



Council of
Asian Liberals
and Democrats



Conference Report

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AGAINST DISINFORMATION

21 October 2019 | Taipei, Taiwan



CONFERENCE REPORT

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

21 October 2020 | Taipei, Taiwan

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40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting

Democracy 4.0: Innovating Democracy Through Technology
Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

Our democratic system makes us open to diverse and innovative ideas, giving us the flexibility to break the mold when the mold no longer fits.

Tsai Ing-wen

President of Taiwan

(Speech at Columbia University, 12 July 2019)

40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting
Democracy 4.0: Innovating Democracy Through Technology
Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

18-23 October 2019

Taipei, Taiwan

Democracy may be beaten, but it is not defeated. The openness of democracy to “diverse and innovative ideas”, as what Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen noted in the quote above, is also what would make it survive in this era of authoritarianism, illiberalism and populism.

But first, democracy must recognize its limitations. Darshana Narayanan of The Governance Lab, New York University observes:

Current forms of democracy exclude most people from political decision-making. We elect representatives and participate in the occasional referendums, but we mainly remain on the outside. The result is that a handful of people in power dictate what ought to be collective decisions. What we have now is hardly a democracy, or at least, not a democracy that we should settle for.

She noted, however, that technology, coupled with political will, can make democracy great again. Examples of how technology makes democracy more open, inclusive, direct and interactive abound:

- *vTaiwan* – This brings citizens and government together to deliberate and “co-create” legislation related to the digital sphere. The process uses human facilitators to lead the discussions, as well as a machine-learning-based open-source system called *Polis* for people to exchange views online, and for analyzing public sentiment. The *Polis* software is now used by public authorities in United States, Canada and Singapore.
- *Decide Madrid* - Developed in 2015 by the Madrid City Council, this platform runs on a free software called *Consul*. It enables residents to propose, support and vote on policies for the city, and ensures transparency in all city proceedings,

including budgeting. The *Consul* software is now used by cities in 33 countries, including Buenos Aires, Paris and Rome.

- *Better Reykjavik* – This online consultation forum gives the citizens a chance to present their ideas on issues regarding services and operations of the City of Reykjavík. Anyone can view the open forum, and registered users who approve the terms of participation can participate in the forum. To date, around 800 citizen initiatives were approved by the city council within seven years.

The cases above show how technology can transform democracy by making citizens front and center of the political process. Taiwan's Digital Minister Audrey Tang summarizes it in this way: "The idea is to bring technology into the spaces where citizens live, rather than expect citizens to enter the space of technology. The premise is this: the government must first trust the people with agenda-setting power; then the people can make democracy work."

Technology, however, can be a double-edged sword. As what President Tsai pointed out in her Columbia University speech: "In the digital age, disinformation can become fact in a matter of hours... Authoritarian governments seek to exploit press freedoms unique to democratic societies to sow dissent among us. They hope to make us question our political systems and lose faith in democracy." Hence, political innovation, in this day and age, should also take into consideration ways to address disinformation or fake news.

Recognizing the potentials of technology to revive (and also damage) democracy, the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), in cooperation with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) and National Democratic Institute for International affairs (NDI), is organizing a series of events in Taipei, Taiwan on 18-23 October 2019. These events include:

- *Democracy 4.0: Innovating Democracy Through Technology (19-20 October 2019)* – A forum and study tour, organized with the support of Taiwan's Digital Ministry, which hope to identify and promote good practices on how technology creates opportunities for citizen empowerment and promotes participation in governance.
- *Defending Democracy Against Disinformation (21 October 2019)* – A seminar-workshop that aims to bring key stakeholders on the issue of curbing disinformation, misinformation and hate speech from a political perspective.
- *40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting (22 October 2019)* – A regular meeting among CALD members and partners that tackles both political and administrative issues that impinge on the operation of CALD as a liberal and democratic organization.

General and Specific Event Objectives: The events hope to identify and promote good practices on how technology creates opportunities for citizen empowerment and promotes participation in governance in the era of disinformation or fake news. More specifically, they aim to achieve the following objectives:

- To describe how new technologies work and their implications for elections, campaigning, governance, among other political issues;

- To demonstrate how new technologies can help solve governance issues and problems;
- To explain how new technologies can be harnessed by political parties in order to improve their organizational operations and engagement with the public; and
- To analyze, with various stakeholders, how technology amplifies disinformation, and how technology can be used to counter it.

Schedule of Activities (21 October, Monday)

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation / Working Groups with Dinner

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation: Stakeholder Analysis and Intervention

Information is power. The use and abuse of information, therefore, has always been part of politics since time immemorial. The recent advances in information and communication technologies, however, have radically changed the way information and politics intersect. On the one hand, the advent of the Internet and mobile devices has democratized knowledge and information, providing the people with the tools to become informed and active citizens in a vibrant democracy. On the other hand, information and communication technologies have also become instruments to create, distribute and amplify disinformation, misinformation and hate speech, which, in turn, threaten to undermine the very foundations of democratic society.

“Fake news” is the more straightforward and more commonly used term associated with disinformation and misinformation. Some say that the concept is an oxymoron, as “news” implies verifiable information in the public interest, and any information that does not meet these standards does not deserve the label of news. For this reason, this workshop would use the terms “disinformation” and “misinformation” instead. Disinformation refers to “deliberate (often orchestrated) attempts to confuse or manipulate people through delivering dishonest information to them.” In contrast, misinformation pertains to “misleading information created or disseminated without manipulative or malicious intent.” (UNESCO, 2018). Lastly, hate speech (sometimes called “mal-information”) consists of “verbal or non-verbal communication that involves hostility directed towards particular social groups, most often on the grounds of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc.” (Oxford Constitutional Law, 2017).

Disinformation, misinformation and hate speech affect not only politics but also the society at large. The shared norms, values and understandings, which are necessary for the effective functioning of every society, have been put into question, even discarded. The societal institutions that used to safeguard moral standards and professional integrity, such as established religions and traditional media, have now become subjects of distrust and hate. In a world of digital disinformation, everyone has become vulnerable – to being a target and unwitting purveyor of disinformation/misinformation, to data hacking and harvesting, to cyber-attacks and cyber-bullying, even surveillance and censorship. Given the wide-ranging scope of the problem, the possible solutions should also mobilize all stakeholders – the international community, government institutions, civil society

organizations, the media, tech and social media companies, educational institutions, even the family.

This seminar-workshop aims to bring key stakeholders on the issue of curbing disinformation, misinformation and hate speech from a political perspective. Three (3) groups of key stakeholders are pre-identified; they are: 1) journalists and civil society activists who can undertake media and information literacy campaigns; 2) tech and social media companies which can adopt self-regulatory standards and measures; and 3) political leaders and legislators who can intervene using appropriate policy or legislation.

Stakeholder analysis, albeit modified to suit the workshop's purpose, will be used as the guiding methodology. It is defined as "the process of systematically gathering and analyzing qualitative information to determine whose interests should be taken into account when developing and/or implementing a policy or program" (Schmeer, n.d.).

The seminar-workshop divides the different steps in stakeholder analysis into the day-long seminar-workshop. The entire ecosystem of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech, along with key stakeholders, will be described through panel presentations. The digital disinformation ecosystem will also be discussed in the context of recently concluded and upcoming elections in Asia, where fake news and hate speech have figured/are figuring prominently. Afterwards, the seminar-workshop participants will be divided into three (3) working groups based on the key stakeholders listed above. The working groups, with the guidance of relevant panel speakers from the previous sessions, will then discuss and analyze the main characteristics (knowledge, position, interest, alliances, resources, power, leadership) of the key stakeholders under consideration, in the context of the Asian region or an agreed upon Asian country. Based on their analysis, the working groups should also draw a list of recommended actions and next steps. The working group results will then be presented in the plenary.

