

Media, Technology and Society Programme



ABOUT THE ONLINE WORKSHOP

“Polarization” has become a common theme of political commentary around the world, including in Southeast Asia. Increasingly, political discussion seems to have shifted from predictable centrism to competition between ideological extremes. Fringe ideas have found large audiences online as traditional media gatekeepers are disrupted by social media platforms. As the debate about the nature of polarization unfolds, this workshop homes in on social media as a driver of conflict and contentious politics in Southeast Asia. From US-China rivalry to civil society activism and from ISIS propaganda to political disinformation, social media platforms are critical arenas of contestation, with consequences for the politics of the region, both online and off.

Webinar 1: Geopolitical Rivalry and Social Media Polarization in Southeast Asia

26 November 2020 (Thursday)

9.00 am – 10.30 am (Singapore time)

Major power competition between the US and China is emerging as a polarization meta-narrative, not just in Southeast Asia but also globally. Some ask whether we are on the cusp of a new Cold War. An increasingly bi-polar world order may be interacting with social media in ways we are only beginning to understand. But influence over tech platforms and the internet is already at the centre of US-China rivalry. This webinar looks at how heightened geopolitical rivalry in Southeast Asia is playing out on social media platforms and being shaped by technology and cyber policy. Ms Elina Noor (Asia Society) examines cyber policy and geopolitical rivalry in Southeast Asia. Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong (ISEAS) analyses how US-China rivalry is influencing social media in Vietnam. Dr William Choong (ISEAS) surveys major power competition across multiple platforms and looks at the future of online political debate in Southeast Asia. Dr Quinton Temby (ISEAS) analyses the impact of China's rise on social media activism in Thailand and Indonesia. This webinar is moderated by Dr Benjamin Loh, Senior Fellow and Coordinator of ISEAS' Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme.

Moderator: Dr Benjamin Loh
Senior Fellow and Coordinator, Regional Social and Cultural Studies Programme, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Presenters: Ms Elina Noor
Director, Political-Security Affairs and Deputy Director, Washington, D.C. Office, Asia Society Policy Institute
Cyber Policy in Southeast Asia

Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong
Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute
US-China Rivalry Online in Vietnam

Dr William Choong
Senior Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute
US-China Competition in the Social Mediascape

Dr Quinton Temby
Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute
China's Rise and Online Activism in Indonesia and Thailand

Webinar 2: Social Media, Activism, and Civil Society in Southeast Asia

26 November 2020 (Thursday)

11.30 am – 1.00 pm (Singapore time)

Social media has transformed the ability of civil society, activists and non-governmental organisations to challenge traditional power structures. It has never been easier to start a social movement online. But the digital disruption of civil society entails new risks and challenges, including the challenge of movement endurance and cohesion. In this webinar, Dr Nien Yuan Cheng (University of Sydney) examines migrant workers' online storytelling in Singapore. Mr Hikmawan Saefullah (Padjadjaran University) looks at increasingly online anarchist subcultures in Indonesia. Dr Hilary Oliva Faxon (University of California) presents new research on digital cultures on Facebook in Myanmar. Dr Azly Rahman (independent author) closes with a presentation on recent activism and academic freedom in Malaysia. This webinar is moderated by Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong (ISEAS).

Moderator: Mr Dien Nguyen An Luong
Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Presenters: Dr Nien Yuan Cheng
Honorary Associate, University of Sydney
Social Media, Storytelling, and Migrant Workers in Singapore

Mr Hikmawan Saefullah
Lecturer in International Relations, Padjadjaran University
Anarchist Subcultures in Indonesia

Dr Hilary Oliva Faxon
Ciriacy-Wantrup Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California, Berkeley
Beyond the Digital Divide: Studying Facebook in Myanmar

Dr Azly Rahman
Author & Columnist
Academic Freedom and #BlackLivesMatter in Malaysia

Webinar 3: Social Media and Extremist Networks in Southeast Asia

26 November 2020 (Thursday)

3.00 pm – 4.30 pm (Singapore time)

A striking aspect of political polarisation in the digital era is the prominence of extremist messaging on mainstream social media platforms. Militant and fringe networks are locked in a continuous game with platform moderators to evade ever-evolving regulations and to amplify their content. In Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, extremist content shifts rapidly in style and location, from platform to platform. In this webinar, Mr Nathan Shea (The Asia Foundation) presents pioneering research on ISIS messaging on Facebook in the Philippines. Dr Noor Huda Ismail and Ms Nur Dhaniala (RSIS, NTU and Ruang Obrol) discuss their recent work on violent extremism and deradicalization in Indonesia. Mr Jordan Newton (AIPJ) presents unique research on ISIS subcultures on the Telegram platform. This webinar is moderated by Dr Quinton Temby (ISEAS).

Moderator: Dr Quinton Temby
Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Presenters: Mr Nathan Shea
Senior Program Officer, The Asia Foundation
Violent Extremism Online in the Philippines

Dr Noor Huda Ismail & Ms Nur Dhaniala
Visiting Fellow, RSIS, NTU
Content Producer, Ruang Obrol
Violent Extremism and Depolarisation

Mr Jordan Newton
Consultant, Australia Indonesia Partnership for Justice
ISIS Telegram Culture

Webinar 4: Social Media, Polarisation, and Democracy in Southeast Asia

27 November 2020 (Friday)

9.00 am – 10.30 am (Singapore time)

The regulation of online political speech is an increasingly fraught issue for countries in Southeast Asia. Social media provides new opportunities for democratic expression but entails new risks in the form of polarisation, disinformation, and conflict. In this webinar, Ms Jasmine Chia (Thai Enquirer) surveys the recent flowering of Thai youth activism. Dr Abel Da Silva (CESTIL) considers the interaction of social media and recent political crises in Timor Leste. Mr Ravio Patra (Westminster Foundation for Democracy) analyses the implication of cyber policy for democracy in Indonesia. Finally, Mr Samuel Cabbuag (University of the Philippines Diliman) takes stock of the fraught relationship between social media and democracy under President Duterte in the Philippines. This webinar is moderated by Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja (ISEAS).

Moderator: Dr Yatun Sastramidjaja
Visiting Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute

Presenters: Ms Jasmine Chia
Contributor, Thai Enquirer
Meme Culture and the Politicisation of Thai Youth

Dr Abel Da Silva
Researcher, Centro de Estudos Estratégicos de Timor-Leste (CESTIL)-
RENETIL, Timor-Leste
Social Media in a Crises-stricken Country: Timor-Leste 2017-2020

Mr Ravio Patra
Program Officer, Westminster Foundation for Democracy
Cyber Policy and Democracy in Indonesia

Mr Samuel Cabbuag
Assistant Professor, University of the Philippines Diliman
Social Media and Democracy in the Philippines