The Rise of Disinformation: A Threat to Democracy in Southeast Asia

14th CALD General Assembly
"Building a Democratic Coalition Against Disinformation"

Plenary Session 2  11:45 AM -12:45 PM
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ACCRREDITED WITH UN ECOSOC CONSULTATIVE STATUS

CIVIL SOCIETY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

MEDIA AND
SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY
Defending Freedom of Expression: Fake News Laws in East and Southeast Asia
Background: Shift to the Digital Age & Rise of Disinformation

Globally, 82% access to the news online

Trust in the news has stagnated or fallen in nearly all countries - only 42% trust in the news

SEA internet users are relatively new and unfamiliar in navigating the online information space
Types of Disinformation

- Click-Bait
- Hate Speech
- Political
- Foreign Interference
Rise of Digital Authoritarianism

Internet Freedoms in Southeast Asia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>54</td>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Brunei and Laos data not available
Source: Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2021
Rise of Internet Censorship

(Comparitech, 2022)
Electoral Integrity

Definition

- based on the democratic principles of universal suffrage and political equality as reflected in international standards and agreements

- professional, impartial, and transparent in its preparation and administration throughout the electoral cycle
Electoral Integrity in Southeast Asia

Source: The Perceptions of Electoral Integrity expert survey, election-level (PEI 8.0), most recent election reported.
Disinformation and Electoral Integrity

Electoral Integrity Global Report 2019-2021

Experts' opinion on elements that challenge electoral integrity.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Note: Negative questions reverse coded so higher scores consistently denote higher electoral integrity for all questions.
Drivers of Disinformation: Case of Malaysia

Government Agencies, Political Parties, Campaign Managers

Foreign-based or local PR Firms, Content Companies, Government-Owned/Friendly Media, CSOs, Individuals

Hardliners, Bots and Paid/Voluntary Cyber Troopers
Recurring Pattern of Political Disinformation: Case of Malaysia

- Sexual Orientation and Promiscuity
- Corruption Allegations
- Undermining Electoral Integrity
- Harassment of Women Politicians
- Foreign Interference
Youth and Disinformation in Malaysia: Strengthening Electoral Integrity

To read the full report, Scan here!
Laws Enacted Against Disinformation

- Blasphemy Law
- National Security Law
- Harmony Law and Hate Speech Law
- Fake News Law
- Anti-Discrimination Law
Impact on Media Freedoms and FoE

- Persecution of Critics
- Attacks Against Female Journalists
- Shutdown of Media/Social Media Outlets
- Attack on Journalist Associations
- Self-Censorship among the Population / Journalists
- Decline of Quality Journalism

ASIA CENTRE
Recommendations

- International Organisations
- Governments
- Technology Companies
- Journalist Associations
- Journalists, Content Curators and Media Organisations
THANK YOU
Stay safe and keep in touch!

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