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Reporting the "Orient": Australian foreign correspondents in South-East Asia

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REPORTING THE "ORIENT":

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

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1997
ABSTRACT

Australian foreign correspondents continue to see Asia through colonial eyes. They are the products of and leading exponents of a professional culture which encourages reporters to meet the expectations of their editors, colleagues and competitors. These correspondents are the most recent recruits of an elitist journalism "club" whose founding members identified with the European empires and their intellectual successors. Themes evident in the work of these earlier reporters can be seen to continue from one generation to the next.

- Australian correspondents' reporting of post colonial Asia is still framed in Western perceptions of the Orient.

- As a result of this identification with Western prerogatives and priorities, correspondents neglect interpretations of events which local people (Asians) deem significant.

- Further, correspondents are guilty of the negative stereotyping, frequently portraying the Orient as a place of misgovernment and arbitrary violence and thereby justifying Western political, economic and ultimately military intervention.

Contemporary correspondents point to lack of adequate training, bureaux infrastructure and editorial agendas as reasons contributing to what many of them see as unsatisfactory coverage of the region. Yet analysis of their own work shows that their stated preferences for Western sources can be reflected in the sources quoted in their stories. They remain preoccupied with preconceptions of how Asia should be, as seen through Western eyes, rather than how many Asians feel it should be reported. In
doing so, one finds that Australian correspondents' reporting of post colonial Asia is still framed in Western perceptions of the Orient.

This thesis examines the work of contemporary correspondents by considering them in context of Australian journalism culture, reflecting on the work of their predecessors and interviewing and questioning them about their opinions, examining their work in the field and analysing their coverage of the Cambodian elections.

Their narrow selection of sources led not only to misreporting of those elections, but also to the sort of negative stereotyping imposed on Sihanouk, and for that matter the Khmer Rouge. Meanwhile, misreporting of the Cambodian elections did more than misinform Australian readers, listeners and viewers. It could be expected to contribute to a new set of false expectations among Australian journalists about Asia.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Edward Knight who knew the value of working class education.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

We saw down in the valley a dusty figure ambling along on a Chinese pony, coming from the direction of Feng-tai and making direct for our temple. It was Dr Morrison, correspondent of the London Times. . . . On hearing early in the day of the mob at Feng-tai, and the burning of the place, he promptly started off in that direction to get as near as possible to the scene of the action, and ascertain for himself if the wild rumours circulating in Peking were truths before cabling them to London.

Mary Hooker¹, writing at the outbreak of the Boxer uprising, May 28, 1900.

Almost a century after George Morrison (of Peking) made his name as the first Australian foreign correspondent in east Asia, journalists were still trying to get as near as possible to the "scene of the action". Many contemporary correspondents still see themselves as romantic individuals, ignoring danger as they follow their stories to remote and exotic locations. Most of them still like to think that they are seeking the "truth", so that they might convey it back to their audience at home. They subscribe to the first article of the code of professional conduct for the International Federation of Journalists which states that "Respect for the truth and for the right of the public to the truth is the first duty of the journalist".² But whose "truth" about "Asia" should we respect?

Journalists specialising in foreign affairs are by definition concerned with reporting on social and value systems to which they do not belong. Australian news organisations place journalists in Asia precisely to seek Australian perspectives on Asian affairs; prioritising and interpreting foreign events in ways most Australians can understand.³ Further, they seek to report the specific

¹Mary Hooker, Behind the Scenes in Peking, 1987, 8/9.
²International Federation of Journalists, Danger: Journalists at work, 1992, 27.
³ABC correspondent, Peter George put it this way:
   I try not to philosophise about the job too much because it gets in the way of the practice. But if I do have a philosophy, it is a simple one: the foreign correspondent has to bear witness. The job requires you to see as much as possible, try to understand what is happening (difficult) and why (almost
activities of Australians and Australian interests abroad. Otherwise, sub-editors assembling newspapers and bulletins would merely rely on international news agency copy; technically excellent but generic news produced from within the Western intellectual framework.

National values and interests are therefore explicitly embedded in Australian correspondents' news gathering practices. As Rodney Tiffin observed in his 1978 study which examined the sociology of Western reporting of Asia:

The processes of news making are not politically neutral or ideologically inert. News values, assumptions and audience interests and attitudes, the production and format demands of news organisations, the differing priority and authority accorded to different news sources, all constitute a very considerable and limiting prism through which Southeast Asian news is filtered to Australia.4

Tiffin's prism may be a hall of mirrors where journalists' prior expectations, prejudices and corporate news priorities combine not only to affect how news is filtered but also how it is created and later understood. "News" can be refracted as it moves through the information distribution systems, in turn creating new illusions upon which new stories are based. This process is evident in the production of newsagency copy where disparate sub-editors have no opportunity to examine a reporter's veracity, other than checking spelling and basic grammar. Once filed, an inaccurate or false story can emerge through a multiplicity of outlets, often without attribution, thereby appearing to provide confirmation, even among competing journalists, that the original story was considered true after all. Meanwhile, stories which challenge or which fall outside the reporters' and editors' belief systems are often downgraded or simply discarded.

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Morrison's "Death"

Even the renowned Dr Morrison fell victim to such a cycle of misreporting. On 16 July 1900, the London *Daily Mail* carried a story datelined Shanghai, which claimed that Dr Morrison had died in a desperate last stand at the besieged British legation at Beijing. In a report resonant of Kipling and the 19th century adventure novel, the defenders were said to have hurled back wave after wave of Chinese assault troops until their ammunition ran out. The legation guards were allegedly wiped out to the last man and everyone else, Morrison included, was "put to the sword in the most atrocious manner". It should be noted that the report while filed by a special correspondent in China, came from Shanghai: isolated from Beijing by almost a thousand kilometres of Chinese countryside populated by largely hostile peasants, roving bands of fanatical Boxers and several well trained Chinese Imperial armies. The story was entirely false.\(^5\)

Nevertheless, the massacre report was picked up and reprinted by many other newspapers. As a result, the next day *The London Times* subsequently carried a glowing obituary for Morrison, claiming that it would be foolish or unmanly to doubt the awful "truth". According to the Times, no newspaper had "a more devoted, a more fearless and more able servant than Dr Morrison". In the editorial the *Times* said:

> His last message was dated June 14 th, just before the legations were finally cut off from the outside world. It was an ominous message. One shudders to think of the awful days and nights that were to follow, waiting for the help that never came, before the tragedy was finally consummated and the last heroic remnants of Western civilisation in the doomed city were engulfed beneath the overwhelming flood of Asiatic barbarism.\(^6\)


\(^6\)As cited by Frank Clune, *Sky High to Shanghai*, 1939, 296.
Such press reports, while generating enormous public sympathy for Morrison as a British hero, also mobilised support for European military intervention in China. The report was part of the self-justifying mythology of Empire, setting Morrison among Imperial icons like the British women murdered by rebellious Indian sepoys at Cawnpore⁷. The Forbidden City was indeed "doomed"; it was shortly after sacked by the avenging forces of "Western civilisation".

While alarmist stories of Asiatic violence and savagery fuelled the fires of imperialism, this embarrassingly wrong report offended the notions of accuracy held by the great metropolitan newspapers. As an apology, the Manager of the *Times*, C.F. Moberley Bell subsequently wrote to Morrison:

> The extent to which we have been bamboozled both as to your safety and as to your danger, by the lying Chinese would I ... as we ourselves were - is natural but I am afraid that half of the telegrams were deliberately faked in Fleet Street.⁸

Faked reports are relatively easy to expose. Morrison's death was categorically disproved by his belated but undiminished ability to file copy for the *Times*. But what of misreporting which arises from cultural differences and other nation's priorities? The former Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, identified a tendency among Australian journalists to exaggerate differences with Asia. He said

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⁷The massacre of the Cawnpore garrison in 1857 entered Victorian popular history, providing a rationale for the savage British reprisals against sepoy mutineers, as well as direct British control of India. Field Marshall Roberts, accompanied one of the relieving columns to the former garrison:

> Our visit to this scene of suffering and disaster was more harrowing than it is in the power of words to express; the sights which met our eyes and the reflections they gave rise to were quite maddening, and could not but increase tenfold the feelings of animosity and desire for vengeance which the disloyalty and barbarity of the mutineers in other places had aroused in the hearts of our British soldiers.

Roberts of Kandahar, *Forty One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander in Chief.*, 1898, 162.

there was a belief that Asia, unlike Australia, was somehow static and not subject to forces of change:

Outdated and somewhat stereotyped images of diversity are still about, many of them emanating from the media itself, and they are not helpful, either to understanding between the region's people or to efforts to strengthen regional co-operation; images of Occident and Orient, 'them' and 'us', 'their' values and 'ours', bear little relation to a much more complex and shaded reality.9

Evans cautiously advised Australians reporting on Asia to "constantly remember that we (Australians) are not the only country with a strong sense of identity or worth". In doing so, he implied that at least some Australian journalists assumed intellectual and ethical superiority over Asians. He called on correspondents to moderate some of the directness or brashness that they might deploy inside Australia or with North America or Europe:

The media need to understand the values of the countries in the region, respect their uniqueness, and appreciate the very real sensitivities of other countries with different cultural traditions. Rather than strident chest beating, which can often be quite counter productive in its impact, the media can be equally or more effective by presenting facts in a thoughtful, unsensational fashion. The substance may have to cause offence; but the style needn't.10

Evans had earlier complained that Australian journalists must share some of the blame for what he saw as the poor quality of debate on foreign policy. "Most widely read or watched journalists only became interested in foreign affairs when they got caught up in domestic partisan politics, had some strong personality component, or were perceived to involve either a grovel or a squabble - a row or a kow tow," he said.11 Evans said that for those journalists committed to constant

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9Gareth Evans, "Reporting Asia: Coping with diversity". Reporting Asia Workshop, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University. 12 June 95.
10Ibid.
11Gareth Evans, "Foreign Policy and the Media", Unpublished paper delivered at the conference Media Images of Asia/Australia : Cross Cultural Reflections, Canberra: 27 November 92, 2.
scepticism, judgement was pre-ordained: the object was flawed and criticism was reduced to an enumeration of defects.\textsuperscript{12}

Paul Kelly, the former Editor-in-Chief of the \textit{Australian} newspaper, conceded in the \textit{Indonesian Observer} that some sections of the Australian media tended to "treat Asia as some sort of freak show, reinforcing the worst sort of stereotypes":

\begin{quote}
Australia's current media commitment to, and coverage of Asia fails to recognise fully its importance to us as a nation. We don't have sufficient expertise in its diverse politics, economics and social issues.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Kelly blamed the inadequate Asian coverage on consumer demand for news from the northern hemisphere, scarce editorial resources, and a lack of appreciation by editors of the specialist skills required of reporters in Asia. However, he also referred to outdated perceptions that might hinder effective reporting:

\begin{quote}
The Australian media has had great trouble over the last twenty years spanning the transition from the region in the 1960s - when it was a region under turbulence and threat, and foreign policy and defence issues predominated and there were a number of prominent journalists involved in the coverage of those issues - to the region we face today which is far more complicated and diverse.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

It can be argued that stories about "turbulence" reinforced perceptions of "threat" not only in the minds of the public, but also with the processors themselves, the sub-editors who expected such stories and the reporters whose job it was to find them. Yet in comparison by the 1990s, there was little "threat" evident. Journalists, like many other Australians, were being forced to make attitude changes as a result of Asia's emergence from colonial military dominance, with former colonies once under direct European control evolving as politically independent trading nations with "diverse politics, economics and social issues".

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Paul Kelly, "Australia Media Representations of Asia", \textit{Indonesian Observer}, 18 June 92.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
In the case of foreign reporting, Edward Said's arguments in *Orientalism*, suggested that Western journalists' "truth" about Asia might merely be representations founded in someone else's fact, fiction and ultimately fantasy:

Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself.15

Said examined the work of those who wrote, taught or researched the "Orient", "whether the person was an anthropologist, historian or philologist".16 The "Orient", according to Said, was both a geographical and cultural entity. It was almost a European invention, and had since antiquity been a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. The "Orient" derived from a confrontation of politics, economics, cultures and ultimately ideas which dated back beyond the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire and the sack of Constantinople in 1452. It had its genesis in the struggle between Eastern and Western powers and helped define notions of the "West". As European peoples engaged in colonialism, the "West" transcended mere geographic locations, transforming into an intellectual tradition as well as an expression of power. Orientalism, in Said's view, was intertwined with notions of Western superiority which were used to justify colonial regimes in the "middle east", Africa and Asia.

While Australia formally entered the post colonial era almost a century ago, older notions continued to frame attitudes. As Said observed, "In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has

16Ibid 2.
always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices".17

Most contemporary Australian journalists no longer argue openly, as Morrison, Clune or Hughes did, for colonialism. However in Cambodia, editorialists and reporters strongly supported Western economic and administrative intervention. Such views were both explicit in their reporting, and implicit in their assumed views of cultural superiority. Could Australian foreign correspondents then be seen to operate in a lingering imperial twilight; a world of blurred interpretations where the values of the old centres of European or Western powers continue to be seen as more important to the independent former colony of Australia than the views of northern neighbours? Was there a thread between Morrison's behaviour and perceptions and those of contemporary Australian correspondents?

**Contemporary Correspondents**

As the ABC's Manager of International Operations, Ian Macintosh co-ordinated reporting on both Occident and Orient. His long career as a foreign correspondent took him back and forth from Sydney, Tokyo, New York, London and Jakarta. His correspondence spanned the "transitional" period in south east Asia, referred to by Kelly. Macintosh agreed with Kelly that journalists who reported on Asia required different sensitivities and skills to their counterparts in Europe:

> If you work, and I have, in both north America and Europe you can if you want to, spend a lot of your time not leaving the office. Stuff comes in off wires, audio and video lines. The global village has descended with a bang. Here in a place like Jakarta for example, where for a start it's very difficult to get people who speak a language the bulk of our audience understand, you have to spend an awful lot of time, twice as much as I can remember spending outside of Asia, just making contacts, talking to people, understanding how things work here. . .  

> *It may be one thing to get the story, but isn't it something else again to persuade the editors back home to use it?*

---

It is all well and good to station and post journalists with expertise in the region, but it comes to nowt if the editors at home have no knowledge, background or interest in this region. It is a lot easier for editors to relate to events in north America and Europe, than it is to relate events on their own northern doorstep.18

News from the northern hemisphere, as distinct from events and affairs in Asia, is a product of Western centred international information distribution systems, which include movies, music, and fashion, as well as "news". Its attractions include easy cultural identification and accessibility. It is far simpler for an editor to quickly obtain footage of fires near Hollywood than it is to cover earthquakes in the mountains of Java. However, coverage is not just a question of logistics. News values, culturally enshrined value judgements of what might be important or interesting for others, are involved here too. Some editors have been heard to argue that Hollywood stars are always "sexier" news than the problems of Asian peasants. According to Macintosh:

I always felt that because of those perceived difficulties in covering and understanding Asia, that the easy track is often taken. I think it is quite in evidence when you look at the pages of Australia's newspapers. There are certain things that Australians do understand about Asia. They tend by and large to be stories about crisis and disaster, human rights abuses etc... All of which are not unimportant stories on their day and depending on particular developments. The best examples that I can think of where Australia is missing the boat are in the areas of business and economics in Asia. We have for a long time covered Japan, but have not covered technological advances as well as we should have for example. In this particular region our coverage of business and finance is appallingly slim.19

It could be that the "things that Australians...understand about Asia" were frequently the colonial era stereotypes where Asia was seen as a place of violence, danger and sexual adventure. As Macintosh suggested there has been difficulty in coming to terms with a modern, independent, better educated Asia where Asian priorities might include business, economics and advanced technology.

18Ian Macintosh, Personal Interview, 13 February 93.
19Ibid.
Negative Stereotyping

In *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*, Rana Kabbani, analysed 19th century travel writing, identifying negative stereotyping which might be familiar today. She argued that descriptions of distant lands peopled by fantastic beings universally abounded, as one dominant group became able to forge images of the 'alien' by imposing its own self perpetuating categories and deviations from the norm:

If it could be suggested that Eastern people were slothful, preoccupied with sex, violent and incapable of self government, then the imperialist would be justified in stepping in and ruling. Political domination and economic exploitation needed the cosmetic cant of *mission civilisatrice* to seem fully commendatory. For the ideology of empire was hardly ever brute jingoism; rather it made subtle use of reason, and recruited science and history to serve its ends. The image of the European coloniser had to remain an honourable one; he did not come as an exploiter but as an enlightened. He was not seeking mere profit, but was fulfilling his duty to his Maker and his sovereign, whilst aiding those less fortunate to rise toward his lofty level. This was the white man's burden, that reputable colonial *malaise*, that sanctioned the subjugating of entire continents.20

Kabanni might have been writing about contemporary Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge became late twentieth century icons for Oriental savagery, where corruption was said to be institutionalised, and where child prostitution was depicted as a major industry. Cambodians, according media reports, were depicted as being unable to govern their own affairs. It followed that, at least in the view of Australian newspaper editorials, United Nations intervention closely followed by Australian investment in Cambodian telecommunications and other industries should be justified or indeed welcomed.

Kabanni wrote that the idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information was commonly found in societies that exercise a high level of political

power. Travellers, like foreign correspondents, wrote from a national perspective, for consumers in their home country:

He feels compelled to note down his observations in the awareness of a particular audience: his fellow countrymen in general, his professional colleagues, his patron or his monarch. Awareness of this audience affects his perception, and influences him to select certain kinds of information, or to stress aspects of a country that find resonances in the culture of his own nation. His social position also colours his vision, and (since he often belongs to a leisured class, which are both expensive and prestigious) he usually represents the interests and systems of thought in which he was schooled.21

Under these circumstances, simply sending more Australian reporters to Asia might do little to widen Australian coverage. As Kelly suggested, scarce editorial resources were only part of the problem. If the quality of Australian media representation of Asian countries were to be improved substantially, then foreign reporters must be able to look beyond the superficial stereotypical stories on the "Orient"; producing information and analysis which editors must not only understand but also value: so that they systematically selected it for prominent publication or broadcast. As Gareth Evans stated, there should be more ballast in media reporting of Asian affairs, "more weight, more complexity and more subtlety".22

This thesis will argue that colonial perceptions of the "Orient" frame news agendas so that much information on Asia is distorted or discarded by journalists. Contrary to Chomsky's theory of propaganda, cultural rather than economic prerogatives often result in stories being excluded at ground level, by reporters, rather than by higher level gatekeepers. While foreign correspondents may couch their stories in Victorian notions of interpreting the world through assembled "facts", they also belong to the wider subjective genre of "Orientalists" delineated by Said and

21Ibid, 1.
22Evans, op.cit., 27 November 92, 6.
Kabbani. Although, their individual reports may be portrayed as "objective", resting as they do in journalism methodology which includes accurate quotes and attempts of balance, their wider themes, that is what questions they choose to ask and perhaps more importantly, the issues they neglect to report, betray their true place in the post colonial world. Meanwhile, conservative, self re-enforcing news culture contributes to the continuation of this process. As a result, it may be that Australian reporting of Asia is in part a karmic wheel of misinformation, where sins of omission, exaggeration and inaccuracy are visited on succeeding generations of correspondents.

Hypotheses

This thesis examines claims that news from South East Asia is distorted by Australian news values and practices. It makes particular reference to the coverage of the Cambodian elections, held in May 1993.

It poses the following hypotheses:

- Australian correspondents' reporting of post colonial Asia is still framed in Western perceptions of the Orient.
- As a result of this identification with Western prerogatives and priorities, correspondents neglect interpretations of events which local people (Asians) deem significant.
- Further, correspondents are guilty of the negative stereotyping as defined by Kabanni, frequently portraying the Orient as a place of misgovernment and arbitrary violence and thereby justifying Western political, economic and ultimately military intervention.

The Organisation of this Thesis
The study is organised into three parts. The first section will consider the culture of ideas in which correspondents work; the spoke around which the wheel of misinformation revolves; a culture which not only shapes their reports, but which also creates the agendas which exclude foreign perceptions of news and which marginalises reporters who challenge the dominant paradigms. It will examine the Orientalist assumptions of earlier generations of correspondents, starting with Morrison, as they pass on ideas, prejudices and notions of truth about Asia to succeeding correspondents. It will show a pattern of reliance on Western institutions, information and resources.

The second section will consider the attitudes of contemporary correspondents, revealing their continuing preferences for Western sources. It will review the preferred sources and discuss why they may be so preferred. Reference will be made to interviews with the consumers (in this case the Australian correspondents and their editors) and the producers (editors and journalists employed by the preferred source).

The third section will examine in detail the work of reporters in Cambodia. It will identify an Orientalist theme running through stories they reported and those many neglected to report. It will provide a unique insight into the work of foreign correspondents by contextualising content analyses with on-location interviews and direct observation.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CULTURE OF IDEAS

A brief telegram had arrived from somewhere in China. It said that a million Chinese had died in the floods that year. To the best of my recollection: it said so in no more words than here have been used; and the discussion was about the space the telegram should be given in the newspaper the next day. One man favoured a large headline over it, another a small. "Old Dr Blank - he was always known to the younger among us as "old Dr Blank," notwithstanding that in spirit he was as young as any of us - said, "No let's make it a 'NIB'," which was the office name for a headline-less item of News In Brief. And Dr Blank being our acknowledged authority of the Far East, a million Chinese died next day in a "NIB", not merely unwept and unhonoured, but for all practical purposes, unsung.

Wilfred Hindle23

Journalists inhabit a culture of ideas which shapes the way they report, select, edit and prioritise news. These ideas reproduce and reinforce themselves in the news making process, re-creating apparently flexible ways for imagining the world outside the newsroom. This cyclic process might have influenced a foreign correspondent to use little more than a sentence to report that "a million Chinese had died". It could have resulted in editors downgrading such a report to a News in Brief, even if it meant applying a racist double standard, leaving the Chinese, "not merely unwept and unhonoured, but for all practical purposes, unsung".

In this case, the decision to downgrade a major catastrophe to a News In Brief contributes to a continuum of ignorance about Asia. It reflects the power of dominant news agendas to represent events so that they conform with Western prejudices and priorities. Meanwhile, the imposition of these values illustrate a paradox for those journalists seeking to change Western coverage of Asia: journalists downgrade reports on Asia because it's believed their audiences aren't

interested. The audiences are said to be uninterested because journalists have
downgraded reports on Asia, and inadequate information is available to make an
informed opinion, or even to create a taste for News from Asia.

This chapter will examine how foreign correspondents are linked to these dominant
agendas. It will consider what happens to those who challenge the accepted
journalistic culture, and how this process results in old assumptions being recycled
as "news".

Dominant Paradigms in News

Dominant ideas about what constitutes News seldom need to be articulated by
proprietors. Perhaps as Richard Terdiman argues, the inherent tendency of a
dominant discourse is to 'go without saying':

The dominant is the discourse whose presence is defined by the
social impossibility of its absence. Because of that implicit potential
towards automatism, the dominant is the discourse which, being
everywhere comes from nowhere; it is granted the structural
privilege of appearing to be unaware of the very question of its own
legitimacy.²⁴

The dominant news discourse springs from a complex synergy of policy, cultural
assumptions, interaction between sub-editors and reporters, expectations based on
previous reports, and journalism practice. Reporters quickly learn through practice
and example that stories which fit the preconceptions of the editors and sub-editors
will be those which "get a run". Foreign correspondents, those reporters adept
enough to secure a "plum" overseas posting, must become skilled practitioners in
office realpolitik or be relegated to the back pages or the bottom of the bulletin.
Their distance from head office, which can allow correspondents the freedom to
investigate and develop new ideas as well as stories, can also diminish their

influence on daily editorial decisions; making it more difficult for them to transform ideas which might challenge prevailing assumptions, into stories.

Pat Burgess saw himself as a tough, independent war correspondent. On the back cover of his book, Warco, a photograph has been selected which shows him alone in the jungle, kitted out in Australian army greens, with his 35 mm camera at the ready. He is depicted as a journalist seeking information in difficult and remote locations. But he is also revealed as one who wears the uniform of the dominant authority who also happened to be his major source of information.

Burgess subscribed to a conformist news culture. As a correspondent sent to cover the Indonesian invasion of Western New Guinea, he found that stories he collected in the field were excluded by the conventional wisdom of the newsroom, expressed in this case by "the most aggressive of tabloid editors", Lindsay Clinch. Back in Sydney, he offered Clinch a series of features about the war on Australia's doorstep in what became West Irian. He offered exclusive photographs. Clinch replied that, in his view, the readers would not be interested:

'West new Guinea will come good again. But right now the people buying my paper have had a bellyful. Now piss off and have a hard new look at the Bogle-Chandler murder.'
As I began to walk out, 'Hey let's have it by Friday'.
I was quite sure Clinch was wrong. People would read. They were interested in a small Dutch boy with his arm around the matt black shoulders of the youngster he had known since they both could crawl. And the fierce Dani. And...
There was no good arguing. What I was talking about was material I felt very strongly about. I wanted to share my own emotion, my own apprehension. I wanted ordinary people like me to know what was happening in the world's biggest island just to the North of them. ...
But Clinch and I were talking about different things. What he wanted were stories that the public read in preference to the stories in the competing tabloid, stories that would make them buy his paper rather than the opposition's, stories like a new angle on the Bogle-Chandler murder. 25

25Pat Burgess, WARCO: Australian Reporters at War, 1986, 245/246.
Burgess was being asked to spike stories written around hard won information to comply with the editor's idea of what the public might like; in this case yet another rehash of a well known sex-murder scandal. He submitted.

Correspondents are frequently depicted in television images, their own writing and in biographies as individuals who are remote from office control. Yet rapidly improving communications technology is linking them even closer to their editors. Equipment such as the portable satellite uplink facilities used by Reuters, allow reporters to file their copy immediately from almost anywhere on the planet. But the same equipment allows editors who may have a less informed international view, to more easily direct the agenda to reporters in the field. There can be little time for reflection. Indeed, their freedom to select stories and issues for publication can in part be defined by their need to justify the cost of their overseas posting.26

At this point, it may be worth reflecting on how quickly reporting practices have been transformed by new technology. John Shaw, a former Sydney Morning Herald and Time correspondent in Asia, began work in Indonesia in 1960 before basing himself in Singapore. Shaw began reporting on the Indochina war in 1962. His career spans the transition from reliance on "cable" (the telegraph network) to contemporary satellite communications. He said that at the beginning of his time in Asia, the Vietnamese were still using the old French colonial telegraph system, so that a cable filed in Saigon was routed through Hanoi and then to Paris. It would then be sent to London for transmission on the old British imperial network:

Cabling time to London or Sydney from Saigon was probably about six hours. If you filed from Saigon early in the morning,

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26Ian Fleming, to whom the high life was not unknown, even warned bon vivant, Richard Hughes, that his expenses had not resulted in the sort of News head office expected. Fleming threatened Hughes with what would have been an ignominious recall from Moscow, unless he successfully located the British defectors, Burgess and Maclean. According to biographer, Norman Macswan, Fleming's cables were taking a note of urgency, "Thanks, good story on the congress but...". Norman Macswan, The Man Who Read The East Wind, 1982, 94.
you would catch the London papers the night before and you could catch the Sydney afternoon papers the same afternoon.

*Under this system it must have been difficult for the editors to find the correspondents?*

Absolutely. They sent their cables to you care of your hotel. That cable went to the Posts and Telegraph Office in Saigon and was then hand delivered from that post office to your hotel reception and from there it was brought up to your room. In fact, when Foreign Correspondents arrived in a new town, one of the first things they would do is go to the cable office and check if there was anything there. They would give money to people on desks to ensure that if anything did come in, it was sent to the hotel.

*That must have given you a lot of freedom?*

Telephones from Australia, America and Europe to Asia, were until at least the mid sixties, unreliable, crackly and expensive. Editors used them very little because again they didn’t know where to get you. It wasn’t as if you were on the end of a mobile or could call in easily.

You might say what is a six or twelve hour delay? Well it gave you a buffer between the reporter in the field. Many correspondents found that a great luxury. Now reporters are instantly accessible at the end of fax, the international telephones often with direct dialling. There are even satellite telephone. This is wonderful in some ways. But it reduces the time reporters have to themselves for introspection, the time between gathering the first news, thinking about it, getting it down and getting it off. You are constantly under the pressure of editors. You could talk about the tyranny of instantaneous communications today.27

Meanwhile freelance journalists who have the time and freedom to self select stories and then offer these stories to employers find that their copy (and livelihood) can be terminated at an editor’s whim. In this way, they are encouraged to conform to prevailing values back in the newsroom or risk being sacked. Successful freelancers, that is those whose work is frequently published, spend at least part of their research time establishing what their prospective editor might expect. It follows that intense competition between reporters seeking to win the news race, can contribute to, rather than provide alternatives for, the conventional view. What non-journalists might perceive as a "scoop", might instead, within the tunnel vision of the newsroom, prove to be merely the earliest version of an expected story.

27John Shaw, Personal Interview, 18 April 95.
Even stringers, who are frequently linked by short term contracts to news organisations, can be expected to operate under close direction. Adrian Brown was a British born freelance journalist based in Hong Kong and employed as a stringer for the Australia's Nine network, supplying stories from south and east Asia on demand. He covered the 1993 Cambodian elections for both Australia's Nine network and British Sky Broadcasting. Brown said that Nine had a news agenda into which stories on Asia were expected to fit. He said that Nine was interested in "popular" stories, the sort of thing you would see in the Telegraph Mirror as opposed to the Australian. Nine's sub-editors regularly demanded that he rewrite scripts he produced in the field: so that the stories might fit with the format and preconceptions of those in Sydney:

Channel Nine is very producer led. They have an agenda. You fax a script over and they will fax back, 'We don't like that line. Change it. We want more facts here'.

In this case, producers were over-ruling the reporter on the spot and defining the "facts" he should cover. According to Brown, their "agenda" meant that he had to look hard for a "peg" for stories which he considered important but would otherwise be difficult to place.

**Challenging the Paradigm**

Individual reporters and sub-editors may attempt to diverge from a news consensus by asserting individual interpretations of the "truth". Ironically, their success at challenging the system's preconceptions can undermine their own credibility as journalists, so that they can be perceived as reporters unable to match the competitors' copy or editors unable to recognise "the story of the day".