With the theme "Defending Democracy Against Disinformation: Stakeholders' Analysis and Intervention", the specific objectives of the seminar-workshop are:

- To understand, in general terms, the ecosystem of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech, including but not limited to their proponents, types, dimensions and impacts;
- To describe how disinformation, misinformation and hate speech impinged on the recently concluded/upcoming elections in Asia;
- To discuss best practices in curbing disinformation, misinformation and hate speech from the standpoint of journalists and civil society activists, tech and social media companies, and political leaders and legislators;
- To conduct a stakeholders' analysis of the three key groups of stakeholders listed above, particularly in terms of their knowledge, position, interest,

	<p>alliances, resources, power, leadership in addressing disinformation, misinformation and hate speech; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop action plans among relevant stakeholders to address the breadth and depth of the weaponisation of information in the Asian region.
06:30-08:30	<p>Breakfast <i>Venue: B-one Buffet Restaurant, B1 The Sherwood Taipei</i></p>
08:30-09:00	<p>Registration <i>Venue: Ching Room Foyer, 3/F The Sherwood Taipei</i></p>
09:00-09:15	<p>Opening Session</p> <p><i>The opening session aims to set the tone for a more detailed discussion of the workshop theme, “Defending Democracy Against Disinformation: Stakeholders’ Analysis and Intervention”, in the succeeding panels. More specifically, it hopes to respond to the general question: “How can liberals and democrats defend and strengthen democracy amidst the scourge of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech?”</i></p> <p><i>Session Chair</i></p> <p>Chih-Wei Chen CALD Secretary General Deputy Director for International Affairs, Democratic Progressive Party, <i>Taiwan</i></p> <p><i>Opening Remarks</i></p> <p>Ching-Yi Lin, MP Director, Department of International Affairs Democratic Progressive Party Member, Legislative Yuan, <i>Taiwan</i></p> <p>Mahmoud El Alaily Former President, Arab Liberal Federation Party Leader, Free Egyptians Party, <i>Egypt</i></p>
09:15-10:30	<p>Session I: Understanding the Ecosystem of Disinformation, Misinformation and Hate Speech</p> <p><i>The spread of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech is based on a complex network or interconnected system of actors, process and strategies. How this ecosystem functions and thrives must be understood so that appropriate interventions could be made. This session gathers experts from media, civil society and politics to make sense of the complex but interrelated ways information is weaponised in the digital age.</i></p>

	<p><i>Session Chair</i></p> <p>Jaslyn Go Singapore Democratic Party, <i>Singapore</i></p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <p>Rosalind Liu CoFacts, <i>Taiwan</i></p> <p>John Nery Philippine Daily Inquirer, <i>Philippines</i></p> <p>Nangamso Kwinana Coordinator, Africa Liberal Network, <i>South Africa</i></p> <p>Silvia Mercado Coordinator, Red Liberal de America Latina (RELIAL), <i>Bolivia</i></p> <p><i>Open Forum</i></p>
10:30-10:45	Coffee/Tea Break
10:45-12:00	<p>Session II: Dealing with Disinformation and Hate Speech during Elections</p> <p><i>In the recent electoral exercises in the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand Indonesia and India, disinformation and hate speech figured prominently, resulting in decline of civil discourse, absence of substantive political debate and a highly polarized society. In Hong Kong, Cambodia, Philippines and Singapore, disinformation has been weaponised to target political opponents or dampen political support for the opposition. Worse, in countries like Myanmar, India and Sri Lanka, disinformation and hate speech are said to contribute to the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. In this session, the impact of disinformation and hate speech will be analyzed in the context of recent elections in Indonesia and the Philippines.</i></p> <p><i>Session Chair</i></p> <p>Francis Gerald Abaya, MP Liberal Party of the Philippines Member of House of Representatives, <i>Philippines</i></p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <p>Bambang Harymurti Senior Journalist and Former Chief Editor of Tempo, <i>Indonesia</i></p>

	<p>Sarah Elago, MP Member, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights Member of House of Representatives, <i>Philippines</i></p> <p><i>Open Forum</i></p>
12:00-13:15	<p>Lunch <i>Venue: Yuan Room, 3/F The Sherwood Taipei</i></p>
13:15-14:30	<p>Session III: Legislating to Address Digital Disinformation</p> <p><i>In recent years, a number of countries in Asia have established task forces, convened select committee hearings and have proposed or passed legislation to combat digital disinformation. However, as UNESCO (2018) observed, “new and stringent laws are scapegoating [genuine] news institutions as if they were the originators, or lumping them into broad new regulations which restrict all communications platforms and activities indiscriminately. Such regulations also often have insufficient alignment to the international principles requiring that limitations on expression should be demonstrably necessary, proportional and for legitimate purpose. Their effect, even if not always the intention, is to make genuine news media subject to a ‘ministry of truth’ with the power to suppress information for purely political reasons.” In this session, existing or proposed Asian legislation to combat digital disinformation will be compared with laws from other regions, particularly on how they balance the need for regulation and respect for fundamental freedoms.</i></p> <p><i>Session Chair</i></p> <p>Huwaidiyah Pitsuwan Useng Former Member of Parliament Democrat Party, <i>Thailand</i></p> <p><i>Speakers</i></p> <p>Robin Ramcharan Executive Director, Asia Centre, <i>Thailand</i></p> <p>Zachary Lampbell Legal Advisor, International Centre for Non-Profit Law, <i>United States</i></p> <p>Emil Kirjas Former Secretary General, Liberal International Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, <i>Macedonia</i></p> <p><i>Open Forum</i></p>

14:30-17:00	<p>40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting <i>Venue: Ming/Yuan Room, 3/F The Sherwood Taipei</i></p> <p><i>Presided by:</i> Bi-khim Hsiao, MP CALD Chairperson Member, Legislative Yuan, <i>Taiwan</i></p> <p><i>With the participation of ALF, RELIAL, ALN, NDI and other guests</i></p> <p>(Coffee/Tea Break at 15:30)</p>
18:00-21:00	<p>Working Groups (Discussion) with Dinner <i>Venue: Han Room, 2/F The Sherwood Taipei</i></p> <p><i>In the working groups, the participants will be asked to group themselves based on the pre-identified key stakeholder groups (listed below). Together with the key experts from the three sessions, they will conduct a stakeholder analysis and come up with action plans or interventions that can be implemented to address the rise of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech in Asia, particularly those that use new technology. The outcome of the group's discussion will be presented to the plenary.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1) journalists and civil society activists</i> <i>2) tech and social media companies</i> <i>3) political leaders and legislators</i> <p>Working Groups (Presentation and Feedback)</p> <p>Closing Session and Evaluation</p> <p><i>Workshop Evaluation</i></p> <p><i>Closing Remarks</i></p> <p>Chih-Wei Chen CALD Secretary General Deputy Director for International Affairs, Democratic Progressive Party, <i>Taiwan</i></p>

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Cambodia National Rescue Party

Mardi Seng
Kanika Lim

Democrat Party of Hong Kong

Sin Chung-kai
Emily Lau

Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

Putri Ayu Anisa
Tony Thamsir

Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

Jayanthi Devi Balaguru
Hng Chee Wey
Zhi Yi Ooi
Tan Yong Herr

Civil Will Green Party

Bayarkhuu Amar
Monsor Nyamdavaa

Liberal Party of the Philippines

Francis Gerald Abaya
Jason Rivera Gonzales
Jeremiah Tomas

Singapore Democratic Party

Jaslyn Go

Democratic Progressive Party

Bi-khim Hsiao
Ching-Yi Lin
Chih-Wei Chen

Democrat Party of Thailand

Siripa Nan Intavichein
Boonyod Sooktinthai
Huwaitiyah Pitsuwan Useng

Democrat Party of Thailand

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Mirna Mneimneh
Yara Asmar
Dirk Kunze
Gijs Houben
Mustapha Allouch

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights

Tsu Quin

Red Liberal De America Latina

Silvia Mercado

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Minerva Salao
Narwin Espiritu

National Democratic Institute

Eunice Ha

CALD Secretariat

Celito Arlegue
Paolo Zamora
Audrie Frias
Julienne Janolo



40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting

Democracy 4.0: Innovating Democracy Through Technology

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Session Chair



Chih-Wei Chen

CALD Secretary General

Deputy Director for International Affairs

Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan

Chih-Wei Chen is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (FRGS) and is serving as Visiting Professor at University College London (UCL) in the UK. He co-leads the research centre with the Faculty of Engineering Sciences of University College London (UCL Engineering) and is also a Visiting Scholar at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Japan. Chih-Wei has been appointed as Secretary General of CALD and is currently serving as DPP Deputy Director for International Affairs. From 2017 to 2018, he served as Chief Advisor to the UN Sustainable Development Goals Advisory Committee of Parliament of the Legislative Yuan. In 2018, Chih-Wei began his political career as the youngest member in National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) of Taiwan Govt., followed by the immediate appointment as the Political Advisor to the Premier.

