Systematic Review of Mediatization of Politics in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

Mediatization of politics refers to the meta-process by which political institutions are highly dependent and influenced by the usage of media in political processes. In the early 2000s, research was heavily pioneered by scholars from Western World. For the past decade, scholars from the Southeast Asian region have explored and used the concept in understanding the relationship between media and political institutions in their respective countries. However, there is no cohesive systematic review on research that has been done on how mediatization of politics is being constructed in Southeast Asian context. This is crucial to determine mediatization of politics claims as the new paradigm of media studies holds true in the context of Asian political systems. Therefore, the present article conducted a systematic literature review on mediatization of politics in the Asian region. This study integrated different research designs and the review was based on PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta Analysis 2020). From 45 articles initially screened, 9 articles were chosen for the final systematic review. Four themes emerged from the systematic review, namely a) democratization, b) disinformation, c) religious populism and d) nationalism. The results showed that in most SEA countries, political actors are embracing the high dependency of media, whether it is the mainstream media or the digital media. Along with the mediatization, comes positive and negative consequences that are different according to the history of the countries. Future scholars should focus on expanding and building the systematic review in different regions.

Keywords: *Systematic review, mediatization of politics, Southeast Asia, democratization, political institutions.*

INTRODUCTION

Similar to other regions, the Southeast Asian region had been affected by the impact of political institution rapid changes. Report by Reporters Without Border in its Press Freedom Index 2022 (Reporters Without Border, 2022) stated that structural issues such the tightening of government policies on information in Vietnam and Singapore; pressure from the increasingly authoritarian or nationalist government in Philippines; and the growing control of large industrial groups, whose influence encourages the self-censorship of journalists and editorial staff are among the reasons why press freedom is on the decline in Southeast Asian region.

According to Harsono (2023), the situation became worse in most countries in Southeast Asia. Myanmar remained the worst among these 11 countries. Newly independent East Timor became the freest, having no criminal defamation law, though, as President Jose Ramos-Horta has repeatedly complained, it is still facing resistance to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In general, the other 10 countries get worse – and in this analysis, we can certainly include the single party dictatorship Laos, which the French organization inexplicably didn't calculate. Thailand, which unlike other countries in the region,

has never been colonized, dropped from the 66th on the chart in 2002 to the 115th in 2022. It shows that Thailand does not necessarily have a better legal infrastructure than the former European colonies like Malaysia, the Philippines, or Vietnam with a Soviet-style legal system. Thailand still maintains the lese majeste law "to protect" the monarchy, including the king, the queen, the heir and the regent-- from defamation. The penalty is 3 to 15 years in prison for each violation, and those charged invariably spend long periods in pretrial detention.

Nevertheless, neither the "symptoms" nor the situation are expected to improve in near time (Strangio, 2022) as the press freedom in the Southeast Asian region had been steadily declining since the pandemic. The use of vaguely-worded fake news laws and politically motivated government crackdowns of critics who called out the mismanagement of COVID-19 pandemic scored Southeast Asian countries into the lower end of the World Press Freedom Index (Parameswaran, 2020). Independent media and journalists in Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand, on the other hand, continue to operate in a repressive environment where they face strong repercussions from state forces that endanger their employment and sometimes even their lives. Laws and regulations are used as a tool to hinder the ability of journalists to do critical reporting that does not align with the government narratives. While critical coverage is not banned outright, there is no presumption of the right to publish in these countries (Hayton, 2021). To make matters worse, COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for the government and office holders to settle their scores with journalists and independent media outlets (Strangio, 2021).

The best method to respond to these impacts are studies on mediatization or the role of media institutions as whole in its relationship with political institutions in the region. Mediatization refers to the process of society's dependence on the media and the growing media logic. Media logic basically refers to the construction of reality according to media formats and methods. According to Hjarvard (2008, p. 113), media logic refers to "the modus operandi of media institutions and technologies, meaning the way in which the media disseminate material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of formal and informal rules". According to Radue (2022), there is a strong need to do cross-national media system comparison using systematic reviews that are away from the Western context. Radue (2022) continued to emphasize that the challenge of Eurocentrism of media system knowledge is important, not just for the sake of challenging, but in order for scholars to inductively infer variables that are important for political communication.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) gold standard model of media system with four dimensions that are being proposed, namely media markets, political parallelism, professionalization of journalism, and the role of the state with regards to media systems has been a topic of hot debate as to its relevance. Media freedom and different contexts of media freedom have not been compared (Norris, 2009). Looking into the literature review of mediatization of politics too indicated that studies of mediatization had mostly focused on the European or United States context (Hjarvard, 2008; Stromback and Dimitrova, 2011; Garland, Tambini and Couldry 2017). In response to this criticism as well, this study focuses on the Southeast Asian region application of mediatization within its political landscape and media landscape.

