Structure and agency in the Malaysian government’s policies for economic development

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Abstract
This article examines the role of government in Malaysia’s history of economic development. In addressing two key challenges – inter-ethnic inequalities, conflicts and tensions, and exposure to global trade and economic relations – the Malaysian government has become directly involved in the economy. Strong government has played a role in Malaysia’s economic success in a range of ways, from 5-year plans to specific industry promotion and the creation of organisations for particular economic development purposes. Government has also been aware of environmental changes and in response has modified its strategies, established new organisations and invested in innovative ventures. Thus, while the drivers of economic development in Malaysia have been deeply embedded structural phenomena, the actual economic development path taken has been determined by the actions of the Malaysian government in concert with other stakeholders.

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