Chih-Wei received Bachelor's degrees from Taiwan in both Computer Science as well as Urban Planning and Spatial Information (equivalent to British 1st class), followed by the grant of MPhil degree involving three fields upon completion of the course in Doctorate of Engineering Science at University College London (UCL). He achieved Professional Certification of Business Sustainability Management at the University of Cambridge with a series of publications about sustainable development issues.

Welcome Remarks



Mahmoud El Alaily

Party Leader, Free Egyptians Party

Former President, Arab Liberal Federation

Mahmoud El Alaily is the President of the Free Egyptians Party (FEP) since May 2017. He represents the party in all activities and is the key spokesperson. Aside from setting the vision, goals and strategies of the party and ensures its perfect execution, he is also responsible for fundraising and budgeting - efficiently allocating the party's resources in line with their political agenda. Prior to becoming President of the Party, he was Head of Specialized Committees for the FEP from March 2015 to December 2016. He was also the President

of ALF from March 2016 to March 2018. He worked on linking up all member parties in the Arab Region, ensuring strong communication and dialogue.

Session I: Understanding the Ecosystem of Disinformation, Misinformation and Hate Speech

Session chair



Jaslyn Go
Singapore Democratic Party

Jaslyn Go has been active with the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) since 2007. She previously served as the Treasurer of the party, playing a key role in fundraising and networking. She also served as the International Liaison to CALD and has spearheaded the “Friends of SDP” on Facebook. Jaslyn joined the party in the mid 2000s as an ardent supporter and enthusiastic activist dedicated to bring changes to Singapore's repressive and authoritarian regime.

In 2015 General Election in Singapore, she stood as a candidate for the party. A proud mother of two, Jaslyn's dedication to the SDP underscored her motivation to champion the cause of underprivileged Singaporeans. As former international liaison for her party, she connected with likeminded democrats to forge a freer and more egalitarian world.

Speakers



Rosalind Liu
CoFacts, Taiwan

Rosalind Liu is a core member of Cofacts and an active volunteer in civic technology. Cofacts is a system that aims to fight disinformation and misinformation in Taiwan. It hopes to make hoax-busting easier. The model has attracted the attention of fake news buster, governments, and media around the world. Rosalind has worked with different organizations, such as the Taipei city government and The Young Foundation in the United Kingdom, on social issues like community empowerment and social housing.



John Nery
Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippines

John Nery is a journalist from the Philippines. He is an Opinion Columnist at the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the country's largest newspaper, and from August 2014 to May 2017, served concurrently as editor in chief of Inquirer.net, one of the country's leading news sites. He is a member of the Inquirer's Editorial Council and represents the newspaper on the Executive Board of the Asia News Network. John also serves as Convenor for the Consortium on Democracy and Disinformation. He has served the

Inquirer Group in various capacities since joining it in 2001. He organized the Inquirer Presidential Debate in 2010 and the Inquirer Senate Forums during the 2013 midterms. He served as co-moderator of the first presidential debate in the 2016 elections. He was Visiting Research Fellow in ISEAS and a Nieman Fellow in journalism in Harvard.

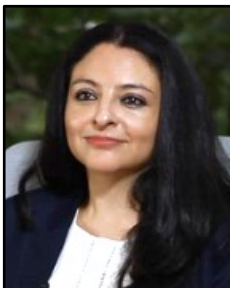


Nangamso Kwinana

Coordinator

Africa Liberal Network, South Africa

Nangamso Kwinana has been the Africa Liberal Network (ALN) Coordinator since October 2018. As the coordinator, she is tasked with implementing the decisions of the Executive Committee, the General Assembly and managing the day-to-day activities of the network. She manages ALN events, projects and oversees the day to day functioning of the network subject to sponsorship and assistance of facilitating partners.



Silvia Mercado

Coordinator

Red Liberal De America Latina, Bolivia

Silvia Mercado is the coordinator of the Red Liberal De America Latina (RELIAL) of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. She has been the coordinator for the activities of the liberal think tanks in Latin America. She has a degree in Social Communication from the Bolivian Catholic University and a Master's degree in Journalism and Political Communication from the National University of La Plata.

Session II: Dealing with Disinformation and Hate Speech during Elections

Session chair



Francis Gerald Abaya

Member of House of Representatives

Liberal Party, Philippines

Francis Abaya is a member of the Philippine House of Representatives representing the 1st District of Cavite. He is the Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Science and Technology in Congress and is also a member of the Committees on Ecology and Climate Change. Francis graduated from Wenworth Institute of Technology in Boston, USA in 2002.

Speakers



Bambang Harymurti

Senior Journalist

Former Chief Editor of Tempo, Indonesia

Bambang Harymurti is the chief executive officer and corporate chief editor of Tempo International Media. He has been a journalist covering regional and international news since the early 1980s, working for several journals, including TIME magazine, Media Indonesia Daily, and Tempo Weekly News magazine. He has been a member of the Press Council of Indonesia since 2006.

Bambang has been an Alfred Friendly Free Press Fellow, a Fulbright Fellow, a New Generation Fellow at the East West Center, an Edward S. Mason Fellow, and a Foreign Affairs Fellow with Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. He has received numerous awards, including an Excellence in Journalism award from the Indonesian Observer Daily in 1997 and the PWI Jawa Timur Pena Award in 2006.



Sarah Elago

Member, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights

Member of House of Representatives, Philippines

Sarah Elago became the Philippines' youngest woman lawmaker when she entered the House of Representatives at 26 for her first term after the 2016 elections. She also became the youngest lawmaker currently serving in the Congress of the Philippines. Sarah's constituents are not confined to any particular legislative district since she ran as the nominee of Kabataan (Youth) Party-list, a political party with specific sectoral representation for Filipino youth. Kabataan Party is also a part of the Makabayan (Patriotic) Coalition in Congress, which has positioned itself as critical and left-leaning before and especially during President Rodrigo Duterte's tenure.

Session III: Legislating to Address Digital Disinformation

Session Chair



Huwaidiyah Pitsuwan Useng

Former Member of Parliament

Democrat Party, Thailand

Huwaidiyah Pitsuwan Useng is a former member of Thailand's House of Representative from the Democrat Party. She is from Nakhon Sri Thammarath, where the majority of voters are Buddhist Thais. She won the election in 2001 and became an active member of Democrat Party since then, following the footsteps of her brother, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former member of the House of Representative, former minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and former Secretary General of ASEAN.

Huwaitiyah's works focus on political empowerment, women political participation, and other social services related to women, children, and elders. She worked as the secretary to the Minister of Social Development and Human Security. She is also interested in decentralization and rural development. She was the Deputy Mayor of Nakhon Sri Thammarat Municipality for two years and was a former member of The Democrat Party Executive Committee.

Currently, she is part of several committees within the Democrat Party: party branch development committee, party decentralization committee, outside party organization outreach committee, and Bangkok strategy committee.

