Abstract

This article looks at the Malaysian perception of the contemporary rise of China by focusing more on the country’s societal response rather than from a broad overall perspective of international strategic relations and diplomacy. The Malaysian society is seen as a complex multi-entity construct, constituted by often sharply differentiated fragments and sub-fragments which could exhibit vastly different responses to the implications of the rise of China. Within such a construct, perception of the rise of China and the appropriate Malaysian response are intricately entwined with domestic power politics, generational transition and governmental control over public discourse. Hence, the Malaysian perception of the contemporary rise of China is as complex as the Malaysian society itself, and what is revealed in official government policies and public discourses in the dominant mass media would fail to reflect the real depth of the issue if the intrinsic complexity of
the Malaysian society is not taken into due consideration.

Keywords: China’s rise, Malaysian Chinese community, perception, generation, politics

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