

Field Report

During the course of my studies for an MA in International Relations I have become interested in non-traditional threats to national security and particularly, why and how human migration across national borders is perceived and articulated as a threat to the societal security of host populations. My study is a comparative, cross-national analysis of Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, two countries that have undergone rapid economic development in the past forty years and have experienced similar patterns of inward migration but have very different social contexts. Drawing upon the Copenhagen School framework of “securitization” in relation to migration and using critical discourse analysis of local press media, I have examined how migration is communicated as a security threat in public discourse. I am particularly interested in how language is used by political elites, especially linguistic devices such as metaphors, to articulate migration as a threat to societal security. I was fortunate to be awarded an Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies Travel Bursary, which allowed me to spend a month in Malaysia during the summer of 2012. My visit enabled me to collect a corpus of texts from the local print media in order to undertake an empirical analysis to support my thesis.

Malaysia, as a newly industrialized country, has experienced rapid economic growth in the last three decades. It has become a destination country for large numbers of migrants from a broad range of countries in recent years, following earlier migration flows from China and India during the colonial period of British rule which had a profound and lasting effect on the country’s ethnic composition. As a result, it is a good example of how developing states that are dependent on migrant labour to support economic

growth, balance the tensions between their economic interests and apparent threats resulting from large inflows of migrants.

During my visit I was able to take advantage of the unique opportunities and facilities provided by the University of Nottingham's Malaysia campus in Semenyih, located approximately 30 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur. Established in 2000, the campus has a student population of 3,500. I met with staff from the campus's School of Politics, History and International Relations to discuss my research and enjoyed full access to the campus's library collection and resources that provided material that was inaccessible in the UK.



University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus

In addition, I visited a school for children of refugees from Myanmar. As Malaysia is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees, the plight of refugees in the country is

particularly precarious and I was able to witness some of the difficulties they face on a daily basis. Denied access to public education, refugee children are dependent on charitable foundations to support their basic studies, and while conditions at the school were rudimentary and crowded, the enthusiasm of the pupils was inspirational.



The School of Politics, History and International Relations

I am grateful to the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies for awarding me a travel bursary and for providing an experience that was both personally and academically rewarding.