

Roundtable on Malaysia's Politics

Reflections on Malaysia's 14th General Election

On 9 May 2018 the Pakatan Harapan coalition in Malaysia won a surprise electoral victory. Pakatan Harapan secured the majority of Parliamentary seats and brought an end to 61 years of rule under the Barisan Nasional coalition. Former Prime Minister Najib Razak's loss raises many critical questions about the future of Malaysian politics, not least the durability of the Pakatan Harapan. The return of Mahathir Mohamad was a major factor that brought an end to the Barisan Nasional's monopoly of power. Mahathir made history by becoming the world's oldest elected prime minister, and the revival of "neo-Mahathirism" needs further analysis. Ethnic politics remains a critical factor in Malaysia, with the Malay majority divided and non-Malays seemingly behind the new ruling coalition. Contentious issues that deserve further scrutiny in this Roundtable include the election manifestos that create new "moral contracts" (not legally binding), the establishment of the Council of Elders, the Institutional Reform Committee, and the review of the Anti-Fake News Act 2018 and the Sedition Act 1948, to name a few. The Malaysian Election Commission is in the spotlight because of the disqualification of candidates and the introduction of new rules governing elections. This interdisciplinary Roundtable offers a timely discussion of the latest political situation in Malaysia, approximately four months after the shock results of the 14th general election.

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