Speakers



Robin Ramcharan

Executive Director
Asia Centre, Thailand

Robin Ramcharan is the Executive Director of Asia Centre. He is a Professor of International Relations in Bangkok, Thailand. His professional experience spans academia, international organizations and the private sector. He has worked in the cooperation for development sector for many years in an international organization, implementing capacity building programmes and undertaking training of human resources for the benefit of developing countries. He has taught and researched on international security, human security, human rights and democracy and intellectual property rights.

He has lectured in Canada, India, Singapore, Switzerland and Thailand. He holds a Ph.D and M.A. (DES) in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. He also holds an MA from the London School of Economics and Political Science, an LLM and an LLB from the University of London, and a B.A. Honours from Queen's University in Canada. He was a Post-Doctoral Fellow with the Center for International Peace and Security Studies of McGill University and the University of Montreal.



Zachary Lampell

Legal Advisor
International Centre for Non-Profit Law, United States

Zachary Lampell is a Legal Advisor focusing on the freedom of expression at the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL). He implements and provides technical legal assistance to civil society organizations and governments around the world seeking to improve laws governing the freedoms of expression, information, and other human rights necessary to a vibrant civil society. Prior to joining ICNL, Zach spent a number of years in Cambodia as the Deputy Director of the English Language Based Bachelor of Law Program at the Royal University of Law and Economics, where he founded the Center for the Study of Humanitarian Law.

Zach was also a consultant with East West Management Institute where he provided technical legal assistance, training and strategic advice to legal aid attorneys on their work defending human rights, including internet freedom and the freedoms of association and expression. Prior to these positions, Zach served as an Associate Legal Officer at the Khmer Rouge tribunal prosecuting senior leaders of the genocidal regime.

Zach holds a J.D. with a Concentration in International Law from Case Western Reserve University School of Law, where he received a Distinguished Scholar Award. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Wesleyan University and is a member of the New York State Bar.



Emil Kirjas

Former Secretary General, Liberal International
Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Macedonia

Emil Kirjas was formerly the Secretary General of Liberal International. From 2004-2006 he was State Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. He has extensive experience in various international organisations and institutions, including the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, and the International Federation of Liberal Youth, of which he is a former president.

Emil is frequently invited to address issues of geopolitics and transformative powers and of political strategy and communication at conferences worldwide. He holds a Master's Degree in Geopolitics from King's College in London.

Executive Summary

Opening Session

- Liberals are caught between whether or not they are looking for cyber security or protecting their freedom of speech and freedom of expression.
- Cyberspace always needs regulations, however, liberals fear of censorship.
- There are many issues in this digital era that are really threatening democracy and there are compromises that liberals should put into consideration.

Session I: Understanding the Ecosystem of Disinformation, Misinformation and Hate Speech

- The most dangerous part of the fake news phenomena is messaging applications where private conversations happen. Through these apps, rumors, misinformation, disinformation and hate speeches spread quickly.
- Reality and facts are spectrum. Fact-checking tools can only show a part of reality and a part of truth, but if there is collaboration from other people, there is a bigger chance to reveal the truth.
- The objective of disinformation is confusion. A confused public is most vulnerable to anti-democratic pressure.
- The ideal target of authoritarian rule is the person who can no longer distinguish between fact and fiction and between true and false. When these no longer exists, that person becomes vulnerable to propaganda.
- The main focus of activists, of advocates of ideologies, good governance, and the rule of law is precisely to spread your message, to spread your ideals and also to recruit people to understand.
- Fake news has always existed but the difference now is the reach and the ability to replicate itself infinitely.
- The populist narrative prospers in Latin America. Latin Americans are incredulous and distrustful of information, particularly of official messages. Paradoxically, they are vulnerable to believe fantastic versions, especially false promises in electoral times.
- There is a need to elevate public opinion through informed rather than reactive journalism.

Session II: Dealing with Disinformation and Hate Speech during Elections

- Social media can be weaponized by candidates during elections to spread propaganda, fake news and disinformation.
- The wisdom of crowds is better than most experts. In dealing with disinformation, it is important to take note of these criteria: diversity of opinion, independence, decentralization, aggregation and trust.
- Believing in the wisdom of the crowd is believing in democracy. It is better to have a collective decision made by ordinary people than by one or two persons from the top.
- Social media and disinformation have become more central and entrenched in the conduct of Philippine political campaigns.
- Digital operations in the Philippines are becoming more prevalent, strategically obscured and very influential in shaping political conversations.
- Existing regulatory interventions are not enough, especially given that the disinformation industry has become increasingly well-funded, sophisticated, and harder to detect. Political strategists capitalize on weak regulatory infrastructure that enable that enable black operation especially during campaigns.
- Fake news is harmful, however, strengthening the regulatory framework that legislation or government can control is even more harmful.

Session III: Legislating to Address Digital Disinformation

- Fake news is the deliberate presentation of false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design. It conflates three subsets of information disorder: disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation.
- Since the introduction of the internet in Southeast Asia in 1995, incumbent regimes have used legislation to negate the democratic potential of the internet by using legislative tools and avenues.
- Most of the current laws are vaguely-worded that leads to over-criminalization and do not necessarily detoxify the post-truth ecosystem, but only monopolize coercive action.
- Southeast Asian government representatives seem focused on discrediting or wrong-footing critics. Governments cannot be the arbiters of truth.
- “Anti-fake news” laws will always violate the freedom of expression because they do not adhere to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all the case laws and legal standards the flow from Article 19.

- Reframing the issues to lessen the spread of fake news is the way forward, but it will not work if the goal is to prohibit fake news because disinformation, misinformation and malinformation campaigns will always be present. This is why media literacy and critical thinking are important.
- The issue of legislation is very important for the Liberals because it confronts conflict of two sacred things – freedom and security.
- International standards for freedom of expression must be respected.
- In passing a law on disinformation, there is that possibility of creating an elaborate system of government censorship. It will stifle free expression and debate and ultimately lead to authoritarianism.

Working Group Results

- Political leaders and legislators urged CALD to create a public manifesto denouncing anti-fake news laws and to support digital media literacy programs.
- Journalists and civil society activists expressed the need to support the process for finding new business models for independent media and a common tool to fight disinformation.
- The tech and social media handlers suggested to do a campaign, weekly newsletter and gamification of fake news.

Opening Session



The workshop on Defending Democracy Against Disinformation was organized by the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF), National Democratic Institute (NDI) for International Affairs, and hosted by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan. This workshop was part of the 40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting held in Taipei, Taiwan.

Minnie Salao, FNF Regional Communications Officer, and Jeremiah Tomas, CALD Youth Secretary General, served as masters of ceremony during the opening session. They began program with a brief introduction on on digital accountability and radical transparency and the concept of fake news.

The opening session was presided by Chih-Wei Chen, CALD Secretary General. He warmly welcomed the delegation to Taipei and introduced the next speaker, Party Leader of the Free Egyptians Paty, Mahmoud EL Alaily.



Mahmoud El Alaily

Party Leader, Free Egyptians Party
Former President, Arab Liberal Federation

Mahmoud El Alaily welcomed the delegates to the workshop and encouraged everyone that it would be much more beneficial if they try to make the sessions interactive to have a more vibrant discussion and interaction.

He also stated that for liberals, it's very important to know how to combat misinformation, malinformation, disinformation and hate speech but at the same time it's mostly the government's responsibility. However, the problem is that they always look at it as a compromise - whether or not the government would use the combating tools to its favor or use it neutrally. Alaily believes that liberals are caught between whether or not they are looking for cyber security or protecting their freedom of speech and freedom of expression. He said that while cyberspace always needs regulations, liberals always fear of censorship.

According to Alaily, there are many issues in this digital era that are really threatening democracy. There are compromises that liberals should put into consideration.

Session I: Understanding the Ecosystem of Disinformation, Misinformation and Hate Speech



The spread of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech is based on a complex network or interconnected system of actors, process and strategies. How this ecosystem functions and thrives must be understood so that appropriate interventions could be made. This session gathered experts from media, civil society and politics to make sense of the complex but interrelated ways information is weaponized in the digital age.

