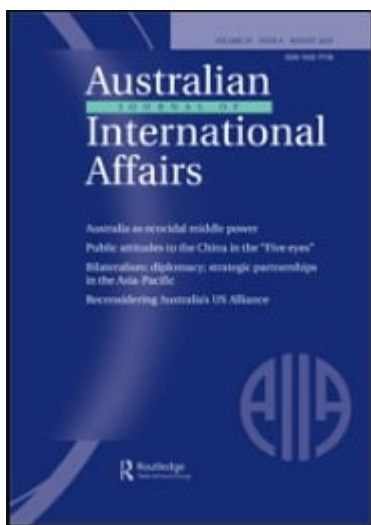


# Will Malaysia become an active middle power?

By [Bruce Gilley](#)

**“A Malaysia that actively promotes the destruction of Israel under phrases like ‘From the River to the Sea’ will never be an accepted leader in global affairs.”**

## ABSTRACT



Malaysia's economic growth and democratisation since 2003 have vaulted it into the ranks of the middle powers in the international system. However, Malaysia remains hesitant about its middle power status. It has assumed a counterhegemonic or pro-multipolarity role; it has supported some new international rules and institutions; it leads regional governance institutions; and it advocates for small countries on development issues. However,

these middle power behaviours are countered by a continuation of traditional Malaysia diplomacy which is inactive in shaping the emergence of superpower China as well as being disruptive and personalistic, most recently because of its embrace of radical Islam. It would require major shifts in international system structures and Malaysian national role conceptions for Malaysia to become a fully active middle power.

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