

Liberalism Under Siege Navigating a New Global Disorder

23 August 2025 | 9AM - 3PM
Kuala Lumpur

Around the world, liberal democracy is under strain. Trust in institutions is weakening. Polarisation is deepening. Values that once formed the backbone of democratic governance, such as the rule of law and public accountability are being questioned.

For Malaysia, these shifts present real and urgent questions. Can liberal ideas still offer a path forward in a diverse and complex society? How can we protect pluralism, fairness and freedom in times of political and economic uncertainty?

The IDEAS Liberalism Conference 2025 offers a platform for open, practical dialogue on how to uphold liberal democratic values in an increasingly divided yet interconnected world.

Tentative Programme (As of 29 July 2025)

Time	Agenda
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Registration
9:30 am - 9:40 am	Welcoming Remarks YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz <i>Founding President</i> <i>IDEAS</i>
9:40 am - 11:00 am	Plenary Panel Discussion: What Happened to Liberal Democracy? <p>Liberal democracy was built on institutions, pluralism, and cooperation. Today, those ideas are being questioned. This session explores how liberal democracies around the world are responding and what Malaysia can learn from these shifts.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Katrin Bannach <i>Country Director, Malaysia & Indonesia</i> <i>Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom</i></p> <p>Prof Chin-Huat Wong <i>Deputy Head (Strategy)</i> <i>Sustainable Development Solutions Network</i> <i>Sunway University</i></p>

Dr Tricia Yeoh

*Associate Professor of Practice
School of Politics and International Relations
University of Nottingham Malaysia*

Moderator:

Aira Azhari

*Chief Executive Officer
IDEAS*

11.00 am - 11.10 am

Coffee Break

11:10 am - 12:30 pm

Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Session 1: Tackling Inequality in Liberal Societies

Liberalism has long supported free markets and open competition, but growing inequality is raising hard questions. Can we build an economy that is both free and fair? This session will explore how Malaysia can shape a more inclusive approach that remains open to innovation while ensuring more people benefit. We will discuss how liberal principles can adapt to meet today's challenges without losing their core.

Speakers:

Shakira Teh Shariffudin

*Senior Economist, People/Human Development
World Bank*

Lee Min Hui (TBC)

*Social Policy Specialist
UNICEF Malaysia*

Moderator:

Dr Stewart Nixon

*Deputy Director of Research
IDEAS*

Session 2: Can We Still Trust Institutions?

Trust is the foundation of democracy. When it erodes, institutions lose their ability to lead, govern, and inspire public confidence. This session will explore how to rebuild institutional credibility through transparency, accountability, and meaningful reforms.

Speakers:

Ibrahim Suffian

*Co-Founder & Programs Director
Merdeka Center for Opinion Research*

Aziff Azuddin
Associate Research Director
IMAN Research

Moderator:
Amalina Annuar
Research Manager
IDEAS

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Lunch Break

2:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Keynote Address

Prof Dan Slater (TBC)
James Orin Murfin Professor of Political Science
University of Michigan

2:30 pm - 3:00 pm

Q&A Session

3:00 pm

Event Ends