Jaslyn Go of the Singapore Democratic Party chaired the session. She said how important this session is for her since Singapore has just recently passed its fake news law.



Rosalind Liu
CoFacts, Taiwan

Rosalind Liu described what Cofacts is and provided a background on the changing landscape of the misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech in Taiwan.

Cofacts, Liu explained, is a crowd-sourced instant message fact-checking system. It received its funding from the government when Cofacts won the competition organized by the office, Audrey Tang, Taiwan's Digital Minister. Cofacts provides instant

messaging to inform the people about misinformation and disinformation. Back in 2017, fake news was not a popular topic in Taiwan, although it was a rising phenomenon globally. Being a pioneer in this area, Cofacts has already helped 150,000 people and collected roughly around 30,000 information.

Liu further explained how the fact-checking system works. When people receive a suspicious message in their chat room, they can forward it to Cofacts' chat box and it will automatically respond with a fact-checked content written by Cofacts editors. If the user is satisfied with the response, they can forward it back to the original chatroom so that others can have an accurate information.

For Cofacts, the most dangerous part of the fake news phenomena is the messaging applications, where private conversations happen. Through these apps, rumors, misinformation, disinformation and hate speeches spread quickly. Line is the most popular messaging app in Taiwan. At least 90-95% of their population uses it every week. For the elderlies, this messaging app could be their first step into the world of Internet. They don't know how to google for information. They just take in what they read in the chatrooms. According to Liu, the elderly are part of the suspects who spread these false information. This is the reason why Cofacts chat bots are in the Line app.

Liu stated in her presentation that everyone can be a judge in deciding which is misinformation or disinformation. She said that reality and facts are a spectrum. Cofacts can only show a part of reality and a part of truth but if there is a collaboration from other people, there is a bigger chance to reveal the truth. If a lot of people will combine their part of the truth and their perspectives, then they will see the whole spectrum. Liu believes that collaborating on fact checking produces a deeper understanding.



John Nery

Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippines

John Nery, a journalist from the Philippines, introduced some of the most important lessons through his counter-disinformation check list and shared informative publications on the topic.

The first on the list is to clarify the stakes. According to Nery, the objective of disinformation is confusion. A confused public is most vulnerable to anti-democratic pressure. He explained this further by quoting Hannah Arendt, "The ideal subject of authoritarian rule is the person who can no longer distinguish between fact and fiction." This is what Arendt calls the reality of experience, and between true and false, or what she calls the standards of fraud. When these no longer exists, that person becomes vulnerable to propaganda.

Next on his list is to define the problem which is disinformation. He suggested two useful and informative books, the *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making* by Wardle & Derakhshan and *Journalism, 'Fake News' & Disinformation Handbook for Journalism Education and Training* by Ireton & Posetti.

Including discussions on Asian perspectives is the third one on the list. According to Nery, most of the scholars on disinformation reflect American or European points of view. He suggested to read the following books: *Information Disorder in Asia & the Pacific* by Kajimoto and Stanley, *Media and Power in Southeast Asia* by George and Venkiteswaran, and the book he wrote for Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the *Democratic Decay and Disinformation in the Digital Age*.

Next is the need to integrate cognitive science, and also behavioral economics. He suggested the book, *The Authoritarians*, to find out why people follow authoritarian leaders. "Bob Altemeyer wrote authoritarians many years ago, but it remains a standard in scholarship...He talks about three elements...authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and authoritarian conventionalism."

Nery also suggested the international bestseller, *Thinking Fast and Slow* by the Nobel Prize winner, Daniel Kahneman. According to Nery, the book explains the difference between system one and system two thinking which allows us to help understand why disinformation circulates. Among many books written on virality, Nery said that *Contagious* by Jonah Berger is the most useful. The author isolates what he calls six principles of virality which he summarizes as steps: social currency, triggers, emotion, publicness, practical value and stories.

Last on the counter-disinformation checklist is to follow the experts which includes Cherian George, a prominent scholar; Masato Kajimoto, a Japanese scholar based in Hong Kong; Ullrich Ecker, an Australian specialist in the psychology of misinformation; Julie Posetti, an Australian academic and journalist working in the Oxford Centre; Jonathan Ong and Jason Cabanes, Filipino scholars; among others.

Nery also talked about the Philippine experience and discussed the work of Jonathan Ong and Jason Cabanes where they identified an invisible machine. "Behind the madness is an invisible machine: industrial in its scope and organization, strategic in its outlook and expertise, and exploitative in its morality and ethics," according to the Filipino experts.

Nery shared two important insights Ong and Banes contributed on the discussion on disinformation. First, when a group pays people to follow a script, that is called controlled interactivity. And because they are not just dealing with trolls or bots, but with real people, there is an element they call volatile virality - the second insight. In the Philippines, he explained, "There was an attempt on the part of the President Duterte to push for a federal form of government. So that was one of the items in the agenda of the government, one of their most influential influencers, got into the act. Her name is Mocha Uson. Probably because of her background, she put together a sexualized attempt to

popularize federalism and that sexualized attempt just offended so many people. It practically put a stop to the federalism campaign. That's what I mean by volatile virality. The influencer interpreted the script but interpreted it in a way that offended the public.”

Nery also talked about the three levels of the architecture of disinformation as observed in the Philippines. The top level consists of the chief architects of networking disinformation, which are the elite advertising and PR strategists. They liaise with political clients and set the campaign objectives. They are the ones who hire the second level, the digital influencers. In the Philippines, Nery explained, this is defined as anyone with a following between 50 thousand and 2 million. These digital influencers are paid and are given the script which contains the core campaign message. They are the ones who spread it. The third level is the community-level fake account operators. They are precarious middle-class workers subcontracted by ad and PR strategists or hired by politicians’ chief-of-staff. They amplify reach and create illusions of engagement.



Nangamso Kwinana

Coordinator

Africa Liberal Network (ALN), South Africa

Nangamso Kwinana, the coordinator of the Africa Liberal Network, started her presentation by sharing her personal experience while working for four years in the federal head of the Democratic Alliance (DA), a political party in South Africa. Kwinana worked in the field operations department, which is responsible for narrating and filtering the strategy, campaign elements, and the messaging of the party. These messages were

designed from the federal head office, through their provinces and ground branches, together with their public representatives, assisting them with mobilizing support for the DA.

According to Kwinana, misinformation, disinformation and fake news have been around for as long as politics has existed. However, as liberal, Kwinana shared that “Our main focus as activists, as advocates of ideologies, good governance, the rule of law, is precisely to spread our message and to spread our ideals and also to recruit people to understand. What it is that we are basically motivating them to follow, to support and to also help us recruit more members to our model of governance.”

She also explained that disinformation might come from people countering your ideology. “What we need to understand is that we've got competition that might seek to do otherwise. That might seek to highlight other models of governance that we are not necessarily in support of, and it's through that relationship where you will find rumors, which might at a later stage be classified as fake news, disinformation or misinformation. It's the countering of ideology,” Kwinana explained. She encouraged everybody to counter the narrative that is competing with their narrative, to counter the narrative that

is illiberal, to counter the narrative that is not practicing democracy. For Kwinana, when these misinformation and disinformation spread, it opens an opportunity for them to reach out to the general public and vehemently state what they stand for.

As presented by Kwinana, ALN has worked with 47 political parties, and they always make sure that they remind the parties and their members to watch out for disinformation and maximize their communication, whether it is during an election season or not. She reminded the plenary that a disadvantage can become an opportunity. "It's a combination of misinformation and also illiteracy that might disadvantage our message reaching our supporters or reaching the electorate, but that is where I see an opportunity for us to raise the bar."



Silvia Mercado

Coordinator

Red Liberal De America Latina (RELIAL), Bolivia

Silvia Mercado, the coordinator of RELIAL, talked about disinformation from the Latin American point of view. Mercado stated that they are starting to realize fake news because it is becoming viral and powerful that it can invade through multiple different channels. She also realized that the people are helpless in discerning the truth.