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28 Adrian Brown, Personal Interview, 15 April 94.
Socialist Foreign Correspondent, Wilfred Burchett identified this process early in his career. On his return from Germany, he was asked to write a favourable report of Goering who, at the time, was perceived by Burchett's editor as being a potential challenger to Hitler. The editor requested a story which favourably depicted Goering as the "country gentleman, squireish type":

\dots we want to start the build up right now, to prepare public opinion. It would sound all the better from you, having just come from there and being able to testify that he's a happy laughing sort of chap who likes to play with his kids and all that\dots . Of course I refused. But the next day, there was a big, smiling portrait of Goering and an article by someone else about what a decent, human, un-Nazi sort of chap he really was.\textsuperscript{29}

Burchett's mainstream success can be seen, in retrospect, to have ebbed and flowed with the changing tides of prevailing Western opinion. Burchett began his metropolitan newspaper career at the outbreak of World War Two. His first major article, which argued that Hitler's autobahns were intended to carry tanks and troops, was run in the second edition of Sir Frank Packer's \textit{Sunday Telegraph}, on November 26, 1939.\textsuperscript{30} His reputation as an "objective" reporter reached a zenith with his exclusive eyewitness report on the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. However, he was later marginalised, excluded and vilified for his sympathetic reporting of the communist sides in Korea and Vietnam.

Characteristically, Pat Burgess admired Burchett's courage to enter South Vietnam with the National Liberation front and report on the conflict from the other side of the fighting. Burgess was an ardent Australian nationalist, who admired and empathised with the Australian troops supporting the American war effort. Indeed, Burgess' idea of following an Australian platoon into the field to report on its tour of duty in Vietnam, made him feel, "as much of 6 platoon as any digger in it".\textsuperscript{31}

While failing to acknowledge his own support for Australian troops constituted a

\textsuperscript{30} Wilfred Burchett, \textit{At the Barricades}, 1981, 58.
\textsuperscript{31}Pat Burgess, op.cit., 9.
conservative political stance, Burgess saw Burchett's oppositional political line as a breach of Australian journalism practice. Burgess approved of "others who crusaded for the Establishment, but who did it more skilfully, within the accepted structures of journalism, without breaking the safety checks":

While every reporter might sin unconsciously and minimally, I believe, the feet of Burchett slipped little by little until, by Korea and Vietnam, he was quietly walking down quite a different road from reporters like Richard Hughes, Henry Keys, Denis Warner and the correspondents who had been his trusted partners or his respected competitors in World War Two.32

As we shall see, Australian reporters like Hughes and Warner certainly walked a different road to Burchett. Indeed their career paths took them to the heart of the Western establishment, where they happily swapped information with the Western intelligence agencies pursuing Burchett. For Burgess, Warner and Hughes were part of a journalism mainstream which relegated Burchett to a professional periphery which lacked the legitimacy implied by conformity with the dominant paradigm.

Herman and Chomsky have argued that the process of ensuring conformity among journalists was often so powerful "as to be internalised largely without awareness".33 They suggested that Western media differed from the propaganda system of a totalitarian state, in that they permitted and encouraged criticism, debate and dissent: provided these remained within "the safety checks", the system of principles and presuppositions that constituted an elite consensus:

A journalist or commentator who does not want to have to work too hard, can survive, even gain respectability, by publishing information (official or leaks) from standard sources; these opportunities may well be denied to those who are not content to relay the constructions of state propaganda as fact. The technical structure of the media virtually compels adherence to conventional thoughts; nothing else can be expressed between two commercials,

32 Ibid, 183.
or in seven hundred words, without the appearance of absurdity that is difficult to avoid when one is challenging familiar doctrine with no opportunity to develop facts or argument.34

To Herman and Chomsky, economic as well as practical reasons pressured journalists to become propagandists for the Western ruling elites. Media personnel adapted or were adapted to the systemic demands. Those who failed to display the requisite values were regarded as 'irresponsible", "ideological" or "aberrant" and would tend to fall by the wayside. Those who remained would be free to express themselves with little management control.

As Burgess suggested, Burchett had chosen a different road. He was not rehabilitated in much of the Western media, until opinions about the conduct of the war in Vietnam began to shift in his favour. Throughout the period, he remained a committed anti-fascist with strong sympathies for socialist or communist governments. He saw himself as a professional journalist who found it necessary to operate outside the usual parameters of other Western foreign correspondents, describing his approach as "unorthodox- perhaps some would say heretical". Although Burchett denied membership of the Communist Party, he identified closely with the Communist leadership in China, North Korea and later Vietnam. Burchett, like Lenin, hoped to shape societies through his journalism:

As members of human society, I believe reporters should regard their responsibilities as being above contractual obligations to editors, and their own personal interests. A simple illustration: a child being beaten to pulp by a bully. A reporter who rushes to report the scene with camera and tape recorder might succeed as a journalist, but he fails as a human being. His first responsibility is to rescue the child. A reporter is not an electronic computer dispassionately digesting the facts with which he is confronted. He is endowed with reason and conscience bequeathed by many centuries of human experience. He cannot remain coldly aloof and objective when basic human issues are involved. My concept of reporting is not just to record history but to help shape it in the right direction.35

34Ibid, 303.
Burchett believed in the value of eyewitness reporting. To him, "to be on the spot where history is being made, to have a keen sense and a good eye" was more important than "the ability to write in some especially attractive style". Yet what Burchett often saw was defined, for most of his later life, as the unacceptable by many of Australia's editorial gatekeepers. His stories not only fell off the mainstream News agenda. They were pushed.

Journalist and film maker, John Pilger wrote that Burchett came close to the romantic and popular notion of the Australian iconoclast; the mythical champion of the fair go for the little bloke. Pilger said that like Burchett, he believed that objective journalism should not only get the facts right, but also get the meaning right; it was validated not only by reliable sources but also by the unfolding of history. Journalists should take the wider view. However, Pilger believes most correspondents fail to adequately cover issues perceived to be outside the mainstream of interest. He blames these failures on journalists' unwillingness to confront the political establishment:

Real inquiry journalism that upsets the agreed consensus is unwelcome. That is increasingly so. It is a correlation with the rise of technology in journalism. Journalists now tend to adhere to pack reporting more than ever before. With the exception of [Lindsay] Murdoch and one or two others, the story of the day fed to journalists is the story that appears in newspapers. . . The tradition of scepticism complemented by real investigation, a tradition of not

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36 Ibid, 37.
37 David McKnight reported that Australian intelligence organisations regarded Burchett as a KGB 'asset' and a traitor to his country:
In 1953, following Burchett's period in Korea, Spry [ASIO's Director General] had sent officers overseas to gather evidence for a prosecution for treason. The prosecution did not proceed but retribution was exacted when the Australian government did not renew his passport in 1955. Down the years, ASIO consistently advised Immigration and succeeding Prime Ministers to deny Burchett a passport or entry into Australia, even for his father's funeral. Publicly Burchett was vilified and excoriated by the anti communist Right and the issue became a cause celebre.
David McKnight, Australia's Spies And Their Secret, 1994, 263.
39 Ibid, xiv.
believing authority because authority has every reason to lie, seems to be a lost one. It doesn't only apply to the Australian press. They perform no worse than the rest of the Western press.\textsuperscript{40}

Pilger claims that these journalists go on to influence their audience with the coded messages used in the language they choose to write their stories. In the preface to Heroes, he nominated a form of censorship which was "least understood by journalists and public alike":

\begin{quote}
It is censorship by subterfuge: the manipulation of thought and language such as labels and clichés that deceive and polarise ('moderates' versus extremists, etc.) and a conditioned deference to authority and the 'prevailing view' in the name of objectivity. This is journalism's most insidious restrictive practice. And here the absurdity is Orwellian; for to reject this bias is 'controversial' and to invite both direct censorship and the indignation of those whom Robert Louis Stevenson aptly described as 'your sham imperialists, wolves in sheep's clothing, simpering honestly as they suppress'.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Not surprisingly, journalists who see themselves as ethical professionals, respond with some hostility to such analysis, citing individual instances where they have been willing if not eager to directly challenge the official line.\textsuperscript{42} In a sense both are correct, in that important stories and angles are being neglected even though journalists pursue aggressive questioning and produce critical stories.

\textbf{Cycles of Conformity}

Writing in \textit{Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media}, Michael Parenti argued that mainstream journalists were granted a certain degree of independence if they demonstrated their ability to produce copy that was not only competently crafted but also free of any politically discordant tones. According to Parenti, competence was measured in part by the journalists' ability to report from an ideologically acceptable perspective, defined as "balanced" and "objective". They

\textsuperscript{40}John Pilger, Personal Interview, 28 September 93.
\textsuperscript{41}John Pilger, \textit{Heroes}, 1986, xii.
\textsuperscript{42}See "Bugging the General" in Chapter Eight.
were free to report on what they liked, as long as their superiors liked what they reported:

Journalists (like social scientists and others) rarely doubt their own objectivity even as they faithfully echo the established political vocabularies and the prevailing politico-economic orthodoxy. Since they do not cross any forbidden lines, they are not reined in. So they are likely to have no awareness that they are on an ideological leash. This is why some journalists insist they are free agents. Only when they stray off the beaten path is the pressure from above likely to be felt.43

During the Vietnam war, many correspondents recognised, at least in hindsight, that US public relations officers deliberately underestimated support for the National Liberation Front. Yet most Australian reporters failed to effectively challenge this material in their stories. Brisbane based journalist and author, Hugh Lunn later reflected about when he was a Reuters correspondent in Saigon in 1967, when questionable, if not false, information was regularly released at the US military's daily briefings, "the follies":

Lies were all too easy to come by. Because AP, UPI and Reuters were in heavy competition to sell their services around the world, any significant announcement was reported immediately, and almost without question. It went out to the world, by and large, in the way it was released - and the questions were left until later.44

Lunn observed that the duplication of such "lies" by "competing" news agencies merely added to their credibility. Conventional journalism methodology which relied on identified and recognised sources failed when those sources provided information which had little relationship with the truth. In Saigon, there were few easy opportunities, and little inclination, to attempt balance in individual stories by seeking accurate quotes from the opposition. Burchett had done so, by going "to the spot where history is being made", but at terrible cost to his reputation in the West. I.F. Stone, a pioneer of investigative journalism, was only able to expose

many of these "lies" about the Vietnam war, by considering them not as individual stories, but rather by examining them collectively after meticulously filing them and then comparing them with the official Congressional record.

Yet until the 1968 Tet offensive, this accumulation of misinformation set the pattern for how the Vietnam war should be reported. In Vietnam, conventional journalism methodology neglected the story growing outside the news agendas; the culturally unacceptable fact that a small "Oriental" country was resisting and ready to defeat the West's major military power.

Many journalists had been part of this culturally influenced self deception; while they may have seen themselves, like Burgess or Lunn, as individualists, they were part of Parenti's larger system. Burgess sought to reinvigorate the ANZAC mystique composed by the AIF's official historian, C.E.W Bean. Lunn was employed by a reputable news agency whose structure and notions of news demanded fast accurate reports of official statements, which in this case also happened to be "lies". Lunn lacked the time, research backup, easy access to alternate sources, and perhaps most importantly status, to challenge the process. Instead, he filed reports which inflated Western assumptions of success. When these assumptions were demolished by the Viet Cong sappers who penetrated the US Saigon embassy compound in 1968, television reports sent the shock waves around the world. The surprise at this reverse for Western power could be compared to the fall of Singapore in 1942, which ended the perceived British ascendancy, or the destruction of the Russian fleet at Tshushima in 1905, which halted Czarist ambitions in the Pacific and ultimately brought down the dynasty.

Journalists are creatures as well as the creators of the news they produce. Parenti said that if a media opinion already existed about what was important and true, it

45Burgess, op.cit., 20/24.
usually would shape subsequent reporting on the topic. Journalists, he said, were exposed to the same communities, schools, universities, graduate schools, popular culture and media that socialised others into the dominant belief system:

They react to much the same News that inundates their audiences. They seldom look to the radical press for a different viewpoint or for information that has gone unreported in the mainstream media. The establishment biases they inject into the news, reinforce their pre-conceived view of the world. With cyclical effect, they find confirmation for the images they report, in the images they have already created.46

In this sense, much "news" can really be seen as "olds"; fresh angles on information securely framed in dominant preconceptions. News, according to the criteria defined by Galtung and Ruge, should be acceptable within the cultural framework of the listener or reader. There should be cultural proximity for the information to be meaningful. The news consumer paid particular attention to the familiar, the culturally similar, so that the culturally distant would not be noticed more easily:

The other dimension of meaningful is in terms of relevance: an event may happen in a culturally distant place but still be loaded with meaning in terms of what it may imply for the reader or listener. Thus a culturally remote country may be brought in via a pattern of conflict with one's own group47.

Asia was initially defined as a threat to imperial interests, a menace from the north. Conflict became a central theme for Australian reporting of Asia, as colonial perceptions of the Asian "other" coincided with a key news criteria observed by Australian journalists. David Armstrong, was editor of The Canberra Times and The Australian, before taking over that role at The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong's quality, broad-sheet daily English language newspaper. He saw Australian demands for conflict-based stories creating a demand for similar stories

46Parenti, op.cit., 36/37.
from the region. Australian editors expected stories about conflict from Asia. Reporters were in turn, expected to produce them. In the conflict-based culture of Australian journalism, the only good news was bad news. That attitude was exported, as it were, to covering Asian news:

Certainly part of the training in Australia, has led many Australian journalists to see conflict as the core of the story. If you look at the way Australian institutions operate, in parliament there is the conflict between the government and the opposition. A Minister might get up and then gets attacked by the opposition. The story then usually becomes the by-play in parliament, which in real terms could be secondary to the announcement itself. We should not be acting as the Minister's PR, but we have a duty to get the information [contained in the announcement] across to the readers. In my training I was told to get both sides of the story; so the idea was always to find someone with an interest in the story who is objecting or complaining, taking an oppositional role rather than finding someone with information to add. It is built into the training quite subtly. No-one says we want you to get the conflict. But your story doesn't get a run if you don't. I think that is part and parcel of the Australian scene.48

According to Armstrong, this "bad news" cycle led the Australian media to ignore what he regarded as the region's major stories: business, development and realpolitik: "There could and should be also more coverage of Asian culture, although there is only so much of that which would play in Australia."

Galtung and Ruge further hypothesised that News could be that which was expected, came to be predicted and then interpreted as that which the consumer wanted:

A person predicts that something will happen and this creates a mental matrix for easy reception and registration of the event, if it does finally take place. Or he wants it to happen and the matrix is even more prepared, so much so that he may distort perceptions he receives and provide himself with images consonant with what he has wanted. In the sense mentioned here, 'news' are actually 'olds', because they correspond to what is expected to happen - and if they are too far away from expectation, they will not be registered, according to this hypothesis of consonance.49

48David Armstrong Personal Interview, 7 December 93.
49Galtung and Ruge, op.cit., 54/55.
In the case of Cambodia in 1993, pre-election reports which discouraged or discredited widely held beliefs about the threat of the Khmer Rouge tended to be discarded or downplayed. Stories which corresponded to expectations of violence contributed in turn to sub-editors' expectations and editor's demands for matching copy. In this sense, news could be seen to re-invent itself, becoming a self-generating paradigm.

Allan Bell in *The Language of the News Media*, defined this self-perpetuating cycle as a further news value: that of Continuity; once something was in the news, it tended to stay there:

> Politicians and other would-be newsmakers know well that news breeds news. A story run in the newspapers today has a better chance of appearing with another angle tomorrow. Similarly, once a news outlet has a good story, all its competitors want it too.\(^{50}\)

Sub-editors, who are usually isolated shift workers attempting to assess, select and edit thousands of words as they flash across remote computer terminals, could be seen to be part of this process of "confirmation" of previously created images of the outside world. In the case of news agencies, these arbiters of news have little more at their immediate disposal than a memory of what has been printed or broadcast before, to judge "what is news". In an attempt to avoid mistakes, sub-editors are required to constantly monitor "the opposition" to ensure that stories are matched. Reuters's Asia Editor, Graham Earnshaw, conceded that sub-editors, whose job it was to check copy filed from foreign countries thousands of kilometres away, had little more than previous experience and the preconceptions that resulted from it, to judge the veracity of stories:

> The sub editors have considerable experience in handling the news from those countries and are therefore able to get a sense of whether

\(^{50}\)Allan Bell, *The Language of the News Media*, 1991, 159.
something sounds right or wrong. . . At a distance of several thousand miles it is not always possible to know whether something is accurate or not. So mistakes do therefore get onto the wires.51

International stories could be expected to pass through a series of these gatekeepers before reaching their final audience. A story originated by the Reuters correspondent in Phnom Penh might be filed to the Bangkok Bureau which in turn would pass the copy on to the major Reuters office in Hong Kong.52 The story could then be passed on to Australian Associated Press which might then include it in its regional news service. The story could then be picked up by a subscriber newspaper, such as the Newcastle Herald for inclusion in the paper which appeared the following day. Such multiple handling increases the chance of error through falsification, over-assertion or re-focus.53

Too often the value and accuracy of a story is judged by what the opposition is running with. In Australia, radio and television sub-editors scrutinise the wire services and newspapers whose sub-editors in turn monitor radio and television programs so that they are always "covered". Reporters frequently exploit this process to ensure their stories are run by their own organisations. They tell their sub-editors that the opposition already has the story and is planning to "go big" with it.54

A consequence of this search for an "objectified and sure world of news", Paul Rock contended, was that the solipsism of the newsroom might feed upon itself, so that other news organisations were seen as authoritative sources:

51 Graham Earnshaw, Personal Interview, 24 January 94.
52 Reuters offices in Hong Kong, London, and New York "follow the sun", dividing the clock between them, taking and passing on responsibility for editing the world's news.
53 Bell, op.cit., 225/229.
54 Chris Kremmer observed that he could guarantee that a story from Vietnam would get a run, by telling the sub-editors that the Age's Lindsay Murdoch had been at the same news conference and had already filed.
Kremmer, Personal Interview, 31 December 93.
Once some newspaper ratifies an event as news, others may accept that ratification and treat the event as independently newsworthy. Journalists religiously read their own and others' newspapers; they consult one another, and look for continuities in the merging world which their reporting has constructed. In this process, a generally consistent interpretation is maintained and built up. It possesses an independent and impersonal quality which makes it seem compelling.\footnote{Paul Rock, "News as eternal recurrence", The Manufacture of News, 1981, 68/69.}

This cycle can result in foreign correspondents being challenged in the field by newsroom based sub-editors who received varying information from a competing source. Tony Eastley, the ABC's Television Correspondent in south east Asia for five years until 1993, said that producers often assumed news agency reports were true, even when they conflicted with what was known by the reporter in the field:

During the Thai riots, I was back in the edit suite putting together a story which we were about to satellite. The phone rang and a harassed producer on the other end from Sydney said, "The Royal Hotel's on fire. The Royal Hotel's on fire" I said, "The bloody Royal Hotel isn't on fire". They said, "No, no, no, it's on fire. It's on the wire service. We are going to run it".
I said, "Look, you pay me a lot of money to be here and to be based overseas. I have just been down there. I have just come back. It is not on fire.".
They said, "It's on fire!".
I said, "You hold on". I got onto the other telephone and rang the camera crew which was still on standby down there.
They said, "The Royal Hotel? It's not on fire!"
I said, "Are you sure?"
They said, "We are standing outside it. It is not on fire!"
Sydney was told to throw its wire copy away and take note of its own correspondent.\footnote{Tony Eastley, Personal Interview, 12 January 92.}

Conclusion
Reporting in Australia is not primarily concerned with "scoops"; highly original stories which are unexpected and which emerge from beyond the predictable methods of news gathering. Rather journalism is in this sense a conformist culture
where information which falls inside conventional parameters is reported and rewarded. Even senior correspondents such as Burgess whose news judgement occasionally strayed beyond newsroom priorities found their stories off the prevailing news agenda. Foreign correspondents, such as Burchett or Pilger, who more frequently challenged dominant assumptions about Asia, faced the prospect of being marginalised.

In this context, competition between journalists might be seen to provide confirmation of expectations first, rather than contribute to a diversity of opinions and sources. Repetition of accepted interpretations and accounts across "competing" media can be seen to contribute to the credibility of what may have little substance in fact. Such cycles of conformity could lead to Hugh Lunn's "lies" being endorsed as "truths". It could also lead to the absurd situation where a reporter on the spot like Eastley found his eyewitness account challenged by sub-editors informed by the fabrications of other news organisations.

As a result, many reporters find themselves caught up in editors' expectations and preconceptions. In part, these assumptions have been formed by the reports not only of other contemporary journalists; but also the reports of their predecessors. It follows that the expectations of contemporary correspondents can be powerfully influenced by the work of the generations of reporters who went to Asia before them.
CHAPTER THREE

FOREIGN DEVILS

To be effective, Australian reporters to some extent must be intruders and that they will carry with them, consciously or unconsciously, prejudices towards and stereotypes of Asian societies found in the wider Australian community. These may be positive - Asians live simple lives and eat a lot of rice; but they may be negative - Asians are devious and untrustworthy, their societies are unstable, dictatorial, corrupt and threatening. It may be argued that such existing stereotypes are largely the result of past media reporting.

Peter Rodgers 57

Contemporary correspondents often draw their inspiration from their predecessors. The journalism culture to which they belong has been fed with information about Asia by the generations of correspondents that went before them. "Fact" and "Fiction" are too easily intermingled when reporting on the "Orient". Conventional journalists might say that their methodology, their use of identified sources, direct quotations and balance help make their work "factual"; clearly defined from the novelists and travel writers who often traverse the same literary territory. Yet the journalists do more than merely provide inspiration for the fictional reporters who populate Australia's movies, novels and theatre. They contribute to and are the product of a wider perception of the Asian "other". They contribute to a system of cultural values which shape the stories they select for publication.

Most Australian foreign correspondents identified closely with Western interests in Asia. Some saw themselves as patriots while others defended the practice of spying or at least trading information with spies. A few became models for "fictional" portrayals of Asia, further influencing the perceptions of their fellow Australians, including views held by new generations of journalists.

57Peter Rodgers, "Australian Reporting from Asia: Interpretation or Intrusion?", Australia, Asia and the Media, 1981, 20.
Foreign correspondents could be seen to be among the inheritors of an established
fictional literary tradition. According to former journalist, Alison Broinowski, this
genre was rooted in colonial values and attitudes. She argued that acceptance of
Western values distorted Australia's perceptions and ultimately relations with near
neighbours:

Because European history remained a much more important component of their national identity than their Asia Pacific
geography had ever been, many Australians accepted that not only was China a remote place, but that all of Asia was more distant and
exotic than Europe. They perpetuated the West's view of the 'Far East', and constructed a kind of neo-Orientalist framework for
Asia. This we will call Australia's Far East Fallacy.58

Broinowski suggested that as a result, Asia for many Australians came to represent
a land of the imagination; a place of sexual adventure, danger, fear and ultimately a
source of conflict. In Yellow Lady she concluded such preoccupations were
reflected in Australian fictional representations of the Asian countries to Australia's
north:

Instead of becoming the best informed of English speaking peoples about the Asia Pacific region, as they were well placed to do, settler
Australians sheltered from the challenge, accepting Europe's Orientalist constructs as substitutes for knowledge. Because they
failed to identify with their geography, Australians accepted that their own region was the Antipodes, and that the West (the 'podes')
was the centre from which the East was 'far'. They adopted the Spice islands, Tartary, Barbary, Serendip, Shangri La, and Xanadu
as places on imaginary maps as Europeans did. Cathay was the fantasy land of silk and porcelain; Zinpangu was the land of
lacquer, and the same unpinnpointable Indies had the same impossible picturesqueness' for literate Australians as for
Europeans.59

"Chinese" Morrison

Through his influential reporting, George "Chinese" Morrison helped shape British and
Australian views of an exotic and dangerous "Orient". In doing so, he
contributed to the late nineteenth century passion for Chinoiserie; the collection of
fragments of purported Chinese cultural artefacts more often than not produced, as
well as interpreted and categorised through Western colonial eyes. Tiffin described

59Ibid.
Morrison as the first eminent Australian journalist in Asia, "who distinguished himself not only by the quality of his despatches, but by his courage during the Boxer Uprising and becoming the first foreign advisor employed by the Chinese republic". Tiffen saw parallels with contemporary correspondents; Morrison's sometimes prickly relations with editors who changed his copy, his concern with expenses and his "complex and varied relations" with government officials. Yet there were other parallels; Morrison shared many contemporary Australian journalists' ambivalent attitude to Asia, admiring Western constructs of "Oriental" culture, while sternly critical of perceived failings such as corruption and violence.

Trained as a medical doctor, Morrison was without question a courageous and pioneering journalist. His 3,000 mile journey across China in 1894 and his subsequent catalogue of impressions and experiences, *An Australian in China*, established his international reputation as an eyewitness reporter. He subsequently served for 17 years as *The Times* correspondent in China. The editor of his letters, Lo Hui-Min, said that while Dr Morrison lacked confidence in his own method of writing, he had virtues which it was said other foreign correspondents failed to achieve:

> If he lacked any stylistic power, it was more than compensated for by the conviction which his plain and lucid narrative inspired in his readers; his style was the more masterful because it was apparently flat. However, this impression came less from his style than from his whole attitude. His adventures prove his courage, but even there he was not reckless, and he was not an adventurer in journalism; he was keen to have a 'scoop', but was never sensational.

Morrison was regarded by many of his contemporaries as the leading journalistic authority on the Orient. A.B. (Banjo) Paterson met him "by great good luck" in 1901 when on a visit to Hong Kong. "It was an education to listen to him, for he spoke with the self confidence of genius," Paterson later wrote. "With Morrison, it

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was not a matter of 'I think'; it was a case of 'I know'".62 Paterson admired Morrison's system of contacts which delivered exclusive reports on international treaties days before they were even signed by the nations involved:

Dr Morrison lives for the most part in Peking, where he is in touch with the best informed Chinese circles. But he moves constantly about, travelling in men-of-war, on tramp steamers, on mule litters, on pony back, or on his feet, as occasion demands. He is a powerful, wiry man, of solid and imposing appearance, and those who know him best in China, say that he has mastered the secret of all Chinese diplomacy - bluff. In China, you must save your face, e.g., preserve your dignity at all hazards. He never allows any Chinaman to assume for a moment that he (the Chinaman) is in any way the equal of the Times correspondent in China.63

Paterson clearly approved of Morrison assuming a superiority over "the Chinaman". Viewed a century later, Morrison's work can be seen as written unashamedly from the perspective of a British imperialist; an Australian by birth who called himself an Englishman. Indeed, according to Philip Knightley, at times Dr Morrison was little better than an agent of the British government. Knightley claimed that while presenting himself as a private individual, Dr Morrison "had gone off on a special mission for the Foreign Office through the still independent Asian nations of Burma, China, and Siam, pretending he had nothing to do with either the newspaper or the British government".64

Morrison later distinguished himself by fighting on the side of colonial powers at the outbreak of the Boxer uprising; an indigenous rebellion against the dismemberment of China, the introduction of foreign culture and the imposition of economic control.65 He corresponded frequently with senior British officials, and

63Ibid, 129.
65Morrison would have been aware of the fate of an earlier Times Special correspondent to China, Thomas Bowlby, who was siezed, tortured and killed by Chinese Imperial forces near the end of the Second Opium War in 1860.
identified passionately with British interests. He was aware of European ignorance about the "Orient" and contemptuous of the resulting failure of many Western missionaries. He admired the achievements of the millenniums-old Chinese civilisation. Author and correspondent, Frank Clune claimed that Morrison's "sentiment of sympathy for non-Europeans was at variance with the hates, fears, phobias, complexes and dislikes of his fellow Australians, which culminated in the White Australia policy". Clune even said that Morrison was "without prejudice of race or colour":

Earnest by name and earnest by nature, he (Morrison) had discovered the great truth that colour is only skin deep; that pigmentation of the hide of a kanaka, a Moor, a Jamaican negro, or an Aryan is only a surface disguise for the character of the man beneath.

In preparing his book on "Chinese" Morrison, Clune had appeared at the Tokyo office of the Society for International Cultural Relations and demanded "everything [the society] had on Morrison". Clune further ordered that the books be sent to his Sydney home. In spite of this research, Clune appeared to be involved in little more than myth making. Dr Morrison, while displaying a life-long interest in Oriental cultures, was most definitely not invulnerable to 19th century Australian attitudes to people from Asia. Indeed, he displayed a xenophobic fear of Chinese immigration:

We cannot compete with Chinese; we cannot intermix or marry with them; they are aliens in language, thought and customs; they are working animals of low grade but great vitality. The Chinese is temperate, frugal, hardworking, and law evading, if not law abiding - we all acknowledge that. He can outwork an Englishman and starve him out of the country - no one can deny that. To compete successfully with a Chinaman, the artisan or labourer of our own flesh and blood would require to be downgraded to a mere mechanical beast of labour, unable to support wife or family, toiling seven days in the week, with no amusements, enjoyments, or comforts of any kind, no interest in the country, contributing no

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66 "We all feel very grateful to The Times for the way it has championed British interests out here." he wrote from Peking to Ethel Bell (the wife of the proprietor) on 14.3.1899. Lo Hui-Min, op.cit., 116.
68 Peter Russo, "Introduction" to Frank Clune. Chinese Morrison, Ibid.
share to the expense of government, living on food that he would now reject with loathing, crowded with his fellows ten or fifteen in a room that he would not now live in alone, except with repugnance. Admitted freely into Australia, the Chinese would starve out the Englishman, in accordance with the law of currency - that of two currencies in a country, the baser will always supplant the better.69

In contemporary terms, Morrison was a racist who saw Asian males as potential sexual predators. To Morrison, Asians were "animals" and "beasts", with whom there must be no miscegenation. "Our own flesh and blood", in this case, the British race, must be protected from the "baser" currency who would starve out the white man. Morrison may have been subsequently portrayed as a dispassionate observer of Asian events. But he saw himself as an outsider in Asia; a spokesman for Western ideas and intentions. Ultimately, to Morrison, Asians were "working animals of low grade" fit only to be servants to the intellectually superior white man.

The White Man's Burden

Perhaps Clune may have seen Morrison as a paragon of tolerance because his own views could also be interpreted as racist. A former Gallipoli digger, chartered accountant and later war correspondent, Frank Clune was during the forties and fifties, one of Australia's best selling "non fiction" authors. By 1945, he claimed to have published a dozen books and sold 100,000 copies70. He had gone to Asia in 1938 to produce a series of 15 minute radio reports, which he negotiated over a round of golf with the then General Manager of the ABC, Charles Moses. His trip to Shanghai on the eve of World War Two, provided the impetus for a trilogy of books, *Sky High to Shanghai* (1939), *All Aboard for Singapore* (1941), and *To the Isles of Spice* (1944).

Clune consciously cast himself as an Australian adventurer abroad. In a period when by-lines were uncommon and journalists attempted to isolate themselves from

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the action by employing third person narrative, Clune placed himself at the centre of the story. Indeed his practice of relying on a largely unacknowledged researcher and writer to conduct the journalistic spade work would be familiar to some contemporary television presenters. Structured around journeys by steamers, air clippers and flying boats, his travelogues relied primarily on Western sources; including research drawn from libraries, information from academics, and briefings by trade advisors. However these reported views were supplemented by frequently ironic conversations with English speaking Asiatics and personal observations from a self-consciously Australian perspective. Consider this purported discussion with Phoebe Hatsuh Imajo of the Japanese owned South Manchurian Railway, "who very kindly sponsored my [Clune's] arrangements for visiting Manchuria":

As we wait for the billy to boil (in the Japanese hash house deluxe), and sip more sake, Phoebe inquires:
'What is the Australian national food?'
'Goannas,' I answered without a blush. Percy blinked and Peter winked.
'What are goannas?'
'An animal of central Australia with four legs and a tail. Its flesh is a great delicacy, and all the best hotels employ trappers to catch them. They are caged and kept in aviaries forninst (sic) the kitchen.71

The Australians were said to be doubly amused by Phoebe's note taking which she said she would use, with Clune as a source, to write an article about Australia for a Japanese women's magazine. Asian representations of Australia were clearly less important to the narrative than what was portrayed as irreverent Australian behaviour. Clune's disrespect for truth in reporting, in this case by a female, Japanese reporter, became explicit. He was more interested in exploiting ignorance and portraying himself as superior than helping a fellow writer. As part of the fun, the Australians moved from under-estimating to grossly insulting the educated Asian woman. According to Clune, "Peter" capped the evening by telling Phoebe that in Australia the Lilies of the Valley which she wore as a bouquet, were fed to the pigs.

71 Frank Clune, Sky High to Shanghai, 1939, 53.
The light hearted, if patronising tone found in *Sky High to Shanghai* belies its setting; it was an account of a tour through Japan and its occupied territories in Korea, Manchuko and northern China, culminating in a visit to the embattled international settlement at Shanghai. At this time, Japan had been involved for almost two years in a bitter war with China; a war which many in the West referred to as "the China incident" and had chosen to ignore. In the book, the Japanese army was represented as efficient if humourless administrators seeking to maintain order disrupted by Chinese guerrillas referred to as "bandits". Clune failed to mention claims of the mass murder of more than 100,000 citizens in the Chinese capital of Nanking in 1937, the year before his own visit. Yet he repeated as fact, a story about an alleged Chinese atrocity at Tung Chow (sic), where about 200 Japanese civilians were allegedly murdered. His source was a Japanese passenger he met on a train. Perhaps as a gesture to the sensibilities of the West's Chinese nationalist allies, the 1947 edition of *Sky High to Shanghai* carried a frontispiece portrait of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, "wife of China's fighting Generalissimo".

In *All Aboard for Singapore*, Clune travelled to Singapore at the invitation of the British authorities to inspect defence arrangements and meet Australian servicemen. The book acknowledged the help of the Australian Minister for the Army, the Air Board, the Department of Information, and the Far Eastern Ministry of Information. By the time of this visit (November, 1940), Japan was clearly identified as a threat to British, American and Dutch colonial interests. In this book, Malay and Chinese Singaporeans were little more than a colourful backdrop for the narrative; being referred to as "lads and lasses in gay sarongs", efficient hotel waiters and even "Concrete Lizzies" (female navvies) but never quoted. Instead Clune sought "the privilege of a special and lengthy interview" with Air Chief Marshall, Sir Robert

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74 Clune, op.cit., 1939, 235
Brooke Popham, who told him that "under no circumstances would we (the British) withdraw or retreat from Singapore".75 Singapore meanwhile was depicted in terms which reflected its importance to Empire, "the spear point for the defence of India" and "the strongest link in the Thin Red Line of Empire" which encircles the terrestrial globe.76 Somewhat unwisely, Clune repeatedly described Singapore's defences as "impregnable":

I went there feeling a bit depressed about Britain's many reverses in the present war...But Singapore was a tonic. I realised that Britain has made this key point into the world's most formidable fortress, either for attack or defence. It bristles with ships, guns and planes, with every weapon of war, and with plenty of trained men to use the weapons if need be...The transformation of this malarial, marshy island into an impregnable citadel has been accomplished in recent years by far sighted statesmanship, despite the objections of pessimists and pacifists.77

Perhaps it should be remembered that Singapore fell to the Japanese army after "a strong land attack" which Clune dismissed as a "furphy" propounded by "wiseacres and amateur strategists".78 "Fighting" Popham did not take part in the battle. He was replaced in command in 1941 after failing to create a co-ordinated defence.79 Many of his fellow British officers were subsequently interned at a concentration camp not far from the airport restaurant where the Air Force treated Clune to Sydney oysters on his last night in Singapore.

To the Isles of Spice resumed the theme of an exotic tropical wilderness, in this case the Dutch East Indies, being "developed" by European colonial administrators. Although it was written about a trip made by the author in 1939, it was published late in the war in 1944, when Clune was working as a war correspondent for the Daily Mirror. It featured post card style photographs which repeated stereotypes of

75Frank Clune, All Aboard for Singapore, 1941, 153.
76Ibid, 168.
77Ibid, 200/201.
78Frank Clune, To the Isles of Spice, 1944, 214.
79Peter Elphick, The Pregnable Fortress, 1995, 158.
the "Oriental" other: Balinese cock fighters, Dyak head hunters in loin cloths and even an object of sexual allure; a young, bare breasted seller of drinks and fruits.

Indonesia was described as "a giant umbrella, between Australia and the rising sun" while the Dutch colonialists were depicted as determined defenders against the Asiatic threat from the north. Clune strongly approved of the Netherlands colonial administration and what he saw as its educated and committed officers calling the Dutch government "the light bringer into dark places":

Let us sing a little paean of praise of Imperialism. Many are the agitators who denounce the white man for gathering taxes from the toil of the teeming multitudes of the Orient. When I saw the heaps of guilders collected from the Toradjas by military methods, I thought the Dutch were pretty crude in their guilder wringing. But what of the other side of Imperialism?80

Clune wrote that Hollanders were martyred as they enriched themselves in the Indies and "its fetid climes". For their taxes, the "natives" received free hospitals, veterinary service, irrigation, agricultural advice, police supervision, freedom from slavery, schools for the ambitious, and "impartial" law courts. The land was being drained by engineers and plague spots eliminated:

These things the natives could never have done for themselves. They needed a guiding hand to redeem them from the filth and germs in which they wallowed... The White Man's burden is a burden indeed. If they are well paid for carrying it, it is only fair recompense for the worries and hardships they endure, and the responsibilities they bear - exiled for the best years of their life from their cool native land to swelter and sweat in these humid tropics among dark skinned heathens and pagans. . .81

_To the Isles of Spice_ was published near the end of World War Two, at a time when the Dutch were hoping to resume the "burden" of colonial administration in the Indies. Clune should have been aware that the Dutch colonial regime had been established in exile at Wacol on the outskirts of Brisbane in 1942. In the same year,

80 Frank Clune, _op.cit._, 1944, 254.
81 Ibid, 254/255
Indonesian independence movement members were transferred from a Dutch concentration camp in what is now East Irian to an Australian POW camp at Cowra. They were freed the following year after a campaign by "agitators" belonging to Australian trades unions.82

Ironically, Clune's researcher and ghost writer was also being held by the Australian authorities. Since 1936, Clune had collaborated in the production of his books with P.R. Stephenson whom he retained on a salary to transform his travel diaries and historical material into professional narratives.83 Stephenson, President of the pro-fascist Australia First Movement, was interned by the Australian government from 1942 to 1945.84

The Last Confucian

Denis Warner served in the AIF from 1941 to 1943 before becoming a war correspondent with the American forces in the Central Pacific in 1944-45. He flew with and reported on the first Flying Fortress raid on Japan. After a term as editorial manager for Reuters-AAP in Tokyo (1947-49), he became a roving correspondent in the "Far East" for the Melbourne Herald and the London Telegraph.

Warner sought Asian sources, but identified with those who supported the West. He forged lasting friendships with right wing Vietnamese officials which would provide him with inside information during a career which would span more than three decades:

I went down from Hanoi to the Red River delta . . ..where the French were conducting an operation designed to clean out the Viet Minh. Accompanying me on the light plane was a young Vietnamese newspaper man. When we arrived the French said that I would be billeted with the officers and he would be billeted with the sergeants. I objected very strenuously to this and eventually and

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83Craig Munro, op.cit., 254.
84Ibid, 223.
very reluctantly the French accepted him in the officers' mess. He turned out to be very important in a political party called the Dai Viet whose people had every major office in Tonking at that time: the governor, the mayor, the chief of Surete' and so on. Through my new friend, I got to know all of these people on a very warm basis and was able to treat Hanoi like doing the city rounds in Melbourne. I could go and talk to the Governor one day and the Chief of Police the next. It was very, very easy indeed to report the political scene on the Vietnamese side.85

Warner became closely identified with American interests as the United States took over the war in Vietnam from the French colonial forces. He was a Nieman fellow at Harvard University in the United States in 1956/57 with articles appearing in American publications including the New Republic, the Reporter, and the Atlantic Monthly. The American magazines provided him with the funding which allowed him to visit Asia every few months, returning to his farm house at Mount Eliza near Melbourne to write his stories.

In his prescient book, The Last Confucian, published prior to the final US military build up in Vietnam, Warner lamented the failure of Western policy there. The detailed information contained in this thoroughly researched book, indicated Warner enjoyed the trust and co-operation of many of the authorities who were suspicious, if not hostile, to journalists who criticised the government in Saigon.

Considering the dismal situation of South Vietnam, Western reporting at this time was restrained. Television crews which came across examples of extreme brutality to prisoners refrained from shooting. On rare occasions when they described brutalities, correspondents eschewed the sensational and tried to put them in perspective. None of this was good enough for [Premier] Diem. Bigart (Homer, New York Times) was saved from expulsion only by the intervention of the embassy and his own voluntary departure. Sully (Francois, Newsweek) was expelled despite embassy intervention on his behalf. The rest were warned that they might expect similar treatment, if they too, were guilty of writing critically.86

85Denis Warner, Personal Interview, 16 April 95.
Warner's hostility to the communist forces in Indochina China was clear. He sought to recruit North Vietnamese defectors to testify against Wilfred Burchett in the latter's defamation case against Democratic Labor Party Senator Jack Kane. To Warner, Burchett was a traitor.

Yet Warner, like Burchett, rejected the pretence of false objectivity. While Burchett was denigrated in Australia and the United States for supporting the communists, first in Korea and later in Vietnam, Warner worked closely with Western conservatives. For his part, Burchett believed that Warner was linked to Western intelligence agencies. Gregory Clark said that while working as a diplomat, he used to receive messages from ASIO that a "friendly" journalist was to visit. Warner would subsequently arrive.

When interviewed, Denis Warner denied that he was ever employed as an intelligence agent. However, he strongly asserted that correspondents must deal with agents in order to be able to gather the information their news organisations demanded:

If you didn't know people in the CIA [US Central Intelligence Agency] in South East Asia particularly from the mid fifties to the early seventies, then you didn't know an awful lot of people you should have known. They were very important characters, yes. So you saw a lot of them and occasionally traded information with them.

*Is it a fine line drawn between working as a reporter and acting on behalf of intelligence?*

I would say a very fine line. I would say it is a line I would hate to see people cross. It was dangerous enough working in South East Asia in those days any way without being accused of being a spy. I disagree very strongly with correspondents who were, and there were some, I don't want to mention their names. I disagree very strongly with it. I thought it was quite improper. I still do.

*Some of the contemporary correspondents think you were [a spy].*

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88 Ibid 127.
Do they really? . . . Well I tried to explain how I got the information. I knew everybody who I thought it was my function to know. I wanted to be informed and I think I was informed. I had heard that. I got a call many years ago from someone from the New York Times who went on for about two hours who said, "Isn't it true that you worked for intelligence? We are doing a great big piece on correspondents who worked for the CIA." I got very irritated by it, but I held my temper and apparently persuaded them that it wasn't true. They used to accuse Bob Shaplen of the New Yorker of the same thing. Bob's answer was, "The CIA works for me. I don't work for the CIA". In part that would have been true.

*Is it sometimes difficult to determine who is an agent and who is not?*

Oh yes. That is true. But some were covert and there was difficulty in that. Some are not.

*Isn't there a danger that when you seek information from diplomats that you may not quite know who you are dealing with?*

Does it matter? I think that as long as you are not acting as an agent. I don't think that it matters. Do you worry about going and talking to someone in intelligence? I never did. People like Harvey Barnett who was head of ASIS [Australian Secret Intelligence Service] here was in south east Asia in that period when I was there. I knew him and talked to him and knew what he did and I didn't see anything wrong with it. I still don't. But when I worked in Tokyo, I had an Englishman working for me there and I didn't know about it, but he was on MI6's payroll. When I discovered it, I was cross about it.

*So should the line be drawn at trading information?*

Yes I would say so. If you wanted to get information out of someone, if you didn't reveal that you were pretty knowledgeable yourself, you weren't going to get anything. You go and talk to someone who does not know you very well and you have nothing to offer but only questions to ask, and you can't conduct a conversation, what you are going to get is pretty lightweight stuff.89

Warner admitted that it was a possibility that journalists using information for intelligence agencies could knowingly or unwittingly be used as a conduit for disinformation. However, he said that he could not recall, even in retrospect, of being used in such a way.

Yet Warner's support for the Western powers could be seen in his writing, with his repeated use of the word "we"; quite literally defining the Indo-China war in terms

of "us and them". While predicting the fatally flawed French and later American policies would lead to a communist victory, *The Last Confucian*, was ultimately a powerful argument backing Western interests:

In South East Asia, we were transfixed by the stars when we should have been searching among the stones. We rode on horseback and saw only the flowers. We looked for figureheads when we should have been looking for people. We conceded the mountains, the forest, and the paddy fields to the Communists and put our energies in the cities. We raised armies instead of living standards.\(^90\)

In this case, Warner's language smacked of fictional prose, contrasting strongly with the rather more spare and direct conventional news style. The use of such language betrayed a highly romanticised view of Asia, where Westerners including reporters, "saw only the flowers".

"His Grace"

In many ways, Warner's "very close friend", Richard Hughes, provided the model for the Australian foreign correspondent based in Asia. Hughes acted as a "father figure" for young Australian journalists covering Japan, Hong Kong and later Indochina; providing them with contacts and professional guidance, as well as drinks and meals paid out of his apparently substantial allowances. He demanded novices display respect for Western sources, particularly diplomats. Support could be withdrawn from correspondents who failed to meet Hughes' code of conduct.\(^91\)

Hughes' biographer, Norman Macswan wrote that Hughes saw himself as "a China watcher watcher".\(^92\) Macswan, who spent two years in Korea as a war correspondent for Australian Associated Press, met Hughes in Tokyo where the latter had been employed as a correspondent for the *Sunday Times* and the

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\(^90\) Warner, op.cit., 1963, 311.
\(^91\) Burgess, op.cit., 86/87.
\(^92\) Norman Macswan, op.cit., 1982, 179.
Economist. Macswan claimed that Hughes influenced Western perceptions of Asia through his interpretative and informed reporting:

His biggest contribution was perhaps showing Asia and the Asian people in a really good light as opposed to the light which most of us saw the Asian people before the war and for a long time after the war. We thought of all Japanese as being little slant eyed blokes who made light bulbs that wouldn't work, who made bombs that wouldn't burst and had ships that turned over. We lost that idea very smartly during the war. We still had no concept of the sort of people they were until a few people like Hughes began to show them as they really were.93

Hughes had been a Sydney Telegraph journalist who had worked in Tokyo before the second World war began. He was to immersed himself in the lifestyle of the European expatriate in the British colony of Hong Kong. In spite of his knowledge of Asian politics, Hughes saw himself as a consummate outsider; a "foreign devil":

Alien Western newspapermen do not feel that they are always foreigners in Western foreign countries. But like all Westerners - they know they are foreigners, and remain foreigners in the East. And foreign devils to boot. This doesn't mean that they are necessarily unpopular or unwelcome -outside communist states - or that they don't make and keep good friends among the Asians. On the contrary, (if they are lucky they can win enchanting lovers and proud wives). But they remain foreigners, outsiders, barbarians, devils - meaning alien, not necessarily satanic intruders.94

Behind his cynical and self consciously comic style, where he styled himself as a bishop and spoke of his "parish", Richard Hughes displayed many of the stereotypes employed by earlier Australian writers about Asia. Westerners were "aliens" to the Oriental "other". The male newspapermen were seen as "foreign devils" by superstitious and implicitly inferior natives. Asia was characterised as the "East"; an imaginary location dictated by its position in relation to European concepts rather than its geographic proximity to Australia. Western journalists could

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93Norman Macswan, Personal Interview, 29 January 96.
94Richard Hughes, Foreign Devil: Thirty Years of Reporting from the Far East, 1972, 11.
make friendships there; but "if they are lucky" their relationship could be expressed sexually, with an implicitly subordinate native lover or wife.

Like Morrison and Warner, Hughes identified and co-operated with the exercise of Western power in Asia. In his columns, he half jokingly referred to Communists, whom he despised, as "commie dogs". Meanwhile, Hughes had a reputation for informing Western intelligence agencies. Pat Burgess discussed this relationship with him one Sunday afternoon over drinks at the reporters' pub in Saigon, the Caravelle Hotel. Hughes had expressed displeasure with an ABC correspondent, Tony Ferguson, who had held an unauthorised and later censored interview with socialist journalist, Wilfred Burchett:

'You and your friend Ferguson', he said, 'What arrogance! Who do you think you are? You can learn a lot, my son, from the good people of the Embassy. And you can do your bit for them, a sort of trade'.
'It sounds like you show me yours and I'll show you mine'.
'Don't be vulgar'.
'It sounds like spying'.
'So, there is something wrong with spying? For a reporter all that spying means is trading information - with people you can trust...' 96

Hughes openly admired journalists who also happened to be spies. He wrote with affection about the Soviet double agent, Victor Sorge and his accomplice "Otto" Ozaki, who were both hanged in Tokyo by the wartime Japanese government, after being detained by their secret police, the Kempai-tai. Before he died, Ozaki, recorded nine precepts which should guide intelligence agents. Hughes regarded them as a "perfect guide for all young foreign correspondents". He made particular reference to Ozaki's precept nine:

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95 Burgess said the Caravelle was derided "by some who accused reporters of writing action reports from its bars". However, he said that the telephones worked there and added that it was favoured by "the trusted hard corps who had specialised (in war reporting) as far back as the Congo and Biafra". Pat Burgess, op.cit., 125.
96 Ibid.
In these days of unrest, you cannot be a good intelligence man unless you yourself are a good source of information. 97

It seems that at least some of the Australian intelligence community reciprocated that trust in Hughes. A search of ASIO files by the Australian Archives revealed the text of a telephone message made in 1952 by an officer designated "B2", at the time when Hughes was based in Tokyo. The message was a response to an urgent inquiry about Hughes' political outlook:

He [Hughes] is considered to be very reliable and a newspaper correspondent whose political outlook is right wing. He is regarded by this office as 100% reliable. He is a member of the majority of the big United States Officers' Clubs in Japan and has a good 'tie in' with the Americans. He is regarded as the best informed correspondent in Tokio [sic]. 98

In his autobiography, Don't You Sing, Hughes son, Richard Hughes Junior claimed that his father was more than merely favoured by Western intelligence agencies, and was in fact a double agent. He claimed Hughes senior wanted the secret preserved until after he had died:

About four years ago, a British correspondent who knew of my father's work as a double agent said to me: 'I used to die a thousand deaths for your father. Lots of correspondents were agents, and that could be dicey enough, just working for your own side. But to be a double agent in those times - working for the Allies, while pretending to the enemy that you're working for the enemy - was enormously dangerous'. 99

Hughes Junr. claimed his father was controlled by a British MI6 agent in Bangkok who provided him with disinformation which was in turn passed on to the Soviets 100. Norman Macswan claimed that Hughes had openly admitted his intelligence connections, during an interview conducted for his Hughes biography:

97Hughes, op.cit., 1972, 46.
98ASIO Headquarters. Telephone Message. 4.15PM. 9 September 52.
99Dick Hughes, Don't You Sing, 1994, 162.
100Ibid, 161.
He was great friends with some of the Russian correspondents and they used to drink and whore around Tokyo together. One of the Russian correspondents said to him, 'Would you let us see some of the stuff that you write before you transmit it to London? I would like to convince Moscow that I am right on the ball and I can feed in some of your information. It won't hurt anyone and of course we will pay you for it.' Dick immediately went to the British embassy and told them and they told him to go along with it. He then told [Ian] Fleming, who was his boss in London who not only told him to do it but to ask double the money the Russians were paying him. So he did.\textsuperscript{101}

Macswan said Hughes maintained he was not giving away secrets. However, Macswan said that Hughes called the morning after the interview was recorded, asking that the admission not be printed until after his death. As a result, Macswan did not include the information in Hughes biography. "I wasn't too happy about doing it," Macswan said. "It would have made it a better book".

Fact and fiction intermingled and became indistinguishable in Hughes' long and colourful professional life. The James Bond novel, \textit{You Only Live Twice}, was dedicated to Hughes, after he accompanied its author, Ian Fleming, on a research visit to Japan.\textsuperscript{102} Fleming, who was himself a former intelligence agent, wrote about an Australian journalist and spy, "Dikko Henderson", whom Hughes later claimed was a caricature of himself. Some years later, another celebrated spy novelist, John Le Carre referred to "old Craw"; an Australian spy in the Hong Kong based novel, \textit{The Honourable Schoolboy}. Craw, a journalist with immaculate connections with intelligence agencies and the police, conducted a drinking club which met at the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club.

Hughes coincidentally was a leading member of a drinkers' club within a club, "Alcoholics Synonymous"\textsuperscript{103}. Founded on Guy Fawkes day 1955, it was

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102}Ian Fleming, \textit{You Only Live Twice}, 1964.
\textsuperscript{103}Anthony Lawrence, "A few drinks, a spot of lunch and Saturday rolls on", \textit{The Correspondent}, October 1989, 48.
composed of newspaper men, business men and diplomats and was "dedicated to alleviating the cares of the past week". Forty years later, Hughes' bronze bust still presides at the bar of the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club, where reporters still trade stories, if not intelligence, about their work.

Story Telling

Foreign correspondents engage in an exclusive club within the wider journalism culture. Their mythologies are often enshrined in biographies, which purport to tell the stories behind the news but which more often recount tales of drinking, danger, humour and frequently sex. Anthropologist, Mark Pedelty, who examined the work of war correspondents in El Salvador, saw this behaviour as ritualised recreational rites which "filled the void between myth and practice". Anecdotes and biographies which accentuated machismo, were seen as compensating for the conflict between their self image, and the routine of filing reports framed in "objectivity", directed by office news priorities and cramped by mainstream news agendas. Such behaviour, he said, allowed reporters to fit their new experiences into the narrative of traditional legends of past correspondents. Contemporary correspondents could at least pretend that they were still acting like Morrison.

Gerster observed possible parallels between working reporters and their portrayal by novelists who fictionally treat the professional practice of foreign reporting. According to Gerster, "Australian journalists bring to their professional tour of duty in Asia, a burden of cultural baggage". It does not necessarily follow as Gerster further suggested that; "however noble their aspirations or rigorous their professionalism, their experience remains counterfeit, second hand, touristic". To suggest so, would seem to broaden the meaning of tourist (a person who makes a

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tour, traveller, especially for recreation) to the point of meaninglessness. Gerster's apparent confusion over differences between journalism and "fiction" appeared in the introduction to the "Foreign Correspondents" section of his subsequent book, *Hotel Asia*, where he grouped reports by recognised correspondents such as George Morrison, Richard Hughes and Louise Williams with fictional works written about journalists in Asia by novelists including Blanche D'Alpuget and Christopher Koch.

Drinking and bars featured in many Australian novels about journalists in Asia. Guy Hamilton, the thinly disguised "Australian Broadcasting Service" correspondent whom Christopher Koch depicted in *The Year of Living Dangerously*, frequented the Wayang bar in the Hotel Indonesia. Australian foreign correspondents could still be found there in 1993. For both "fictional" characters and "factual" correspondents the bar remained a source of information, education and a place of refuge from the alien Asian "other" of Jakarta. It was here that reporters fed off each others' news, opinions and prejudices; to match news stories which would be filed later at their respective offices and to plan sexual adventures. Their alienation and isolation from the Asian "other" was echoed by the novel's journalist narrator, Cook:

> A foreign correspondent has a life without continuity, without a centre: he has few real relationships, either with the people of the country he happens to be in or with his colleagues. There isn't the time, there isn't the trust, nor to be truthful, the inclination, journalists being what they are. 'Concern' is paraded as feeling and in-jokes as a substitute for understanding.

This profound sense of isolation and alienation from the Oriental "other" can be seen to contribute to a sense of elitism, shared by many correspondents. It is reflected in the attitudes of Vietnam war correspondent, Tony Clifton, an

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109 The bar is still favoured by Australian journalists in Jakarta. Keith Loveard (Asiaweek) introduced me to Terry Friel (AAP) and Lindsay Murdoch (the *Age*) there in February 1993.
Australian. He claimed that most correspondents were "in it", not only for the stories but also for "the bullshit glamour and special camaraderie", adding that "most of us are loners who would keep psychiatrists happy for hours":

..They're flashy exhibitionists who love getting drunk in bars, behaving outrageously in whorehouses, adulterating away like latter day Casanovas, and have an endless capacity to tell and listen to stories about each other which they have all heard a hundred times before. There is a special charge about it and you get the rush strongest when you walk into some seedy hotel in some shit encrusted city, and as you move towards the bar you revel in watching the heads of tourists go up as a chorus of drunken shouts greet you..."Things are bad fellas, here's that bastard Clifton".111

While it would seem that most journalists "love getting drunk in bars", it would seem unlikely that female correspondents would behave "outrageously in whorehouses". It would not be appropriate to refer to women as "Casanovas". It appears that Clifton thought of correspondents as male.

**Remembering Vietnam**

Many reporters were attracted by the perceived glamour of war reporting. Edmund Behr, who had been covering conflicts since the partition of India, said with particular reference to Vietnam, that "missing out on a war, for a reporter, is like missing out on an invitation to a particularly coveted party". Behr quoted spy novelist John Le Carre when he sought to give an explanation as to why reporters might be willing to risk their lives:

Some times you do it to save face, other times you do it because you haven't done your job unless you have scared yourself to death, other times again, you go in order to remind yourself that survival is a fluke. But mostly, you go because the others go: for machismo; and because in order to belong you must share.112

Vietnam war reporters also shared a privileged existence when they visited the old French colonial administrative centre of Saigon. Journalists who engaged in the

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111Tony Clifton, as cited by Pat Burgess, op. cit., 1986, 167.
112John le Carre as cited by Edmund Behr, Anyone here been raped & speaks English?, 1982, 243.
black market money exchanges found it within their budgets to rent luxury accommodation, hire servants, dine in French restaurants, entertain bar girls and patronise colonial hotels in Saigon like The Caravelle or The Continental (where Graham Greene wrote the novel, The Quiet American).  

Mike Carlton arrived in Vietnam in late 1966, on assignment from ABC News. There was no question of impartiality. He had been told to refer to the Viet Cong as “the enemy” and always call Australian conscripts “national servicemen”, the term favoured by those Australians who wished to prosecute the war. Carlton celebrated his 21st birthday in Saigon. Prior to his arrival, he said he knew little of Vietnamese history or customs and spoke “not a word” of the Vietnamese language:

"I am an Australian journalist," was about all I could say, and that was pretty shonky, too... We were all very young. Most of us were in our twenties. It was exotic. It was dashing. We did our very best to live up to the image of the devil-may-care correspondent. We drank a lot. We whored around a lot. We ate expensively and we did quite dangerous and silly things, as a justification for all the drinking and whoring.

Was this a new experience for you?

It was the most stunning experience of my life! I was basically a North Shore kid who'd grown up in Chatswood and I'd never left Australia until I was sent to Singapore. It was a revolution.

Did you spend much of your off-duty time with other journalists?

Yes. If you were in Saigon you'd go to the five o'clock follies, which was the briefing held by the Vietnamese and the Americans. If they had anything to say to the Australians, you might go back and file a story... if there was one worth doing. You would generally tend to meet in the bar of The Continental and decide where tonight's dinner would be, in a French restaurant or one of the Vietnamese ones. There was something of a freemasonry of correspondents which competed, but not very much because we didn't really compete with the Americans and they were very helpful to us.

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114Mike Carlton, Personal Interview. 23 September 1996.
Carlton said that correspondents often got their stories from "a vast media apparatus" set up by the Americans, the South Vietnamese and the Australian authorities: "You had to try and filter some small truth out of the vast wall of pseudo information, that was pumped out," he said. However, he said that reporters could sometimes go and see the war for themselves, on transport supplied by the American military or their allies.

