*(1): https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-1fd5b1957e

Waikar, P., Mohamed Nawab, M. O., & Ali, R**.** (2021). Dancing with the *ummah*: Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy under Najib Razak. *The Pacific Review, 34*(2), 230–258.

Walwema, J**.** (2025). Ubuntu: An African ethics. In D. G. Ross (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of ethics in technical and professional communication*. Routledge.https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003434375-22/Ubuntu-josephine-walwema

Wan Mohd Nor, S. & Wan Mohd Nor, M. (2024). Unofficial cultural ambassadors: exploring the experiences and perceptions of Malaysian student scholars in America. *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies*, *20*(1). pp. 53–75.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Intellectual Discourse is an academic, refereed journal, published twice a year. Four types of contributions are considered for publication in this journal: major articles reporting findings of original research; review articles synthesising important deliberations related to disciplines within the domain of Islamic sciences; short research notes or communications, containing original ideas or discussions on vital issues of contemporary concern, and book reviews; and brief reader comments, or statements of divergent viewpoints.

To submit manuscript, go to http://www.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse

The manuscript submitted to Intellectual Discourse should not have been published elsewhere, and should not be under consideration by other publications. This must be stated in the covering letter.

1. Original research and review articles should be 5,000-8,000 words while research notes 3,000-4,000 words, accompanied by an abstract of 100-150 words. Book review should be 1,000-1,500 words.
2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with a 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins. Use 12-point Times New Roman font.
3. Manuscripts should adhere to the *American Psychological Association* (APA) style*,* latest edition.
4. The title should be as concise as possible and should appear on a separate sheet together with name(s) of the author(s), affiliation(s), and the complete postal address of the institute(s).
5. A short running title of not more than 40 characters should also be included.
6. Headings and sub-headings of different sections should be clearly indicated.
7. References should be alphabetically ordered. Some examples are given below:

Book
In-text citations:
Al-Faruqi & al-Faruqi (1986)

Reference:
Al-Faruqi, I. R., & al-Faruqi, L. L. (1986). *The cultural atlas of Islam*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Chapter in a Book
In-text:
Alias (2009)

Reference:
Alias, A. (2009). Human nature. In N. M. Noor (Ed.), *Human nature from an Islamic perspective: A guide to teaching and learning* (pp.79-117). Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.

Journal Article
In-text:
Chapra (2002)

Reference:
Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies, 10*, 214-232.

The Qur'ān
In-text:
(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36
(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:
The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth
In-text:
(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)
(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:
(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.
(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible
In-text:
Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:
The new Oxford annonated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Transliteration of Arabic words should follow the style indicated in ROTAS Transliteration Kit as detailed on its website (http://rotas.iium.edu.my/?Table_of_Transliteration), which is a slight modification of ALA-LC (Library of Congress and the American Library Association) transliteration scheme. Transliteration of Persian, Urdu, Turkish and other scripts should follow ALA-LC scheme.

IIUM Press (Marketing Unit)
Research Management Centre
International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-4862
E-mail: intdiscourse@iium.edu.my; intdiscourse@yahoo.com.
Website: http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop

In This Issue

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print)

ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

ISSN 0128-4878
2289 5639