This study is a part of an attempt to de-Westernized approach towards the mediatization theory with greater sensitivity to the region context by taking into account the latest development in the region (McQuail, 2000). This fundamentally meant that mediatization of politics would be used and compared connotatively in this study inductively.

Petrosino et al. (2001) had defined systematic review as a quantitatively and qualitative way of recognising, combining and evaluating data to produce an in-depth evidence based response to a research question. The systematic review is significantly different from literature review as it goes through a vigorous transparent article retrieving process. Systematic review also allows a wider search as it considers alternatives or synonymous keywords. It also allows the production of better quality evidence with significant results (Mallett et al., 2012).

Meanwhile, a considerable amount of existing literature review related to mediatization of politics had been conducted across the globe, with some attempts to do cross national comparison. Nevertheless, a very limited number of studies were conducted in the context of the Southeast Asia region (Shaffril et al., 2018). The available literature seems to focus on individual country context (Arifuddin, 2017; Wang, 2020).

The recent decline in the press freedom index and the shifting paradigm of political processes and powers across Southeast Asia warrants the study even as the media institutions within the region are doing their best to make sense of the current happenings and exert their influence (Reporters Without Border, 2022). The current paper attempted to systematically review all the relevant high quality literature from 2022 with the aim of fulfilling the gap to examine the growing body of evidence on the adaptation of mediatization of politics in the region. The present study came about due to the scarce amount of existing research that provides a comprehensive look into the status and tug of war between political logic and media logic in the region. Existing systematic review articles or literature review articles of mediatization failed to present in depth information on how the theory should be adopted.

Furthermore, this study is pivotal as it provides information on the extent of peer reviewed literature which can help researchers in understanding the potential and attention that should be paid towards mediatization of politics. This is especially so as scholars such as Corner (2018) had criticized that mediatization is a buzzword that is a broad descriptor without satisfactorily indicating its kind of theory, paradigm of research framework with clear independent identity.

Therefore, the development of this article in its systematic review is based on one main research question: How is mediatization of politics employed by researchers in the Southeast Asian political and media context? The main focus of the investigation was given to the SEA region as this region had fared poorly in the Press Freedom Index and are forecasted to be on decline in the coming few years. While this section discusses the current research gap and why there is a need for systematic review on the SEA region, the following section presents the literature review, followed by the methodology that is employed to obtain the answer to the research question. The systematic review was then thematically analyzed and is discussed based on the emerging themes. The final section of this paper discusses the measures and recommendations for future scholars interested in the area of mediatization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mediatization was used for the first time by Asp (1986, p.359) when he attempted to explain how "the political system is influenced and shaped according to the needs of the mass media in their coverage of politics". Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999, p.250) describe political mediatization as a process where politics loses its autonomous power and its main function depends on the mass media. Schulz (2004, p.88) explains that mediatization refers to "changes associated with media communication and its development". The definition is more or less

the same as Kepplinger (2002, p. 973) who states that mediatization is "political adaptation to the needs of the mass media".

Hjarvard (2008, p.48) gives a broader definition that "mediatization describes a process where the main elements of social or cultural activities (such as work, entertainment and play) take the form of media". Jansson (2002, pp. 14-15) states that "mediatization of culture refers to the process that strengthens and develops the culture brought by the media". The theory of mediatization was initially only applied within the political discipline but its usage had been expanded into studies of other social institutions such as education institutions and religious institutions. Mediatization theory is a relevant theory because of its nature that combines various disciplines related to the media to provide a holistic picture. Secondly, the role of the media is now becoming more and more important in every institution to the point that all institutions can actually be associated with the media (Livingstone & Lunt, 2014).

Mediatization theory is important for contemporary media studies because "mediatization is a concept that goes beyond and covers media effects" (Schulz, 2004, p. 90). Media studies today that focus on media delivery, different forms of media and the impact on the audience are not sufficient to understand the media phenomenon that is happening today, especially because we are now living in a quite dynamic era, with the integration of the conventional media and online media at the same time.

