Workshop on

Digital Democracy in ASEAN in the Age of Digitalization

2-3 December 2019, *Ibis Styles Khaosan Viengtai,* Bangkok

Concept

The rapid progress of digitalization transforms societies around the world. Ubiquity of information, seamless connectivity across borders and the rise of ever more powerful technologies such Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 5G are relocating large parts of our life into the digital world. Critical infrastructure, defense systems and communication devices are operated over networks such as the Internet.

Political systems are making the digital switch too. Politicians, officeholders and public institutions make increasing use of social media, professing the goal of direct interaction with constituents, supporters and citizens. The formation of the political will is taking place largely in digital spaces, where public discourses are shaped. Elections, referenda and other votes can already be held in electronic voting booths, and they can be shifted to cyber space as well. Therefore, the legitimation and exercise of political power is, to increasing extents, digitally determined. Consequently, actors with sophisticated digital capacities or influence in cyber space are likely to affect public discourses and decision-making procedures. The possibility to exploit algorithms and to scale effects at low costs exacerbate the digital vulnerabilities.

It follows that the resilience of democratic processes and institutions against interference from within and abroad is one of the major challenges of our time. Governments, civil society and the media need to develop joint approaches and solutions to safeguard democracy and national self-determination.

Problem analysis: Challenges and chances of digital politics in ASEAN

The governments of several ASEAN countries are currently pondering how to address a rise of disinformation ("fake news") and hacking attempts that target elections. The resilience of democratic institutions is a major issue in many Southeast Asian states. Several recent incidents and developments illustrate this.

Ahead of Indonesia's general election in April 2019, hacking attacks were reported that aimed to manipulate and modify the country's electoral roll, which includes the data of more than 187 million eligible voters. The large majority originated from domestic sources, though foreign hacking, in particular from China and Russia, was reported to have taken place as well.

According to survey results, almost half of the Indonesian electorate said they received fake news and hoaxes every day ahead of the election. This included, for instance, false rumours alleging that containers full of millions of marked ballot papers shipped from China were being stored at a Jakarta port. Multiple other stories that included false claims about the presidential candidates went equally viral as social media algorithms unfolded their power.

However, the connectivity of social media may also facilitate grass-roots initiatives, for example to independently verify an election's vote count. Using a combination of raw data released by the election commission and cross-checked data from polling stations, hundreds of Indonesian citizens who grouped together via social media published updated vote counts every 10 minutes.

In a similar fashion, a group of Thai media and technology companies and an NGO joined hands to launch a crowdsourcing project to calculate and report voting results online in parallel with the country's election commission on election day in March this year.

In the Philippines, the current administration has actively shaped online discussions with the use of paid trolls. Facebook closed several "inauthentic" accounts that were linked to a businessman who had managed the president's online election campaign. At the same time, the "fake news" label is used by public officials to discredit critical media.

Singapore recently enacted the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019, which criminalizes the public communication of false or misleading information if, for example, this may lead to an undue influence on the outcome of an election or referendum, to enmity, hatred or ill-will between different groups of persons, or to a diminished public confidence in the government. The law aims to tackle the spread of "fake news" with the government's professed aim to secure Singapore against connected threats. However, many observers also say that the law may do more

harm than good due to its likely chilling effect on free speech, which is one of the cornerstone rights of any democratic system. Malaysia made efforts to repeal its "Anti-Fake News Act" of 2018 after the general election of May 2018 resulted in a change of the administration.

Focal countries, target group & project goals

The project shall be developed in a longer process if sufficient funding and stake holder interest is secured. A first goal is the crafting of a likeminded community of stakeholders and the production of a policy paper as a platform on which ensuing activities might be developed. To ensure discussions on comparable status and problem levels in the inception period initial target countries within ASEAN are those with a stronger commitment to a democratic system of government. This applies in particular to Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The target group is comprised of state representatives, attorneys, academics, journalists and NGO representatives.

The goal of the project is to develop strategies to increase the resilience of democratic systems within ASEAN. This goal shall be achieved by an interdisciplinary and international exchange of experiences, ideas and approaches. The expected outcome is a comprehensive and multi-faceted analysis of the existing challenges and the development of concrete strategies to address them.

Format:

This Expert-workshop will give opportunities for experts to have informed discussions on a number of pre-selected topics.

Over 1.5 days, six larger topics will be discussed, each under the guidance of one "leading expert". Each leading expert will guide one 1.5 hour session with the other five experts and the other invited participants.

The leading expert:

- if feasible- will circulate a small amount of reading to the other 5 experts prior to the workshop (they will all be e-introduced to each other as soon as experts are confirmed)
- will provide a short input presentation at the beginning of their session
- will guide the discussion for the remainder of the session
- will formulate a brief (2-3 pages) summary and results paper for one of the six sessions as indicated in the agenda

The six short report and result papers will be edited and published on CPG's website publication after the event.

Agenda

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2" align="center">**Monday, 2 December 2019**
Kaosan Room, 2. Floor</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.30-9.00</td>
<td>*Registration*</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00-9.15</td>
<td>*Welcoming words & introductory remarks*

Henning Glaser, Director, German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG), Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok</td>
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<tr>
<td colspan="2" align="center">*Workshop Session 1: Disinformation, Fake News and Elections*</td>
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<td>9.15-11.00

(Review Summary: Prof. Dr. Francisco A. Magno)</td>
<td>Under the leadership of Ms. Santi Indra Astuti, this session will discuss the impact of fake news and disinformation campaigns on elections, their credibility and outcomes. Guiding questions are:

(1) How can the impact of targeted disinformation and fake news on elections be characterized? (Foreign Influence etc)
(2) What are ways to deal with the negative outcomes in future?
(3) Will increased tension, seemingly fostered by social media, lead to a stronger rejection of Western values in ASEAN's democracies?