Australian war reporters from mainstream organisations were usually accredited by the military before they left home. But in Saigon, according to Australian Army PR, Winston Coates, the Americans accredited many who arrived in Vietnam and simply wanted to be "gung-ho correspondents". Coates claimed that at least one major news agency handed out cameras and film to hopeful correspondents and pointed them out the door of their office with the advice, "the war is that way":

For many "that way" was a direct route to a well known hotel straight across the road where press gathered constantly to drink and exchange rumours and gossip. Many wrote their dispatches there, and some never left the place during months-long stints in the country. Shaun [sic] Flynn, son of Errol, landed in the Australian lines one day, with a couple of cameras around his neck and wearing a highly expensive Hollywood smile with recapped teeth so bright that everyone said that he would have to keep his mouth shut during patrol or the sun would flash off his teeth and warn the enemy. Shaun left after a couple of days of walking with an Australian company, but not before he sent a story back to America telling how he had single-handedly saved some Aussie lives. It sounded like one of his father's movies.115

Such fictional reports did more than mis-inform the public. They contributed to over-blown professional reputations which became part of foreign reporters' mythology. On the basis of stories he had read in his own newsagency office, Hugh Lunn admitted to being over-awed by the reporters who preceded him in Vietnam. He looked forward to joining the Reuters Saigon office and meeting the

"legendary correspondent", Jim Pringle. According to Lunn, Pringle had a knack for attracting violent news:

His reputation was that of a fearless Scot, and during my previous eighteen months in London I had carried an image of him as a slightly larger version of Sean Connery. When I first entered the Saigon office, there was a shortish, slightly round-shouldered man of about 28 sitting at a phone. He looked unfit for his age, and his blue eyes were disconcertingly large, distorted by very large pebble glasses. When he hung up, he was introduced as Jim Pringle.¹¹⁶

Australian newspapers relied heavily on syndicated material generated by international newsagencies such as Reuterss. As late as 1966, no Sydney daily newspaper had a single correspondent in Southeast Asia. Melbourne's *Age* and *Herald* newspapers "each had a single reporter in Singapore with the daunting brief of covering Asia from Japan to West Pakistan".¹¹⁷ According to Tiffen, much of the reporting which was deemed critical of Western involvement in the war was produced by American journalists:

By contrast, the performance of the Australian media was overwhelmingly timid, and there was less independent probing, less willingness to devote adequate resources to reporting the war, and a far more restricted range of opinion and analysis. Even bearing in mind the enormous disparities in population, and their vastly different roles in the war, on any comparison, the Australian news media were demonstrably inferior to their American counterparts.¹¹⁸

Many Australian journalists wrote stories which supported Australian involvement in the war. Gerald Stone who spent three months in Vietnam in 1965, as a Special Correspondent for the *Australian*, was an exception. His short visit resulted in a book, *War without Honour*, which questioned Australia's commitment of troops.¹¹⁹

However, it was the combat camera-man, Neil Davis, who captured many reporters' imaginations. Davis was sometimes seen as the "Dean" of the predominantly male Indochina foreign correspondents' corps. His fearlessness, explored in David Bradbury's documentary, *Frontline*, earned him the unwanted sobriquet, "Death Wish" Davis. A cine-camera man turned photo journalist, he reported on Asia from 1964 until his death in Thailand in 1985. Like Burgess, Hughes and Clifton, he was member of an elite reporters' club which drank, worked and socialised together. Like many of his colleagues, Davis was a habitué of the "girlie" bars. Indeed in 1972, Davis formed a partnership with journalist, Dennis Cameron, to own and operate such a bar in Phnom Penh. The bar, which was located in what was formerly Prince Sihanouk's Royal Barge was "stocked with fine food and booze and an appropriate number of comely bar girls". According to correspondent, Jim Bennett, who declined to join the investment, Davis never made any money out of it, even though, "he was getting a lot of good stuff on the side, and free meals in the restaurant":

Dennis and Neil personally selected a bevy of about thirty five absolute beauties as "hostesses" - and I am sure that they both took every one of those lovelies to the casting couch before making their final selections. Business was apparently booming. They were shitting in high clover and rubbing it into me for having dropped out.120

Davis' business was destroyed after only three weeks, when the barge, together with the correspondents' lingering hopes, was sunk by a plastic charge believed to have been planted by Khmer Rouge frogmen. The blast may have closed the business but it merely added to Davis' reputation for boyish bravado and sexual adventure.

**Highways to a War**

120Jim Bennett, as cited by Tim Bowden, *One Crowded Hour: Neil Davis, Combat Cameraman*, 1987, 258/259.
Christopher Koch’s novel, *Highways to a War*, tells of an Australian photo journalist, Mick Langford, whom Koch claims is only partly based on Davis. Consider some of the parallels:

- Both Langford and Davis are farm boys hailing from Tasmania.
- Langford works for the fictional syndicated news network, Telenews, while Davis worked for the syndicator, Visnews.
- Both made their names covering the dangerous patrols of the South Vietnamese armed forces, who were otherwise neglected by Western reporters.
- Their friends called them both "Snow".
- Both characters were addicted to danger. Reference is made to the nickname "Suicide" Langford. Davis was known to his detractors as "Death Wish" Davis.

The novel romanticised coverage of the Indochina war; where male reporters made their names by venturing out like Morrison to get near to the scene of the action. After almost a century since Morrison, Asia was yet again depicted as a place of romance, sexual intrigue and danger. Koch even repeatedly refers to Langford’s nemesis: the threatening Khmer Rouge as "the Others". Phnom Penh was depicted as a good dream; a happy, relaxed, civilised, Westernised city threatened by nightmarish spectre of faceless Asians waiting to invade:

> Even in your sleep, you know the other’s waiting; there’s the sense of something out on the perimeter, waiting to invade. ...something you can’t quite see. You know that if it breaks in, something terrible will happen. Well it arrived in Cambodia when the sixties ended.121

Koch depicted the surviving war correspondents lingering in bars in Bangkok, Singapore and Hong Kong, swapping yarns about being at the edge of death. "The big story is over for them," he wrote.122

The "Great Swordsmen" of Asia

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122Ibid, 98.
Fictionalised accounts of Asia continue to have a powerful impact on correspondents ostensibly employed to report the facts. Fact and fiction still intersect when it comes to foreign correspondents and their representations of Asia. As *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist, Louise Williams observed, many contemporary male journalists still identify with professional practices and personal behaviour which looks backwards towards the Vietnam war:

> It's a very male oriented culture where men can very easily be sucked into sitting in a bar with pretty women massaging their egos. There are the bars that the men hangout at in those cities and to me it seems very much like a hangover from Vietnam in a way. You still find people going into the region who probably would have liked to be in Vietnam [during the American war] if they had not been ten at the time. They are still looking for the last war. There is still a lot of that machismo. The Philippines provided that type of violence with coup attempts. Bangkok later became the centre of the Cambodia watching which really was the last war in the region. That still provided the trips with the guerrillas, the skirmishes and the kind of macho adventures that a lot of people still perceive foreign news to be about.¹²³

Williams, contended that many contemporary Australian foreign correspondents persisted in acting as if they, too, were characters in a colonial adventure novel about the "Orient". She referred to a male-dominated foreign correspondents' culture, which still revolved around brothels and "girlie" bars; including Hotmen's Disco in Jakarta, the Bottoms Up Bar in Bangkok and the Tiger Bar in Phnom Penh:

> I actually lived in Mabini Street in Manila, down the end of which is the main prostitution drag with all the clubs. The journalists' night life and the drinking was all around clubs with naked women dancing over these great specimens of manhood that were the foreign correspondents. All the jokes were about the "great swordsmen of Asia" and the number of notches they had on the bed head, or who had the anti-biotics this week because they had the clap.¹²⁴

Williams contended that the treatment of Asian women as available sexual objects implied a racist world view. She said that she frequently encountered hostility from her predominantly male colleagues. As a woman she felt excluded from a "boys club" where journalistic adventures were planned and executed¹²⁵. As a feminist, 

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¹²³Louise Williams, Personal Interview, 28 May 94.
¹²⁴Ibid.
¹²⁵The boys club has been evident for some time. World War Two correspondent, Frank Legg had been a Regimental Sergeant Major with the Australian Imperial Forces in North Africa before
Williams found this behaviour offensive and actively sought to team up with women reporters. She claimed male correspondents' reporting was constrained by their "macho" lifestyles, immersed in sexual fantasies fed by subordinate Asians:

If you looked at any expatriate community in Asia, there is still an enormous hangover of colonial dominance. You find that in wives who go out there who have never had a maid in their lives and who in four weeks start complaining about servants. This sort of attitude must be reflected in the way people report on a country. If they think it's OK to go into a country and handle women in a bar and boss the housekeeper around and have a driver and all the other trappings of colonialism from the era of the safari suit and speaking English very loudly to the natives, they must have an underlying sense of Western superiority which must reflect in their reporting.

Conclusion

Australian correspondents in Asia have a history of identifying with Western interests there. Morrison and Clune sided explicitly with the British Empire, cheering its victories and, in the case of Clune, ignoring its imminent eclipse. In both cases, there was no question of objectivity as they reported uncritically on what they saw as Imperial economic, military and racial superiority over Asians. Yet such an approach appeared increasingly anachronistic as colonialism, with its visible mechanisms of control, gave over to the post-colonial era when the old Imperial powers granted "independence" while seeking to maintain discreet influence through trade, culture and even espionage. In this period, Australian analysts Warner and Hughes frequently used, and were themselves used by, Western intelligence agencies, the contemporary if covert expression of Imperial power.

being appointed as an ABC Radio correspondent in New Guinea. It seems he first encountered women journalists while on assignment to the Philippines:

It was at this time that a horde of 'war correspondents' descended on Manila. Now that the war was practically over, even women's periodicals had secured accreditation for lovely puzzled blondes who sauntered around GHQ, their noses shiny in perspiration, their hips swaying in ill fitting khaki pants. There was even a husband and wife team that aroused the envy of us all. She was a fast and accurate typist.

Frank Legg, War Correspondent, 1964, 238

By stereotyping women reporters as "puzzled blondes", Legg was clearly unwilling to recognise female correspondents as professional equals. To him they were sex objects, "their hips swaying in ill fitting Khaki pants". A woman who was actually part of a team appeared to be recognised because of skills in the subordinate and technical skills as a "typist".
As Said suggested, the culture and mythologies of Empire persisted after the tangible demise of imperial institutions. Like Orientalism, a tradition of adventure provided a complex and time-honoured set of stories, images and patterns of wish fulfilment, a system of knowledges in which the self and the Other were always already comprehensible in known and familiar terms. Vietnam war correspondents who knew little of that nation’s history, culture or language could find comfort in an expatriate lifestyle which owed more to fictional representations of Asia than to the demands of news gathering. Many saw themselves as adventurers, in an uncanny echo of 19th century Orientalist non-fiction writers such as Richard Burton or "Bokhara" Burnes. Perhaps these romantic superficialities provided a distraction from what some of their American colleagues recognised as the big story; the impending defeat of the world’s dominant Imperial power in a Asian land war.

But what of contemporary correspondents? The following chapter will seek to create a framework to allow the examination of their attitudes, practices and work. It will review previous studies of reporting in Asia and adapt an methodology to consider those who came to Asia to report on the closing phase of the Indochina war; the elections which resulted from the peace negotiations in Cambodia.

127 Both writers became as famous for their sexual pecadillos and their experimentation with drugs, as their reported readiness to expose themselves to danger in pursuit of their stories.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CAMBODIA REFERENDUM--
A CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Journalist: Why not try sending me over [seas] Mr Collins?
Editor: You've written a book on economics or something... The twilight of feudalism?
Journalist: It was very well received.
Editor: Not by me! I don't want any more economists or sages fulminating over our pages. I want a reporter! Someone who doesn't know the difference between an 'ism' and a kangaroo. A good honest crime reporter. That's what the Globe needs

Foreign Correspondent 128

When considering a study examining the work of contemporary Australian correspondents in action, might be tempted merely to examine the product of the journalism process: the published stories in the newspapers, or perhaps reports on radio and television. This would certainly provide insights into Australian news agendas on Asia. However, such a study would also ignore the process of reporting, the intellectual and cultural context from which the correspondents emerged, not to mention the views and criticisms of the correspondents themselves. Author's reaction of the Falklands War, Morrison and Tumber stressed the need to include the attitudes of the journalists involved. Such an approach, they claimed, not only gave outsiders a clear view of journalists' procedures but, "it also opened the eyes of the journalists themselves, turning them into reflective witnesses of their occupation":

Reading the academic literature, one cannot help but feel sympathy with the journalists' claim that the 'outsider' has failed to get inside the trade; it is all to formalistic, too sterile, too serious; and it is not surprising therefore, that working journalists fail to recognise the world they are supposed to inhabit.129

128 Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison, James Hilton, Robert Benchley (Writers), Alfred Hitchcock (Director) Foreign Correspondent, United Artists, 1940.
129 David E. Morrison and Howard Tumber, Journalists at War: Thee dynamics of news reporting during the Falklands Conflict, 1988, viii.
However, journalism methodology alone is too imprecise a tool to adequately dissect journalism practices. As Peter Dahlgren suggested, while journalism research should draw upon, and relate to, the experience or practitioners, such research should not end in a "relativistic morass"\textsuperscript{130}. Possibly, one needs to adopt empiricist approaches to provide focus for a study which might otherwise drift into the unsubstantiated speculation which journalistic style guides abhor. To do so one might borrow techniques from other disciplines including linguistics, history and sociology to explore practices which are sometimes mythologised, demonised or consciously misconstrued by even the players themselves. As a result, this chapter will consider research projects which examine media reporting of Asia and adapt their procedures to develop a methodology to study the practices of contemporary Australian correspondents.

**Asian news flows**

Content analyses provide a conventional approach for examining journalists' work; isolating patterns of coverage which may give insights to reporters and editors' agendas and values. While accepting that the underlying framework for a content analysis (e.g. the definition of themes in stories), must be grounded in subjectivity, a case study analysis of Australian correspondents' stories, for example, could be expected to reveal any systematic interpretation of events. This in turn should indicate assumptions and agendas to which the reporters might subscribe.

Schramm and Atwood (1981) examined the flow of foreign news in Asia; especially the performance of the major Western news agencies as they reported regional events. They analysed the foreign content of 18 Asian dailies, with particular reference to what was selected from the agencies.

We are going to concentrate on the news. That is quite enough for one study. Within this limited area we are going to try to provide

\textsuperscript{130}Peter Dahlgren "Journalism Research: Tendencies and Perspectives" *Nordicom Review*, 1993, 7.
some light where there is mainly heat - that is provide some concrete information about news circulation as it presently exists, its strengths and its shortcomings. What are the international agencies actually carrying? How does their coverage of the Third World compare with that of the First World? What kinds and amounts of news are they providing to daily newspapers? 131

The study examined newspaper reports over a week, from 4-10 September, 1977. It excluded radio and television reporting, even then a significant part of Asian coverage. In their report, Schramm and Atwood provided qualified comments rather than hard conclusions. They found, for example that the circulation of news in Third World Asia could not be understood or assessed wholly in terms of the international news agencies or any other single element in the process:

So we have to confess that we have not found any one villain or any one hero in this situation. It isn't a question of one or the other being solely at fault; the entire system is less than ideal. The international agencies have taken the brunt of criticism in the Third World probably not so much for what they have or have not done, but what they are: like other transnational enterprises owned in the industrial countries, they are have amongst have nots, and they come from outside.132

They commented that the international agencies were "probably doing a better job quantitatively than qualitatively", and decided that Third World countries would probably never be satisfied with their nation's coverage until they had their own agency.

The Schramm/Atwood study revealed the sort of stories chosen by Asian editors and allowed a comparison between their newspapers, their national coverage and that of the agencies. However, their parameters were defined by what was reported in these newspapers rather than what may have been left out. News stories in newspapers were perceived as the final product, in this case elements of text, rather than as part of a process which began with reporters and ended with an audience.

132Ibid 169.
Their rather speculative conclusions rested on an assumption that international news agencies could provide a bench mark for international coverage of Asia by which regional newspapers coverage could be judged. There were no source documents or events considered by which all coverage might be judged. As a result, Shramm/Atwood could make only relative judgements. Given the effort made to quantify, codify and cross reference news stories, it might seem an unremarkable conclusion that the news agencies produced more stories about Asia than the Asian newspapers used.

**Case Study Design**

In an attempt to find news which might be neglected by Australian correspondents, an event (the UN sponsored Cambodian elections) was chosen which would generate significant quantities of copy which could be collated, codified and analysed, but which might also be judged in the context of the official record and wire service reports. By defining a short but critical period in this election, it would also be possible to visit the event and observe the correspondent's work first hand. As a result, the study was designed to examine Australian coverage of the Cambodian elections, focusing on a four week period from May 9 to June 7, 1993.

In *Circulation of News and the Third World - A study of Asia*, Schramm and Atwood adopted a system where each news story, commentary, editorial, and news picture was coded in the following categories in addition to the name of the newspaper or news agency, the date and the serial number of the story.

- Short title (usually the headline)
- Page Number
- Length in column inches
- Words or Pictures
- Domestic, News or Commentary
• Region or regions referred to
• Category of news
• Source, if given (e.g., Reuters, paper's own correspondent, etc.)
• Notes

The Schramm Atwood study considered but rejected two additional categories:
• Hard or Soft News
• Good or Bad News

They were unable to obtain sufficient agreement among coders to justify considering the results reliable. This seemed hardly surprising, since both are vague and perhaps meaningless generalisations rather than categories. One does not have to be an existentialist philosopher to realise that what is good news for one person may be particularly unfortunate for someone else. A factory fire may be bad news to the proprietor but quite cheering to a firm of loss assessors. Similarly, concepts of "Hard" and "Soft" news depend on the eye of the beholder. An interview with a politician about the possibility of an early election may be considered "Hard" news by political reporters. However, to most other parties it may be perceived as groundless speculation, "soft" news with little relevance to long term political developments.

The following Schramm/Atwood categories were adopted, modified or discarded:

• **Headlines**: The coding of headlines seemed a useful way of revealing information about sub-editors' language, knowledge and implicit attitudes in the stories. It was also a definite way of identifying stories.

• **Page Numbers**: Clippings had been collected in Australia and sent to Hong Kong where the case study was constructed, without the inclusion of page numbers. As a result, data on where the stories had been located in newspapers could not be included in the study.

133 Ibid, 16.
• **Column Inches:** This seemed a rather outmoded way of measuring the space allocated to news stories. In the days of hot metal presses, newspaper "columns" were quite literally set in frames of steel. However, with the advent of offset printing and computer generated layout, newspaper designers have become more flexible in their use of columns. Furthermore, different publications use different width columns. A broad sheet with wide columns may devote fewer column inches but run a longer story than a tabloid with narrower columns. The critical factor here is the share of the news hole which the editors and sub-editors choose to allocate the story. Since the size of the news hole is defined by proportion of space allocated to it after advertising, it would seem more appropriate to use the measuring method increasingly used to sell advertising, square centimetres. Each item was measured from the top edge of the headline to the edge of the last sentence. Total width was also measured. If the story was carried over onto the next page, the additional space allocated to the item was also calculated and added to the item's total.

• **Words or Picture:** Most news stories were not illustrated. Illustrations consume space and potential advertising revenue. Therefore, the space allocated to photographs, drawings, or cartoons can indicate how important the editors or sub-editors regard the story. The imagery associated with the story can be sometimes the most important sub-text associated with it.

• **Domestic, News or Commentary:** For the purpose of the current study, the categories of news items were expanded to include; News, News agency, Feature, Editorial/Commentary and illustrations.

• **Region or Regions referred to:** Schramm/Atwood were studying an entire region. The current study focused on Cambodia. As a result this category was deemed unnecessary and discarded.
• **Category of News:** The Schramm Atwood study listed 15 sub-categories.

1. Military, political violence.
2. Foreign relations.
3. Domestic, political.
4. Economic
5. Science health
6. Education.
7. Accident disaster.
11. Sports.
12. Art, culture.
13. Human Interest.
14. Religion
15. Other

This system of news categories has been adopted by other content analyses. Again it was designed for a general study of news flows and many of the categories would seem inappropriate for a study focused on the Cambodian elections. It was therefore discarded.

Kou, Holoday and Peck's study, *Mirror on the Wall: media in a Singapore election*, provided some useful ideas for a more appropriate set of categories. That study, conducted in 1991, employed some 29 sub-categories which were specific to the Singapore elections. These issues which included Prime Minister Goh's

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mandate, the need for opposition parties, candidate qualifications and Ethnicity, were initially defined by a survey of voters, who nominated what they thought important. Since my study concerned itself with the Australian coverage of a Cambodian election, it was not necessary to engage in the complex and expensive process of gauging Cambodian voters' attitudes to isolate issues.

Schramm/Atwood provided a guide for analysing technical aspects of the stories such as sources and headlines while Kuo/Holoday/Peck indicated how subjective issues and themes might be dealt with.

Source: The Schramm/Atwood study failed to differentiate between source and by-lined author. Journalists usually define the source as the person or institution from where the reporter got the story, while the by-line identified the writer of the story. This may seem a fine distinction for an academic non-journalist. However, most journalism style guides stress the importance of naming sources, as a way of protecting the author's objectivity and credibility. As Ramaprasad pointed out in her study of Foreign Policy and Press Coverage, the source and the by-line could be the same in some cases; for example, when the reporter was at the scene and reporting from direct observation an event not attributed to another source.135

Sources are a key element in news writing. As a result, they should not only be in a separate category to authors but should also be examined in greater detail. This study examines three major categories of sources (United Nations, Australia and Cambodia), and includes sub categories.

Kuo, Holoday and Peck coded some thirty five items, in each newspaper content analysis136. Since that study examined the impact of local media on the Singapore

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136Holoday, Kuo, Peck, op.cit., 122/123.
elections, many categories were devised to examine whether reporting was skewed to favour a political party. Since Australian reporting of the Cambodian elections could be expected to have minuscule impact on the fate of Cambodian political parties (less than 200 Cambodians voted in Australia), most of these categories could be discarded from the current study.

However, the following categories applied by Kuo Holoday and Peck seemed appropriate and useful.

Column 17-18: Write in all names appearing in Headlines and Sub-headings or Captions.

Column 27-28: Write in Headline verbatim.

Column 29-30: Headline size (height of capital letters in mm.).

**Coding system adopted**

Employing Claris Works software on an Apple Macintosh Powerbook 145, stories in the current study were coded using the following categories.

**Date:** date of publication.

**News Outlet:** Organisation which published item.

**Author:** By-lined journalist or writer.

**News:** News story written by staff. (See definitions in Appendix).

This item was measured in square centimetres.

**Wire:** News story obtained from news agency. This item was recorded in square centimetres.

**Feature:** Feature or news commentary.(See definitions in Appendix). This item was recorded in square centimetres.

**Editorial:** Editorial Comment.(See definitions in Appendix). This item was recorded in square centimetres.

**Illustrations:** Photograph, Cartoon or other graphic. This item was recorded in square centimetres.
**Total**: Total of above items recorded in square centimetres.

**Headline**: Verbatim headline.

**Names**: All names appearing in Headlines and Sub-headings or Captions.

**Size**: Headline size (height of capital letters in mm.).

**Sources**: Sources quoted in stories. (See appendix)

**Themes/Issues**:

1. Military
2. Political violence
3. Threat of violence
4. Threat of the Khmer Rouge
5. UNTAC and United Nations
6. Sihanouk's role
7. Buddhist Peace movement
8. Human Rights
9. Election
10. Domestic election issues
11. Economic
12. Accident, disaster
13. Australia's role in the region
14. Blackhawks
15. Other Australian military commitment
16. Human Interest
17. International
18. Post-election Cambodia
19. Pilger
20. Re-arm factions
21. Other

**Illustrated subject**: Subject of photographs, drawings, graphics etc.
News Outlets.

Using a professional clipping service, Media Monitors, press clippings were collected from all Australian newspapers and magazines, using the code words, 'Cambodian elections'. The study focused on reports in two national papers (the Australian and the Australian Financial Review) seven metropolitan dailies (Courier Mail, Sydney Morning Herald, Telegraph Mirror, Herald Sun, Hobart Mercury, Adelaide Advertiser and the West Australian. Sunday publications produced by the same newspaper groups were also studied. Two regional newspapers, the Canberra Times (which sent its own correspondent to Cambodia) and the Newcastle Herald (which relied heavily on AAP copy), were also included.

Once assembled, the case study needed to be contextualised. The reports were studied with reference to the following parallel and separate sources of information on the voting process. Reuters (Hong Kong) provided access to their computerised copy file and data base for the period. A computer search using the code word "Cambodia" produced a print-out of Reuters stories. ABC Radio conducted a similar computer search using the same code word. This search produced a complete file of program run downs for the programs Early AM, AM, The World Today, and PM. Sixty four radio reports on Cambodia were carried by these programs during the period. The UNTAC information office provided copies of their Daily Briefing Notes, which were produced as a detailed internal record of information releases and news conferences produced for the media. The UNTAC electoral component supplied Issues numbers 12 to 19 of their newsletter, Free Choice, covering the period from January 29, 1993 to May 18, 1993. The Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club supplied copies of the Daily Report: East Asia, produced by the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service. The report consisted of a digest of translations of news stories from the region, usually with a specific chapter dealing with Cambodia. Twenty Three copies of the Phnom Penh
Post, including the entirety of Volume 1 (12 issues) and 11 issues of Volume 2 were also examined.

The Sociology of Newsmaking

However, attempting to understand a news event by merely looking at the stories, may be a little like trying to describe someone else's good cup of coffee by conducting a thorough examination of the grounds. To comprehend more fully coverage of the Cambodian elections it was not only helpful to observe the event itself but also to employ journalism methodology; interview the reporters themselves.

Tiffen (1978) sought information on foreign correspondents through a series of open ended interviews and "observation of them in their working situations". Tiffen rejected a more quantitative approach because he said the numbers were too small, and were further fragmented by variables such as type of news medium, nationality, particularities of employing organisations, size of beat, staff correspondents versus stringers etc. At the time, he was only able to identify two Australian newspaper correspondents in the region. Then, as now, the ABC was the only Australian broadcaster with any full time correspondents in South East Asia.

Tiffen found that the growth of foreign reporting paralleled the path of technical possibility, economic profitability, and the areas of greatest metropolitan interest. However, such growth was hindered by increasing costs and a perceived lack of audience and editorial interest, as well as by the actions of authoritarian regional governments. Significantly, Tiffen reported a symbiotic relationship between foreign correspondents and foreign diplomats. Foreign correspondents' contacts with local communities were seen as "often limited and shallow". Collaboration

between correspondents was an important if indirect way of forming judgements and framing news values. Yet Tiffen dismissed the economic-driven conspiracies which theorists such as Chomsky used to explain why some news was simply off the agenda:

Views on foreign news content as being a direct, systematic expression of any one person's or organisation's ideology, usually fail to take account of the ideological diversity and ambiguity within much news coverage. More centrally, they typically fail to give an adequate account of the processes of news making. Any attempt to understand the news content without understanding news making is bound to be partial and likely to be wrong.138

Conversely, a discussion of news making processes without reference to story content can sometimes contribute to, rather than dispel, speculation. By employing anecdotal information from journalists, Tiffen engaged with some of the myths which foreign correspondents and editors wove around themselves and their work. He repeated a view often held by reporters that most conflicts occurred over the treatment of copy, implying that correspondents' "truths" challenged the home office status quo. Experience as a reporter might just as easily suggest otherwise. Tiffen referred to such items as "stories which do not consistently meet the threshold of Western interest".139 However, one might claim that, in practice, such conflicts rarely involved correspondents who had already successfully negotiated news office politics to secure a prestigious overseas posting. It may be that conflicts more regularly resulted from correspondents' failure to match their competitors' stories; that is, failure to meet home office notions of what is news in foreign parts.

A weakness of such a qualitative approach could be seen in a discussion about news values, or more specifically "bad reporting". Tiffen cited a dispute among journalists over reports by Bruce Wilson of the *Melbourne Herald* and Bob Taylor of the *London Daily Mail*. According to Tiffen, they had written stories about the

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138Ibid, 5.
139Ibid, 200.
Malaysian Airforce having lost a number of planes through communist insurgents' activity.\footnote{Ibid, 101.} Wilson and Taylor claimed their stories were true, rejecting the disbelief of other correspondents who had been unable to match them:

A few brought it up spontaneously in interviews as an example of irresponsible foreign reporting. Some said that it had caused a considerable hardening of government attitude to foreign journalists. Neither did any of the Western journalists I talked to believe the stories. One agency journalist, who tried to check it after the reports appeared, described it as 'the greatest bullshit story of the year so far'.\footnote{Ibid, 102.}

The fact that other journalists could not substantiate a story did not make it false. To repeat such unsourced allegations about the story without substantiation may itself provide an example of what Tiffen was seeking to expose; "bad reporting". Journalists cannot be considered "objective" sources, particularly when they are assessing each other's work. Indeed, more recent studies of foreign correspondents (Pedelty 1995) suggest that a tendency to highlight the failures of competitors is a feature of correspondent culture:

The opinion and story telling ritual provides reporters a cultural space within which they may act out their war correspondent persona, projecting the intellectual authority and macho bravado which defines their lot. Re-inventing the myths of war correspondents past -"In the great line of Crane, Orwell and Hemingway...- they fit their new experiences of traditional war correspondents' legends". There are two major types of stories told in these sessions. The first are those trumpeting the heroism of a journalist, usually the speaker herself [sic]. The second type highlights the failures of others.\footnote{Mark Pedelty, \textit{War Stories: The culture of foreign correspondents}, 1995, 129.}

Although Tiffen's ground-breaking study provided unique insights into foreign correspondents' work, his frequent use of unattributed remarks might undercut the credibility of some of his observations. Nevertheless, the strength of Tiffen's research in this case, rested on his willingness to go, like a journalist, "straight to
the source"; the foreign correspondents. Such interviews and examination of journalistic issues allow empirical content analyses to be contextualised.

Cambodia visits.

I visited Cambodia twice as part of the case study. In the first visit, February 20 to March 2, 1993, I obtained press accreditation with UNTAC (Card number 1298) and explored the possibility of conducting a case study of the May elections. I also prepared a series of current affairs interviews which were subsequently broadcast on Radio National Breakfast, the Law Report and National Country Hour. Press accreditation allowed access to all news conferences, private briefings, the UNTAC headquarters' security zone in Phnom Penh and passage on UN road, air and river transport.

I returned to Phnom Penh on May 22, the day before voting began. I stayed until June 3, 1993, after voting had been completed. This time I abandoned reporting, witnessing the election and observing the Australian journalists as they reported on it. I saw the Buddhist peace march after its arrival in Phnom Penh. I went with the Age's Lindsay Murdoch to Chhuk, where the Khmer Rouge attacked polling stations on the first day of voting. I attended the daily briefings and news conferences. I saw UNTAC's chief, Asusi Akashi declare the poll "free and fair". I was in the room when the Cambodian People's Party called the result fraudulent. I was also there when UNTAC's electoral chief, Reginald Austin, rejected the complaints. I used a Nikon F601 35 ml SLR camera to record proceedings where appropriate.

To back this personal observation of the election coverage, ten unstructured interviews were held in Cambodia with Australian journalists and UN staff, questioning them about their work. I chose correspondents whose work I was planning to dissect as well as the key public relations personnel they dealt with.
(Only one of the Australian correspondents who were present during the election was unavailable for interview). To supplement the Cambodia work, more than 40 other interviews were conducted with reporters, editors, foreign correspondents, writers and columnists located in Hanoi, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, London, Sydney and Mount Eliza near Melbourne. These journalism interviews were recorded broadcast style, using a Uni-directional microphone and a Sony Professional Walkman tape recorder. More than fifty thousand words of transcript were produced.