Mediatization conceptualizes the effect and power of media in the political scene, especially in European countries (Kepplinger, 2002; Schulz, 2004). Stromback and Dimitrova (2011) have done a comparative analysis between the mediatization that happened in the United States and Sweden. In the study, they also compared the mediatization differences between Swedish commercial television stations and Swedish public television stations. The study as a whole proves that America that uses a "liberal" media system that focuses on profit has a higher level of mediatization compared to Sweden that uses a "democratic corporatist" media system - a media system where private media and media that are closely connected to political power are balanced. The study proves that the existing media system (ie in terms of commercial profit and government power in the media) will influence the level of mediatization in different countries. In the same country, research proves that there is not much difference in terms of mediatization of private stations and public stations.

Touching on political mediatization in the United Kingdom, Garland, Tambini and Couldry (2017) conducted a qualitative analysis using the methodology of document analysis and interviews with nine experts from the fields of policy or communication. The findings of the study suggest that the government in the United Kingdom has been mediatized and there is a change to continuous communication through the media as well as deepening the value of news and news management in government. There are changes in the daily routine and procedural norms of government, especially in terms of the sensitivity of politicians to media representation for policy.

Recent studies expanded mediatization in China (Sun, 2014; Wang, 2020), as well as Indonesia (Arifuddin, 2017) and Sino-Indian Conflict (Zhang, 2019). Couldry and Hepp (2018) coined the term deep mediatization to indicate the present moment straddles what they term digitalization and datafication, together a period of 'deep mediatization' when there is 'a much more intense embedding of media in social processes than ever before'.

In general, mediatization of theory is taken seriously as Increasing integrated forms of media into our lives as evidence have shown increasing digitalization of politics. Political discourses online are taken offline, and vice versa, political discourses offline are taken online.

Image branding, marketing of politicians online become the deciding point of their electoral result. Hence in the changing political landscape of the Southeast Asian region, the researchers want to find out what has transpired within the studies since 2022.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology or publication guidelines applied within this study is the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Below, the researchers explained how the research questions are formulated, what are the strategies of systematic searching applied (identification, screening and eligibility), the quality appraisal, data extraction and the analysis. The researchers applied PRISMA as a guide to formulate the research question, as well as to set the criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the attempt to examine the database of literature over a defined period of time (Page et al., 2021). In this study, PRISMA is the guide used to perform detailed and systematic searches on terms that are related to mediatization of politics and its use in the Southeast Asia (SEA) region, and then code the information for future political communication reviews.

Formulation of Research Questions

A suitable research question is very crucial before a systematic review is done, as the research question would anchor the process of evidence retrieval (Shafrill, 2021). The main objective of this article was to systematically review the existing literature related to mediatization of politics theory adaptation in the context of Southeast Asian countries, the following research question was formulated – how do researches in the Southeast Asian region apply and use the theory of mediatization of politics? Having established the research question, this article focuses on the use of mediatization of politics employed in the Southeast Asian context rather than a worldwide or Western perspective on mediatization. Special attention was given to the Southeast Asian region as this region is facing a political shift and press freedom decline that are forecasted to be worse in the coming year even as all Southeast Asian countries fall at the bottom half of the ranking except for Timor Leste (Strangio, 2022).

Strategic Searching Systematically

As per the PRISMA guidelines, this article applied the three processes of searching strategy namely identification, screening, and eligibility. In the process of identification, the researchers created a database of main keywords used and expanded the main keywords. This is crucial to ensure that more related articles are included in the process of the review (Shafrill, 2021). To expand the keywords, efforts to search for related terms and synonyms for the main keywords used (i.e., medialization, mediation, digitalization, governance and political actors were used). For the full details of words used, please refer to Table 1. Thesaurus and keywords used by past studies or suggested by databases were also taken into consideration. The keywords were combined using search functions such as phrase search, truncation, wild cards and field code function as per Table 1. In Google Scholar, the same keywords are used but with variation of searching techniques as suited to Google Scholar.

Table 1: The search string used in the systematic review search

Databases	Keywords

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("Mediatization* of *Politics*" OR "Media Logic" OR "Medialization" OR "Digitalization" OR "Media Institution" OR "Mediation") AND ("Politics" OR "Campaign" OR "Government" OR "Government Policy" OR "Polity" OR "Governance" OR "Public Administration") AND ("Politicians" OR "Nationalism" OR "Political Party" OR "Political Actor" OR "Parliament" OR "Judiciary" OR "Election" OR "Policy" OR "Polity" OR "Politicking") AND ("South East Asia" OR "ASEAN" OR "IndoChina")) -
Web of Science	TS=("Mediatization of Politics" OR "Media Logic" OR "Medialization" OR "Digitalization" OR "Media Institution" OR "Mediation") AND TS=("Politics" OR "Campaign" OR "Government" OR "Government Policy" OR "Polity" OR "Governance" OR "Public Administration") AND TS=("Politicians" OR "Nationalism" OR "Political Party" OR "Political Actor" OR "Parliament" OR "Judiciary" OR "Election" OR "Policy" OR "Polity" OR "Politicking") AND TS=(""South East Asia" OR "ASEAN" OR "IndoChina")

Three selected databases, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar were used. The search process was done in January 2023. Manual searching and screening were also done to delete redundant articles. In the whole process, a total of 45 potential articles were identified after excluding duplicate articles.

The researchers then screened through the 45 articles identified in the first process. The criteria for the screening process should include the literature type, language and year of publication as adapted from Abu Samah et al. (2021) as per Table 2. The primary data chosen are peer-reviewed journal articles as these articles offer reliable methodologically sound data, which are important for systematic review. In the context of this study, only articles in English were included even though there are initial articles written in Bahasa Melayu or Indonesia. This is to ease regional comparison of the topic seeing that there may be articles written in Tagalog or other languages that are not searchable by researchers. The study selected only 1 year of articles to be compared (articles published in 2022 and 2023) as this timeline provides the latest context of different countries after the pandemic. Two of the articles were also excluded as it is a conference proceeding. From this process, a total of ten articles were excluded.

Table 2: The inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Eligibility	Exclusion
Literature type	Journal (research articles)	Journals (systematic review), book series, book, chapter in book, conference proceeding
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2022-2023	2021 and earlier

The process of eligibility was then conducted from the articles remaining upon the screening process. The process was done manually through discussions between the researchers for suitability of review, especially from the title and the abstract. The researchers noted that there are some articles that were examined in the content to ensure that the selected articles do fit the criteria of research. After careful examination, a total of 15 articles were excluded as they are deemed to be not focused in the Southeast Asia region, as comparison with countries outside of the SEA region or the area of focus are not mediatization entirely. The remaining 20 articles were then appraised for quality.

The Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT) by Hong et al. (2018) were used as guidelines to appraise the quality of the selected articles. The researchers set up a panel to

assess the quality of the selected articles based on factors such as clarity of research questions, assessments used, data collection, sampling and the depth of the analysis to achieve the objectives. The data presentation, depth of discussion and conclusion were also reviewed. Based on the guidelines, if the articles score 25% in total, it is considered to be low quality. 50% score would be considered as average, 75% as above average and 100% being high. In this study, it was concluded that from the 20 articles selected, 5 articles were considered to be high average and 4 articles were considered to be above average, while the rest of 10 articles were average. There was no article that was considered to be low quality. Figure 1 shows the diagram of the study as outlined by PRISMA 2021.
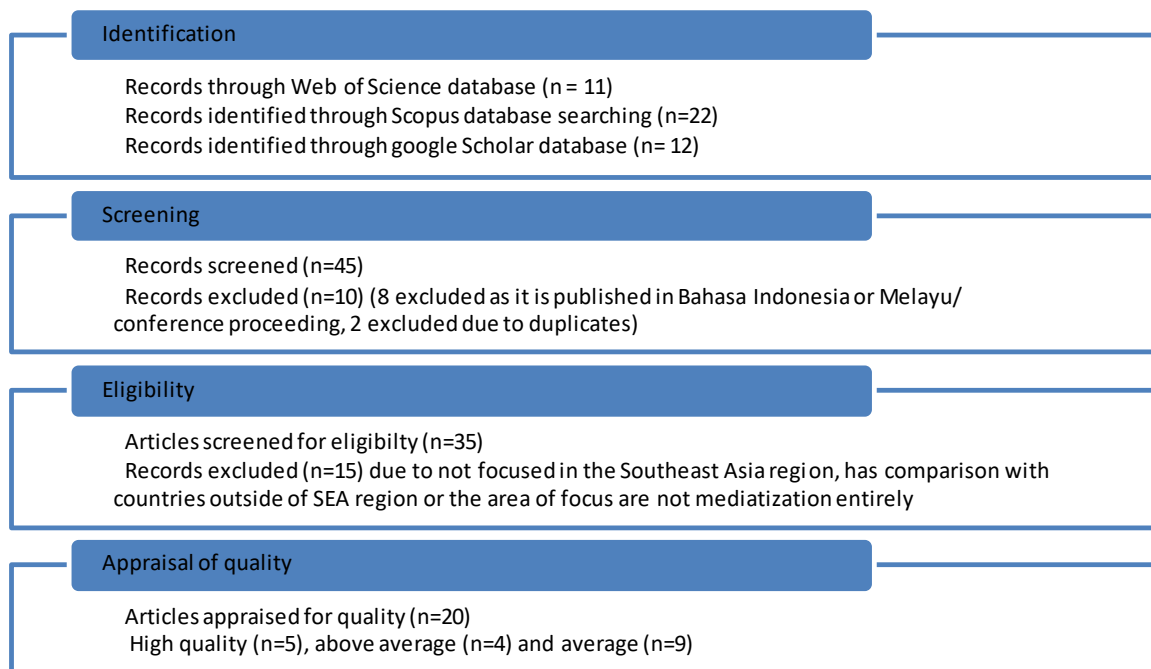
Identification

Records through Web of Science database (n = 11)
Records identified through Scopus database searching (n=22)
Records identified through google Scholar database (n= 12)

Screening

Records screened (n=45)
Records excluded (n=10) (8 excluded as it is published in Bahasa Indonesia or Melayu/ conference proceeding, 2 excluded due to duplicates)

Eligibility

Articles screened for eligibilty (n=35)
Records excluded (n=15) due to not focused in the Southeast Asia region, has comparison with countries outside of SEA region or the area of focus are not mediatization entirely

Appraisal of quality

Articles appraised for quality (n=20)
High quality (n=5), above average (n=4) and average (n=9)

Figure 1: The flow diagram of the study adapted from Page et. al. (2021)

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this research, only above average and high quality articles were analyzed, hence in the end only 9 articles were selected. The researchers then extracted data from the selected articles using the study's research question to guide the process. The researchers first analyzed the abstract, results and discussions of these articles, before proceeding to look for related information within the content of the articles. The extracted data were placed into a table to ease the synthesis process. This article focused on qualitative synthesis using thematic analysis to identify themes that are related to mediatization of politics in the Southeast Asia region. Thematic analysis is a commonly used analysis technique in identifying, analysing, organising, describing and reporting themes recognised within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reason thematic analysis is viable and useful as it carefully examines differences of perspectives and compares the similarities or differences of the data. Thematic analysis also helps in synthesizing the overall theme of data in a more in depth manner, especially when researchers are organising and categorising the findings (Nowell et al., 2017). This is also useful analysis since the articles retrieved are a combination of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodology designs (Flemming et al., 2019).

Themes were then generated based on the emerging patterns from the data. The researchers developed the theme through identification of similarities or relationships between the data. The researchers conducted the process, which generates a total of 4 main themes, namely a) democratization, b) disinformation, c) religious populism and d) nationalism. These themes emerged from the process of screening itself and were re-examined along the way between the researchers to ensure that the themes are accurate and suitable for the study's research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis produced a total of four themes related to mediatization of politics in Southeast Asian countries namely democratization (3 articles), disinformation (2 articles), nationalism (2 articles) and religious populism (2 articles). Please refer to Table 3 for the detailed analysis.

Table 3: Emerging theme, slants and country of origin

Authors	Countries	Title	Synthesis	Theme	Slant
Purnama (2022)	Indonesia	Paradigm Shift: From Ownership Issues to Political Mediatization	Democratization process in Indonesia regarding the use of social media in Indonesia	Democratization (Positive)	Positive
Ahmad (2023)	Indonesia	Adaptations Of The News Media And Social Media Logics By Indonesian Political Parties' Leaders And Presidential Candidates After 2004 Indonesian Presidential Election	Indonesian political parties' leaders and presidential candidates after the 2004 Indonesian presidential election adapted to the news and social media logics and what drove such adaptations.	Democratization (Positive)	Positive
Budiasa (2022)	Indonesia	Politics, Media, and Sports in Indonesia	Sports related to the state and media in Indonesia	Nationalism	Positive
Kansong, Sunarwinadi & Triputra (2022)	Indonesia	Religious Populism in Mainstream Media in Indonesia.	Political and media logic on religious populism to reinforce ideological changes in contemporary society. Promotion of 2017 Jakarta Governorial Election as religious populism cases.	Religious populism	Positive
Ragrario (2023)	Philippines	Media populism and the metanarrative of God in the Philippines	Mediated appeal of the God metanarrative—Religious Duterte, Catholic Church, Apollo Quiboloy, and Daily Prayer- to amplify the communicative style of populism in the Philippines.	Religious populism	Negative