Leading Expert/ Chair: Ms. Santi Indra Astuti, Chief of Research and Development, MAFINDO, Indonesia

Discussant: John Nery, Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University</td>
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<td>11.15-11.15</td>
<td>*Coffee break*</td>
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<tr>
<td colspan="2" align="center">*Workshop Session 2: Fact-checking and Digital Media literacy*</td>
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<td>11.15-13.00

(Review Summary: Ms. Santi Indra Astuti)</td>
<td>Under the leadership of Dr Fiona Suwana, this session will discuss the effectiveness as well as pros and cons of fact-checking centres and who should run them. Guiding questions are:

(1) Can fact-checking be independent?
(2) What are safeguards to ensure fact-checking is not a mere continuation of undue influence?</td>
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	(3) How can we improve digital media literacy, are there simple "traffic light options" (i.e. a three-tiered signalling system for content)? (4) What is the role of education and critical thinking? *Leading Expert/ Chair: Dr Fiona Suwana, Co-Course Leader-Digital Literacy, Queensland University of Technology* *Discussant: Dr. Taberez A. Neyazi, Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore*
13.00-14.00 pm	***Lunch break***

	Workshop Session 3: Who should govern free speech and how?
14.00-15.45 *(Review Summary: Dr Fiona Suwana)*	Under the leadership of Aisyah Llewellyn and Ranto Sibarani this session will discuss who should govern free speech, the right to an opinion, and how it should be governed. Guiding questions are: (1) Who should make the rules? Private Companies or Governments? (2) How can a balance be struck between the right to an opinion and avoiding hate speech or inciting violence online? (3) How should one govern, who takes responsibility and for what? Libel, laws, (i.e. California Deepfake and B.O.T Law) *Leading Experts/ Chairs: Ranto Sibarani, Legal Advisor, New Naratif and Aisyah Llewellyn, Deputy Editor, New Naratif* *Discussant: Dr. Taberez A. Neyazi, Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore*
15.45-16.00	***Coffee break***

	Workshop Session 4: The impact of the Protection of Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA Singapore) on Digital Activism and Resistance in Singapore.
16:00-17.45 *(Review Summary: Ranto Sibarani; Aisyah Llewellyn)*	Under the leadership of Satveer Kaur-Gill, this session will discuss digital activism in Singapore. The guiding questions include: 1. With the passing of POFMA, what are the potential implications of digital activism in the city-state? 2. How has mainstream reporting shaped discourses on POFMA? How will POFMA be used and reported in the upcoming general elections? 3. What are the implications of laws like POFMA authoritarian climates? *Leading Expert/ Chair: Dr. Satveer Kaur-Gill, Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Center & the Dept of Communications and New Media, National University Singapore*

17.45	*Closing of the first workshop day*

Tuesday, 3 December 2019
Kaosan Room, 2. Floor

Workshop Session 5: Deep Fakes: The Future of disinformation and undue influence

8.45-9.15	*Registration*
9.15-11.00 *(Review Summary: Dr. Satveer Kaur-Gill)*	Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Zuriati Ahmad Zukarnain this session will discuss the future of disinformation campaigns and undue influence, with a particular regard to ever evolving deep fakes. Guiding questions are: (1) We struggle with comprehensively regulating the most basic aspects of disinformation. Do we stand a chance against the inevitable development towards much improved fake news - the "deep fakes"? (2) What are conceivable scenarios in the case of successful and unsuccessful ways to regulate deep fakes, or, what is at stake? (3) What are the conceptual differences between "fake news" and a deep fake? If one creates an objectively false reality, the other "interprets" or gives a version of a reality, which is potentially more damaging? *Leading Expert/ Chair: Prof. Dr. Zuriati Ahmad Zukarnain, Deputy Dean(Industry and Community Relations), Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology, Universiti Putra Malaysia*
11.00-11.15 am	*Coffee break*

Workshop Session 6: Potential of digital innovations towards strengthening democratic governance

11.15-13.00 *(Review Summary: Prof. Dr. Zuriati Ahmad Zukarnain)*	Under the leadership of Dr. Francisco A. Magno, this session will discuss the potential of digital innovations and how they can strengthen democratic governance. Guiding questions are: (1) What developments stand out in terms of strengthening democratic governance? (e.g. digital plebiscites, instant surveys) (2) How can we foster positive trends while not getting overwhelmed by negative trends? (3) Can digital democracy increase trust in democracy as a whole? What needs to be considered to achieve such outcome?

	Leading Expert/ Chair: Prof. Dr. Francisco A. Magno, Director of the Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance at De La Salle University *Discussant: John Nery, Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University* *Discussant: Sutawan Chanprasert, Founder, Digital Reach*
13.00-14.00	***Lunch break***
	Concluding Workshop Session/ Preparation of Results
14.00-15.00	This session provides another opportunity for the workshop experts to gather their results and discuss outstanding issues. It may also be used for the individual experts to begin preparing their report on one of the six issues discussed.
15.00	***Workshop closing***

This event is supported by:

CPG's cooperation and funding partners: