


Chapter 9

Public Security and Trust–Building in Cambodia:


Navigating Challenges of the Post–Truth Era for Positive Developmental Progress

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how Cambodia has been adapting its efforts to ensure public security during the post-truth era. Considering the period characterized by the onslaught of misinformation, emotionally charged narratives, and drops in institutional trust, Cambodia's governance efforts centered around social cohesion and public order management are faced with challenges from the public order through ungoverned security threats. Given the socio-political realities of the country, the chapter outlines the legal frameworks and the reforms in digital governance, and civic overt activities and the cross-border civic-overt cooperation in the region and their implications on the management of civil information and trust in civil institutions and trust in governance, and information provenance. It argues that expressed

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social security, accompanied by trust in information governance and civil institutions, information transparency is the key to public and social order management in the 21st century and the sustainable socio-economic development of the state.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, post-truth has described one of the most important phenomena for the management of governance, democracy, and public order. The term entered the public sphere in light of the word of the year post-truth, indicating a historical moment where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). McIntyre (2018) argues that post-truth is an erosion, not a collapse, of epistemic authority, the capacity of truth to bind and command collective assent. In these digitally saturated environments, algorithmic bubbles foster content that reinforces pre-existing biases instead of challenging them (Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

Some scholars, like Fuller (2018), understand the post-truth condition as a legitimacy crisis, where political narratives and emotional identification eclipse empirical narratives. Harsin (2015) expands on this by describing post-truth as a regime of information disorder that results from a combination of media fragmentation, strategic communication, and the public's distrust of institutions. Within this milieu, the control of violent and fitted discourse, through the manipulative and disorderly putting forth of truth claims, gets left unchecked. This antagonistic discourse leads to social fragmentation and conflict (Corner, 2017).

The ramifications for social order and public safety are vast and multifaceted. Compared to Bennett and Livingston (2018), misinformation and disinformation campaigns can weaponize information ecosystems to undermine governance, escalate intragroup tensions and conflicts, and destabilize elections and civic engagement. This information warfare involves no kinetic means: eroding trust in authorities, inflaming grievances, and constructing oppositional mobilization based on lies (Chesney & Citron, 2019).

In Nye's (2021) perspective, the ability to define the information environment and construct the truth are facets of power in the digital age. Thus, public security institutions need to manage the epistemic or mental in addition to the concrete, physical dimensions of risk. The disintegration of a shared fact set means collective will and action become impossible, and public security institutions fundamentally grapple with this fact. The proliferation of unverified, digitally distributed information has the potential to undermine institutional authority, paralyze law enforcement, and incite public disorder (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The rise of synthetic media and deepfakes also poses other risks, as they amplify public uncertainty about the

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