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In Search of a New Model of Political Governance in Southeast Asia; Democracy's Decline, Populism's Rise, and Globalization's Retreat

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Abstract.

This article examines the challenges facing democracy in Southeast Asia, including the decline of the liberal democratic model, the rise of populism, and the retreat of globalization. It identifies five key trends that have led to the deterioration of the democratic ethos in the region and highlight the emergence of strong populist leaders who promise change through radical reforms. The article argues that it is necessary to explore the emergence of new political governance models that are uniquely Asian and lie outside the perceived colonial shadows of North America and Western Europe. This study focuses on four emerging market countries in Southeast Asia. It uses qualitative research methods to examine how these countries are coping with the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in the region. The study aims to provide an overview of the possible outcomes of new political governance models as the area moves forward. The review highlights that while the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in Southeast Asia has hurt social and economic progress in the region, emerging market countries in the region have taken steps to address the decline by strengthening democratic institutions, increasing investment and trade, and strengthening vital economic sectors such as tourism and information technology. In addition, the review also discusses the potential for a new political governance model to emerge that is distinctly Asian and in keeping with the culture and history of each country in the region.

Keywords: globalization, political governance model, democratic decline, representative democracy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy in Southeast Asia faces challenges from various geopolitical, economic, technological, and socio-cultural factors (Neher, 2006; Pye & Weatherbee, 2005; Weatherbee, 2014). The Western model of representative and liberal democracy has lost its appeal over the years as events spiraled out of control and delegitimized democratic institutions as effective engines for creating private wealth and the equitable distribution of public goods (Kleinfeld, 2022; Michael J. Abramowitz, 2020; RICHARD WIKE et al., 2019). Globalization has exacerbated the gap between the rich and the poor, causing mass poverty, hunger, and unemployment (IMF Staff, 2000). Neoliberal market models and private sector-driven growth have driven many people from their homes, jobs, and communities, resulting in inflation, environmental degradation, and social and racial tensions (Byrne & Norris, 2022; FORREST & HIRAYAMA, 2009). In addition, Southeast Asia is in the midst of extreme weather changes and climate change leading to natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and pandemics (*Climate2030_southeast_asia_pacific_islands*, n.d.; “Weather and Climate Extremes in Asia Killed Thousands, Displaced Millions and Cost Billions in 2020,” 2020; IMF Staff, 2000). China’s claim to the nine-dash line has disrupted peace and stability in the region, intensifying competing claims among Southeast Asian countries (*AlternActive Worlds a Publication of the National Intelligence Council*, n.d.). The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the decline of democracy, leading to the rise of populist leaders in the region (Auliya & Zulfah, 2021).

Five main trends have led to the decline of the democratic ethos in Southeast Asia over the past two decades. First, globalization has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, leading to mass poverty, hunger, and unemployment. Second, neoliberal market models and private sector-driven growth have resulted in displacement, inflation, environmental damage, and social and racial tensions. Third, Southeast Asia is amid extreme weather changes and climate change leading to natural disasters and pandemics. Fourth, China’s claim to the nine-dash line has fueled an arms race in the region, disrupting peace and stability. Finally, the food security crisis has disrupted global supply chains and lowered agricultural productivity, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the scarcity of water and arable land (Bhasin & Kumar, 2022; Haque, 2004).

The rise of populism in Southeast Asia can be attributed to the failure of the democratic model in addressing public problems, leading to a growing sense of frustration and disillusionment among the people. According to (DUGAS, 2003), this has resulted

in the rise of strong, populist leaders who promise to bring about change through radical reforms. In countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, these leaders have garnered significant support by capitalizing on people's frustrations.

However, the rise of populism in the region has also been accompanied by a shift towards authoritarianism, which has the potential to undermine the progress made toward democracy in the region. As noted by (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003), countries in the region have begun to look to China as a way to revive their economies and break away from the West. This move has been accompanied by an increasing acceptance of China's authoritarian model, which is more effective in promoting economic growth. This shift towards authoritarianism is a concern as it has the potential to erode human rights and freedoms in the region and undermine the progress that has been made toward democratization.

