

A Malaysian Perspective on US-Iran Relations

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpt from the Malaysian website *newstraitstimesonline.com* discusses a Malaysian perspective on US-Iran relations. The author expresses concern over a potential US initiative to create regime change in Iran, which he claims would destabilize the Middle East.

The article notes that the recent Iranian protests were spontaneous and not manipulated by an external power, while the 2009 protests were due to fraudulent elections. The author faults Iran for not creating better economic conditions for the Iranian people following a decrease in economic sanctions from the nuclear deal.

The author considers Iran a net positive in the region, claiming that Iran's coordination with Russia helped roll back the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). He claims that it was Saudi Arabia's ideology that led to the rise of ISIS, not Iran's. The author also suggests that even though the Iranian people may begrudge their own government, they would resent any attempt to interfere in their country's internal affairs. Furthermore, the author suggests that the US has a poor record in nation-building and there is no reason to think there would be any improvement if there was a regime change in Iran.

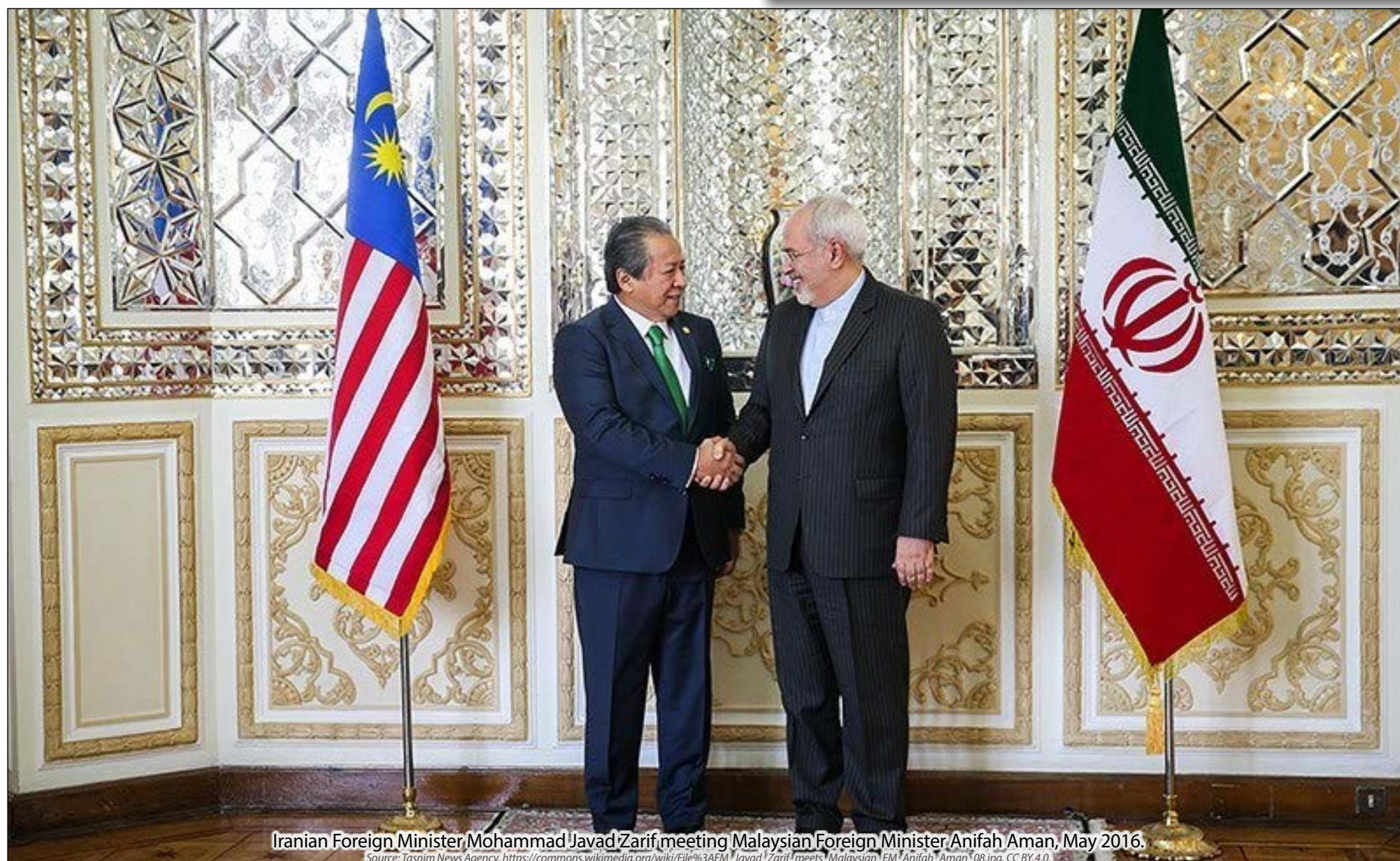
The author recommends that the US develop people-to-people ties with Iran and focus its efforts on winning Iranian hearts and minds instead of on issues related to the government. According to the author, reshaping Iran depends on empowering the people, including financially, thus suggesting that greater economic engagement would be key to improved relations between the US and Iranian citizens. He claims that "an approach akin to the Marshall Plan that won over Japan post-World War II through broad reconstruction programs will yield far better results than habitually threatening Iran's sovereignty." **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

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Source: "Invading Iran will further Inflamm the Middle East," *Newstraitstimesonline.com*, 9 January 2018. <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2018/01/323192/invading-iran-will-further-inflame-middle-east>

Whereas ordinary Iranians in 2009 were galvanized by a stolen election and led by intellectuals, these protests are spontaneous, rudderless and consequently more dangerous. A US-led military intervention to topple the Ayatollahs, however, is a terrible idea and will permanently destabilize the Middle East. Nevertheless, contrary to US anxieties, it is worth examining why Iran is a net positive for the Middle East. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC) and its affiliated Shia militias, in cooperation with the Russian army, have been instrumental in breaking the back of global terrorists the Islamic State (IS). ...the reason IS had so effortlessly blitzed the Middle East in the first place was largely thanks to the web of radical thought spun across the region by Saudi Arabia.

When Trump begins... a foreign policy that does not fixate on sharpening contradictions, he will realize the key to reshaping Iran is by empowering its people and not further emptying their wallets.



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif meeting Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman, May 2016.

Source: Tasnim News Agency, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3AFM_Javad_Zarif_meets_Malaysian_FM_Anifah_Aman_08.jpg, CC BY 4.0.