

### Book Review

**Joseph Chinyong Liow (2022). *Islam and Political Power in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Role of Tarbiyah and Dakwah in the Evolution of Islamism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 148 Pages. ISBN 978-1-108-70558-5**

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Islamism in Indonesia and Malaysia has experienced various important transformations from its social movement roots to mainstream politics. In this case, it is important to explore how this happened and what is the purpose. Through social movement theories, the case of Islamism in these two countries is influenced by the popularity and appeal of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia, which can not be understood without appreciating social movements and the strong mobilization within them. Furthermore, the roots of the mobilization in civil society have influenced long-lasting Islamist politics and experienced political transformation. Based on this, this argument is used to explore Islamist ideas in the context of social movements, types of institutional structures, and changes in the political landscape that influence the processes of Islamism itself.

Let's look at several studies that focus on Southeast Asia. There is still something inherent in the literature, namely that scholarship on Islamist movements tends to be dominated and shaped by analytical frameworks and historical developments that emerge from the Middle East and North Africa. This was influenced by the Arab Spring and its impact, namely the opposition from Islamic politics and civil society groups carrying out mass protests and trying to overthrow dictatorships in several countries, such as Egypt and Tunisia, to the extent of Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, and Kuwait, and several other affected countries (Liow, 2022: 1). Furthermore, the Arab Spring has indeed made an important contribution to researchers in knowing and understanding the actions of Islamist groups in mobilizing and the extent to which the efforts made were successful or failed in some cases, as well as at a certain level reviewing the compatibility between democracy and Islam.

Based on this context, there is a bias that obscures the role of Islam in South Asia in shaping developments in Southeast Asia since the early 1920s. Although Muslim intellectuals from South Asia never considered themselves to be on the fringes of the Islamic world, nor did they consider themselves subservient to their counterparts in the Middle East. However, it aroused the curiosity of Islamic scholars in Southeast Asia when they began referring to works transmitted from South Asia.

Meanwhile, if you look more deeply into the book "Islam and Political Power in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Role of Tarbiyah and Da'wah in the Evolution of Islamism" by Joseph Chinyong Liow, the first chapter of this book reviews Islamism, social activism, and politics which occurs in the international context, the Middle East region and especially in Indonesia and Malaysia. Before discussing too much, Islamism in the context of this book is a revolutionary political ideology centered on an interpretation of Islam that emphasizes social and political involvement. In understanding Islamism and the prospects for political power for Islamist groups in Southeast Asia, one must look at and consider the activism and civil society mobilization of Islamist groups (p. 17).

For this reason, in responding to this problem, first, most scholars and observers have agreed that piety and religious awareness are increasing among Southeast Asian Muslims. However, the majority of this increasing piety is expressed in their personal choices, such as being more diligent in observing the five pillars of faith, dressing conservatively, and using greetings in Arabic rather than using the local language. This can be seen from the results of research conducted by Noorhaidi Hasan, that the expansion of this movement can be seen in the appearance of young men who wear long beards, wear Arabic-style robes, wear turbans, and ankle-length trousers (*isbal*), and the women wear black veils that cover their whole body (*niqab*) in public places (Hasan, 2007: 83). Second, because of the increase in

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social activism, political involvement has become an absolute necessity. Meanwhile, in reality, a large number of social movement activists in Indonesia and Malaysia have joined Islamic political parties and they occupy leadership positions. Furthermore, social movements and Islamic protests have mobilized themselves and collaborated or transformed into political parties, as well as taking part in general elections to gain power in decision-making. Third, the state has sponsored quite high levels of Islamic activism in recent years in Indonesia and Malaysia. This can be seen from the allocation of resources to each Islamic religious institution (p. 18).

The second part of this book examines the markers of Islamist activism, especially in Southeast Asia. In this case, the main channels for the discourse of Islamic revival are Indonesian and Malaysian students who travel on scholarships to centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East and North Africa, especially Egypt, and Europe. When they returned to their countries, they seeded Islamic social movements designed to spread the ideas and ideals of Islamic reform. Furthermore, the differences between the *Tarbiyah* and *Da'wah* movements in Indonesia and Malaysia are also clearly visible. *Tarbiyah* at secular universities and Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia and *da'wah* in Malaysia focuses on mobilizing graduates from secular higher education institutions, both at home and abroad. In Indonesia, Islamic social and religious activism during the early days of Soeharto's presidency revolved around DDII which was formed in 1968. This Islamic organization was formed with the aim of formalizing efforts to raise Islamic awareness among Indonesian students through *da'wah* programs on campuses. Meanwhile, Islamic social movement activism in postcolonial Malaysia is related to the Islamic *da'wah* movement which began in the 1970s with the emergence of various student groups and civil society organizations to strengthen the religious identity of Malaysian Muslims.

Meanwhile, the third part of this book focuses more on discussing movements and parties, as well as issues of mobilization and transformation. In this case, the various Islamic sects in Indonesia have given rise to educational institutions and contributed to the process of social mobilization and transformation. Furthermore, the *Tarbiyah* movement also expanded its influence among state-controlled religious institutions and encompassed student leadership bodies at various state Islamic universities. These conditions gave the movement a foothold that became the basis for the movement to deepen its involvement in politics in the late 1990s. Apart from that, there are many schools and institutions connected to Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Hidayatullah, and several smaller movements. They have networks and structures that function as a means of mobilization. Meanwhile in Malaysia, the reach of the *da'wah* movement in the field of education is facilitated by a network of private Islamic schools affiliated with groups such as ABIM, JIM, and Ikram Malaysia, as well as PAS.

The final chapter of this book contains Islamic social movements that have been advocating in Indonesia and Malaysia since the late 1960s and turned to political and socio-religious participation which allows for political opportunity structures in movement theory in Indonesia and Malaysia. Furthermore, since the mid-1980s, the relationship between the state and Islam in Indonesia has become increasingly close and has transformed along with the transition from the New Order to a more advanced direction.

Finally, the book "Islam and Political Power in Indonesia and Malaysia: The Role of *Tarbiyah* and *Dakwah* in the Evolution of Islamism" is an important work to see the relationship between Islam and political power in Indonesia, where there is a role of *Tarbiyah* and *Dakwah* in the dynamics evolution of Islamism. This book is important for academics to read, especially those who focus on Islamic social movements and Islamism developing in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Malaysia. This book has provided three important findings, namely first, the *Tarbiyah* and *Da'wah* movements have integrated into mainstream politics in their respective countries. In Indonesia, politicians with *Tarbiyah* backgrounds are almost all found in the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Meanwhile, in Malaysia, *da'wah* activists who turned into politicians can be found across the spectrum of political parties, including UMNO, PAS, Amanah, and PKR. This suggests that there is a more diffuse influence. Second, although there are progressive voices within the group, Islamic political activism in Malaysia, in general, takes a narrow and exclusionary approach. On the other hand, in the case of Indonesia, the PKS has at least done this and come to the fore and resisted pressure to pursue a stronger Islamic agenda. While conservative religious forces are actively involved in debates on social issues and there has been no concerted effort to promote an Islamic state a signal of political goals. Third, there is a relationship between the role of the state and Islamist groups. Although there is a correlation between the political openness of space and the increase in Islamic activism, in fact, in Malaysia, since the 1970s it has played

an important role in the gradual creation that allowed Islamic activism to develop. Meanwhile in Indonesia, the oppression carried out by the New Order government weakened Islamism and forced it underground, where it was partly supported by the *Tarbiyah* movement.

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### **References**

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