The Greeks' problem was the demagogue, Mercado shared. Strategy uses rhetoric information to achieve political objectives. For the millennials, it is already called fake news.

Before discussing how Latin America deals with disinformation, Mercado first stated three particular features in her region. First, they have societies that are skeptical of the fundamental institution. "Latin American citizens are generally disappointed in the fundamental institutions. We distrust the agreements, we do not believe in justice. We do not defend private property and we always question the free and transparent vote." Mercado explained institution have less credibility in Latin America and that's what they worry the most. "The weakness and low credibility of our institution is a basic issue," she added.

The second aspect pertains to governments historically manipulating information. Mercado said their governments provide false information. In order to remain in power, they often use official media, finances, citizen's taxes to create an alternative narrative. The Latin American government commonly uses sports to distract the real issue. It is common for them to use football, soccer and the common collective passion of the people to deviate from problems. "In Argentina, in the 70s, the government wanted to hide the abuses of the military dictatorship with the 1978 world cup. While in Brazil when the government hit the scandalous causes of corruption, they hid it behind the new infrastructure, new stadium, teams and so on."

Lastly, there seems to be uneducated public opinion and light journalism present. Mercado highlighted the gap between education and consumption of technology in Latin America. She believes that although it is not difficult to have access to a smartphone, people are not using it in a smart way. It is merely just a tool for entertainment, not used for education, therefore, the consumption of important information remains shallow, superficial and inconsequential. Journalism is also becoming more reactive and less profound. There is almost no investigative journalism because it no longer has value to the people.

After pointing out the three general features of Latin America, Mercado then explained their take on disinformation. "Latinos are incredulous and distrustful of information, particularly of official message. Paradoxically, we are vulnerable to believe fantastic versions, especially false promises in electoral times. That is [how] populist narrative prospers."

A common attitude of Latin American populist in power is they are the first to confront the traditional mainstream media. They have already witnessed a populist in power imposing his full authority to disqualify the press and accusing them of faulting the truth. She mentioned names of leaders who also harassed the private media and journalists with a strong objective, either as a media attack or mercenary press. She also revealed that their leaders even consider themselves as victims of fake news to maintain their status quo and the hegemony of official information convenient to the government.

Fake news, as explained by Mercado, has always existed but the difference now is the reach and the ability to replicate itself infinitely. Therefore, the responsibility of each individual is greater, because now any single opinion or any false data can reach millions. For her, fake news from a Latin American political perspective is not really surprising. "The contribution of the Latin American to the misinformation debate, is the experience because somehow the fake news for us is part of the political strategy and always have been. Historically, the discursive culture of politicians is to manipulate information on one side to the other."

She then urged her fellow liberals to not be afraid to condemn a person with power if it intimidates a citizen who is doing his journalistic work.

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Hate speech in South Africa

Bambang Harymurti, Former Chief Editor of Tempo in Indonesia, asked everybody in the room which side of the coin are they on hate speech. The American side, hate speech is a protected speech by the First Amendment, but on the European side, it's a crime.

Kwinana answered that hate speech divides people. She is on the side that says freedom of speech. Having her country as the context, she explained that South Africa's history is a history of division, a history of hate speech and a history of misinformation. All of which was influenced by race and economics. The largest population of South Africa was nullified and mistreated simply because of the color of their skin. Hate speech was the driving vehicle that allowed that to perpetuate all over the country for decades.

Speed and scale of disinformation

The conference introduced a web-based question and answer platform -- Slido -- where participants can ask their questions anonymously. A question was asked on the solution on the problem of scale of disinformation.

Nery stated that talking about scale also reinforces the notion that fake news or disinformation is not just digital. We need to be sure that our focus on scale does not distract us from how disinformation also travels among the non-connected. In the Philippines, millions of people do not have access to the Internet, and yet they are

vulnerable to disinformation. Fake news go viral easily whereas, the corrected information does not reach that many people.

Stand on Fake News Law

An anonymous question, "Should government pass a bill to counter fake news?" was raised.

Nery expressed that he is against the passing of a bill to counter fake news. For him, it should not be one person, one organization, or one administration to determine what is true. It should be a plurality of what is called institutions of truth and usually a law will not be able to reflect that. Kwinana also did not support the passage of the bill since it will desensitize the people's communication.

Session II: Dealing with Disinformation and Hate Speech during Elections



In the recent electoral exercises in the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia and India, disinformation and hate speech figured prominently, resulting in decline of civil discourse, absence of substantive political debate and a highly polarized society. In Hong Kong, Cambodia, Philippines and Singapore, disinformation has been weaponized to target political opponents or dampen political support for the opposition. Worse, in countries like Myanmar, India and Sri Lanka, disinformation and hate speech are said to contribute to the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. In this session, the impact of disinformation and hate speech were analyzed in the context of recent elections in Indonesia and the Philippines. Hon. Francis Abaya, Member of Parliament from the Liberal Party of the Philippines, moderated the session.



Bambang Harymurti

Senior Journalist

Former Chief Editor of Tempo, Indonesia

Bambang Harymurti has been a journalist since 1982. Social media, according to him, is beneficial for pro-democracy and anti-corruption activists however it was grabbed by the other side and weaponized it to propagate propaganda, fake news and disinformation. This was evident during the Indonesian presidential elections last April 2019 where both parties weaponized the social media. This strategy started in 2016.

When Indonesia was having an election for the Jakarta mayor, the Islamic fascists started to organize a Muslim cyber army to attack the Mayor during the election with many fake news. A lot of people believed the fake news and the Islamic fascists were able to mobilize 700,000 people to rally in Jakarta. Rather than fighting it with truth, the Mayor also created their own fake news army. These paid armies are called buzzers in Indonesia, and these started the biggest problem for Indonesia. When the government and the police have their own fake news production team, it creates a trap question: who can you trust in this society? And with this, the problem of government distrust arises.

He cited the author, James Surowieki, saying that the wisdom of crowds is actually better than most experts. Surowieki provided the five criteria for crowdsourcing: diversity of opinion, independence, decentralization, aggregation and trust. However, this crowdsourcing could be madness if certain criteria are not met.

In Indonesia, as stated by Harymurti, some people are trying to fight back. They currently have an agreement with 22 media groups, NGOs and Google to create a fact-check institution. However, other Indonesians still consider this fact-check as fake news because of the buzzers. The buzzers are attacking the media, journalists, their credibility and businesses. They often use WhatsApp to propagate their propaganda.

In conclusion, Harymurti reinforced that believing in the wisdom of the crowd is believing in democracy. "It is better to have a decision made by ordinary people than by one or two persons, no matter how smart or good they are. That is why we have to be careful when criminalizing hate speech. Because who defines hate speech? Because in Indonesia, this is being used by the most powerful, by the majority to criminalize the minority."



Sarah Elago

Member of House of Representatives, Philippines
Member, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights

Sarah Elago represents the youth partylist, Kabataan, in the House of Representatives. Her presentation revolved around on how the Philippines dealt with disinformation and the spread of false news during the 2019 midterm elections.

She presented a global digital report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, that showed Filipinos being the most active users of the internet. Due to this trend and how it makes the youth vulnerable to disinformation, the Kabataan Partylist passed a resolution calling for a probe on the impact of free data of Facebook in the Philippines. She explained that users only read the headlines and not the full article, which contributes to the extent of disinformation in the Philippines. Elago also presented information conducted by Tsek.ph, a multi-sectoral fact checking group spearheaded by universities and media partners that collaborated to counter misinformation and disinformation. According to the study, the main source for misinformation and disinformation during and after the midterms is social media, followed by the candidates and other public figures. The most targeted by disinformation during the 2019 elections was the Otso Diretso slate,

comprised of candidates from the Liberal Party, independent and other pro-democracy candidates.

She then gave examples of false claims, misleading contents, and inaccurate articles or posts attacking the pro-democracy figures. Elago likened the situation of the Philippines to Indonesia. “There were also cases wherein the police and the military personnel were the ones distributing newspapers, pamphlets, or flyers with fake news and misleading information targeted against independent and critical voices in public service.”