**From Torrent to Trickle**

The limitations of unstructured interviews soon became apparent. Journalism interviews may probe, reveal insights and provide useful quotations but they are not designed for the collection of data. If I were to collate basic information such as age, education, marital status etc. I would need to impose a system to ensure that all relevant material was gathered. Therefore I found it necessary to construct a questionnaire; in part borrowing questions and structure from earlier academic work. I was influenced by a study conducted by Szende (1986) who set out to examine ASEAN perceptions of the flow of news in the region by conducting lengthy structured interviews with editors, news executives whom he described as key "gatekeepers" who decided what news was ultimately transmitted to the general population.

The first part of Szende's questionnaire was a survey which sought to discover which sources the respondents perceived to be the most useful ones in their work. The second section of the interviews dealt with news coverage of the ASEAN region and the rest of the world. The third section dealt with news coverage of ASEAN countries within the region. The study sought to find explicit answers
about claims of unequal coverage of Asian countries; attempting to do so in "as fair and unbiased form as possible"\textsuperscript{143}.

Szende found that the ASEAN journalists surveyed thought that Western sources were most useful. The four big international news agencies were among the six sources seen as most useful. The two Dow Jones, Hong Kong based news paper magazines, the \textit{Asian Wall street Journal}, and the \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review} were respectively second and fourth highest.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Sources favoured by ASEAN journalists}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Outlet} & \textbf{Very useful} \\
Reuters & 23 \\
Asian Wall Street Journal & 15 \\
Associated Press & 14 \\
Far Eastern Economic Review & 13 \\
AFP & 12 \\
UPI & 10 \\
BBC & 10 \\
Foreign Correspondents & 10 \\
International Herald Tribune & 8 \\
Multinational corporations & 8 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Szende said that foreign sources enjoyed a certain amount of trust in the region. He suggested these results could be attributed to perceptions of inadequacy of local sources, lack of local resources or perhaps confidence in the professional foreign approach to news:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143}Andrew Szende. \textit{From Torrent to Trickle: Managing the Flow of News in Southeast Asia}, 1986, 19/20.
\end{flushright}
It is remarkable that second to the non-ASEAN news organisations, ASEAN news professionals turn to non ASEAN organisational sources for their information. This may indicate the respondents trust the outside sources more than they do the regional ones. On the other hand it may be that they turn to these sources to obtain a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the world -- including their own region -- than they can get from any ASEAN regional source.\textsuperscript{144} 

Szende's method, using structured questionnaires, seemed a useful supplement to Tiffen's more informal approach. By systematising the questions asked, basic yet useful information such as age, marital status and education levels could be collected.

Using Szende's questionnaire as a model, a new series of questions was constructed to identify sources which contemporary correspondents found useful. Szende employed 20 categories of questions with some 60 sub-categories. The current study used similar categorisations but supplemented them with open ended questions which sought correspondents' opinions on the quality of reporting and asked how that reporting might be improved. Szende employed the key informant method and received responses from about 50% of the ASEAN journalists targeted.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The study adopted a multifaceted approach to analysing correspondents' work. Newspaper reports have been subjected to a content analysis to reveal themes and quoted sources. Individual stories have been dissected and judged against the work of other journalists, the official records and news agency material. The correspondents producing them were interviewed by questionnaire to allow the construction of data showing common or divergent trends. Unstructured interviews were held in the field to provide subjective analysis. Radio and television reporting was considered in the context of the print material.

\textsuperscript{144}Ibid, 70.
CHAPTER FIVE

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

The following are the ingredients for . . . [an]. . . ideal foreign correspondent. He [sic] must be a credit to his country and to his newspaper abroad; he should either be a bachelor or a solidly married man who is happy to have his children brought up abroad; his personality must be such that our Ambassador will be pleased to see him. When occasion demands, he must know something about protocol and yet enjoy having a drink with the meanest spy or the most wasterly spiv. He must be completely at home in one foreign language and have another one to fall back on. He must be grounded in the history and the culture of the territory in which he is serving; he must be intellectually inquisitive and have some knowledge of most sports. He must be able to keep a secret; he must be physically strong and not addicted to drink. He must have pride in his work and in the papers he serves, and finally he must be a good reporter with a wide vocabulary, fast with his typewriter, with a knowledge of shorthand and able to drive a car.

Ian Fleming145.

Foreign correspondents have long been regarded by other journalists as an elite within journalism.146 They represent a relatively rare and costly component of the news making process. Their substantial salaries are usually greatly exceeded by their expenses; accommodation, travel, food and entertainment. As Fleming suggested, they must be proficient in the skills required of all reporters. But in Fleming's view, they must also be ready to play the role of diplomat; as a representative of their country and their news organisation; one whose reporting does not presumably offend their nation's foreign affairs officials.

Contemporary Australian foreign correspondents were surveyed to provide information on their backgrounds, practices and attitudes to news. For the purpose of this study, they were defined as Australian journalists employed to produce reports on south and east Asia which were received by an Australian audience. They included staff correspondents stationed in the region, as well as stringers and some

146Jeremy Tunstall, Journalists at Work; Specialist Correspondents, 1971, 138/142.
visiting reporters. The survey was distributed by mail, fax and in person during 1993-94. Sixteen journalists responded. Three (two news agency and one commercial television reporter) declined to reply. This represented a response rate of 84.2% of the target study group. Andrew Szende in his 1986 study of ASEAN journalists, targeted a larger group (about 70) but received responses from only a little more than 50% (37). Szende's survey was aimed at editors and executives whom he saw as the key "gatekeepers who decided what news was ultimately transmitted to the general public". The Cambodian Survey targeted the initial gatekeepers, the journalists, placed in the region to seek news considered to be of particular relevance to the Australian public.

**Journalists' Profiles**

Most of the Australian correspondents were male (75%). This figure was substantially higher than the Australian population in general. It also did not reflect the proportion of women working as journalists inside Australia. Equal numbers described themselves as married or single (43.8% in each category). The substantial time spent travelling as well as demanding work schedules was seen as placing continuing stress on relationships. Tony Eastley, ABC's Television south east Asian correspondent for five years until 1992, found that the work of a foreign correspondent necessarily had a negative impact on journalists' private lives:

> Your family life suffers. There is no way out of it. You work shift work. You work long hours, and you travel all the time. You pay a toll on your family life. A lot of overseas correspondents do not have a home life. Subsequently they don't have husbands and they don't have wives. Their kids are complete strangers. That is a problem.

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147 Andrew Szende, op.cit., 1986, 16.
148 The three journalists who failed to respond were all males. Had they been included the proportion would have risen to 78.9%.
149 Media Alliance journalist membership figures showed 2,107 males (57%) and 1589 females in NSW, in January 1995.
Tiffen in his 1978 study observed that correspondent's "mobility and relatively short tenure in any one place" increased pressure on social and family life. He noted that there was "a high level of sex role assumptions, that the woman will follow the man, that the husband will spend a large amount of time away from his wife, who will largely accommodate her time to his". Such assumptions have changed only a little since that time. However, at least by 1993 one woman reporter had brought her spouse to Asia, so that the man rather than the woman was the semi-dependent partner.

Asia, it seemed, was neither a place for very young nor older journalists. Most of the respondents were approaching middle age, with 68.8% aged between thirty and forty years. The youngest respondent (aged under twenty five years) described herself as a stringer, while the oldest was a news paper correspondent. More than half of the respondents (56.3%) saw print as their primary medium, perhaps reflecting the key role which newspapers play in initiating stories and setting news agendas. Radio journalists, mostly employed in the ABC's regional offices, accounted for 31.3%. Television was represented by only two reporters.

Most of the journalists described themselves as Correspondents (68.8%); that is official representatives of news organisations. Only 25% said they worked as stringers (journalists usually employed under part time contracts) or freelance reporters (journalists paid on a story by story basis). Freelancers could be expected to be difficult to identify in any survey, because of the ephemeral nature of their work. However, there would seem to be a general reluctance by Australian news organisations to systematically hire work from Asia on a freelance basis. Melbourne based Photo Journalist, Louis Ascui observed:

I find that very annoying because I did ring a lot of papers before I came here. (Cambodia) They just want to rely on wire services. I

\footnote{Tiffen, op.cit., 1978, 51/52.}
could have done a job which showed the work Australians are doing here. The wire service will do a general overview which may have nothing to do with what Australians are going through here. Photographers from the main agencies will just follow the main news. They could instead have used images for example of the Australian troops, showing what they are doing. Does that indicate a lack of commitment by the Australian media? I believe so. There are photographers from all over the world except Australia. Maybe they are too cheap.\textsuperscript{152}

Nevertheless, correspondents were well paid by Australian standards. Only three respondents earned less than $A40,000 a year. Two received more than A$100,000 a year, placing them in the ranks of the highest paid Australian journalists. ABC journalists who on paper, earned between $A40,000 and $A60,000, also received substantial living allowances and other benefits.

As one might expect, most of the respondents had significant experience as journalists, with 75% having careers of ten or more years duration. Only two respondents had less than five years experience and none had less than two years. However, most respondents' experience was accumulated in locations other than Asia. Only one journalist reported more than ten years in the region, indicating that the days when reporters became "old Asia hands" like Morrison, Hughes and Warner may well be over. Half of them had less than five years experience. A further 31.3\% described themselves as visitors. The respondents were well educated by Australian standards with more than half (56.3\%) having university degrees. However there appeared to be no correlation between income and the level of education. Of the two highest paid respondents (more than A$100,000 PA), one had an undergraduate degree, while the other had only gone as far as high school. One respondent said that he had attended technical college.

Most of the respondents completed cadet-ships (75\%), including those who had already completed journalism majors in their undergraduate degrees. One respondent

\textsuperscript{152}Lous Ascu, Personal Interview, 27 May 93.
nominated the ABC Basic Broadcasting course as her training. Three had no training in journalism.

**Language Skills**

All of the Australian correspondents surveyed relied heavily on the English language while gathering information for their stories. Six respondents (37.5%) said they spoke only English, while another four (25%) indicated knowledge of only European languages (two French, one Spanish and one Portuguese). Four claimed fluency in Bahasa Indonesia (spoken in Indonesia). One each also spoke Thai and Mandarin (China). Some correspondents claimed basic skills in Cantonese (Hong Kong and Southern China), Mandarin, Thai and Khmer (Cambodia).

*Asiaweek’s* Indonesia correspondent, Keith Loveard, said that correspondents required advanced non-English language skills to carry out their work effectively. Loveard went to Jakarta in 1989, after a substantial career in Australian journalism which included working at the ABC and AAP. He subsequently became President of the Foreign Press Club in Jakarta. Loveard said that initially he found the going hard in Indonesia, even though he began work as a correspondent with basic language skills resulting from earlier visits:

> How the hell do you communicate? You can't use body language. You can't pull out a name card or write something down. You have to use [local] language. Invariably, if you only speak English you will find that people will hang up on you. It means your access is very limited.

*Yet two thirds of the Australian correspondents I surveyed said they spoke no Asian languages.*

I think the people to blame are not the correspondents, but the people who put them in place. If you look at the way Australian diplomats are trained before they come to a country, in most cases they are given language training if they are required to have some interface with the locals. I think it should be essential for any news organisation wanting to cover countries where English is little known that similar training is provided. They should get at least a basic grounding, so that when the correspondent arrives, it is not total confusion. What tends to happen instead is that people get to a
place and they will be immediately asked to start filing. They have no hope whatsoever.

*How long did it take you to find your feet here?*

It took me a year. I was left absolutely nothing by the former *Asiaweek* staffer here. She didn't leave a single file or even a name card. I had to start from scratch. It was an extraordinarily confusing period. I was totally lost for most of that year. I didn't know whether I was coming or going. I didn't know what an important story was, unless it was in the English language *Jakarta Post*.

*Yet ABC journalists are frequently posted to Asia for stints of only two years. Where does that leave them?*

It leaves them expecting a lot of luck. It leaves them covering the obvious stories. However, they had some very experienced reporters like Ian Macintosh, who doesn't have much Indonesian. But the ABC has the budget to employ local staffers who will do some of the ground work for them. If you have the budget to employ a good English speaking local, you can get by without too much trouble.

*But doesn't that interpose another filter in the news gathering process?*

You have to assume that everyone has their own biases. You always have to bear in mind that whoever is working for you may also be reporting on your activities.153

Foreign language skills would appear to be critical for correspondents who sought to explore the subtleties of the stories from the countries to which they were posted. Australian journalists who lacked local language skills might have to hire local interpreters when seeking information beyond the preserves of the English speaking elites. In doing so, they would certainly introduce yet another filter into the news gathering process, as the interpreters chose words, phrases and emphasis to describe what they might have seen. Freelancer, Cecil Holmes suggested that interpreters could exercise considerable influence on reporters' attitudes and activities:

> Interpreters are much more than another pair of ears - they become your alter ego, they enter in various and subtle ways into your whole being. They quickly (as a rule) discern your tastes in food.

153Keith Loveard, Personal Interview, 27 July 95.
and entertainment, and bustle you along from dawn to dusk, and even beyond for that matter - perhaps like an old fashioned servant who manages his master. And they are often your only confidante in social situations which, while not unfriendly, is still alien - less for reasons of ideology than of cultural remoteness.¹⁵⁴

Meanwhile, interpreters might not even pretend to be dispassionate observers. In the case of Vietnam, where the ABC correspondent, Chris Kremmer, spoke no Vietnamese, the ABC agreed under contract to use a Vietnamese government Foreign Ministry official to translate all of Kremmer’s interviews. Kremmer admitted that the use as an intermediary of an official of a government which kept dissenters in concentration camps, might discourage critics from consenting to interviews with the ABC. The official, who was stationed full-time in the ABC bureau office, acted as a facilitator:

There would be a case I think for getting some sort of independent monitoring of the translations we are getting. But as in all communist countries, if you are going to be on the playing field, you have got to accept the rules and try to work around them as best you can to get something, because something is better than nothing.¹⁵⁵

Australian journalists’ lack of foreign language skills contrasted strongly with United States’ journalists; with only 11% of 774 American foreign correspondents surveyed in 1992 unable to speak the local language of their foreign posting. According to the study conducted by Stephen Hess, American foreign correspondents claimed proficiency in a mean number of 2.3 languages. Hess would have been unaware of American correspondents’ clear advantage over their Australian competitors when he observed:

Americans have a reputation for not being linguists. They have been preoccupied at home, where other skills are more valued, and

¹⁵⁴Cecil Holmes, One Man’s way: On the road with a rebel reporter, film maker and adventurer, 1986, 229.
¹⁵⁵Chris Kremmer, op.cit.6, 1993.
geographically there usually has been a good deal of space between them and the need to know other people's languages.156

Hess found that 67% of American foreign correspondents in 294 foreign postings were sufficiently skilled in the local language to be able to conduct interviews in that language. In contrast, 62.5% of the Australian journalists in this survey said they spoke no Asian languages.

**News Bureaux**

By the mid nineties, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation boasted of the most extensive network of Radio and Television news bureaux in Asia.157 ABC Foreign Correspondents were based in Jakarta, Hong Kong, Hanoi, Singapore158, and Bangkok, with part time "stringers" located in Kuala Lumpur, Phnom Penh and Manila. Most of these reporters serviced the ABC's three domestic radio networks, as well its international service, Radio Australia. Until 1993, ABC television for almost all of the region south of China, was serviced by the Hong Kong based correspondent, Sally Neighbour. The ABC closed the Hong Kong bureau in December 1994, transferring Neighbour's team to Beijing.

The Special Broadcasting Service relied largely on television material syndicated by Reuters for its television news coverage outside Australia. However in 1994, television current affairs reporter, Michael Carey was assigned to Singapore, producing detailed specialist reports for the program Dateline. An SBS Radio journalist, Bronwyn Curran, was also contributing material from Cambodia during the election.

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156 Stephen Hess, "Speaking in tongues: more foreign correspondents know the language of the country they cover", *Nieman Reports*, Fall 1994, 30.
157 David Hill, "Speech Notes", 27 March 94.
158 The ABC announced in May 1996 that it would close its Singapore office, and make Bangkok its key bureau in Southeast Asia.
The Fairfax group which included two metropolitan dailies and one national newspaper had three correspondents stationed in the region. However, one of these, the Sydney Morning Herald's Margaret Harris, worked only part time. During the 1993 Cambodian election, the Fairfax paper the Sun Herald assigned reporter, Stephen Skinner, to Phnom Penh. The West Australian's Asia Desk editor, Andre Malan operated both as a reporter filing stories on important issues such as the UNTAC operation, and as a sub-editor arguing for the inclusion of regional stories in the newspaper. It followed that the paper's coverage consisted of a mixture of news agency stories, leavened with in house reports targeted at the West Australian's audience.

News Limited which owned one national and six metropolitan daily newspapers (representing more than two thirds of metropolitan newspaper distribution in Australia), had only two correspondents in the region, both reporting for the national daily, the Australian. Yet Editor in Chief, Paul Kelly, said that increasing Asian coverage was a key priority of his newspaper. He saw the establishment of Asian bureaux as central to his paper's long term strategy:

The first element of the process is to try to ensure that the region is covered through Australian eyes. What that means ultimately is to establish a network of either full time or part time Australian correspondents in the region. Over the last five years, we have been putting in place that sort of strategy. At the same time, we have been trying to build up the profitability of the paper so that we can re-invest and expand our foreign posts. At the moment, we have three full time foreign posts in Asia; Japan, China, that is, Hong Kong and Jakarta. We are establishing a fourth post, an ASEAN post, and that will almost certainly be in Bangkok. In addition to that we have got a series of part time, or if you like stringing post in Asia in India, KL [Kuala Lumpur], the Pacific and Bangkok. We also have a full time correspondent in Wellington, New Zealand. Clearly we rely on wire services for coverage of the Asia Pacific as well. That is important on a daily news basis. But when it comes to Asia at the end of the day, there are Asian services which cover Asia with the same quality as those from Britain and the United States.

159 House of Representatives Select Committee on the Print Media, 1992, 94.
Do you have reservations about using regional news agencies such as Antara or Bernama?

I think its enormously important for Australia, when it comes to Asia and the Pacific to have our own people on the ground doing it. That is our objective. If you look at our coverage of Indonesia it is pretty good. It's a pretty detailed coverage. On the other hand our coverage of Singapore is not as good as it ought to be. At the end of the day this reflects the situation on the ground and our priorities as we go about expanding our coverage of the region.

The ABC has been having difficulties maintaining bureaux in places like Singapore and Hong Kong because of the cost. Has that been inhibiting your organisation as well?

We are going the other way. We are expanding and that is because these decisions are made on assessments of our financial positions which will stick and endure. There is no point in establishing a foreign post if that post is only going to be there for a short period of time. Also by concentrating on Asia, we are concentrating on a region which will be very important to Australia. We have an ambition at the Australian that eventually we will be able to sell our Asia Pacific service both within the region and to papers in the northern hemisphere. Hence we will be able to generate a revenue stream as a result of this editorial commitment. This of course will make the whole exercise more sustainable.

It would seem that Australia has an advantage in the sense that it is a stable democracy with relative freedom of speech. That is, you can write things here which you could not in Singapore where the government may be a little more sensitive to criticism. That means that an Australia based news service could run stories about Asia that a Singaporean based one may not. Is that behind your thinking here? Is that why someone might prefer an Australian based service?

Precisely. Precisely. In that sense, I think we are in a very good position to market and sell such a service, provided we get to the state where it is sufficiently comprehensive.160

None of the News Limited metropolitan dailies, which were acquired in the takeover of the Herald and Weekly Times group in 1986, were represented by a full-time staff correspondent in East or South East Asia. Instead, they relied on news agency copy supplemented by material syndicated from other News Limited outlets.

While the overall number of correspondents in the may appear to be small, they represent a slight increase on 1978, when Rodney Tiffen found that there were only

160Paul Kelly, Personal Interview, 26 July 96.
two Australian newspaper correspondents in south east Asia. Neither of them worked for News Limited, even then a major newspaper group. At that time, the ABC was the only broadcasting organisation with any staff correspondents in the region.\footnote{Tiffen, op.cit., 1978, 3.}

Even after the passing of 15 years, there were still no correspondents representing any of Australia's commercial television or radio networks in south-east Asia. However, the Nine network maintained a contract with a British owned bureau based in Hong Kong for requested stories. The commercial radio stations relied on AAP for such coverage as they required.

**Australian Associated Press (AAP)**

Australian Associated Press (AAP), a domestic agency owned jointly by Australia's major newspaper groups, supported a single correspondent in South East Asia. It had a reporter based in Jakarta whose main task it was to report on Indonesia. When it was considered that particularly important stories arose (e.g. the Cambodian elections) the reporter might travel to other countries. AAP also employed a stringer in Bangkok.

However, the bulk of AAP material was selected from other agencies, notably Reuters, with stories chosen on "news merit". In 1993, AAP syndicated foreign news to News Limited and Fairfax newspapers, most regional daily papers, and most major commercial radio and television stations. AAP's General Manager, Lee Casey, said AAP offered far more News than its subscribers could use:

> Our editors are not instructed to use stories of a particular type or from a particular country. They make their own decisions. The owners of AAP do not issue instructions to me as Chief Executive and I do not issue instructions to our editors. Although we file a
great deal of Third World material, we have no control over what is published. Each individual newspaper editor makes that decision.\textsuperscript{162}

Recognising the potential business market in Asia, AAP in 1994 inaugurated a biennial conference of Asian, Australian and Pacific media Executives; inviting speakers including Parni Hadi, Antara's Director of International Relations, former Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, and even British television personality, Michael Parkinson. AAP Information Services Chairman, Lyle Turnbull, said his organisation had a continuing commitment to providing a complete and impartial news service for the Australian media. "The conference is also an indication of the depth of our commitment to Asia, where AAP has recently joined the Organisation of Asian Pacific news agencies, and where we are formalising news and economic links with our fellow regional news agencies," Turnbull said.\textsuperscript{163}

Yet AAP's journalistic representation in Asia in the 1990's was considerably smaller than in the period following World War Two. In 1946, the then Chief Executive of the Herald and Weekly Times group, Keith Murdoch, reached an agreement with Reuters to allow AAP to staff bureaux throughout Asia. Murdoch, who had made his name as a correspondent covering the Gallipoli expedition, felt that Australian newspapers needed more Australian perspectives on the Asian region. Initially, AAP supplied journalists for Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong and Jogjakarta.\textsuperscript{164} Denis Warner, who was to become one of Australia's most celebrated foreign correspondents, was appointed to Tokyo. However, AAP's commitment to Asia did not appear to extend the cost of maintaining its own journalists overseas. The last of the AAP/Reuters Asian bureaux closed with the end of the Vietnam war.

\textbf{Table 5.1}

\textsuperscript{162}Lee Casey, "The Third World News Debate", \textit{Australia, Asia and the Media}, 1981, 66.
\textsuperscript{164}Denis Warner, \textit{Wake Me If There's Trouble}, 1995, 78.
The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC)

ABC information programs entered the post war period with extensive experience in Asia, gleaned by a generation of war correspondents. However, the ABC did not establish a permanent base in Asia until 1956 when a bureau was opened at the then British regional administrative centre and military base, Singapore. In spite of the obvious symbolism of entering Asia in the footsteps of the old imperial power, there were strong practical reasons for choosing Singapore. As a colonial regional military and administrative headquarters, it boasted the best telecommunications, support and transport facilities in the region:

If a typewriter broke down or something went wrong with the car, you had to get the stuff from Singapore. . . For a while, whenever a plane arrived from Jakarta, one of us would go out and as the passengers filed out, we would ask them, "Got anything for the ABC?" Sure enough they would often have a piece of tape. Singapore had the communications infrastructure. For many years
you could not run a Jakarta operation without the backup from Singapore; to get money to pay the staff, to get tapes in.165

Jakarta office, which opened with the assistance of the Australian Foreign Affairs Department, received its first ABC journalist in 1959. Hong Kong and Bangkok bureaux were established in 1972, with Beijing established as a result of Whitlam government recognition of China the following year.

Former ABC correspondent, Warwick Beutler, said that only the ABC and the Age-Fairfax group had taken seriously the need to station Australian correspondents in Asia. However, Beutler also claimed that the selection of ABC journalists for Asia was "very much a hit and miss affair". Beutler said that internal ABC politics were sometimes as important to correspondents' appointments as candidates' ability:

The person chosen might have tertiary qualifications or he might never have gone to university. He might have been selected because he speaks Chinese or Indonesian, or he might be one of those people totally incapable of grasping a foreign language. He might have been a good political reporter or a good television interviewer in Australia, but mostly he has an unproven record for working very much on his own in a country he knows very little about. The success rate, measured in terms of performance, is far from satisfactory. Once in the post, the reporter gets minimal feedback from the departments to which he contributes. Unlike the news paper reporter, the ABC man does not see or hear the his finished product, except as it comes back via Radio Australia. He's expected to be a manager as well as a journalist, with administrative duties taking up a considerable part of his time.166

An ABC bureau in the 1960's and 70's might have had up to six locally appointed employees with the Australian correspondent as the titular head. A typical office would mainly consist of locally employed staff and include an office administrator, as well as a driver. Singapore, which became the regional administrative centre, even had an Australian appointed General Manager, Southeast Asia who oversaw

165Peter Hollingshead, Personal Interview, 30 November 95.
the whole operation. The Singaporean ABC postings included an office just off the increasingly prestigious Orchard Road and an apartment with servants at an expatriate-populated inner suburb, as well as membership in that bastion of colonial privilege, the Singapore Cricket Club.

Even though accommodation may have been privileged, news gathering in Asia was seen as more difficult than postings to Britain or the United States. In the early days at least, reporters were said to rely heavily on primary sources, as opposed to other press reports, to formulate their stories. Peter Hollingshead directed the operations of ABC correspondents in Asia for almost two decades:

You could send a billy goat to North America or London. They step off the plane. They have the best media in the world; radio, television and newspapers. They can start plucking from that and hours after they arrive they can start filing copy. In Asia, there wasn't a decent paper, or television. It took eighteen months for an ABC Australian bloke to hit his straps in Asia. Then, with this silly business of two year postings, you have six months with the bloke at his top and then he was on his way back... You had to scratch and claw for every bit of news. You couldn't just pick up the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* with the headlines screaming at you. You know what the *Straits Times* or the Jakarta papers are like. It was hard work.

Most Radio stories were text based, and filed by teleprinter. Gary Scully, ABC’s Indonesia Correspondent from 1973 to 1975, said that in most weeks he filed only about five voice reports, which were pre-recorded and sent through a pre-booked line from the telecommunications office in central Jakarta. Scully saw the moneys spent on supporting the correspondents as well spent, an indication of the ABC’s commitment to Asian news:

The expense of the ABC placing foreign correspondents, particularly in Asia, was more than justified over the years by the results. We all remember quite brilliant coverage that the ABC has risen to on occasions. I can remember Tony Ferguson covering the separation of Malaya and Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew on air.

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167 The ABC had three such overseas General Managers; located in Singapore, London and New York.
168 Peter Hollingshead, *op.cit.*
crying, crying on the tele. That was something the ABC brought to
the world. It probably justified years of being in Singapore and
gaining confidence in Singapore. There are plenty of examples of
ABC reporters in Asia who broke new ground, opened up new
stories and literally led the way for the Australian media. We kicked
the shit out of the agencies.⁶⁶⁹

Correspondents, however, usually had access to a Reuters news feed which often
served as a "tip off" for breaking stories. ABC television news meanwhile relied
heavily on syndicated material usually provided by Visnews (a subsidiary of
Reuters). Such material was often edited in the field then packaged in either New
York or London before being sent to Sydney where it was married to a voice-over
produced by an ABC correspondent in Asia.⁶⁷⁰ The process resulted in lengthy
delays, as stories were selected by a series of offices and organisations. Even ABC
sub editors saw television News from Asia through the filters of British or
American news values. These often unstated priorities were to linger in the news
making process after technical advances eliminated the circuitous route through
Western news offices. The former Head of ABC Television News, Jack Gulley,
said that even after the introduction of direct satellite news feeds from Asia in 1975,
Australian sub-editors were still unwilling to prioritise stories from Asia:

There was a reluctance of sub editors to use Asian material. A lot of
the time they didn't think that it was of any great relevance to
Australia. The whole cultural historical tradition had been geared
towards London and then to some extent towards north America.
Asian material was not seen as relevant in the same context as that
from America and Europe.

Was this attitude more extreme in the sixties?

Yes. But it was happening right through almost until I left the ABC.
There was a trend towards using more material from south east Asia
but the major stories were still coming out of north America,
London and Europe. Except when you got into the death and
disaster area, which always came out of south east Asia. The
Vietnam war was the turning point.

What did these priorities mean in terms of news bulletins?

¹⁶⁹Gary Scully, Personal Interview, 24 November 95
There is a restriction about how much news can go into a television bulletin. The average ABC bulletin, by the time you took out the weather component and sport, was about twenty odd minutes. A commercial station would also take out ads and promotions, leaving only about fourteen minutes of news in the half hour. You can't fit too many stories into those minutes. If the sub editors are faced with a choice between a secondary story from the Europe or the US as opposed to a secondary story from Asia, they will probably elect to go for the first. The Asian stories just don't get used. That is a continuing problem in the television news area.\textsuperscript{171}

Under the management of David Hill, the ABC sought to rationalise and increase its coverage of South East Asia. Divisions were broken down between departments such as News and Current Affairs which had often previously regarded correspondents as their exclusive property. In 1994, ABC Foreign News Editor, John Highfield, had day to day editorial responsibility for all of the correspondents filing for radio:

We have about seventy people around the world, with a direct reporting staff of twenty four or twenty five on a permanent basis overseas. We might have another half dozen or dozen on short term assignment as well. . .The history of the ABC and its foreign correspondents has been by and large to leave the editorial story selection to those correspondents who are on the ground. To a large extent they set the agenda. However, you could say that there is some setting of the agenda by the selection of where they are going to be.\textsuperscript{172}

However, agendas were effectively fixed by the executive producers who controlled the programs into which the correspondents filed. Most ABC correspondents were expected to give priority to programs produced by the News and Current Affairs Departments from which most had been recruited. ABC reporters may have been free to report whatever issues they chose, but they had little or no control over whether their stories were subsequently broadcast.

