

Understanding Asia: Religion and Society

Multicultural vs Rightwing Islamism: Islamist Competition and Transformation in Contemporary Malaysia



(Scan for registration)

Hew Wai Weng
(Universiti Kebangsaan
Malaysia)

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Zoom event

Besides political parties, various Islamic organisations have been playing important roles in shaping discourses and practices of political Islam in Malaysia. While these organisations share conservative views on numerous religious, moral and gender issues, they have different approaches when dealing with topics such as nation-building, multiculturalism, democracy and attitudes towards non-Muslims. Some have been more moderate and inclusive in their outlooks, while others have chosen a more hardline and exclusivist position. These two diverging practices of Islamism coexist, compete, and often co-constituting each other. How do we understand and capture such Islamist competition and transformation in Malaysia and elsewhere? Moving beyond the debate of post-Islamism and Islamism, this paper suggests describing such contestation as a competition between moderate, multicultural Islamism and extreme, right-wing Islamism.

Hew Wai Weng is a research fellow at the Institute of Malaysian and International Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (IKMAS, UKM). His research interests include the intersections between ethnicity, religiosity, class and politics in Malaysia and Indonesia. He writes about Chinese Muslim identities, Hui migration, social media and Islamic preaching, and urban middle-class Muslim aspirations in Malaysia and Indonesia.