Hence, there is a need to explore the emergence of new governance-politics models that are distinctly Asian and outside the shadow of North American and Western European colonialism (Corry, 2020). This study examines how four emerging economies - Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines - are coping with the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in the region. It also seeks to analyze the impact of the rise and fall of liberal democracy on social and economic progress and development in the region. In doing so, it can shed light on the possible outcomes of a new political governance model as the region moves forward.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The past decade has seen democratic backsliding in South and Southeast Asia, with the military staging coups in Myanmar and Thailand and illiberal populists undermining institutions in India, the Philippines, and other countries. The impact of military force, polarization, populism, and COVID-19 has contributed to this democratic backsliding. Meanwhile, globalization is changing the liberal international order. Political globalization is declining while new identity politics and nationalism are rising (Mietzner, 2020, 2021).

Despite these challenges to democracy in Asia, support for democratic governance remains strong (Pietsch et al., 2015). The Indo-Pacific region may be the center of gravity in the competition between democracy and authoritarianism. The region is home to the world's largest and most economically dynamic democracies. However, even successful democracies continue to grapple with the problem of democratic backsliding (Hau, 2020).

Understanding global democratic backsliding requires analyzing leader-driven anti-democratic political projects and their mechanisms and motivations. Three distinct types of backsliding efforts have been identified: grievance-driven illiberalism, strategic partisan manipulation of electoral rules or institutions, and enhanced executive power through legalistic means (Dewi Setyaningsih, 2022). Although Russian and Chinese influence on national political life is not a significant factor in many cases of backsliding, such as the decline of democracy in India in recent years (Dewi Setyaningsih, 2022), Western democracies must take seriously the need to blunt these efforts as part of the defense of their democracy.

Populism is a slippery concept. Some literature describes it as a direct expression of popular grievances and protests the increasingly indecisive and elitist oligarchic systems that republican and representative democratic systems are built upon. Most of these democratic systems are ruled by a privileged few who fail to represent the interests of the people truly. (Jacobs et al., 2018) points out the dichotomy between corrupt elites and populists who represent the authentic voice of the people (the pure people). The pure people also believe in their distinct, homogeneous, and shared identity, which often results in the marginalization and exclusion of 'others' who are different from them, both ethnically and in terms of views.

(Hadiz, n.d.) writes about the social, religious, and historical underpinnings of the rise of Islamic populism, which is linked to the deteriorating economic and political conditions of Islamic societies due to globalization and Western hegemony. The long line of literature on Islamic populism begins with poverty, economic injustice, and marginalization of the dominant Muslim majority. The birth of populism occurs with the emergence of a charismatic leader who can mobilize the masses through effective communication, charisma, and guile.

Three recognized types of populism have marked our history. First, the radical left-wing populism that began in Latin America campaigned against the hegemony of capitalist democracy in the West and promoted socialism as an alternative to curb the influence of the ruling elite. Second, radical right-wing populism in North America and Western Europe crossed populism with authoritarianism and nativism. Authoritarianism calls for an ideology of law and order due to the flood of immigrants crossing borders and occupying their countries. Nativism prioritizes domestic issues and advocates identity politics over the values of immigrants, foreigners, and non-natives. Nothing beats this motto from US President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" political campaign to win the presidency.

In addition, there are also two types of populism. Jan-Werner Muller describes it as "political populism," a moral ideology in which people unite against morally corrupt elites. This group is often represented by a charismatic leader who becomes their voice and, once in power, rules with intensive rigor while claiming to embody the will of the people and then undermining democratic institutions. The other is Cas Mudde's "economic populism," which uses economic policies to support a particular political party. It tends to exclude groups not targeted by economic policies and does not consider the unintended consequences of these policies on society. This type of populism is highly transactional, sacrificing economic gains to gain political support from certain groups, generally the ruling majority.

On the one hand, Laclau identifies three preconditions for the emergence of populism, namely: (1) there is an internal conflict that separates "the people" from "the ruling elite"; (2) there is an equal voice that represents the demands of the people and is recognized; and (3) these demands become prominent and integrated into a recognized issue, where both conditions reach the point of political mobilization. Laclau emphasizes that when people assert their specific demands (the logic of difference) or uphold common values by giving up their specific demands (the logic of equality), the environment for populism to emerge will develop (E Laclau, 2005).

In conclusion, Southeast Asia has experienced democratic backsliding due to factors such as military might, polarization, populism, the COVID-19 pandemic, and globalization that have changed the liberal international order. Despite these challenges to democracy in Asia, support for democratic governance remains strong. Understanding the global decline of democracy requires analyzing the anti-democratic political projects driven by leaders while blunting the efforts of Russia and China as part of their defense of democracy.

Based on the review of existing literature, an identifiable research gap is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between populism and democratic backsliding in Southeast Asia. While the literature highlights the rise of populism as one of the causal factors of democratic backsliding in the region, it remains unclear how different types of populism (left-wing, right-wing, economic, and political) interact with other factors such as military power, polarization, and globalization in weakening democratic institutions. Moreover, there is a need to examine the specific mechanisms and motivations behind leaders' anti-democratic political projects that contribute to democratic backsliding, particularly in the Southeast Asian context. Finally, this literature review suggests a need for further research on the role of Western democracies in blunting Russian and Chinese efforts to undermine democracy in the region.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What has been the impact of the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions on social and economic progress in Southeast Asia, and how have emerging market countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines coped with this decline?
2. What is the potential for emerging new political-governance models that are distinctly Asian and beyond the colonial shadows of North America and Western Europe?

4. METHODS

This research will utilize a qualitative research design involving data collection through focus group discussions and document analysis. The research will focus on four developing countries in Southeast Asia - Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines - and will examine how these countries have dealt with the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in the region. It will also analyze the impact of the rise and fall of liberal democracy on social and economic progress and development in the region. The research will use purposive sampling to select key informants from government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Data analysis will use content and thematic analysis to identify emerging themes and patterns.

5. RESULTS

The decline of Western liberal democracy is not a unique phenomenon at the turn of the 21st century. Southeast Asian countries were already accustomed to and adept at various forms of authoritarianism, ranging from dictatorships, and military juntas, to pseudo-democracies. However, the collapse of the Soviet empire and the rise of the United States as the sole global superpower in the 1990s ushered in the democratization of political systems in the region. Globalization and integration of the world economy only formalized the dictates of the Bretton Woods conference that laid the foundation of the international economic system. While globalization has created new wealth, lifted people out of poverty and unemployment, and boosted the economies of developing countries, it has also thrown millions of people out of work, destroyed people's lifestyles and cherished communities, separated many people from their communities, and decimated many government-provided public services. Globalization indeed has its

losers and winners. However, weak governments and political institutions in the region have been crushed by the avalanche of disruptions brought about by globalization. Democracy, born of consensus, constructive debate, gestation for success, and nation-building, faces severe contraction as voters demand swift and sweeping reforms. The resultant adverse effects of globalization paved the way for populism to grow and win elections. Like periodic convulsions, populism occasionally resurfaced in Southeast Asia from the period between 2000 to 2015, with the likes of Thaksin Shinawatra and Joseph Estrada taking power and eventually losing it. However, from 2016 onwards, the region witnessed populist leaders attracting crowds and winning elections with cross-cutting implications for democracy.

This paper argues that populism can be interpreted positively through the exercise of direct democracy by the people and subordinating the interests of political-economic oligarchs. However, the paper also suggests that populism can hinder the growth and institutionalization of democratic nation-building due to excessive reliance on charismatic figures. In this section, the historical context and distinctive experiences of each Southeast Asian country will be discussed and explored in light of current trends and developments. Three key issues will be addressed in each discussion: (1) What political, economic, cultural, and technological transformations triggered the decline of liberal democracy in Indonesia? (2) How did democratic forces react, respond, and consolidate amidst the decline of democratic achievements? (3) What are the repercussions of the struggle, and how will the victors move forward in this century?

5.1. Indonesia

Indonesia has more than 275 million inhabitants with an area of 1.9 million square kilometers. Indonesia's GDP is estimated at \$1.289 trillion, with a nominal GDP per capita of \$4,691. Although the country is one of the fourth largest Muslim-majority countries in the world, its form of government promotes unity in diversity with secularism, a multi-party system, and democratic values enshrined in the constitution. Over the past ten years, Indonesia's economy has performed well through the palm oil industry, agricultural manufacturing, rubber production, and business outsourcing. Indonesia is the 17th largest economy by nominal GDP. The large population is a competitive advantage with the availability of direct consumers, suppliers, and distributors of the nation's wealth.

Indonesia is home to 300 ethnic groups, 87 percent of whom are Muslim, 10 percent of the population is Christian, followed by Hinduism at 1.7 percent. However, Indonesia

TABLE 1

SE country	Major transformations	React, respond and reconsolidate	Way forward
Indonesia	Economic boon after the collapse of the New Order Populist leaders such as Jokowi and Prabowo Rising Islamic extremism (i.e., Islamic Defenders Front) Decentralized power	High prevalence of populism among upper- and middle-income class	Indonesia shall grow economically and become more secular and democratic.
		State ensures secularism and diversity.	
		The growing popularity of the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam-FPI)	
Thailand	Death of the monarch Red vs. yellow shirts Military coup	Civil society group organized mass rallies against the military junta.	The social unrest in Thailand can result in a new democratic regime.
Malaysia	The downfall of PM Razik Split in the coalition forces Fear of Islamic militarism	PM Razik faces 12 years imprisonment.	Coalition forces shall be split and would cause more unrest.
Philippines	Economic recession Election of populist leaders The decline of People Power Revolt	Election of the son of former deposed President Ferdinand Marcos	The Philippines would be skirting more towards populism and retreat from the representative democracy.

is also threatened by extreme violence and terrorism from militant Islamic groups. Although Indonesia is known as a Sunni Muslim country that is generally characterized as tolerant and moderate, there have been incidents where some populist religious and political leaders have inflamed people’s emotions by ostracizing individuals or groups that they perceive as a threat to their religious norms, beliefs, and practices. A case in point is the 2016 Islamic mass demonstrations in Jakarta accusing Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) of blasphemy, which cost him the election. Indonesia also faces increasing demands from peripheral regions for more decentralized power, resources, and authority. President Joko Widodo, a former mayor of Surakarta and governor of Jakarta, focused on expanding roads and railways, investing in ports and airports, and irrigation to connect the archipelago’s diverse islands. In addition, he implemented the village fund program, where each village gets financial assistance to allocate to roads, water supply, and village enterprises.

Both in Indonesia and in Western countries, the rise of populism is triggered by deep social inequalities that provide fertile ground for populism. This battle between Islamists

and Pluralists is laden with solid identity politics. President Jokowi's assumptions indicate that Islamist groups, such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), still courageously appeal to the public and win votes. Islamist populists criticize the wide gap between rich and poor Muslims. Populism in Indonesia is the domain of the bourgeois elite as a representation of Islam. However, the influence of Islamic populism in Indonesia is not as strong as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (Hadiz, 2016).

Another populist ploy was at the expense of minority groups, such as wealthy Chinese immigrants. This anti-Chinese rhetoric led to mob violence, killings, and rapes in the late 1990s during the height of the Asian financial crisis. Islamists also target socio-religious minority groups, such as Ahmadiyya, Shia, LGBTI, and atheists. The difficulty in curbing populism is when it is hijacked by established political parties and candidates seeking office. (Mietzner, 2021). For Mietzner, President Jokowi also plays the 'populism' card by emphasizing bureaucratic reforms to better serve the people by offering free health and education programs. This is referred to as "technocratic populism." This is in contrast to Prawbowo's populist approach, which tends to attack elite groups, promote the welfare of the poor, and marginalize them through affirmative action, such as subsidies for farmers and fishermen. In a way, FPI is a religious populism to unite Indonesian Muslims against infidels, which resulted in the defeat of Ahok, a Christian, Chinese, and incumbent governor of Jakarta. FPI's approach combines nativism and authoritarianism. This type of populism upholds the moral authority of ulama to be the arbiters of virtue and way of life in society due to their unique position and privilege as descendants of the Prophet Noah.

The way forward is for Indonesia to mitigate the adverse effects of populism that create social divisions in terms of 'pure people' versus 'corrupt elites. Democracy in Indonesia is still in the process of being established and institutionalized. The case of Ahok, who was resoundingly ousted from the governorship due to massive protests from the FPI, is a setback to Indonesia's democratic achievements and upholding the motto "Unity in Diversity ."The downside shows how political parties and mass organizations have used populism to gain popular support and defeat opponents. This could further hamper the development and maturity of democracy in Indonesia unless populism is curbed in favor of institution building.

5.2. Thailand

Since 2001, populist policies and leaders have changed Thailand's political landscape. The arrival of the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party and the election of Thaksin Shinawatra as Prime Minister, a successful telecommunications entrepreneur, paved the way for implementing populist policies to win votes in Thailand and increase public trust in the government. The next government continued Shinawatra's pro-poor policies, with enormous subsidies for public education, senior citizens, health care, agrarian debt relief, a rice guarantee scheme, and a 300 baht minimum wage being key measures. However, these populist policies increase the public debt and are prone to corruption. As a political strategy, on the one hand, these policies generated much support from the public, especially from poor households and rural households who gained access to social and economic assistance from the government.

As the 23rd Prime Minister, Shinawatra was in power for five years and 222 days from February 17, 2001, until a military coup ousted him after massive street demonstrations that pitted the yellow and red groups against each other. During his absence, the government that replaced him followed his political playbook by redistributing government aid to specific groups in Thai society to win elections and political capital. On August 30, 2014, General Prayut Chan-o-cha took power by force and formed the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO). General Prayut modified this populist policy by focusing on the grassroots economy through the "Civil State," or panchayat project. This model is based on a cooperative relationship between the government and society to provide social security, create a culture of self-reliance, improve economic livelihoods, promote an anti-corruption culture, provide free internet access, and push anti-drug policies.

Admittedly, these populist policies effectively reduced inequality and poverty in Thailand and restored public trust in the government. The redistribution of government resources also helped political parties to win a majority of votes in the general election. More people began to participate and vote in elections. However, this also frustrated the ruling elite, who saw the redistribution of wealth to programs that had sunk costs and could not foster new investments. These populist policies also made Thais more dependent on the government, allowed corruption and graft to flourish, and led to conflicts of interest between political parties. They also do not stimulate people's economic livelihoods through job creation, income distribution, innovation, and investment. Using political marketing to win votes has become more critical than sustainable development. Similarly, the government's redistribution activities are concentrated at the top levels of the Thai government, while local governments play little or no role. Many policies

are short-term without adequate accounting, monitoring, and evaluation of long-term outcomes and impacts after implementation.

Populism has been embedded in Thailand's political culture since the successful assumptions and practices of former PM Shinawatra in 2001. This economic populism based on the redistribution of government resources and finances led to high public satisfaction and trust in the government. However, there are challenges to ensuring democratic accountability, checks and balances, and sound fiscal management of many populist policies and programs. Taxpayers, especially the ruling elite, have complained that these populist policies are often burdensome and only palliative for short-term gains—many reports of massive corruption and fiscal mismanagement among politicians benefitting from these populist policies. Therefore, strict regulations and accounting are essential to negate the negative consequences of these populist policies despite their ability to alleviate poverty and promote wealth distribution.

5.3. Malaysia

Populism in Malaysia cannot be discussed without referencing the ethnic, nationalist, and religious principles of the former ruling political party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). The type of populism in Malaysia follows Mudde's definition of two opposing and antagonistic groups, namely "pure rakyat" versus "corrupt elites." In this definition, the "rakyat" have the same pure values and interests, while the "elite" have corrupt values against the people's will. This "us versus them" ideology often creates division and polarization on political and socio-economic issues.

In Malaysia, the State's use of coercive authority is recognized in promoting ideologies that manipulate the people and implement policies detrimental to broader interests (Poulantza). Populist issues that attract policy intervention include ethnicity, religion, education, cost of living, immigration, and political corruption. Malaysia's demographics consist of Bumiputera (Muslim and non-Muslim) at 67.4%, with ethnic Malays accounting for 63.1%, Chinese at 24.6%, and Indians at 7.3%. More than 61% of Malaysians follow Islam, while Buddhism is 19.8%, Christianity is 9.2%, and Hinduism is 6.3%. It is hard not to take these ethnic and religious differences into account when discussing key populist issues in Malaysia, particularly foreign worker immigration, governance, and unemployment.

Malaysians care deeply about economic issues. Malaysia's hybrid regime is one where regular competitive elections occur. However, the ruling party has unfair and greater access to government machinery and institutions that weaken and delegitimize

the opposition. The ruling government uses repressive methods and legal measures to silence and stifle the opposition and promote its agenda. A case in point is former Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, whose followers harassed the media for their critical coverage of the 1MDB scandal. In the Freedom House survey, Malaysia scored low on political and civil liberties, with a "partly free" position of 45/100 compared to New Zealand's 98/100. This environment has led to high levels of corruption becoming a significant issue in political discourse and elections in Malaysia.

Economic hardships, such as the cost of living, rising prices of essential commodities, and rising taxes, cause this rising trend of populism. Populism was also exacerbated by media coverage of widespread corruption, the lavish lifestyles of high-level politicians, and regressive taxes imposed by parliament. UMNO's political failure resulted in the rise of political populism among Malaysians, who perceived cronyism and kleptocracy as emblematic among the ruling elite. They sought sweeping reforms in political and electoral institutions and the abolition of repressive laws, which undermined the checks and balance mechanism in government. There is a growing push to introduce pluralistic and liberal reforms to improve the governance structure and allow competing views to have input into government.

5.4. Philippines

Populism thrives in environments rife with extreme inequality, severe poverty, and weak political institutions. The rich often take advantage of such unstable situations, gaining disproportionate influence in politics and advancing their economic interests at the expense of people's well-being. In the case of the Philippines, decades of corruption and graft, mismanagement, and bureaucratic dysfunction propelled charismatic leaders to take power, such as Joseph Estrada, Rodrigo Duterte, and Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. Political institutions, such as the legislature, executive, and judiciary, are weakened in the face of personality-based politics and loss of trust among the people. A process of individualization where political leaders become more receptive to direct appeals that bypass political parties and other intermediary institutions.

In the case of the Philippines, the rifts and divisions caused by globalization and the expanding influence of social media in elections accelerated the rise of populism. The first national leader to appeal to the masses was Joseph Estrada, a famous movie actor who blazed a campaign trail with promises to deliver more social benefits to the poor. Another populist leader was Rodrigo Duterte, the mayor of the world's largest city on the southern island of Mindanao, who framed the presidential contest as a law

and order contest instead of typical campaigns such as reducing poverty, creating jobs, and fighting corruption. The populist appeal was replaced by Ferdinand "Bong-Bong" Marcos, Jr, the scion of former strongman Ferdinand Marcos, Sr, who used social media and politically savvy marketing to propel him to the highest office in the country.

The rise of populism points to a weakening of the country's checks and balances with an overly powerful executive and declining legislative power. Across the nation, politicians, from celebrities to boxers to political dynasties, have risen to power with the support of voters who feel marginalized and impoverished due to unequal wealth distribution. Anti-elitism and xenophobia created a dichotomy between the poor and the elite. The growth of populism is anchored on the assumption that the political system of representative democracy has failed the Filipino people. Massive appeal and charisma have been the order of the day in every national and local election in the country. The people feel neglected and abandoned by the elite-controlled political elites.

However, the rhetoric and actions of Filipino populist leaders are often at odds. While they talk and promise to defeat the oligarchic class, they replace them with their own cronies and political allies. Unfortunately, the biggest losers are the poor and marginalized who voted them into office. A case in point is Duterte's presidency from 2016-2022, which saw the deaths of more than 4,500 suspected drug users and dealers. In comparison, President Ferdinand Marcos' martial law regime led to the deaths of 3,257 people over a more extended period of 14 years, from 1972 to 1986.

5.5. New political-economic model in Southeast Asia

The new political-economic model in Southeast Asia is a form of political-economic system development in countries in the Southeast Asian region. This political-economic model aims to create a unique and independent system from the colonial influence of the West and North America and can increase economic growth and strengthen political stability in the region. In implementing this model, countries in Southeast Asia developed various economic policies such as trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. These policies were implemented to boost economic growth and increase regional competitiveness in the global market. In addition, Southeast Asian countries also developed bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries in the region, including China and Japan.

The new political-economic model in Southeast Asia covers many aspects, including economic upgrading, regional integration, and political development. There are several researches and studies on this model, which illustrate some of the critical elements

involved. According to J. Mark Sidel in his book entitled "Law and Society in Vietnam" (2017), the new political-economic model in Southeast Asia is driven by several factors, including economic modernization and the development of information technology. Sidel also highlights the importance of regional integration in this model, primarily through economic cooperation such as ASEAN.

A study by Thomas Pepinsky, Sophia Hui Yi Wong, and Joshua Kurlantzick, entitled "Authoritarian Modernization in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam" (2019), also highlights the critical role that authoritarianism plays in Southeast Asia's new political-economic model. The study notes that countries such as Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam have leveraged economic modernization to strengthen their authoritarian positions. On the other hand, a study conducted by Richard Robison, Vedi Hadiz, and David McDonald, entitled "Neo-liberalism and the Asian Financial Crisis" (2004), criticized the new political-economic model in Southeast Asia driven by neoliberalism. The study notes that the economic policies implemented during the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s did not yield positive results, leading to social and political crises.

However, there is also a positive view of the new political-economic model in Southeast Asia. A study by Edmund Terence Gomez and Jomo Kwame Sundaram, entitled "Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics, Patronage and Profits" (2013), highlights the critical role played by the government in shaping this model. The study also highlights how Malaysia's new political-economic model combines traditional and modern elements. Overall, these studies provide an overview of the various factors influencing the new political-economic model in Southeast Asia. While there are various views and criticisms of this model, most studies emphasize the importance of regional integration, economic modernization, and the role of government in shaping this model.