Ong (2022)	Philippines	Philippine Elections 2022: The Dictator's Son and the Discourse around Disinformation	Mediatization influence on the discourse around Ferdinand Marcos Jr victory in the May 2022 election	Disinformation	Negative
Ragrario (2022)	Philippines	Facebook populism: mediatized narratives of exclusionary nationalism in the Philippines	Exclusionary nationalism hinges on the communicative might of Facebook which forms part of the bigger project of mediatization of politics in Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines	Nationalism	Negative
Yến-Khanh, Phelan,& Gray. (2022).	Vietnam	Neoliberalism and authoritarian media cultures: a Vietnamese perspective	Examining the case of Vietnam, a country where the relationship between the media system and the political system is defined primarily by the power of the party-state autocracy.	Democratization	Positive
Leong (2021)	Malaysia	Digital Mediatization and the Sharpening of Malaysian Political Contests	Digital mediatization encouraged cyberattacks and information warfare	Disinformation	Negative

Democratization

More specifically from the three articles that focused on the themes of democratization, two are from Indonesia (Purnama, 2022; Ahmad, 2023) and one is from Vietnam (Yến-Khanh, Phelan & Gray, 2022). It is also noteworthy that from the three articles, all of them view mediatization as a positive phenomenon. In the case of Purnama (2022) and Ahmad (2023), they explored how political actors in Indonesia are adapting to media logic and are heavily mediatized in their political processes. These two articles also conquered that the process of mediatization had sped up the democratization process in Indonesia. Yến-Khanh, Phelan and Gray (2022) on the other hand, proposed that mediatization could be the answer to "free" Vietnam from the power of party-state autocracy.

Disinformation

There were two articles on disinformation namely Leong (2021) and Ong (2022). Ong (2022, p.133) in concluding his research on the discourse of Ferdinand Marcos Jr winning the Philippines election, said *"Though Marcos Jr. is unlikely to enforce the direct censorship of mainstream and social media, legal intimidation and online harassment will doubtless be used to silence criticism. Marcos Jr. himself could villainize social media platforms for being "biased" in their financial support for local journalists and fact-checkers that he would label as unpatriotic "fake news" generators."* He reiterated that in the Philippines, mediatization of politics had allowed the spread of fake narratives that allowed Marcos Jr's winning election.

Leong (2021) on the other hand, said that digital mediatization in Malaysia had led to increasing cybersecurity issues in Malaysia and information warfare between political actors.

Religious Populism
Another emerging theme that emerged was religious populism within mediatization of politics (Kansong, Sunarwinadi & Triputra, 2022; Ragrario (2023). Kansong, Sunarwinadi and Triputra (2022)'s research showed that political and media logic had allowed the promotion of Jakarta Governial Election as a religious populism issue. At the same time, in the Philippines, Ragrario (2023) pointed out that there is a narrative of religious populism among the political actors in the Philippines such as "religious Duterte" or "Apollo Quiboloy". This seems to change the political discourses and public perception towards the leaders. While mediatization of religion is not new, however, the increasing link between religious mediatization with politics is an interesting phenomenon that is noteworthy. What is also interesting is that Kansong, Sunarwinadi and Triputra (2022) had framed religious populism as an important aspect, and a positive one to be considered in elections.

Nationalism
Ragrario (2022) expressed narratives of exclusionary nationalism that would not be good for the Philippines. On the other hand, Budiasa (2022) said that mediatization of sports in Indonesia that are closely related to the political institution had allowed the sports media in Indonesia to grow and develop over time since the time of Suharto.

