

Topic: Elections, Democracy and Human Rights in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is a diverse region with a wide range of political systems. However, in recent years, there has been a general increase in concern about the state of democracy and human rights in the region.

Ensuring free and fair elections is under great pressure. In some states in Southeast Asia, there are significant violations of fundamental rights before, during and after elections, such as the arbitrary detention of opposition supporters, the use of violence against demonstrators or election rigging. Increasingly, technology is used for this purpose. The role of social media is eminent; it is used to spread disinformation and propaganda, which can undermine the integrity of elections. At the same time, critical news portals, blogs or the websites of opposition parties are increasingly being shut down.

Populism is on the rise worldwide, including in Southeast Asia. The tactics of populist politicians include contesting election results, delegitimising electoral institutions or deliberately inciting opposition against 'disagreeable forces'. With the increasing interconnectedness of Southeast Asia, authoritarian governments tend to cooperate in their crackdown on civil society and opposition voices, arresting critics and extraditing them to their respective neighbouring countries.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to promote democracy and human rights. A vibrant and diverse civil society plays an important role in this. A well-educated and increasingly networked generation of critical activists can be observed in many states in Southeast Asia and exerts considerable influence on political events. Transnational networks are also becoming increasingly relevant.

International actors can play a role in promoting democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia. First and foremost, among these is the ASEAN confederation of states, within which individual states or groupings can exert targeted pressure on authoritarian leaders. However, their effectiveness is often limited by the lack of political will on the part of all member states. The effectiveness of the postulated promotion of democracy and/or development on the part of the European Union, the United States, India, and China is also often limited by considerable self-interest.

The economic situation in Southeast Asia has an impact on the political landscape of the region. On the one hand, it is argued that economic growth contributes to strengthening democracy and human rights in the long run. Equally, however, there are counterexamples demonstrating that, despite gains in prosperity, there is more oppression of dissenters. This issue of *südostasien* therefore sets out to examine the challenges and opportunities of elections, democracy, and human rights in Southeast Asia.

Thus, we are looking for contributions that address the following questions:

- The impact of authoritarian rule on elections and democracy
- The role of technology and especially social media in the run-up to elections
- Disregard for human rights, especially but not only in the run-up to elections
- Civil society democracy movements, their strategies and influence

- Role of (international) corporations and/or institutions in promoting/undermining democracy and human rights

We would like to address these and other questions in the 1/2024 issue of *südostasien* in various forms: portraits of actors, commentaries, reports, background reports, analyses, interviews, photo essays and reviews of films or books. We are looking forward to texts that exemplarily deal with individual aspects mentioned above, as well as articles on structural questions and contexts.

Deadline for articles (max. 10,000 characters including spaces) is 30 November 2023 (in individual cases and after consultation with the editors, a later deadline may be possible). Please submit a short abstract (max. 1,000 characters) to the editorial board in advance.

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