The new political-economic model in Southeast Asia also faces various challenges and problems. One of the main challenges is that socio-economic inequality is still relatively high in these countries. In addition, countries in Southeast Asia are also faced with issues such as corruption, inconsistent policies, and political instability. To overcome these challenges, Southeast Asian countries need to develop a more inclusive and sustainable political-economic model. This can be done through efforts to improve people's welfare, reduce corruption, improve the quality of education, and involve people in the policy-making process.

6. DISCUSSION

The decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in Southeast Asia can hurt social and economic progress in the region (Croissant, 2022; Mauk, 2022). It can lead to political instability, stifle innovation, and reduce investor confidence, which in turn can hamper economic growth. However, emerging market countries in Southeast Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines, have taken steps to address this decline. Some countries have taken steps to strengthen democratic institutions and reduce corruption; for example, Indonesia has introduced policy reforms to fight corruption and protect human rights. These countries have also sought to increase investment and trade with other countries, such as through involvement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP).

In addition, countries in Southeast Asia also seek to strengthen their economic capabilities through the development of critical economic sectors, such as tourism and information technology. Indonesia, for example, has launched the "Indonesia 4.0" program to increase the use of digital technology in the industrial and service sectors. Overall, emerging market countries in Southeast Asia face challenges in sustaining their social and economic progress amidst the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions. However, efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, increase investment and trade, and strengthen critical economic sectors can help these countries overcome the decline and achieve more significant progress in the future.

The potential emergence of new political governance models that are distinctly Asian and outside the colonial shadows of North America and Western Europe is possible. As Asia's economic and political awakening intensifies, some countries in the region have tried to find a political governance model that is more in line with their culture and history (Karimi & Osuli Odlu, 2022). One example is China, which has created a unique political governance system by combining socialist principles with traditional Chinese values. This model emphasizes consensus, stability, and strong government authority. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have achieved significant economic and political progress by maintaining political stability and implementing effective economic policies. The political-governmental models in these countries emphasize values such as harmony, cooperation, and consensus. However, it should be noted that each country has its own unique political, social, and economic context, and it is impossible to create the same political governance model for all countries in Asia. In addition, some countries in Southeast Asia also face challenges such as corruption and ethnic conflicts that may require different solutions from other countries in the region.

Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand have a long history of creating unique political-governance systems. For example, Indonesia's political governance system reflects local customary and cultural values, while Malaysia and Thailand have solid monarchical systems. With the rise of China and India as global economic and political powers, the potential for new political governance models with Asian characteristics is increasing. China, for example, has created an economic model of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," while India has a complex and heterogeneous political governance system with long historical roots. Some countries in Asia have also tried to adopt elements of Western political governance systems and adapt them to the local context. For example, Japan and South Korea have adopted parliamentary systems emphasizing civil society participation and the protection of human rights.

Along with the increasing influence of technology and globalization, the emergence of new political governance models that are more open, participatory, and transparent is increasingly likely in Asia. Some countries, such as Taiwan and South Korea, have successfully utilized technology and social media to encourage public participation in political decision-making. Thus, the potential for the emergence of a new political governance model distinctly Asian and beyond the colonial shadows of North America and Western Europe is possible but will be strongly influenced by the local context and specific conditions in each country in Asia.

7. CONCLUSION

Five key trends have led to the decline of democracy in the region and highlighted the emergence of strong populist leaders who promise change through radical reforms. To explore the emergence of new political-governance models uniquely Asian and beyond the shadow of North American and Western European colonial perceptions. Although the decline of liberal democratic principles and institutions in Southeast Asia has hurt social and economic progress in the region, emerging market countries in the region have taken steps to counteract the decline by strengthening democratic institutions, increasing investment and trade, and strengthening vital economic sectors such as tourism and information technology.

Each country has a unique political, social, and economic context, and it is impossible to create a political governance model that is the same for all countries in Asia. In addition, some countries in Southeast Asia also face challenges such as corruption and ethnic conflict that may require different solutions from other countries in the region. While the decline of liberal democratic principles in Southeast Asia poses a challenge

to the region's progress, emerging market countries have taken steps to overcome this decline and explore the potential for new political-governance models to emerge that fit the culture and history of each Asian country.

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