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The Many Shades of Islamism and Islamists in Malaysia



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Islamism, referring to a political ideology that valorizes the erection of an Islamic state as the ultimate goal of the Islamic struggle, emerged in Malaysia since the 1960s. The onset of Islamic resurgence in the 1970s injected vigor into Islamist initiatives, which by the 1980s had been adopted by the Malaysian state. Since the adoption of Islamization as an official policy during the Mahathir administration, Islamists of variegated persuasions have participated in the country's political process in numerous ways, whether in government, in opposition or in civil society. Despite persistent attempts by the state at homogenizing Islam in both faith and practice, the Islamist spectrum in Malaysia continues to exhibit great diversity, each segment trying in various ways to influence the state. By the time Najib Razak came into power in 2009, the stage had been set for a new form of contestation reflecting fault lines over the proper role of Islam in the public sphere. Rather than surrendering to the Islamists whose influence today run deep in the state apparatus and structures, a diverse range of Malay-Muslims have also risen to countervail stirrings of Islamism, part of which is state-orchestrated, and which they accuse of slowly but surely essentializing Islamic discourse, sacrificing Malaysia's much-vaunted pretensions of moderation in the process.

Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid is Professor of Political Science at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang, Malaysia. In 2008-09 and 2015-16, he held Visiting Fellowships with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, respectively. Trained as a political scientist and political economist at the universities of Oxford, Leeds and Newcastle, UK, his research interests lie within the field of political Islam in Southeast Asia. Ahmad Fauzi has published over sixty scholarly articles in leading journals and books on Islam in Malaysia and the region. In May 2017, Ahmad Fauzi represented Malaysia at the Russia - Islamic World Strategic Meeting held in Grozny, Chechen Republic, Russian Federation.

Date:
29 August 2017, Tuesday

Time:
3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Venue:
Lecture Theatre 6, Level 1, Sunway University

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