She also discussed a comprehensive study tracking digital disinformation in the 2019 Philippine midterm election. The study showed that the digital operations in the Philippines are becoming more prevalent, strategically obscured and very influential in shaping political conversations. Elago highlighted the three key messages found in the study. First, social media and disinformation have become more central and entrenched in the conduct of Philippine political campaigns. Second, disinformation producers are becoming more insidious and evasive. Campaigners leverage social media platforms to reach discrete audiences and cultivate new intimacies consistent with own politicians’ own brands. Elago also mentioned the 3 innovations that helped spread disinformation during the midterm election: the use of the micro and nano influencers which “creates a message with contrived authenticity that is part of a larger scheme of disinformation to attack a particular person,” the use of alternative media, and the use of closed groups. And lastly, that existing regulatory interventions are not enough, especially given that the disinformation industry has become increasingly well-funded, sophisticated, and harder to detect.

Elago also explained the challenges ahead that the Philippines may face in combating disinformation. Political strategists “capitalize on weak regulatory infrastructure around political campaign consultancies and industry self-regulatory mechanisms that enable them to produce black ops campaigns as supplementary gigs to more respectable corporate projects.” And, that the common failure of fact checks is that “they often neglect tracing the connection between a singular instance of ‘fake news’ to a broader project of undermining values in society, whether it is the legacies of liberal democracy or emerging power of China.”

Elago recommended that there needs to be a shift in regulatory interventions around social media from content regulation to process regulation. “There should be a process oriented-approach to political campaigning. First, continue public conversation. We've been doing this, going around the Philippines to speak about countering disinformation and defending the truth. Second, review possibilities for a broader legal framework that might encourage transparency and accountability in political consultancies. Third, review the Commission on Election’s (COMELEC) existing frameworks for campaign finance and social media regulation. Lastly, encourage them to form intersectoral alliances.” She also strongly encouraged media outlets to have their third-party checking websites like Tsek.ph.

She then ended her presentation by sharing further campaign strategies to prevent the spreading of disinformation and hate speech. “We should continue to report those websites and other materials that are false or hateful in content to the relevant publisher or site admin and the authorities to take further action. And then, support and promote digital and media literacy for the public, but also for other stakeholders such as politicians

who are often sources of disinformation. Lastly, support and collaborate with groups who are working on capacity building programs related to disinformation and hate speech. With this, we can have more opportunities to counter and debunk disinformation.”

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Truth demarcation line

Mustapha Allouch, Member of the Future Movement in Lebanon, expressed to the panel that truth is not an antidote to a lie. People are just going against the truths of somebody else's. He therefore asked Harymurti a philosophical question - whether there is a way to define and to demarcate the line between your truth and the truth in the opinion of the other.

There are different categories of truth that exist in our society, said Harymurti. He further explained and categorized these truths. Scientific truth, or objective truth, can be tested by anyone independently. It is usually based on facts and is the basis of modernity. Consensual truth is where everyone in a group has a mutual agreement of the truth. Whereas, authoritarian truth is when someone in authority determines the truth where the people have no choice but to follow it. Lastly, religious truth is truth based on one's personal beliefs.

Disinformation in the Philippines

An anonymous question, about the sufficiency of Facebook's efforts to counter disinformation in the Philippines politics, was directed to Elago.

She explained that at present it's not enough. Aside from Facebook online campaigns, there should be grassroots campaigns on countering and defending disinformation as well. The Philippines needs to improve the education system with work on democracy, and democratizing access. The government should work on creating opportunities for young people to speak up based on truth, on facts and not merely on disinformation, speculation, and hearsay. Elago also stated that it's worrisome to pass a legislation now, in the Duterte administration, since it might further suppress dissent and be used to silence critics.

Corruption as a source of Fake News

An anonymous question asking, "What is more harmful - fake news or fake news legislation?" was raised to Harymurti.

He believes that fake news is harmful, however, strengthening the regulatory framework that legislation or government can control is even more harmful. He says that, that is where the danger lies - who decides what's true and not true. Government propaganda is a problem. The source of fake news is also corruption. In Indonesia, according to Harymurti, government uses the people's tax money to propagate government propaganda and lies. There are also police officers telling fake news. "Indonesia needs to have a Corruption Amnesty like Hong Kong, otherwise we will never get out of this corrupt cultures."

Session III: Legislating to Address Digital Disinformation



In recent years, a number of countries in Asia have established task forces, convened select committee hearings and have proposed or passed legislation to combat digital disinformation. However, as UNESCO (2018) observed, “new and stringent laws are scapegoating [genuine] news institutions as if they were the originators, or lumping them into broad new regulations which restrict all communications platforms and activities indiscriminately. Such regulations also often have insufficient alignment to the international principles requiring that limitations on expression should be demonstrably necessary, proportional and for legitimate purpose. Their effect, even if not always the intention, is to make genuine news media subject to a ‘ministry of truth’ with the power to suppress information for purely political reasons.” In this session, existing or proposed Asian legislation to combat digital disinformation were compared with laws from other regions, particularly on how they balance the need for regulation and respect for fundamental freedoms. Huwaidiya Pitsuwan, member of the Democrat Party of Thailand, moderated the session.



Robin Ramcharan
Executive Director
Asia Centre, Thailand

Robin Ramcharan represented Asia Centre, a not-for-profit entity that creates positive social impact in the region through activities based on significant issues. His discussion revolved around what has been happening over the last four years concerning fake news in Southeast Asia. He started by introducing Asia Centre's three-year project on disinformation, where they have been organizing and planning international conferences on fake news and elections, hate speeches, disinformation and propaganda, and freedom of expression in Asia. The conferences they organized are also helping in their evidence-based research, national regional engagement, advocacy, and policy documents.

Ramcharan shared that since the introduction of the internet in Southeast Asia in 1995, incumbent regimes have used legislation to negate the democratic potential of the internet by using legislative tools and avenues. He defined fake news as a "deliberate presentation of false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design." Fake news conflates three subsets of information disorder: disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation. Furthermore, he stated the types of legislation present in South East Asian countries. There were anti-state laws proposed such as Anti-fake news in Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines and the cyber security laws in Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand. Whereas, there are laws that already exists such as the criminal defamation laws in Cambodia and Myanmar, Computer Crime Act in Thailand and Myanmar, Sedition Act in Brunei and Malaysia and the Propaganda Against the State in Laos and Vietnam. The penalties range from one to twenty years imprisonment. He also pointed out that these laws are either over legislation or over criminalization.

With regard to these legal measures, most of them are vaguely-worded laws leading to over-criminalization and it does not necessarily detoxify the post-truth ecosystem, but only monopolizes coercive action. Ramcharan believes that another slew of legislation being added on to a legislation that exists significantly affects freedom of expression. "Southeast Asian government representatives seem focused on discrediting or wrongfooting critics," he added.

In conclusion, Ramcharan stated that the way forward in addressing fake news is through non-legal measures (fact checking agencies, media literacy) and consumer responsibility.



Zachary Lampell

Legal Advisor

International Centre for Non-Profit Law (ICNL), United States

On behalf of the ICNL, Zachary Lampell discussed the disinformation and legislative dilemma. He briefly introduced ICNL as a non-profit organization based in the United States with offices around the world working to promote the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression. Similar to the previous speakers, Lampell also reiterated the idea that fake news has existed for a long time, however, he wanted everybody to rethink how

they are framing the issue today. "If we look at this problem as we need to prohibit or we need to stop fake news, I don't necessarily think that that's a winning way to look at this problem." According to Lampell, the only difference between fake news today and in the 1800s is that now, with the advent of digital technologies, the amplification of fake news, and the speed at which it spreads, has changed.