Slants
Overall, the slants discussing mediatization of politics in the SEA region can be grouped into two categories. The first category refers to the positive outlook towards mediatization of politics, whereby the high degree of media control has brought goodness to the countries. Referring to Table 3, from the 9 articles reviewed, 5 articles framed mediatization of politics positively. From the 5 articles slanted positively, 4 articles were from Indonesia (Purnama, 2022; Ahmad, 2023; Budiasa, 2022; Kansong, Sunarwinadi & Triputra, 2022) and 1 from Vietnam (Yến-Khanh, Phelan & Gray, 2022).

The second category refers to articles reviewed that present a negative outlook towards mediatization of politics, whereby the high degree of media control has brought dire consequences to the countries. Again, from Table 3, there were 4 articles that were slanted negatively. 3 articles were from Philippines (Ragrario, 2023; Ong, 2022; Ragrario, 2022) and 1 from Malaysia (Leong, 2021).

These findings on the slant proved that increasing dependency on media i.e mediatization can result in different consequences for different countries with different cultures and media systems. In the case of oppressive Vietnam and developing Indonesia, mediatization of politics would be viewed as a positive phenomenon. Whereas in Malaysia and Philippines, where generally the media system had been more "free", manipulation and disinformation are areas of concern when political systems are highly mediatized.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, it can be concluded that mediatization of politics is happening across the board despite a repressive media system or changing political landscape. The research in 2022 had shown that in most SEA countries, political actors are embracing the high dependency of media, whether it is the mainstream media or the digital media. Along with the mediatization, comes positive and negative consequences that are different according to the history of the countries. However, the fact that there is no mediatization of political research done in Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar in 2022 is noteworthy and is important to be scrutinized. What can be done in the context of these countries to yield more understanding of the relationship between political and media institutions?

The findings of this systematic review have yielded a number of recommendations that may be helpful for other mediatization of politics scholars. First, future scholars should focus on expanding and building the systematic review in different regions such as the East Asia region (e.g. China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan), Middle East region (e.g Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman) and African region (e.g Cameroon, Nigeria) even as there are growing body of evidences across these regions. Even as this study is limited to only the Southeast Asian region, it is more exploratory in nature and is not exhaustive. The systematic review would assist us to understand the suitability of mediatization of politics, and if it is applicable in other regions at all. In this case, it is very important to obtain empirical data about mediatization of politics impacts from other regions seeing that political landscape changes are witnessed globally. For example, research by Tatchou (2022, p.1) indicated that "most Cameroon parties cared very little about adapting their campaign communications to the news media logic, because they believe the news media in Cameroon have a negligible significance for election performance. Instead, political parties largely focalized their strategies on oral face-to-face rallies and door-to-door canvassing, which they perceive as more effective and efficient for reaching the electorate." Furthermore, studies conducted in these regions should be further investigated as their media systems are more similar to the Southeast Asian region compared to the European and the United States media system.

It is vital to examine the differing mediatization levels and what are the factors that influence the meta relationship between political institutions and media institutions – is the system, the political actors, the newsroom editors or the power of social media popularity? This is vital when you cast the question with the decline of press freedom forecasted to worsen in future.

The researchers also opine that the scope of the recent study is small, as we only consider articles from year 2022 onwards to capture the latest updates of the research. The articles were limited to only 45 articles from the beginning of screening. The researchers aimed to expand the systematic review to at least five years (2018 onwards) in order to capture the erosion of the relationship between political institutions and media institutions over time.

The literature available on mediatization of politics in Southeast Asia reflects basic areas of focus in the region towards mediatization of politics. Furthermore, the three main themes i.e. digital mediatization of the political system, colonization of the media and open government or social mediatization were identified in this research. The first theme refers to the research that focused on the use of digital media (be it social media or digital platforms) in affecting political campaigns or political actors. Secondly, the colonization of the media studies was focused on how in countries such as Cambodia, Singapore and Indonesia, repression of the press freedom is ongoing, indicating the tug of war between political actors

and media actors. Next the theme of open government or social media indicated research whereby Governments are embracing the digital era and are mediatized as they seek social media popularity or prominence in their campaigns or policymaking.

This study had provided a glimpse for scholars of mediatization of politics to consider and to integrate different elements into the theory. This would help to conceptualize mediatization of politics into something tangible and measurable, not mere "buzzword of the decade" as phrased by Corner (2018). At the same time, it allows journalists to introspectively understand their influence overall on the political system and how crucial their role is in ensuring that the flow of information continues.

BIODATA

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