In 1993, the ABC introduced an international, advertising funded television service, Australia Television, which had a particular focus on the Asian region. The former

\textsuperscript{171}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172}John Highfield, Personal Interview, 2 May 1994.
Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating saw the launch of the new service as taking Australia "another step along the road towards a closer relationship towards the region":

We should be projecting to the world the truth about Australia; this is a robust democracy, a society as rich and diverse and unique as the continent itself. A people able to imagine their future and the world. A creative people, able to make things the world wants to buy. Able to deliver the information and services which the world needs. Able to deliver products of their imagination and culture.173

Keating explicitly linked the promotion of Australian culture with development of Australian trade with Asia. To this end, the new service was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with additional moneys hoped to be drawn from corporations developing businesses in the region. Yet in spite of the optimistic rhetoric, the new service did not seek to generate substantial amounts of new material. Rather it was intended to re-broadcast programs and other items produced for the domestic service, including reports by ABC foreign correspondents in Asia.174 Nevertheless, in doing so, it influenced the production work of these journalists. Their already substantial duties were extended to produce stories of interest to an international as well as a domestic television audience. These items were processed by Australia Television's small news staff, headed by Executive Producer, Prakash Mirchandani, located in the Darwin newsroom. The team which also included two presenters and about four producers was expected to select material to fill two regionally focused bulletins each evening.

Demand for more television footage led an Australia Television executive to tour the region in April, 1993, unsuccessfully seeking stringers willing to shoot stories using hand-held home video equipment.175 The ABC subsequently directed its Radio

174 Michael Mann, Personal Interview, 17 November 94.
175 Eric Ellis, the Australian Financial Review's correspondent in Hong Kong, claimed that Mirchandani proposed a deal which would require the stringer to purchase a high quality, home
reporters to supply television on a needs basis, supplying them with home video cameras to provide vision. ABC Radio's Bangkok based correspondent, Evan Williams, found that he was required to learn camera work, television production and presentation "on the job":

Television work is time consuming, and Evan gives every appearance of being the proverbial meat in the bureaucratic sandwich as he tackles the often conflicting commitments of ongoing obligations to radio, with the increasing demands of television. As his position is still totally funded out of the Radio budget, it's not hard to imagine the long hours and organisational frustrations that are inevitable in any attempt to begin satisfying everyone, particularly when regional stories regularly make world headlines.176

ABC management considered that international television could represent a more potent challenge to regional "cultural sensitivities", and as a result initiated guidelines to "assist editors and producers in meeting the general needs and expectations of a new and different overall audience". According to Australia Television's "Guidelines for International Reporting", there must be an identification with the target audiences in Asia and the Pacific, projecting Australian values honestly but with sensitivity to the values that exist throughout the diverse region.177 ABC journalists were required to consider "important editorial and programming assumptions" which included:

- Journalists should see themselves as regional broadcasters rather than "foreigners".
- Australian domestic issues and interests should have a natural and important place on the information and entertainment agendas of the region.
- News content of bulletins should be based on a mix reflecting regional priorities, e.g. Asia Pacific region, important world news, then other Australian news.
- Some expressions of Australian culture may be inappropriate for distribution within other cultures.178

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178Ibid.
However the guidelines failed to take into account the inherent conflict between Australian journalists' codified ethics which encouraged "independent" reporting and "development" and "communist" modes of journalism which demanded cooperation with or action on behalf of their respective governments. Tiffen observed that Asian governments which criticised Western media coverage of their countries may be seeking changes which benefit the ruling elite rather than their country's wider interests. Tiffen said that while these governments' self interest did not invalidate criticisms, it did raise questions about the governments' motives, as well as the changes suggested:

The idea that the problem and adversary orientation should be replaced by the press becoming a partner in development, sounds plausible in principle. But it is hard to see the practice producing anything other than a sycophantic and uncritical press, one which could easily develop norms of suppressing true bad News and promoting false good News.  

Australia Television entered into contracts to distribute programs and establish a local bureau in Vietnam. Yet the Hanoi government remained explicitly hostile to criticism by journalists. Amnesty International reported that there were still as many as 70 prisoners of conscience in Vietnam in 1992. These included Doan Viet Hoat who was sentenced to 20 years jail in 1993, for publishing an unlicensed newsletter named Dien Dan Tu Do (Freedom Forum). He was also found guilty of sending abroad articles which were critical of the Vietnamese government.

Meanwhile, the ABC successfully tendered for a contract to train broadcasters employed by the Vietnam Prime Minister's propaganda outlet, the Voice of Vietnam. The Hanoi-based ABC correspondent, Chris Kremmer, who shared

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179 Tiffen, op. cit., 1978, 188.
181 The name "Voice of Vietnam", was chosen on 5 September 1945 by Bac Bo (North Vietnam) Propaganda Department. A translation of Ho Chi Minh's independence declaration became its first
his office with the training program, complained of censorship of incoming
information, restricted sources and the need to have a government official attached
as a translator to his office.

There's not a culture of news and information of the kind that we know. We get the Vietnamese news agency here which is then re-
regurgitated in most of the Vietnamese language newspapers. By
and large, ninety percent of it is not usable. It does give you
interesting pointers to the way this one party society thinks its
problems are; what it wants to focus on. [It does so] not always in
ways that people in the West would think were a fair or good way
to go about it.\textsuperscript{182}

Kremmer's outgoing reports, produced under such restricted circumstances, were
broadcast without qualifications on domestic and international ABC services. David
Hill spoke of the need to tread a fine line between "sensitivity and censorship":

We have always recognised that we are beaming into other people's
countries, other people cultures, other people's lounge rooms and
there should be some regard for the cultural diversity in the region
and after consultation with Radio Australia which has been
broadcasting in the region for fifty years, we drew up some
guidelines for programmers and news editors for Australia
Television to make sure we were not causing unnecessary
offence.\textsuperscript{183}

To assuage concerns expressed among ABC staff that the desire to avoid offending
authoritarian foreign governments might translate into domestic censorship, the
Editorial Guidelines re-affirmed Western concepts of a "genuinely independent
overseas service". The ABC recognised that the context of the material would
determine its usage. The ABC stated that it would not distort or censor program
material, particularly information programs, in order to avoid the possibility of
offence to one or other part of the totality of its audience. "It should be clearly
stated that awareness of areas of sensitivity such as those above will not mean that
Australia Television or Radio Australia will be restrained in any way from the full

\textsuperscript{182}Kremmer, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{183}David Hill, Personal Interview, 17 February 94.
and accurate reporting and reflection of events in the region, in the tradition of independence, authority and integrity developed over forty years by Radio Australia's news and information services,” the guidelines said.184

Hill might not have been aware that Radio Australia had itself been at the very centre of a struggle between those at the ABC who believed it should offer "independent" views and those at DFAT's predecessor, the External Affairs Ministry, who believed that it should serve as the foreign voice of Australian government policy. The struggle had been particularly intense during the World War Two and the Cold War periods when Australia was seeking to defend and then project Western values throughout the region. Staff questions about Australia Television's "independence, authority and integrity" were not moderated in 1994 by Hill's appointment of Michael Mann, a diplomat with no previous experience in broadcasting, as Australia Television's Chief Executive.

Conclusion
Foreign correspondents are among the most privileged of Australian journalists. However, their access to Asian information and sources could be expected to be limited by their professed lack of Asian languages. The fact that all but one of the respondents had been in Asia for less than a decade indicates that most had little opportunity to cultivate long term contacts.

The distribution and numbers of correspondents seemed inadequate to cover or even interpret such a diverse and populous region. Australia's largest newspaper group, News Limited, had a disproportionately small number of Asian based correspondents, relying on syndicated material from newsagencies. Meanwhile, Australian Associated Press, whose material was carried by most Australian newspapers, had only one correspondent in the entire region. The Australian

184Ibid.
Broadcasting Corporation, while maintaining the most extensive network of bureaux, also demanded most of its reporters who were required to generate material tailored for radio and television, domestic and international networks.
CHAPTER SIX

REPORTERS AND INFLUENCES

You know, when I first started in journalism, I used to think that foreign correspondents spoke every language under the sun and spent their lives studying international conditions. Brother look at us! On Monday afternoon, I was in East Sheen breaking the news to a widow of her husband's death leap with a champion girl cyclist - the wrong widow as it turned out; the husband came back from business while I was there and cut up very nasty. Next day the Chief has me in and says, "Corker you're off to Ishmaelia." "Out of town job?" I asked. "East Africa," he said, just like that, "pack your traps." "What's the story?" I asked. "Well," he said, "a lot of niggers are having a war. I don't see anything in it myself, but the agencies are sending feature men, so we've got to do something. We want spot news," he said, "and some colour stories. Go easy on the expenses".

Evelyn Waugh185

What do Australia's foreign correspondents think of Australia's coverage of the region? The most extensive section of the questionnaire sought answers on the sources they regarded as the most reliable, to determine where reporters said they got their stories from.

Many of the journalists surveyed were required to cover more than one country if not the whole region. It is often impossible for foreign correspondents simply to act like old time rounds reporters, cultivating contacts, attending meetings and picking up news releases. They must rely on other journalists and other media to be the initial source of information on stories they would have to cover. Their rating of the usefulness of national and international media could be expected to reflect their assessment of its reliability as well as its accessibility.

185Evelyn Waugh, Scoop, 1964, 77.
Coverage

In open ended questions, the correspondents were asked to comment anonymously on Australian coverage of the region on which they reported. Most felt that Australian reporting on the region was neither accurate nor balanced. Those that did, thought such coverage was "very thin in some areas" or lacked "depth". Others said that while individual stories were accurate enough, the overall coverage was selective and flawed. One respondent said, "I think generally it's probably accurate and balanced enough, but collectively it is so inconsistent and sporadic that it can give a distorted image, mainly by reporting isolated incidents, rather than trends and developing issues".

Most thought that coverage was inadequate because most Australian news organisations failed to provide the necessary resources to report on Asia. There was too little understanding of cultural differences, and too few outlets inside Australia for "good" analysis. There was a perceived lack of interest among the Australian public and a "Eurocentric bias in the Australian media". One respondent said that "the Australian media allow the international news agenda to be set in New York or London". Nearly all thought that there should be more Australian correspondents based in Asia, and most believed that editors should run stories from the region more frequently and more prominently. Asian studies should be emphasised in the education and training of journalists. "Media companies need to get serious about Asia," said one.

Primarily respondents blamed apathy, ignorance and even racism for what was seen as the current unsatisfactory coverage of Asia. Domestic news priorities, costs and "stingy newspaper company finances" were also blamed. Australians had a "Eurocentric view of the world" while their "media companies have looked to Europe and the USA to build their foreign networks". They had not kept up with the times. Managements were on the whole seen to be very slow to realise the importance of the
Pacific Rim to Australia. There was a lack of "perspective with the focus on London, New York and Washington" which was seen as "a hangover from the colonial past!".

Sources

Australian journalists overwhelmingly chose Western sources when seeking information about their beats in ASEAN and Indochina. Asian sources, notably those from the Philippines were consistently rated as least useful. While Asian national sources might be expected to rate lower because of reduced accessibility, Asian international news agencies also rated lowly. The only exceptions were the Thai newspapers; the only non Western source to make the top ten.

The respondents were asked to rate sources as very useful, of some use and of no use. They were offered 20 categories to choose from including international news agencies, magazines and organisations, as well as national politicians, newspapers and radio and television stations. More than ninety sub-categories were also provided. They rated diplomats as most useful, followed by the weekly magazine, the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, BBC Radio, the Thai newspapers and Radio Australia. Two of the big four international news agencies, Reuters and Agence France Press (AFP) were also in the top ten, reflecting their extensive use by the Australian correspondents' employers. The *Asian Wall Street Journal* and BBC Television were also rated highly.

The survey was initially distributed in May 1993, to correspondents attending the UN controlled elections in Cambodia. At the time, UNTAC was holding twice daily

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186A journalist located in Phnom Penh could not be expected to have easy access to foreign newspapers, unless they took the trouble to visit the foreign country's local Embassy. However, many of the journalists surveyed had responsibility for more than one country and should therefore have access to more than one country's national media.
news conferences in Phnom Penh, perhaps explaining the high rating of UN information in this survey.

**Figure 6.1**

**Australian Correspondents' ten most respected sources**

![Bar chart showing the top ten sources](chart.png)

**Diplomats**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Of some use</th>
<th>Of no use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diplomats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diplomats, particularly Australian foreign affairs officials, remained Australian journalists’ most favoured sources in east and south east Asia. All of the correspondents saw diplomats as useful or very useful as sources. This result confirmed Rodney Tiffen’s anecdotal findings made in 1978. Tiffen found that the most notable aspects of the correspondents’ source structure were its potential diversity and the symbiotic relation between foreign newsmen (sic) and foreign diplomats:

Diplomats and journalists have shared interests and other compatibilities, stemming not from publicity and career advancement so much as from similarities of role and social
situation. They both have to gather information about the societies in which they are based - their foreign relations, economic policies, domestic policies; and in this case sometimes directly help each other.\textsuperscript{187}

Tiffen noted that journalists' and diplomats' social situation were also likely to enhance personal compatibility. While this may be true in individual cases, for most journalists the relationship was clearly a pragmatic one based on mutual needs and serviced by DFAT policy.

In the 1990's, most Australian Embassies or High Commissions had Second Secretaries authorised to deal with the media. Their responsibilities went far beyond issuing news releases or sending translations of relevant clippings. As one information officer put it, "I feel like a Chief of Staff [in a news organisation]. I provide tip offs, set up contacts, introduce people and give background information".\textsuperscript{188}

Since as the survey revealed, most Australian foreign correspondents were unable to speak the local language in the country they were visiting, many frequently relied on diplomats to provide translated material. This information could be drawn from other secondary sources including local newspapers, trade contacts, friendly politicians as well as military and intelligence officers. Since such briefings were routinely conducted "off the record", diplomats were well placed to influence media coverage without having to take responsibility for what was said. This process was reflected in the case study of the Cambodian election, where the then Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, while frequently and indeed repeatedly consulted, was quoted only three times in the press.

\textsuperscript{187}Tiffen, op.cit., 1978, 59/60.
\textsuperscript{188}Julie Meldrum, Personal Interview, 15 July 94.
As veteran Australian correspondent, John Shaw observed, diplomats could be useful if hardly dispassionate sources of information for reporters:

They [correspondents] can speak to most diplomats, particularly those from Australia or Western countries, in English, which is important if you don't speak the local language. It also important for radio and television reporters to have an English speaking voice or head for their stories. Diplomats are by and large accessible. They usually work at a well known given, fixed point. There's usually a down town embassy and you can go to it and there's an information officer who will put you in touch with the First Political Secretary for a briefing or the Ambassador for an interview. Also embassies are institutions with a range of interests, so you can go to them and ask a range of questions. You can ask them about the latest political controversy, the latest UN matter or perhaps the latest economic treaty. Of course diplomats make themselves accessible because they have a line or lines to push. They want to get out the line from their country and their government. So language, ease of access and a range of information are attractive things for foreign correspondents. I would not say that journalists should avoid diplomats or use them less. They are very useful. But their information ought, can and should be balanced by information from non diplomatic sources, from business sources, from non official sources, from NGO [Non Government Organisation] sources.189

In Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) pursued a proactive media policy which sought to influence the attitudes of journalists reporting foreign affairs. DFAT operated three schemes which sought to influence journalists by providing expense paid visits.190 The Overseas Media Visits (OMV) Program administered by the Department's Overseas Information Branch (OIB), aimed to influence foreign media coverage of Australia by encouraging selected media representatives to gather and produce material which would help project Australian government policies and interests. Up to 200 overseas media representatives visited Australia each year under the program. About half of these visits were funded by DFAT. Assistance ranged from arranging interviews to complete programs of appointments. According to DFAT, "extensive coverage of benefit to Australia was

190Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Foreign Correspondents Overseas, 1992.
achieved through the program, which was an important vehicle for projecting specific Australian policy issues as well as matters of broader interest".

The other two schemes involved sending Australian journalists to Asia and the Pacific. The South East Asia/South West Pacific Visits Program for Australian Media Representatives was established after talks with the Australian Journalists Association (since amalgamated into the Media Alliance). The scheme was designed to be a long term exercise for assisting Australian journalism as a profession. It aimed to give journalists first hand experience of the region and to better understand "the complexity of political, cultural and social dynamics". At the same time it also set out to show those countries the seriousness and importance Australian media attached to the region. Following a review in 1989, the scheme was extended to cover the Pacific as well as the ASEAN countries. The North East Asia Media Visits Program was established in 1990 by the Australian government in response to the recommendations in the report, *Australia and the North East Asian Ascendancy*, prepared for the government by Professor Ross Garnaut. The program involved awards for working visits of up to 14 days in China, Hong Kong, Japan or Korea to one country or more than one) to full time journalists. In both of these programs, funds were provided to cover international and domestic air fares, as well as reasonable daily expenses. It should be noted that journalists did not benefit automatically from these programs. Successful journalists were required to meet criteria set by a panel usually chosen by DFAT.

According to DFAT spokesperson, Susan Boyd, the Department provided its staff with media awareness training and devoted "considerable energy to management of the media aspects of emerging foreign policy questions". Ms Boyd said that the good journalist would know that, while the department would not lie, its primary objective was the pursuit of Australia's best interests in the international arena. That may not always be best served by complete openness:
Unfortunately, the department usually gets requests for help from sloppy and inexperienced journalists who have undertaken no research before coming to us, who are unaware of the previous history and who have not refreshed themselves with their own newspaper’s recent reporting of the issue. The best that can be said about this experience is that it allows the department absolutely to shape the story. But that is not really what the department is about.\textsuperscript{191}

The Far Eastern Economic Review

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The Far Eastern Economic Review, an American owned (Dow Jones and company), Hong Kong based, English language weekly news magazine was the second most useful source for Australian foreign correspondents. Their responses mirrored that of Asian News editors who rated the magazine as the fourth most useful source, in the survey published by Andrew Szende in 1986\textsuperscript{192}.

Established in 1946, the Review specialised in covering the east and south east Asian region. In 1994, it sold about 80,000 copies each week, targeting the educated elite; politicians, business people, lawyers, teachers, academics and other journalists. It was aimed at, "informed people who were looking for more than what they got from their local newspapers".\textsuperscript{193}

So why did most Australian correspondents, who could be expected to be expert consumers of regional news, choose a Western owned news magazine as a very useful source? Perhaps it was particularly accessible: an English language

\textsuperscript{192}Szende, op.cit., 1986, 68/69.
\textsuperscript{193}Nayan Chandra, Personal Interview, 18 July 94.
production, which was available region wide, and which subscribed to Western journalism conventions of objectivity and balance. Yet the same could be said of Australia Television which was rated as very useful by only two respondents. So what made the Review different in its approach, so that respondents preferred it to their own media?

Nayan Chandra, the Review's deputy editor, said that the magazine's credibility rested on its network of correspondents, with bureaux in Bangkok, Hanoi, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Singapore. While the Australian Broadcasting Corporation had a comparable network (if you included part-time stringers), the ABC often placed correspondents in Asia for strictly defined terms (two years) before bringing them back to Australia. This policy would have contributed to the fact that half of the survey's Australian respondents had less than five years experience in the region.

The Review, in contrast, kept its correspondents in the field. The Chief Correspondent, Rodney Tasker, who was based in Bangkok, had worked for the Review for more than twenty years. Chandra said this magazine employed journalists who had long institutional memories:

When you are under deadline pressure and resources for checking facts are not so developed, you go by your own clipping files, your own local knowledge and your own memory. Some things you see happening, you know their backgrounds, you know their antecedents. Particularly in Asia, the personality factor is important, it is important to know who is who and what the connections are. That is half the story.

Review journalists were expected to be fluent in the local languages giving them a significant advantage over those Australian journalists who could only speak

194Ibid.
195Ibid.
European languages. These Australian reporters would be invariably forced to rely on translators, introducing yet another filter in the information gathering process:

Until a few years ago officials and business men (in Asia) were reluctant to talk to reporters. It most places the press was not free. People were afraid to speak. Government was not used to dealing with the press. Their idea was, 'Here is a handout. Now bug off!'. In that kind of atmosphere, journalists had to background, to interpret, not just report what happened. They had to put the facts in context. They could do that because of their long association with that country.\(^{196}\)

Meanwhile, the Review, unlike most Australian organisations (the West Australian and the Sydney Morning Herald being notable exceptions) employed specialist Asia desk editors with knowledge of the region. Unlike Australia's Channel Nine referred to earlier, Chandra claimed the Review was driven by correspondents, rather than an editor's agenda of what might fit the format:

The media are more and more market driven, driven by the need to get bigger sales and make more advertisements by pushing themselves. People are only concerned about what story will sell the paper well. In some ways the journalists don't have much choice. In my eight years in Washington (as a correspondent), I have seen how the battle for ratings and the advertisement dollar is leading newspapers away from their original purpose, to inform the public; about the things they need to know rather than the things they might be titillated to know.\(^{197}\)

The Review was said to be less susceptible to such pressures because it served a niche market which demanded "serious information". It was able to charge a high cover price (A$7.00) which made it less dependent on advertisers.

Working for a weekly magazine was seen to afford Review correspondents the freedom of space for longer stories and the time to prepare them. The most important political story of the week, the cover story, could run to 5,000 words or five pages.

\(^{196}\)Ibid.
\(^{197}\)Ibid.
Each of the lead stories in the magazine's three sections, business, arts and society, would usually run to about 2,000 words.

In comparison, ABC journalists' ability to provide reasoned analysis could be hindered by their having to report to a multiplicity of programs, producers and networks. The Executive Producer of the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* program, John Budd, said that such pressure to satisfy so many divergent programs diminished ABC correspondent's ability to seek out and cultivate non Western sources. This in turn contributed to correspondents being contained within a cycle of Western influenced reports on Asia:

> You have reporters who are filing not only for the main domestic news and current affairs programs, including the AM's and the World Today's and the PM's but also for Radio Australia, and specialist programs, as well as taking phone calls from announcers on talk shows. Now they are expected to do stories for television, programs like ours, as well as Australia Television. It is a sausage machine and occasionally it runs out of control. It ties them to their desks. Too often a successful reporter is one who simply feeds the machine and who does not get out there and who does not have the time to get out there to do the leg work to get the insights that are the key to being a foreign correspondent.

The varied output of contemporary ABC foreign correspondents might be compared to that of some of their less pressured predecessors. BBC correspondent, Douglas Stuart, said that when he arrived in New Delhi in 1949 to cover both India and Pakistan, he was expected to make a weekly broadcast by short wave radio. He might also file spot news, "if there was a story".

*Far Eastern Economic Review* journalists had significantly more time and space to analyse in detail than their fellow journalist working for the ABC. The latter who would be filing stories of about 100 words for Radio News or stories of up to three minutes duration for ABC current affairs. While journalists might file longer stories

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198John Budd, Personal Interview, 19 October 94.
for ABC Television, the content was often qualified by the need to find suitable vision. The ABC journalists would not be working to a single editor. Rather they would be taking calls from editors across Australia.200

**BBC Radio**

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The BBC was even more popular among Australian journalists than their own Radio Australia. It seemed that while the Empire itself was long dead in most of Asia, its voice was still being heard and appreciated by some of the former colonials.

As the similarity of names might suggest, the BBC provided a model for Australia's ABC. BBC news programs were initially re-broadcast on the Australian network, without editing, preceding the establishment of an indigenous ABC News service. ABC journalists inherited a philosophy of broadcasting which embraced the liberal democratic approach of a socially responsible media; notions of objectivity, balance, responsibility, fairness and a perceived freedom of bias.201 Former BBC foreign correspondent, Douglas Stuart, articulated this notion of "objective" reporting:

200 ABC correspondents interviewed complained of the problems created by having to work to a number of masters. In Hanoi, Chris Kremmer noted:

There's tremendous pressure on people who are in these positions. I am speaking of my own experience over the last four years. You really do make large personal sacrifices and you really do have people calling you at all hours of the day and night at three in the morning, who don't know the meaning of a time difference. They say, "Hi...we just want to do a q. and a. and just want you to talk to us". You have got to be diplomatic and you have got to learn to say, "Yes", without getting upset at the fact that its forty degrees and the air conditioner isn't working and the bureaucracy in the country you are dealing with is a mess and all your staff haven't appeared for work and you are under massive pressure. It's a great adventure but it is also a great responsibility. You learn a lot. You pay for it on a personal level. You can never service everybody. You just try.

Kremmer, op.cit..

The BBC has no editorial views but it does have an editorial policy. This is to present all the relevant facts of the news with the relevant comments, if available, of others. The BBC holds up a mirror to the world, seeking to reflect an undistorted picture of what is happening. A working BBC Correspondent does not broadcast his own opinions, only the opinions of others; and these he tries to balance so that the listener and the viewer is given the opportunity to decide about the conclusions to be drawn from the facts in an unprejudiced frame of mind. This is not to say that BBC correspondents are political eunuchs. On the contrary, all hold opinions on the men and the matters they report, but, as part of their craft, their opinions are suppressed.202

BBC news reports were couched in language and philosophy with which Australian correspondents could readily identify. The BBC's ethos for international broadcasts developed partly out of British experiences during World War Two. Preponderance of "truth", it was believed, had far more positive psychological effects on listeners than the Nazi brand of propaganda transmissions. Out of this practice developed a fairly stable relationship with the State, or to be more specific, with the Foreign office in London. The British taxpayers, via the Foreign Office, paid for the operation. The return on the investment for Britain was considerable goodwill and an operation characterised by authoritativeness, reliability, stability and professionalism. There was said to be a clear give and take relationship with the establishment which allowed the operation to continue.203

In Southeast Asia, BBC bureaux were located in Hong Kong, Singapore, Jakarta and Bangkok. BBC Hong Kong correspondent, Simon Long said the BBC enjoyed access to a multiplicity of sources; it subscribed to wire services including Reuterss, AFP, and Associated Press as well as a number of the minor national services. But what of criticisms of the BBC claiming a Eurocentric bias? Contemporary correspondents such as Simon Long were more sanguine about BBC editorial policy than their predecessors:

The line within the BBC is that there is no editorial line. This is of course complete nonsense. Of course there has to be an editorial line. The way they do it is through style. You get indoctrinated about what the BBC sounds like. That usually includes (giving) both sides of the argument. Where it gets difficult is with judgements on whether to run stories... When China began its economic reforms, it didn't get reported because it didn't fit in with what [was thought] China does.\(^{204}\)

The British Foreign Office required the BBC to run a monitoring service, which provided BBC World News with regular, updated translations of foreign language news services. The service based at Caversham, today "provides edited transcripts of Radio and Television broadcasts around the world, as well as summaries of articles from newspapers and news agencies". Bob Jobbins, the Editor of News and Current Affairs at the BBC's World Service, said such reports were supported by analytical material.\(^{205}\)

This meant that while BBC correspondents were able to draw on additional sources of information; non English language sources which allowed sub editors wider criteria on which to judge correspondents' stories. Further, the BBC sought to check news agency reports by maintaining a policy which required confirmation from a second source. "We are particularly insistent on corroboration, where facts are in any sense suspect, or their original source is thought to be partisan," Jobbins said.

**The Thai Press**

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The Thai newspapers were the only Asian owned and operated source in the Australian correspondents top ten. In interviews, many correspondents referred to

\(^{204}\) Long, op.cit., 1994.

\(^{205}\) Bob Jobbins, Personal Fax, 26 June 95.
the Thai English language press which, at its best, was seen by many to equal the most authoritative publications in the region.

Thailand lies at the heart of ASEAN; sharing its borders with Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Burma and Malaysia. Like Singapore, its excellent international airport made Bangkok a cross roads for foreign correspondents. However, unlike its counterparts in the Lion City, the Thai press was relatively free of government controls. Thailand’s outward looking, high quality English language press was an easily accessible source of news for visiting and resident foreign correspondents. Bangkok newspaper executive, Suthichai Yoon, said that “farang” journalists were able to take advantage of the relative freedom of speech in Thailand:

> We do publish a lot of stories which can’t be published elsewhere in the region. Secondly the investigative reports on ASEAN and Indochina are quite open and accurate in the Thai press. You can’t get such information in the China press or in the other ASEAN countries. That is why the Thai newspapers seem to have become front-line news sources...People come and go and there are stories from Burma, Vietnam even after it opened up, China. The correspondents would be arriving back in Bangkok. Many international sources are also based in Bangkok. A lot of countries make their embassies in Bangkok their main stations in the region. That is why you get good sources and good stories. And you are free to publish them! Australian journalists tend to court the Bangkok English language newspapers because they speak no Thai.206

Thailand’s mass media grew markedly in the latter 1980’s, in line with the country’s economic expansion. There were substantial increases in newspaper and magazine circulation levels. More radio and television stations were set up, leading to the electronic media emerging slowly as an alternative news and current affairs force, albeit with sparse analysis and criticism. This tougher competition in the past few years has resulted in the print media embracing new technology and shoring up its position as the most reliable source of in-depth reports and commentaries.

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206Suthichai Yoon, Personal Interview, 3 December 1994.
There were also 265 radio stations in Thailand, most of which were operated by the government's Public Relations Department through Radio Thailand. Thailand became the first Asian country to introduce regular television broadcasts. In 1993, there were nine television stations, of which five were located in Bangkok.

The two leading English language daily newspapers published in Thailand, the *Bangkok Post* and the *Nation*, both used major international wire services for international coverage: Associated Press, Reuters, United Press International and Agence France Press. They also had access to international news syndicates and information services which add to their coverage. This was their most obvious advantage over Thai language newspapers where foreign news reports were delayed by the need for translation and rewriting. About 45 Thai language papers were printed in Bangkok but only about 11 were published regularly. There were about two hundred provincial newspapers.

The Managing Director of the *Siam Post*, Paisal Sricharatchanya, said that the quality Thai newspapers were moving to extend coverage of neighbouring countries. He said that while it could not yet afford, nor had the skilled journalists, to operate a network of correspondents, his own newspaper had already entered agreements to exchange news with other Asian newspapers:

> Each [ASEAN] country has a state run news agency. But they have failed because of the poor quality of their coverage. So no one buys them. So the job is left very much to the private media organisations some of which are quite strong. We have already entered into editorial arrangements with several regional papers; in Hong Kong the *South China Morning Post*, the Straits times in Singapore, the *New Straits Times* in Malaysia, the *China Daily* in China. A lot of arrangements already exist. But what editors have to do now is to turn those arrangements into more substantive agreements. Technically we can start a direct modem to modem link up anytime. So I don't have to pay for my own correspondent in Jakarta. I can use the *Jakarta Post*, if I think that they are good enough.