For this reason, Lampell believed that reframing the issue to come up with ways to dampen the impact and lessen the spread of fake news stories is the way forward. However, it would not be feasible if the goal is to prohibit fake news because there will always be disinformation campaigns, misinformation and malinformation. With this problem on how to lessen the impact or reduce the spread of disinformation and malinformation, ICNL, tries to look at it from two fundamental premises. First, governments cannot be the arbiters of truth and, second, international standards for the freedom of expression must be respected.

He argued that anti-fake news laws will always violate the freedom of expression since they do not respect Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and all of the case law and legal standards that flow from Article 19.

He also gave some existing laws that can be effective to this cause. "The tort law, which deals with intentional infliction of emotional distress and invasion of privacy, can be a remedy that victims of disinformation and fake news campaigns can use to successfully receive some form of justice. Defamation or libel and slander, is also an effective law but it should be a civil defamation not criminal defamation because the latter does not comply with international standards. Cyber-bullying is a common anti-harassment law that most countries have, then fraud and copy right may also be used." Before thinking of creating a new legislation, from ICNL's point of view, people should first look at what already exists and help provide training to civil society organizations, law enforcement, and judges. In that way, the tools that already exist can be used to combat disinformation.

Lampell also identified the gaps in existing laws: bots, transparency in political advertising, registration of lobbyists and privacy, which he wanted to highlight the most. "One of the reasons that amplification of disinformation and malinformation campaigns take root is because of the information that the social media companies and tech companies gather about us. With stronger privacy laws, the algorithms will not

necessarily be able to be gamed bad actors. So stronger privacy laws will, in fact, decrease the effects of disinformation campaigns.”

He also mentioned that media literacy is also an effective legislative tool since teaching critical thinking and media literacy in schools will allow populations to decipher what is actual news, and what is disinformation in a young age.

“We're not going to be able to solve disinformation overnight, it's going to take time. And that's why media literacy is so important. Critical thinking is so important, and not having knee jerk or gut reactions to try and prohibit broad categories of speech. Rather, let's try to identify the existing gaps in laws. And let's make sure that legislation that is passed addresses those gaps, while ensuring that governments are not arbiters of truth and that international standards for freedom of expression are respected.”



Emil Kirjas

Former Secretary General, Liberal International

Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Macedonia

Emil Kirjas, has been regularly invited as a resource speaker to address issues of geopolitics and transformative powers and of political strategy and communication at conferences worldwide. For his presentation, he discussed the ideological background and the European experience. According to Kirjas, fake news, misinformation, disinformation is very often about playing with the emotions, both on the subject of misinformation and the side of the recipients who are

actually being deliberately misinformed or misled. He also mentioned the difference between the past and the present situation of fake news, which is the medium used to spread it. Dealing with fake news, misinformation and disinformation was a subject of debate during the Andorra Liberal Manifesto in 2017, because it was very much connected with the elections and politicians. “We realize that this is not a new phenomenon is just that as the technology is changing. We are actually addressing a more or less same issue in a different way.”

This issue of debate is very important for the Liberals because, as explained by Kirjas, it's about conflict of two sacred things – freedom and security. “We want to make sure to safeguard freedom of expression, freedom of information, freedom of speech, and access to information because it's important for us to hear different viewpoints, to have competition of ideas and have more information to stimulate creativity. But at the same time, we'll have peace, stability and security. We want to safeguard the individual integrity and safety. We want to make sure that we live in a society where we are protected from abuse, there is public safety, and that peace, freedom and democracy are being defended.”

Kirjas also presented the liberal manifestos from 1947-2017 and highlighted the importance of these manifestos since it inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which serves as the legal framework liberals are building upon today.

This discussion also centered on respecting international standards for freedom of expression. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The liberal position on the issue of disinformation is also clear on the Liberal International (LI) Andorra Manifesto 2017. "Freedom of expression is critical for a liberal democracy. We support unencumbered access to, and circulation of, information for all citizens, and freedom of discourse unhindered by the state and protected by a framework of rules that promote freedom."

Kirjas also touched on the topic of deep fakes which will eventually become one of the problems in the future. Deep fake is where a person in a video or image is replaced with someone's likeness through artificial intelligence and technology.

He also shared that while they were trying to understand the situation of how democracies or autocracies will react to information and disinformation, they came down to two possible tendencies. One tendency is that, among the autocracies, they will try to legislate where the government intervenes in the content of information. While the other tendency, for democracies, is trying to find a way to analyze what information is being offered and ways on how they can provide in-depth analysis on the information.

OPEN FORUM



Fake news and the threat to democracy

Meriem Fatnassi, Senior Officer and Outreach of Afek Tounes in Tunisia, asked Lampell about how to deal with fake news in a fragile democracy, where they don't have really strong institutions, and people can be easily manipulated.

Lampell explained that if you try to solve the problem by passing a law, you are actually creating an elaborate system of government censorship. It will stifle free expression and debate and ultimately lead to authoritarianism. Democracies are under threat and authoritarianism is on the rise, but trying to prevent the spread of disinformation by giving the government ultimate power to determine what is allowed to be said and what is the truth will lead to authoritarianism rather than true democracy.

Reducing the amplification of disinformation

Pitsuwan read the last anonymous question regarding passing a legislation as a means to reduce the amplification of disinformation.

Lampell also believes that reducing the spread of disinformation relies on holistic approach. There should be legal reform, revision, new laws to address the gaps, and training for law enforcement. It's also important to focus on non-legislative means such as media literacy, critical thinking, media ownership, fact checking, and privacy laws in the technology companies. He argued that relying on just one of these would never fully address the spread and amplification of disinformation.

As for Ramcharan, these issues may continue to get worse but for him he would not recommend passing any legislation, unless it is the right legislation in accordance with the standards and it must involve a proper consultation with all stakeholders.

WORKING GROUPS



In the working groups, the participants were asked to group themselves based on the pre-identified key stakeholder groups: (Group1) journalists and civil society activists, (Group 2) tech and social media campaigners, and (Group 3) political leaders and legislators. Together with the key experts from the three sessions, they conducted a stakeholder analysis and came up with action plans or interventions that can be implemented to address the rise of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech in Asia, particularly those that use new technology.

The political leaders and legislators group suggested the following:

- Create a public manifesto denouncing anti-fake news laws since they do not comply with the international standards for freedom of expression.
- Step back and try to identify first the gaps of current legislations and the implementation of current laws and mechanisms.
- Urge CALD to support digital media literacy programs that would help their constituents, fellow members of parliament and other public servants.

The journalists and civil society activists group suggested the following:

- Support the process for finding new business models for independent media and its personnel.
- Explore an easy to use tool to fight against disinformation which can be shared with the different independent news media.
- Request CALD to sponsor either an annual independent media award with the hope to celebrate practices of good and honest journalism, or a training like that

of Friedrich Naumann Foundation's learning institute, International Academy for Leadership (IAF).

The tech and social media group suggested the following:

- Come up with a campaign through social media that would increase the people's knowledge on the issue.
- Publish at least 10 videos with the concept, "*True or False.*"
- Publish a fake news weekly.
- Explore gamification of fake news which can be used as educational materials to people.

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

Summarized and prepared by:

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40th CALD Executive Committee Meeting

Democracy 4.0: Innovating Democracy Through Technology

Defending Democracy Against Disinformation

CONFERENCE RESULTS

- Learned about the concept, history, nature, and experiences involving disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation.
- Reviewed existing disinformation legislation and "anti-fake news" initiatives as well as crucial gaps needed to improve the fight against fake news.
- Identified plan-of-action proposals for CALD to take to help parliamentarians, political activists, the media, the academe, the tech and social media actors, and the civil society in developing ways to counter disinformation.
- Strengthened partnership and explored future collaboration between CALD and NDI.



OFFICIAL CONFERENCE GROUP PHOTO



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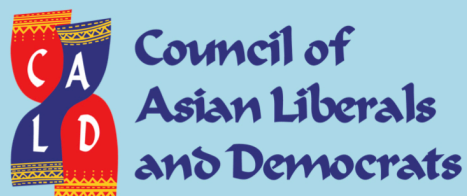
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