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208 Paisal Sricharatchanya, Personal Interview, 2 December 1994.
Radio Australia

Very useful  Of some use  Of no use
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Radio Australia was the only Australian based news service in the top ten. This might be seen to reflect on the credibility of Australian reporting of the region, confirming the responses the correspondents made in open ended questions about the quality of Australian coverage. But perhaps it should also be seen to reflect on the paucity of Australian produced news which was available throughout the region. In contrast to their Thai English language colleagues, Australian news producers were still largely looking inwards to the Australian audience rather than the wider regional market.

The Australian government established an international short wave radio service in 1939, to "meet the needs of Australia at war". The first broadcast was made by the conservative Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, who said in the opening program, Australia Calling, that "the time has come to speak for ourselves". During World War 2, the service intentionally spoke on behalf of the Australian government, while operated by the ABC.

The Curtin Labor government called senior ABC executives to Canberra on 7 January 1942, to tell them to put Australia first in their broadcasts and counter BBC programs which gave priority to Europe. The ABC was given responsibility for preparing all Australian radio news, including commercial radio bulletins, for the duration of the war. Its first all Australia bulletin carried the headline story which presaged the end of colonialism in Asia; the news that Singapore had fallen to the

209 As cited by ABC Public Relations pamphlet, "History of ABC Radio Australia", undated.
Japanese. The ABC sub editors ignored Japanese reports claiming their forces had seized Britain's colonial fortress. Showing their preference for European rather than Asian sources, the sub editors delayed broadcasting the news of Singapore's fall until twelve hours after it occurred, while they waited confirmation by cable from London.210

In 1945, the Labor government named the international service Radio Australia. In 1950, a conservative government, again headed by Robert Menzies, abolished the service's controller, the Department of Information, and turned administration over to the ABC. While material was drawn from the domestic ABC services, a liaison officer was appointed from the then Department of External Affairs to provide guidance "which is necessary for a full appreciation of the international situation and Australian policy abroad". The Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender, wrote to the Commission's Chair, Sir Richard Boyer on May 9 1950, "..that Radio Australia be looked at as an instrument of foreign policy. ..".211

Radio Australia's demand for more Asian material increased pressure on the ABC to post more staff to the region. The official history, This is the ABC, claimed that ABC journalists were frequently perceived as Radio Australia representatives when they went to Asia to report. Indonesian President Sukarno used to greet the ABC's Jakarta man, Colin Hann, as "Mr Radio Australia". Walter Hamilton, touring Asia as Controller of News in 1963, was delighted to find Radio Australia so popular in Indonesia that the authorities, "were on the point of asking for the times of News sessions to be changed so as not to collide with those of their own broadcasting organisation".212

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211K.S. Inglis, This the ABC, 1983, 156.
212Ibid, 235/236.
In 1994, Radio Australia broadcast in nine languages: English (24 hours), Bahasa Indonesia (7 hours), Standard Chinese (6 hours), Cantonese (1 hour), Khmer (30 minutes), Tok Pisin (3 hours) and French (30 minutes). It sought to position itself as the most authoritative independent provider of international news and current affairs specialising in the Asia Pacific region. In August 1994, a new English language programs format was introduced with greater emphasis on news and information. Network Asia (News and sport) and international Report were consolidated into a two hour block, which was updated and repeated to serve morning audiences across Asia. The ABC's General Manager, International Broadcasting, Derek White saw Radio Australia's identification with ABC news gathering practices as a source of its credibility:

Radio Australia works within the ABC tradition of independence and impartiality in its reporting. We don't censor the News. We don't add any Australian slant. We have a very high reputation among our listeners, let alone journalists, (who believe) that we are not a propaganda service. We know from times of crisis in Asia when our audience response goes up, that they value that service. Over the years, ABC journalists in Asia have developed a reliable reputation for reliable reporting and not going off half cocked. They are held in high regard by other professionals.

However, White's almost utopian view of the service ignored the Australian Foreign Affairs Department's repeated attempts to have Radio Australia broadcast stories which promoted or at least did not conflict with Australian government policy. In his book, Radio Wars, Errol Hodge, outlined five ways in which Radio Australia continued to serve Australian foreign policy:

- The government exercised considerable influence over appointments to key positions, particularly that of Director. Translation staff were frequently recruited from the RAAF Point Cook Languages School. Meanwhile, Australian

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213 As cited by ABC Public Relations pamphlet, "Radio Australia: Tune In . . . the rest of the world does!!", undated.
215 Derek White, Personal Interview, 20 January 95.
diplomatic influence at times extended to influence the choice of foreign correspondents.

- Self censorship of issues and stories which might offend foreign governments.
- Priorities to target particular countries. Frequently such decisions were made after consultation with Foreign Affairs.
- English language programs which in the longer term, furthered Australian government diplomatic and trade policies.
- Promotional programs which were directly funded by Austrade.216

Nevertheless, Radio Australia could be expected to appeal to Australian correspondents for a number of reasons: It sounded authoritative like its model the BBC and provided Western style news programs which serviced, reflected, and indeed confirmed the expectations of credibility and agendas held by the Australian journalists who responded to the survey. Unlike Australia Television which was also administered by White but which was found to be of no use by 75% of the respondents, Radio Australia could be easily received throughout the whole of the region. The short wave service could be picked up by hand held receivers tuned into transmitters which were specifically directed towards achieving a maximum audience reach in Asia Pacific.217 Meanwhile, Radio Australia regularly carried stories prepared by ABC correspondents who made up the majority of the Australian reporters based in the region, allowing them to monitor the broadcast of their own stories..

**Reuters**

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217White, op.cit.
News agencies, information wholesalers such as Reuters, have a powerful if often unseen influence on the news which appears with the information retailers, the newspapers, radio and television stations. News agency copy, frequently unattributed, continues to provide the bulk of non ABC Australian coverage of southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the pervasive nature of agency material can help set agendas for those organisations which have placed their own correspondents in the field. Reuters helped form the notion of "What is News". A circular sent to Reuters agents in 1883, can still be seen to influence the News judgements of contemporary correspondents in Asia:

The following are the events which should be comprised on the service:- fires, explosions, floods, inundations, railway accidents, destructive storms, earthquakes, shipwrecks attended with loss of life, accidents to war vessels and to mail steamers, street riots of a grave character, disturbances arising from strikes, duels between and suicides of persons of note, social or political, and murders of a sensational or atrocious nature. It is requested that the bare facts be first telegraphed with the utmost promptitude, and as soon as possible afterwards a descriptive account, proportionate to the gravity of the incident.218

News agencies helped establish modern news practice. They sold their news to many outlets, requiring the development of an apparently detached "objective" style which would be accepted in diverse markets. They transmitted concise stories to reduce costs on the initially expensive telegraph system, introducing the "inverse pyramid" style of writing to allow rapid editing. Oliver Boyd Barnett gave four agenda setting functions of the agencies;

• As stated, they helped develop Western concepts of news.
• They influenced editors' judgements about what constituted news. That is, stories did not sometimes become "news" until they were picked up and run by the agencies.

• Agencies were used by other news organisations to check the accuracy of their own reporters, so that they checked their own reporter's copy against that of the agency.

• Reporters often relied on the agency for a quick tip off on breaking news.219

Fairfax's Lindsay Murdoch kept a Reuters printer next to his bed in Singapore:

I have a Reuters wire. If a story breaks I know instantly and I can get on a plane. A few weeks ago, I learned within ten minutes of a snap coming through Reuters that the President of Sri Lanka had been assassinated in a bomb blast in Colombo and I was on a plane within an hour and a half and I was the first Western journalist there. I use the Reuters wire as an advanced warning system and a backgrounder. I keep files of stories that I think will develop and when they are big enough to go, I have a reasonable file as background and I get there.220

Reuters distributed news from three world major centres, London, New York and Hong Kong, with global responsibility for news operations shifting with the movement of the sun. In 1993, Reuters employed about 250 journalists in Asia in about 25 bureaux. (excluding North Korea and Laos). The bureau size varied from somewhere close to one hundred in Tokyo to two to three people in Phnom Penh.221 Asia Editor, Graham Earnshaw, said that most of the thirty Reuters journalists based in Hong Kong, were engaged in editing copy:

The cliché is "a newspaper correspondent has a deadline once a day, while a news agency journalist has a deadline every minute". We are moving stuff for subscribers now while a newspaper journalist is writing for people to read over breakfast tomorrow. We use satellite phones in a number of places around the world. We must have at least a couple of dozen of them. You can set up a satellite phone from just about anywhere in the world and file to just about anywhere. This is modern technology.222

Founded in 1851, Reuters was a British institution, the news agency of the British Empire, with its expansion following the imperial telegraph cable network. British

220Lindsay Murdoch, Personal Interview, 25 May 93.
222Ibid.
government outposts made up a significant proportion of its subscribers. Reuters became a private company in 1916, with the British Foreign Office as a major shareholder.223

During the First World War, it was accused by the Germans of a pro-British bias. Recognising the agency's international influence, the Berliner Tageblatt was quoted as saying, "Mightier and more dangerous than the Fleet and Army is Reuters'."224 The post war decline of the British Empire and the expansion of international news services forced Reuters to adopt a less overtly nationalistic approach. During the inter war period, it sought to make major inroads into the lucrative American market, which was less tolerant of an overtly British government slant. Reuters became pro Western rather than just pro British. The company was again restructured in 1941, as a trust whose majority consisted of newspaper editors. It went public in 1983. Its annual reports now portray Reuters as a modern, transnational corporation.

Reuters's contemporary news reporting reputation rests heavily on its style of presentation; with the Handbook for Reuters Journalists demanding detailed attribution for contentious claims, frequent use of direct quotations, and rigorous attention to questions of basic accuracy, e.g. titles, statistics and the spelling of names. Even Reuters's editors, however, have abandoned notions of false "objectivity". Graham Earnshaw:

What is objectivity? I don't think there is such a thing. I think objectivity is a target to aim for but I think it is unobtainable. Anybody who is writing anything should be striving to obtain a level of objectivity but inevitably is going to be making a choice of words and information which somebody somewhere else is going to consider to be subjective. You can't get around it.

What of the criticisms from countries such as Singapore, Malaysia or Indonesia who claim that organisations like Reuters see news from a Western perspective, translating what is going on in Asia in Western terms?

223 Read, op.cit., 124.
224 Ibid, 134.
I think if you are looking at it in terms of quantity, Reutersss moves more words on the Third World, certainly more than any other organisation does. In terms of proportion of news from Third World Countries as opposed to other centres, I would say it would take up a fairly high proportion. I don't have the exact numbers at my fingertips.

Secondly, in terms of the people producing the news, they are almost all residents and nationals of the countries they are reporting on, products of the education systems and cultural backgrounds of those countries. I wonder how those journalists would feel about such opinions.

*These countries' governments often claim that Western journalists in general tend to concentrate on stories involving conflict and ignore development issues such as business, culture, agriculture and trade.*

Most of the words that we write about any country are about the economy and about the markets; material which is exempt from the sort of opinions which you were just espousing.\(^{225}\)

Yet is the reporting of international business really value free? Could it be that the ideology of business, now the source of most of Reutersss news, had replaced that of the now defunct Empire?

**Agence France Press**

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<tr>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Of some use</th>
<th>Of no use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AFP claims to be the oldest news agency in the world, having been created in 1835, by Charles Louis Havas. During the 19th century, the Havas agency entered into news exchange agreements with Reuterss, as it consolidated its operations throughout the French Empire.\(^{226}\)

Faced by Nazi aggression in 1940, the French government bought the agency's information branch and set up a propaganda office at Vichy. When the Germans

\(^{225}\)Earnshaw, op.cit.,

\(^{226}\)Read, op.cit., 53/55.
came, they took over the agency and turned it into part of the official Nazi news agency, Deutches Nachrichten-Buro.\textsuperscript{227} It acquired its current name in 1944, from members of the underground liberating France from the Nazis.\textsuperscript{228} However, AFP was forced to seek financial support from the incoming government, with consequent slanting of news.\textsuperscript{229} In 1957, the French parliament passed special legislation aimed at guaranteeing AFP's independence and impartiality:

\begin{quote}
Agence France Press can under no circumstances take into account influences or considerations of such nature to compromise the exactitude or objectivity of its information; it must under no circumstances, pass under the legal or de facto control of an ideological, political or economic group.\textsuperscript{230}
\end{quote}

Rather than provide a single, world-wide news service, Agence France Press (AFP) now divides the world into four news zones, with regional headquarters or "hubs" in Paris, Hong Kong, Washington and Nicosia. In Asia and the Pacific, AFP offers its clients an English language "Asian Wire" which carries between 60,000 to 90,000 words each day\textsuperscript{231}. Its major subscribers in Australia include the ABC and the \textit{Australian} news paper. According to Richard Breeze, AFP's Australia/Hong Kong/ South Pacific Director, the French based agency saw itself as Reuterssss most important competitor in Asia:

\begin{quote}
There are a lot of similarities between ourselves and Reuterssss, in that we both cover the major stories. But where we differ is that firstly we put a very strong emphasis on regional news and we carry more such news than Reuterssss. Secondly we are not under orders to put an economic emphasis on everything. Reuterssss correspondents can very often be called upon to file for their economic wires before they file for their news wires. We file economic stories for the business pages, but these are news stories.

\textit{Do you seek to hire local journalists?}

As we have extended and taken on more staff, we find it much more useful to have local people who speak the language in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{227}Richstad Nnaemeka, op.cit., 1979, 37.
\textsuperscript{228}Agence France Press Handout. "A Worldwide News Agency" undated.
\textsuperscript{229}Nnaemeka, op.cit., 37.
\textsuperscript{230}AFP, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{231}AFP Handout, "Products and Services" undated. 3.
Indonesia, Malaysia Cambodia, and even Hong Kong. It's useful to have people with local language and local contacts.

Are foreign correspondents who speak only English at a disadvantage?

I believe so. Most Asian officials are quite used to dealing with the media in English. I am sure that if they are dealing with someone who is asking the wrong questions they can pretend that they don't understand. English is the lingua franca for ASEAN. But say someone is in the bureau on their own. If they can't read the local press, where are we? Foreign correspondents with Asian languages can burrow deeper into the society they are reporting on. Would they go to France without speaking French? Would they go to Germany without speaking German?

Why would foreign correspondents use an agency like AFP?

They are covering stories in countries where they are not [based]. They use it as a tip off. AFP has a full service. In somewhere like Indonesia the local correspondent can go out to lunch, come back and read AFP and learn what has happened in the country where they are living without having to listen to the local Bahasa radio station. They can read it in English.

...However, journalists should check stories out. Foreign correspondents in particular, are paid to write their own stories, not paid to lift them from other agencies.232

Conclusion

Australian foreign correspondents were highly critical of their collective coverage of the region. They were, by their own admission, strongly influenced by Western sources in Asia and according to some, not producing the quality journalism with the unique Australian insights which editors said they sought. Indeed the sources nominated by the Australian foreign reporters revealed their intellectual homelands, placing them squarely in Western journalism culture, with its strong and visible roots in the colonial era. Their preferred sources might indicate that reporters as well as editors suffered from "a hangover from the colonial past!".

An analysis of the sources own methods revealed weaknesses in Australian techniques and practices. Western diplomats could be undeniably accommodating, if flawed and partisan informants. The Far Eastern Economic Review relied on

232Richard Breeze, Personal Interview, 8 May 95.
highly experienced specialists while BBC Radio and Television, the Thai press, and the big Western news agencies tapped heavily into foreign language services.

But should Western sources be so highly favoured by reporters sent to Asia to collect information first hand? Do reporters' cultural affinities affect their priorities in Asia? To answer that question, one must take this study to Asia itself; to consider not only what reporters said about their work, but also to examine in detail what they actually did.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CAMBODIAN ELECTION

Why Cambodia?

Instead of trying to evaluate news in terms of a universal or general definition, we should begin to look at news as it is being produced. This way we will be looking at news as a social phenomena- as a social construction of reality. In other words, we should evaluate news not in terms of an abstract and absolute ideal of what news should be, such as objectivity, fairness and neutrality; (though these values are important) but as a social construction of every day occurrences, viewed in the light of cultures’ priorities, preferences, concerns, sensitivities and (negotiated) in an invisible but powerful undercurrent of attitudes, values and norms.

Anura Goonasekura\textsuperscript{233}, Asian Media Research Centre, Singapore.

Cambodia in May 1993 was a magnet for foreign reporters. It was an Asian country under foreign occupation. Foreign control of Cambodian communications, the economy and even most organs of government, was tangible. The army of occupation was a polyglot group of soldiers, police, aid workers, electoral officers and bureaucrats gathered under the banner of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC).

A case study of the Cambodian election offered unique opportunities to study the work of Australian foreign correspondents in south east Asia. The election had already received widespread publicity within Australia and could be expected to generate more stories, providing a focus for a detailed study. The voting was an event of international significance, involving both the Australian government and the United Nations. It was not an isolated event, but was perceived as the closing chapter of a wider story which had involved generations of Australian correspondents: the Indochina war. In this process, Cambodia had also been significantly fictionalised, most notably in the case of the movie, \textit{The Killing Fields}, perhaps blurring perceptions of "fact" and "fiction".

\textsuperscript{233}Anura Goonasekura, "News as a social construct", \textit{Media Asia}, 1992, 9.
Cambodia had received formal independence from France in 1953. Under the then Prince Sihanouk, it enjoyed more than 15 years of relative calm, before it was drawn into the Indochina war raging across the border in Vietnam. Sihanouk's attempts to remain "neutral" by balancing opposing factions against each other was undermined and ultimately overthrown by bombing, incursions and invasions aimed at interdicting the North Vietnamese supply route, known in the west as the "Ho Chi Minh Trail". 234

A quarter of a century of warfare and isolation turned Cambodia into one of the world's poorest countries, with large numbers of disabled and unemployed people. Almost half the population was under fifteen years old, while almost 60 percent of the population was female. Large numbers of teachers, academics, artisans and professional workers were either killed, died for want of medical care, or simply fled Cambodia, after Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge (Democratic Kampuchea) in 1975. 235 In 1979, a Vietnamese military invasion took control of the capital and central provinces, establishing what the Khmer Rouge called a "puppet government". Subsequent attempts at economic reconstruction were hampered by both Vietnam's diplomatic isolation and the continuing insurgency on the borders. Agricultural research, irrigation construction and other aid projects were abandoned as funds were cut during the progressive disintegration of Vietnam's patron, the Soviet Union. By the beginning of the 1990's, the State of Cambodia presided over a ruined economy which was incapable of generating the taxation necessary to equip and pay the standing army required to keep the Khmer Rouge and its erstwhile allies at bay. International lobbying, including that of the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, provided the catalyst for peace negotiations.

UNTAC resulted from an agreement reached in Paris between the warring Cambodian factions on 23 October 1991. The United Nations Security Council subsequently

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approved the agreement in its resolution 718 (1991) of 31 October. Under the terms agreed, the UN Secretary General appointed a Supreme National Council of Cambodia (SNC) as "the unique legitimate body and source of authority in which, throughout the transitional period, the sovereignty, independence and unity of Cambodia are enshrined". Chaired by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the SNC initially included the four major Cambodia factions: the former pro-Vietnamese government, the State of Cambodia, the royalist party, Funcinpec, and the party of former Prime Minister, Son Sann, the Liberal Democratic Buddhist Party.

Headed by a Japanese diplomat, Yasushi Akashi, UNTAC began operations on March 15, 1992. Head-quartered in what had been the old French residency in the shadow of Wat Phnom, its brief was to hold "free and fair" elections in May 1993, prior to handing the country back to Cambodians later that year. In the interim, UNTAC's operations penetrated almost every corner of Cambodia.

Most contemporary Australian correspondents covering Southeast Asia could be expected to attend the election, allowing them to be interviewed and to be given questionnaires. This was in itself an important consideration, given many correspondents' practice of travelling widely, frequently and at short notice throughout the region. For example, the Age's Lindsay Murdoch, who was based in Singapore, was initially located in Jakarta. AAP's Terry Friel, while based in Jakarta, was often out of the capital visiting Indonesia's provinces.

The final stages of the election campaign covered a predictable and defined period, so that all Australian media could be extensively sampled. The reporting of major stories could be subject to direct observation and subsequent criticism. Reporters could be followed, if necessary to the sound of gunfire, and subjected to sort of scrutiny they normally applied.

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236 UNTAC Fact Sheet, "United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia", 15 March 92, 1.
237 See Appendices II for further details on the factions involved in the Cambodian election process.
to politicians and other sources. Journalism techniques including interviewing, field research and photography could be applied to make the reporters the reported. Their work could be examined in production, rather than just as a product, as is more often the case in other academic studies. It could nevertheless later be considered in the context of other academic research and discussion.

Newspaper reports could be compared to television and radio for depth, variety and analysis. News agency copy could be examined and followed through the news networks to publication. Individual reports of particular incidents could be analysed for content and style, allowing the work of competing reporters to be compared. Meanwhile, the interaction of journalists and an established public relations operation (UNTAC) could be examined through interviews and by comparing issues covered by the public relations daily briefings.

**What the papers reported**

A "quality" newspaper might be identified by the attention it gives to information, as opposed to entertainment, by the independent news generated by its own reporters as opposed to reliance on syndicated copy, by the use of excellent photographs and illustrations, and by the analysis and background it provides its readers. It might also be judged by the space it allocates to foreign news, which is in turn relatively costly and difficult to gather and edit, as well as demanding knowledge and assiduity on the part of its readers.

Four daily newspapers provided the bulk of the press coverage of the Cambodian elections. All of them were represented by correspondents during the voting. News LTD's national daily, the *Australian* and the Fairfax newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age* provided the most comprehensive and voluminous coverage. The
Age would have topped the survey had its total included Lindsay Murdoch's feature style report, "Is peace killing Cambodia?".

**Figure 7.1**

Newspaper coverage of Cambodian elections

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**Table 7.1**

Newspaper Coverage of Cambodian Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>118,850</td>
<td>20,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>244,170</td>
<td>15,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>211,714</td>
<td>15,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West. Australian</td>
<td>West Australian Newspapers</td>
<td>242,982</td>
<td>13,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courier Mail</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>232,258</td>
<td>8,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra Times</td>
<td>Stokes</td>
<td>44,289</td>
<td>7,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Review</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>76,637</td>
<td>6,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>638,297</td>
<td>5,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertiser</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>204,395</td>
<td>5088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraph Mirror</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>515,000</td>
<td>3153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart Mercury</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
<td>51,992</td>
<td>2379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle Herald</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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238 The 2802 sq. cm. spread was distributed in the Good Weekend which is included in both the SMH and the Age. However, it was edited in Sydney and was therefore included in the Sydney Morning Herald total.

239 House of Representatives, News and Fair Facts, 1992, 94.
As one might expect, there was no positive correlation between large circulation and extensive coverage. The *Age*’s Melbourne competitor, the *Herald Sun*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in the survey, came fifth last in space allocated to Cambodian election coverage. Another newspaper, the *Telegraph Mirror*, with the second highest daily circulation, came third last in coverage, surpassing only two minor papers, the *Hobart Mercury* and the *Newcastle Herald*.

To allow an examination and comparison of ways different newspapers covered the Cambodian elections, reports (whether text or photographic) have been broken into six categories;
Illustrations,
News,
News agency,
News Analysis,
Features,
Editorials.

**Illustrations**
Illustrations were defined as news photographs (whether produced by a staff photographer, received from a news agency or taken from a library), cartoons, maps and drawings, together with directly associated sub-headings.
The *Australian* newspaper which used the most photographs and drawings (7,705 sq. cm.) in the survey, also used the highest proportion of illustrations (38.1%). Like all but one newspaper in this study, the *Australian* did not send a staff photographer to Cambodia and instead relied on syndicated material from Reuters and Associated Press. Meanwhile, the *Australian* at times used library material of sometimes dubious vintage. (As reported in Chapter Eight, on one occasion, the *Australian* illustrated contemporary violence in Cambodia with a large photograph which appeared to date back to the Vietnam war.)

In contrast, the *West Australian*, a metropolitan daily with a strong commitment to covering "Asian" news went to the expense of sending a staff photographer, Larry Ashby, to accompany its Asia Desk Editor, Andre Malan to Cambodia. The result included a full page colour photographic spread which showed aspects of daily life in Phnom Penh under the UNTAC regime. "The Healing Fields", *The West Australian*, 5.6.93, included photographs of a Cambodian mine victim, Angkor Wat, a soldier playing a saxophone, and an abandoned baby. This coverage was supplemented with photographs and stories about Australians working for UNTAC. (e.g. "Danger is the
name of the game", 21.5.93, which featured the work of an army nurse). While the imagery might be similar to that provided by the syndicated photo services (maimed children, alert but friendly military etc.), Ashby's photographs contributed to the *West Australian*’s focused and comprehensive coverage.

Most papers failed to use available freelance photographs. Melbourne based freelance photo journalist, Louis Ascui, said that he had contacted most Australian publications prior to departing for Cambodia, offering to supply them with photographs. He said that the Australian editors who had replied to his offer, told him they would rely instead on syndicated photographs, which Ascui regarded as an inferior product:

> I don't see many Australian agencies at all who are looking for the type of photography I do. Most Australian agencies use stock photography, advertising and commercial. When you go to a news-stand in Australia, most of the magazines don't use what I do, photo journalism. Most of the material is from overseas.

> **How do they go about rejecting your work?**

> They don't say anything. You have to find them to get an answer. Elsewhere in the world they at least write you a letter of rejection. I believe that it is very unprofessional. They leave you hanging in the air not knowing what is going to happen.240

**News**

News stories can be distinguished by a number of factors;

(a) News is about events, not states of affairs.

(b) News aims at current rather than past or future events.

(c) News is the report of an event, not the experience of the event.241

In this instance, a news story was further defined as produced by a staff reporter who was usually identified in a by-line.

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240 Louis Ascui, *op.cit.*

The two Fairfax metropolitan dailies, the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* led with the news reports produced in the main by their prolific Singapore-based correspondent, Lindsay Murdoch who worked in Cambodia for the entire period under study. Thirty eight of Murdoch's stories were printed by the papers in the period under study. Although both papers frequently printed versions of the same story, Murdoch was in the practice of updating stories several times a day so that his total output was still substantially higher than the number of stories printed.
The *Australian* printed eleven stories written in Cambodia by its correspondent, David Lague, during the same period. These news reports, beginning with "Khmer Rouge ambuses Dutch unit" on 18.5.93 also included a feature, "Blessed are the Peace Makers", 21.5.93, which centred on a lengthy interview with the UNTAC military commander, General Sanderson. The *West Australian* ran 16 stories written by Andre Malan during the same period. In comparison, published output by the AFR's correspondent, Eric Ellis, was relatively slight with only six stories published. Ellis began his reporting on the Cambodian elections with "Road crash tragedy with Australian troops", 24.5.93, and concluded with "Cambodia's close call raises new KR fears" only six days later. All three newspapers supplemented material produced by their correspondents with substantial amounts of news agency copy. In the case of the Australian, syndicated agency reports (3951 sq. cm.) were allocated slightly more space than stories by the paper's own reporters (3914 sq. cm.).
David Lague believed his newspaper's heavy use of agency copy freed him to more fully investigate developments:

I thought that given that we pay for these services we should use them. I thought that there would be far better return for my company's investment if I spent my time talking to UN officials, and people all around the country.

So the use of a high proportion of news agency copy, even though there was a correspondent in the field, was an intentional policy?

Precisely. Why duplicate a service we already have? We feel that we should have something that sets our coverage apart.242

Most of the "News" reports carried in the other papers were originated by staff correspondents in the Canberra Press Gallery. In the case of the Courier Mail, News stories produced by staff reporters were either Canberra sourced (e.g. "Townsville troops boost peace forces", 1.5.93., by Wallace Brown) or addressed strictly local angles. (e.g. "[Brisbane] Cambodians gloomy about poll", 24.5.93., which included a photograph of Brisbane based émigré Sophai Su and his daughter Angela.)

242David Lague, Personal Interview, 4 January 94.
News agency

News agency copy is syndicated news reproduced by newspapers and other news outlets. In this instance it was identified by sub-headings (e.g. AAP), by-lines (e.g. Sherri Prasso), by considering whether a newspaper had a reporter in Cambodia at the time of the elections and then comparing copy to material generated by the agencies. Most of the news agency copy came from Reuters, with some papers, particularly the Australian also using material from Associated Press, Agence France Press and Knight Ridder.

Figure 7.6
Newspapers use of News Agency copy

News agency copy accounted for 24,542 sq. cm. of the space allocated. From the above graph, it can be seen that all of the newspapers relied to some extent on news agency copy for coverage of the Cambodian elections. However, all of the papers also appeared unwilling to by-line wire service reporters on whom they relied for the bulk of their stories. For example, the Australian born Reuters correspondent in Phnom Penh, Mark Dodd, was credited only twice: "UN braces after Phnom Penh threat" (2.6.93, Australian) and "Sihanouk peace bid" (3.6.93, Telegraph). Although the Australian Associated Press correspondent, Terry Friel, produced a steady stream of material during
the elections, he was credited with a by-line only three times; "UN accuses Hun Sen forces of violence" (24.5.93, *Australian*), "Boys of the Blackhawks at the ready" (1.6.93, *Hobart Mercury*) and "UN under fire on efficiency, human rights" (4.6.93, *Adelaide Advertiser*).

Regional newspapers, with strictly limited resources were utterly reliant on agency copy. The only truly "regional" contained in this study, the *Newcastle Herald*, almost exclusively used material circulated by Australian Associated Press, which in turn edited material received from Reuters.

**Figure 7.7**

**Breakdown of Coverage: Newcastle Herald**

The *Newcastle Herald*’s total coverage was only slightly smaller in size than the metropolitan daily, the *Hobart Mercury*, (2150 sq. cm. as opposed to 2379 sq. cm.), which again contained an overwhelming proportion of news agency copy.
The *Mercury*'s coverage was spasmodic, with longer articles appearing at irregular intervals. Most "News" reports carried in the *Mercury* originated from the paper's political reporter in Canberra, so that there were virtually no "local" angles carried on the Cambodian elections. Feature articles were syndicated.

**News Analysis**

News analysis or comment seeks to explain the significance of an event, to trace its origins and where possible, to indicate where a story might develop.\(^{243}\) Clearly all news stories contain analysis whether overtly expressed in by-lined opinion, or covertly through use of language, assembling of "facts", or even construction of the story itself. Some news organisations such as news agencies attempt to draw a line between "news" stories and "news analysis" by propounding and enforcing style guides which stress "objectivity", "balance" and "sourcing". However, a number of publications included in this study (e.g. *Sydney Morning Herald* or the *Australian Financial Review*) often blurred

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this distinction by positively encouraging reporters to openly inject personal opinion into what otherwise would be daily news reports. In this way, even the official editorial the line between "news" and "news analysis" can sometimes be lost.

Figure 7.9

Newspapers use of News Analysis

[Bar chart showing news analysis (sq. cm.) for various newspapers]

Reuters seeks to generate news analysis when the news is particularly important or complex, or when there is a significant gap between the time when a news story is reported and when it is possible to gather the information needed for a coherent analysis of its significance:

Analysis should be derived where possible from named sources in a position to speak with informed knowledge on the issue. Failing that the news analysis should draw on unattributable sources, whose orientation is made as clear as possible so that the reader can assess their possible degree of bias, and on the knowledge of the writer. In the absence of a immediate comment from qualified sources on a news development, it is still possible to write a useful news analysis by putting the news in context of previous events and listing possible explanations for what has happened and scenarios for what might happen next.\textsuperscript{244}

\textsuperscript{244}Ibid, 127.
According to Reuters, news analysis reports should be between 400 to 800 words in length. For the purpose of this study, "news analysis" has been identified by headings (e.g. News Analysis, Monitor or News Extra), length, and by-line.

First considered are the newspapers which carried little or no news analysis: the Newcastle Herald, the Hobart Mercury, the Telegraph Mirror, the Advertiser and the Australian Financial Review. Of these, the Mercury, the Advertiser and the Financial Review carried some feature material which backgrounded news and news agency coverage. However, the Telegraph Mirror, neither carried analysis nor feature material. The Telegraph's coverage was dominated by news agency copy (53.3%) with staff reporters producing "News" stories from Canberra and Sydney.

Meanwhile, the Melbourne Age published the highest proportion of news analysis in the period under study. This included columns by syndicated writers, such as Gerard Henderson (e.g. "Pilger's Blind spot to 'c' in Cambodia", 11.5.930, as well as critiques in the Age Green [television] Guide).

Figure 7.10

Breakdown of Coverage: Sydney Telegraph Mirror
Features

A feature finds its impact beyond the realm of the straight news story's basic and unvarnished who-what-where-when-why and how. According to Reuters, the justification, strength, and very identity of the feature lie in its penetration of the imagination - not in departing from or stretching the truth but in piercing the peculiar and particular truths that strike people's curiosity, sympathy, scepticism, humour, consternation or amazement. Features provide an opportunity to analyse both specific events and trends in depth and with a quality of writing that is not always possible to bring to a spot story under the pressure of deadlines. In this instance, features have been identified by sub heading (e.g. Feature Page), style and length (800 words or more).

Figure 7.11

Newspapers use of Features

The *Canberra Times* coverage of the Cambodian elections was largely composed of news agency copy (32.4%) and a series of features written by a staff reporter, Ian McPhedran.

\[245\]Ibid, 75.
McPhedran's features, "The messengers of peace", 2 June.93, "Chariots of Democracy hover over Cambodia", 3 June 93, and "Strange and difficult task of policing in a lawless land" 4 June 93, reported on the activities of the Australian police and military, reflecting the time the reporter spent at the helicopter base in Siem Reap Province as well as at police outposts.

**Figure 7.12**

**Breakdown of Coverage: Canberra Times**

![Pie chart showing the breakdown of coverage for the Canberra Times](image)

**Editorials**

Joseph Pulitzer, who funded the establishment of the Columbia School of Journalism in 1902, somewhat idealistically defined an editorial as the expression of the paper's conscience, courage and convictions. Australian journalists might be more inclined to call it the "voice of management". *The Kelmsley Manual of Journalism*, published in 1950, to "help to equip young men and women for the profession of journalism", described it as a vehicle of opinion of the newspaper (in this case *The Times*) itself:

That does not mean that it is a mere assertion of opinion. Its business is not just to record for readers the conclusions that the newspaper has reached and that they ought to swallow, but to persuade them by telling

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them why and how those conclusions have been arrived at. It follows that the essence of a leader is an argument.

An Editorial produced by a leader writer overtly reflected the newspaper's official analysis of the situation. In this instance, editorials have been identified by heading.

**Figure 7.13**

**Newspapers use of Editorials**

All but three of the papers under study ventured one or more editorial opinion on the Cambodian elections. The *Courier Mail* devoted the most space, 759 sq. cm., to editorials, representing 9.2% of its total coverage. It ran three editorials; "An extra step: Human demands we must meet", 12.5.93, "High stakes: Cambodia poll is a litmus test", 22.5.93, and "Vote Power: a lesson in Asian democracy", 1.6.93.

**Figure 7.14**

**Breakdown of Coverage: The Australian Financial Review**

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In this survey, the *Australian Financial Review* emerged with a relatively high proportion of editorial opinion (11.2%). The AFR ran two editorials, "Cambodia deserves bi-partisan support (1 May 93) and "After Cambodians have voted" (24 May 93) during the period under study.

Australian newspaper editorials unanimously approved of Australian government policy which supported the UN sponsored elections. Australia was depicted as "standing up for what was right"\(^{248}\), an action which demanded bi-partisan support within Australia\(^ {249}\). The *West Australian* saw Australia's intervention as pointing to diplomatic maturity.

The exercise is a sign of the influence Australia can exert in the Asia Pacific when it acts as a modest and committed mediator. As a middle ranking power in the region, Australia has shown it can be an effective voice for peace and stability.\(^ {250}\)

\(^{248}\) *Courier Mail*, 12 May 93.
\(^{249}\) *Australian Financial Review*, 12 May 93.
\(^{250}\) *West Australian*, 15 May 93.
Seventeen editorials were carried during the period. None supported the Khmer Rouge. All perceived this group as a danger to the elections. The *Courier Mail* saw the insurgents as a threat to regional stability and called for military action to neutralise it:

> The fact is, Australia and other regional nations have little option but to take on the Khmer Rouge in the event they respond to the outcome of the election with firepower. Senator Evans says such an eventuality is unlikely - everyone will hope that he is right on that score - but it is wise to begin preparing the ground, just in case.\(^{251}\)

The *Herald Sun* editorialised that Australia had led the way in helping to organise the elections and should take much satisfaction if it were to proceed. However, the Khmer Rouge faction was seen as the major threat to stability:

> Only the Khmer Rouge, whose mad ideology led to the horror of the killing fields where a million died, has refused to take part. Instead from its lair along the Thai border, where the fanatic Pol Pot still lurks, the terrorists have murdered 131 people as part of their violent campaign to disrupt the democratic process.\(^{252}\)

Perhaps more cautiously, the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that "Cambodia was not out of the woods yet". It noted that it might be tempting to cynically see the election as a way of mopping up the Khmer Rouge on the battlefield. However, it argued that it was more important to legitimise a government which might oversee the rebuilding of Cambodia.\(^{253}\)

Most newspaper editorials ignored the problems associated with forming a coalition government; an issue which subsequently dominated efforts to bring peace and stability. Somewhat omnisciently, the *Age* suggested that forming an effective coalition in Phnom Penh was the key to peace in Cambodia:

> A coalition may be the only way to prevent a return to the killing fields in Cambodia, but that's for Funcinpec to decide. Then, Cambodia's

\(^{251}\) * Courier Mail*, 23 May 3.
\(^{252}\) * Herald Sun*, 25 May 93.
\(^{253}\) * Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 93.
feuding, and sometimes feudal, political leaders must learn and live together.254

Summary

All but one of the twelve newspapers relied on syndicated photographic material. This was an unnecessary and minor cost saving, given the availability of Australian freelance photographers in Cambodia.

The commitment to "quality" news displayed by the papers which sent reporters to Cambodia was reflected in the diversity and depth of their coverage. Perhaps the only exception here was the *Australian Financial Review*, which published a relatively small number of stories by Asia Correspondent, Eric Ellis, and a relatively large number of newsagency reports.

As one might expect, the influence of news agency copy was pervasive. However, the almost universal unwillingness to by-line agency reporters could be seen not only as a professional slight to the reporters involved but also as an arbitrary limit placed on the information which news consumers might use to judge the material offered. Indeed, the *West Australian* failed to credit news agency stories in total, so that they had to be identified by cross referencing. Reliance on generic news also caused some newspapers to miss stories which had particular parochial relevance. In such a case, the Brisbane based *Courier Mail* missed a story about the Brisbane barrister, Mark Plunkett, the UN’s Special Prosecutor in Cambodia, who claimed the UN was unable to prosecute political murderers. The Perth based Andre Malan ran the story, "Australian lawyer stalks a nation’s political thugs" on the front page of the West Australian on 24 May 93. Ten days later the *Courier Mail* ran a similar if less detailed AAP story, under the heading "Red tape riles Aussie lawyer", without crediting the author, Terry Friel.

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254 *Age*, 7 June 93.
Absence of News Analysis and Feature style reporting characterised the coverage of the two largest circulation papers, the daily Telegraph *Mirror* and the weekly *Sun Herald*.

Two classes of News Corporation papers emerged in terms of coverage. In the first, was the national *Australian*, with its own correspondent, continuous and spacious coverage as well as varied analyses and feature style reports. In the second were metropolitan daily newspapers whose lack of such resources, combined with heavy reliance on agency copy would seem to make their coverage of foreign news, in qualitative and quantitative terms, little better than the usually smaller and less well resourced regional newspapers.

Meanwhile, both of the independent papers, the *West Australian* with its Asia Desk editor and the *Canberra Times* with its feature style reports showed how even limited resources could be effectively applied to provide a more diversified coverage.
Sources

You don't have the same sort of government supplied information (as you do in Canberra). You get the news from the primary source. You have to work harder to get it. You spend a lot of time running around and then waiting in offices for the people you want to talk to.255

Terry Friel, South-East Asia Correspondent. Australian Associated Press.

This morning an international media organisation with some reputation called and said there were four dead in Ratanakiri province. I said "Well, I have no information about that I will check ". We ran a routine check. Nothing. Just to be sure because it was a reputed and large media organisation, we ran a further check. Nothing of the sort was true. I said," Where did you get this information". UNTAC civilian police. I said that "I am sorry but nothing of that sort happened". This happens all the time. We get rumours of killings all the time. I don't know whether you have been here before but it is really one of the craziest countries as far as rumours are concerned.256

Eric Falt, UNTAC spokesman.

Sources are supposed to be the readers' key to news reporting. They are designed to provide the context for the story, by allowing the reader to assess its contents. According to The Reuters Handbook for Journalists:

..every Reuters story must be clearly and explicitly sourced for two reasons: to enable subscribers to form their own judgement of its credibility and to protect our reputation if a story is challenged. Any contentious statement must be rigorously sourced . . .A subscriber should never have to ask of any element in a story: "How does Reuters know that?257

Journalists often argue that sources are determined by the topics which make up the story. However, sources perceived to be prominent, sometimes supported by public relations operations, often create newsworthiness in their own right. While attribution to sources is presented in style guides as a yardstick of credibility, it is clear that there is usually an unstated agenda about which sources are credited and which are ignored. As van Dijk observes, not all sources are regarded as equally credible:

255Terry Friel, Personal Interview, 27 May 93.
256Eric Falt, Personal Interview, 25 May 93.
There is a hierarchy of sources and associated degrees of their reliability. Elite sources are not only considered more newsworthy [as news actors] but also more reliable as observers and opinion formulators.258

Given the stress placed upon sourcing stories, it could be that journalists select widely approved sources to bolster their own stories' credibility. That is, journalists select sources which they believe will be perceived as credible by their editors and audience. Herman and Chomsky argued that journalists needed sources that were deemed to be presumptively accurate; to maintain an image of objectivity, to protect themselves from criticisms of bias and the threat of libel suits.259 However, an examination of stories seeking "a hierarchy of sources", which identifies "elites and which notes neglected sources should then illuminate journalists' unstated biases.

Figure 7.15

Sources quoted by newspapers

Kuo, Holoday and Peck in their study of the Singapore elections considered only three types of sources (local, foreign and others).260 However, this is clearly inadequate for a detailed analysis of the multiplicity of sources quoted during the Cambodian elections.

259Herman and Chomsky, op.cit., 19.
260Duncan Holoday, Eddie Kuo, Eugenia Peck, op.cit., 121.
This study identified 44 sources, in three categories; United Nations, Australia and Cambodia. All newspaper reports were scrutinised for quotes by sources. The sources were identified, placed in categories and counted. Each newspaper's sub-total was compared to the overall Australian total.

**Figure 7.16**

**Cambodian sources quoted by newspapers**

![Pie chart showing sources from Cambodia](image)

Of the sources recorded in this study of coverage of the Cambodian elections, most were non Cambodian (61.5%) in origin. Of the 289 Cambodian sources quoted, Hun Sen and the ruling Cambodian People's Party were quoted 99 times. During the election period, Hun Sen's State of Cambodia government held weekly English language news conferences in Phnom Penh. As a result, Cambodian People's Party sources were frequently quoted, even though Hun Sen himself was quoted only 27 times. Prince Sihanouk who was to become Cambodia's King was quoted 58 times. On his return to Cambodia, Sihanouk held frequent news conferences in his Palace at Phnom Penh. Prince Ranariddh and his party Funcinpec, which actually won the elections were quoted only 28 times. If Australian standards of "balanced" reporting elections were applied, it would seem that reporters failed dismally if they attempted to adequately represent
Functinpec's views. It would also seem that sub-editors seriously underestimated Functinpec's importance.

The Khmer Rouge which featured in an overwhelming proportion of pre-election stories (see: Chapter Eight) represented only 11.7% of the sources. In other words, the Khmer Rouge were more often talked about than talked to. Although they were repeatedly referred to as a key (and threatening) element in Cambodian politics, they were infrequently quoted. As a result, it would seem that their activities were reported largely through the eyes of their political enemies. This did not have to be the case. While the Khmer Rouge withdrew from their Phnom Penh compound, they could still be contacted by travelling to Pailin in Cambodia's north. Transcripts of Khmer Rouge Radio could be obtained from UNTAC or the US Embassy. Foreign correspondents who really wanted to emulate Burchett, could have taken the trouble to find and quote Khmer Rouge sources. The fact that they did not do so, resulted in explicitly biased reporting.

The belief that reporters, including foreign correspondents, routinely seek their sources from among opposition groups located in remote areas, may be little more than another journalism myth. Rather it may be as Herman and Chomsky claimed, that the mass media are frequently drawn to powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. In this created hierarchy of elite Cambodians, Hun Sen's control of the army certainly made him more powerful than Sihanouk and his son Ranariddh. Buddhist Peace marchers (see Chapter Nine) who travelled the length and breadth of Cambodia during the election period, but who had neither an army, economic influence or even a public relations advisor, were relegated to the bottom of the source hierarchy.

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261 The ABC demanded that its broadcasters allocate Australian political parties equal time, requiring Executive Producers to present time sheets showing that airtime had been fairly allocated:

8.2.2 The government and the official opposition in an outgoing Federal or State Parliament are granted equal time by the ABC for election broadcasts during election campaigns conducted for those Parliaments.
8.2.4 A detailed guide has been compiled outlining the allocation of program time in radio and television.


262 Herman and Chomsky, op.cit., 1988, 18.
Indeed, the Buddhist clergy appeared to have not been quoted at all in the Australian press in the period under study.

During the election campaign, significant differences of opinion developed between many of the Australian reporters and UNTAC's public relations staff. This led some such as Mark Dodd, to bypass official releases and use the product of electronic eavesdropping. Others such as Lindsay Murdoch were openly contemptuous of UNTAC spokesman, Eric Falt's offerings:

If you don't trust your source, you try and get it elsewhere. If you believe that the truth has been held back you have to go to other sources and he [Eric Falt] doesn't like you talking to some of these other sources because when you do , you inevitably find out things he doesn't want you to know. 263

Figure 7.17
UN sources quoted by newspapers

Yet in spite of this expressed cynicism, the Australian press quoted UNTAC and United Nations sources 269 times in the items under study. The UNTAC spokesman Eric Falt and his subordinates were directly quoted 92 times, indicating that while many journalists

263 Lindsay Murdoch, op.cit., 25 May 93.
might distrust the official information (See "The man called Eric Falt", Chapter Eight) official sources were used in most stories. Although the UN representative in Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, was quoted 36 times, a number of these reports would have resulted from statements released by Falt, who controlled journalists' access to Akashi. Taken together, Akashi, his spokesman Falt, and his public relations operation account for 47.8% of all statements made by UNTAC.

Of UNTAC's seven components, the Electoral office which ran the elections and UN Military rated 26 quotes each. Australian press journalists were much more interested in Australian military sources. UN Human Rights and the UN Civil administration rated four and three quotes respectively. UN Rehabilitation and Repatriation who dealt with economic aid and refugees and (non Australian) UN police who were responsible for the critical issue of law and order, were not quoted at all.

**Figure 7.18**

**Australian sources quoted by newspapers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources from Australia 9/5-7/6/93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military 42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans 16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Federal Politicians 13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plunkett 3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embassy 1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other 22.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Australian Military were the key sources among Australians quoted on Cambodia. General Sanderson made himself available to selected reporters through his able and
experienced public relations officer, Colonel Dick Palk. In spite of his misgivings about the press (See: "Bugging the General", Chapter Eight), Sanderson and Palk, were quoted 34 times. The architect of the peace agreement, Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, who made most of his statements through parliament and the attendant national gallery, was quoted 32 times. The Defence Minister, Senator Ray, who sent Australia's Blackhawk helicopters to Cambodia was quoted 10 times compared to Opposition Foreign Affairs spokesman, Andrew Peacock, who served as an observer in Cambodia during the elections, was quoted only five times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals as Sources 9/5-7/6/93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sihanouk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akashi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanderson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hun Sen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ray</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ranariddh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plunkett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khieu Samphan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boutros Ghali</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peacock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

Australian journalists, who are products of a "Western" values system, preferred quoting "Western" sources for their stories. This bias could be attributed to a number of technical factors.

(a) UN and Australian sources were largely located in the capital cities and as such were often more accessible than the Cambodian politicians.

(b) They were supported by public relations operations which generated material for them and in the case of UNTAC ran twice daily news conferences.

(c) They spoke and produced news releases in English.
(d) They were familiar figures and as such may have been seen as more credible than Cambodian politicians.

(e) The Australian sources were favoured by newspapers seeking a "local angle" on the Cambodian elections.

Whatever the technical reasons for doing so, the results are clear. Journalists can be accused of re-affirming their own world views by selecting sources from familiar backgrounds while downgrading local opinion and comment. While journalists sometimes challenged the veracity of UNTAC within the context of individual stories (see Bugging the General, Chapter Eight), their continuing reliance on UN sources contributed to Australian perceptions of (UNTAC's) credibility. Meanwhile, military sources were used more frequently than rehabilitation, repatriation or even electoral sources. This would appear to provide some substantiation for Eric Falt's claims that most journalists saw the election as a "war" story rather than one about recovery.²⁶⁴

Tiffen argued that such reliance on "foreign" sources can be misleading not only because of possible conflicts of interest, but also because "their perceptions are likely to be out of touch with local viewpoints and feelings".²⁶⁵ But if the misreporting was merely a question of accuracy, why wasn't the practice challenged by the sub-editors whose job it was to check and process stories?

After considering journalists' selection of sources, it would seem that to the Australian press, foreign intervention in Cambodia, particularly Australian military involvement, was considered the central story in May 1993, not Cambodians' involvement in the election itself.

²⁶⁴Eric Falt, op.cit., 25.5.93.
²⁶⁵Tiffin, op.cit., 1978, 197.
Even within the category of Cambodian sources, key politicians such as Prince Ranariddh were largely ignored in favour of those such as his father, Sihanouk, who were more accessible through public relations operations. This bias could be attributed to ignorance of Cambodian politics. However, it may more likely be the result of a practice as common in Canberra as in Phnom Penh; reliance on those in power to provide information. Herman and Chomsky claim that the mass media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news:

They have daily news demands and imperative news schedules that they must meet. They cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important stories may break. Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumours and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held.266

In Cambodia, analysis of sources quoted show that Australian newspaper journalists gravitated towards Cambodian Government, United Nations and military spokespersons who were largely located in Phnom Penh and aided by public relations apparatus. Meanwhile, the Khmer Rouge remote in their jungle strongholds, continued to be "demonised" in stories which largely ignored them as a source. In most cases they were not even considered as raw material to produce the sort of notional "balance" applied by the ABC in Australian elections.

It is at this point that the myth of Western journalistic "objectivity" becomes most transparent. It is here that the techniques of contemporary foreign reporting draw close to the traditions of 19th century colonialist fiction. Abdul R. Jan Mohamed could be writing about the Khmer Rouge when he claims in relation to colonialist fiction that the fixation with "the savagery and evilness of the native" is used to justify "occupation and exploitation", in this case the intervention of the Western dominated United Nations. Mohamed argues that the dominant model of power and interest relations in all colonial

266Herman and Chomsky, op.cit., 18/19.
societies is the Manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and supposed inferiority of the native.

This axis in turn provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation: the Manichean allegory - a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilisation and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object.²⁶⁷

In the case of the Khmer Rouge, the "Other" becomes the near voiceless "enemy": a shifting wayang shadow puppet image, illuminated by the fears and explicit propaganda of the foreign powers and their allies. In failing to adequately use "native" Cambodians as sources, foreign reporters may have neglected to properly reflect Cambodians' "truth" of their own elections.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REPORTS ON THE POLLING

I was seriously expecting a lot of violence here. I thought there was a strong chance that an Australian might have been at least wounded or killed. In fact, it has been much quieter, which is a better or more interesting story in many ways, but it just doesn't have the sort of impact back home that violence has.

Terry Friel268, AAP.

...There is a special Western concept of news which tends to oblige Western journalists to seek the abberational rather than the normal as the main criterion for selection: Western news agencies are therefore on the lookout for information concerning violence, war, corruption, disaster, famine, fire, flood. The resulting flow of information therefore systematically distorts knowledge of the cultural, political and economic progress of the Third World and emphasises the negative aspects.

Anthony Smith269, The Geopolitics of Information.

Expectations of Violence

Most Australian journalists went to Cambodia expecting violence. These expectations appeared to be confirmed two days before the elections when the Khmer Rouge's leader, Khieu Samphan, described the voting as "a stinking electoral farce" which would mean the death of the Cambodian nation.270 The journalists' expectations were reflected in the themes they chose for their stories and editorials. However, the pessimism and speculation about widespread military violence was not confirmed by subsequent events.

Analysis of the 163 newspaper reports from 9 May 93 (the beginning of the study to 23 May 93 (voting begins) reveal that most stories were concerned with the issues of the threat of the Khmer Rouge, violence, and military affairs (56.5%). Only 15.3% of stories were concerned with preparations for the election itself, and

268Terry Friel, 27 May 93.
269Anthony Smith, op.cit., 70.
270Khieu Samphan, "Voice of the Great National Union Front of Cambodia", 34.
many of these items contained sub-themes relating to the threat of the Khmer Rouge. Distinctly Australian angles such as the Australian Federal Police contingent's affairs (11 items), Australia's role in the region (5 items) and stories about John Pilger (3 items) accounted for 11.7%. Other Cambodian issues such as the role of Prince Sihanouk (5 items), power brokering by the political parties (3 items), post election scenarios (3 items) and the economy (2 items) were the central issue for only 8% of the total. International diplomacy and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) administration were represented in a relatively insignificant 6.1% of items.

**Figure 8.1**

**Thematic Analysis: Australian Press Reports**

During the same period, the newspapers under study carried 83 illustrations (photographs, drawings and cartoons) accompanying news items on Cambodia. Most of these again were concerned with the Khmer Rouge and military affairs (50.6%). Election preparations (e.g. election posters, polling booths, Hun Sen, Son Sann campaigning) accounted for 14.5% of the total. Australian angles (head shots of Gareth Evans, poll workers etc.) accounted for 9.6%. The Australian Federal Police contingent was illustrated only by a single Tandberg cartoon. Other Cambodia subjects such as Prince Sihanouk (4 photos), Buddhist Peace marchers
(2 photos) and library photos of Hun Sen accounted for 14.5%. International issues, including the role of UNTAC represented 10.8%. Prince Sihanouk was the most popular individual subject (5 illustrations) followed by the Australian General Sanderson (4), Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen (4), retired Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot (4), UNTAC leader, Mr Akashi (3) and Australian journalist, John Pilger (2).

**Figure 8.2**

**Thematic Analysis: Illustrations**

Most of the illustrations dealing with the military show Australian, other UNTAC or State of Cambodia (SOC) soldiers on guard, patrolling or simply posing for the camera. Of the eleven photos and drawings dealing with the Khmer Rouge, six are photographs of exhibits of the Tou Sleng "Genocide Museum", three are old library photos of Pol Pot and one is an artist's impression of Pol Pot covered in Tou Sleng skulls. One photograph appears to show Khmer Rouge soldiers at ease in the jungle. This might seem a small number given the constant references made to the Khmer Rouge in the text of the accompanying stories.
None of the photographs printed by Australian newspapers during this period showed fighting actually taking place. This contrasted with the earlier Vietnam war where such photos were regularly taken and printed. The *Australian* (15 May 93) even went so far as to re-print a photograph captioned, "Towering brutality: One soldier stands guard over another during an earlier phase of the civil war". The US style uniform and weaponry suggest the soldier belonged to the Republican forces led by Lon Nol. These forces were finally defeated by the Khmer Rouge in 1975, suggesting that the 285 sq. centimetre photograph used to illustrate the article, "The Ballot. . .or more bullets" was twenty years old.

The lack of contemporary photos of fighting during the closing stages of the Cambodian election campaign could mean that photo journalists failed to capture the action. However it should be remembered that at this time, there were more than 900 foreign journalists in Cambodia, with more than 2300 accredited to UNTAC overall. A number of these were Indochina veterans, some of whom had been in Phnom Penh when it fell to the Khmer Rouge. It seems unlikely that they missed the action this time. It raises the question whether journalists' expectations of military action and violence were not being realised by what UNTAC claimed was a "stable" military situation.

The apparent conflict between journalists' news agendas on one hand and the available sourced information and photographs on the other, appears in the story, "Diggers may go to fight: Evans" in the *Hobart Mercury* (22 May 93). The item, by reporter Angela Leary was accompanied by a small (7 sq. cm.) head shot library photograph of Senator Evans with the caption, "Senator Evans: Khmer Rouge threat unlikely). The item led with a claim about the possibility of an Australian military build up in Cambodia.

271 Eric Falt, op.cit.
(1) Australia may have to send troops to Cambodia if the Khmer Rouge begins a killing fields style offensive.

The term "killing fields" was one which was frequently used by journalists writing about Cambodia. It has highly emotive associations deriving from the Hollywood movie of the same name. Its use in the context of a military offensive indicates that it has undergone a shift in meaning. Instead of specifically referring to a place where political executions took place, it now seemed to mean some unspecified horror associated with the Khmer Rouge. Meanwhile, the weakness of the "military build up" angle was revealed in the second, supporting sentence.

(2) The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Gareth Evans, said yesterday that this could not be ruled out if the international community was behind the push.

So it seems that "Diggers might go to fight" if the Khmer Rouge attack and if Australia responded to a demand for action which might be made by the "international community". Senator Evans was not quoted as saying this chain of suppositions would happen. He was indirectly quoted as saying that "this could not be ruled out". However, the third sentence in the story revealed the source's opinion that this tenuous eventuality was considered unlikely.

(3) However, such a threat from the Khmer Rouge was unlikely as it did not have the military capability.

Analysis of the story shows that the validity of the claim made in the headline dribbles away as the story unfolds. This would seem to be an example of journalists bending a story to fit in with an underlying theme, in this case "the threat posed by the Khmer Rouge". Although Evans' information clearly contradicts this theme, his words seem to have been processed in a way that confirms what the journalists expect and believe.

The prevailing mood of Australian media doomsaying about Cambodia led some journalists to consider techniques which might be more appropriate for fiction.
writing. The need to fulfil expectations of Cambodia as a dark and dangerous place, left some writers producing stories which lacked substantiation, with reports consisting of little more than a string of unsupported assumptions. This pessimism was directly expressed in a feature length report, "Voting for a return to the killing fields", by staff feature writer, Paul Lloyd, published in the *Adelaide Advertiser*, on 21 May 93, just two days before voting began. On that day, the Australian newspapers being studied carried twenty-four reports relating to the Cambodian elections. As the following graph shows, they were overwhelmingly (75%) concerned with the threat of the Khmer Rouge, violence and military issues. The Australian domestic political dispute over the decision by the Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett, to stop a group of Victorian police flying to Cambodia on UN work was the central issue of three stories (12.5%). In comparison, Prince Sihanouk's return to Cambodia was the key issue in only two stories (8.3%).

**Figure 8.3**

**Thematic Analysis: Press Reports 21 May 93**

Lloyd's report should not be construed as representative of reporting of the Cambodian election. However, it is worth analysing in detail to reveal the quality of the information presented to Australian audiences seeking background information.
The story's headline in the *Advertiser*, "Voting for a return to the killing fields", was clearly misleading. All the major parties contesting the election had condemned the mass executions which occurred during the Khmer Rouge's period of power in Phnom Penh. Since the Khmer Rouge was not participating in the election, it would seem that there was little chance of anyone voting for a return to the killing fields. It should also be remembered that the phrase the *killing fields* does not appear to be a term commonly used by Cambodians, even though it has been popularised in the Western fictional portrayals of Cambodia.

In the light of subsequent events, the sub-heading also seemed somewhat alarmist.

Cambodia is on the edge of a new bloody civil war as the country prepares for its first democratic election.

While there was a possibility of civil war, it seems had it occurred, it would have been rather lop-sided affair. In the week before the election, the Deputy Chief of State of Cambodia armed forces, Lieutenant General Preap Tan, was quoted in *The Cambodia Times* as "generously" estimating Khmer Rouge strength at a maximum of 8,000. The newspaper claimed that in comparison, State of Cambodia forces had been estimated to consist of 200,000 regulars. There was also an equal number of village-based militia, which had proved particularly effective in dealing with guerrillas. If the figures were accurate, government forces outnumbered the Khmer Rouge by a handy margin of 50 to one. In addition, the UN had more than 16,000 troops on the ground in Cambodia, including elite units from the Royal Dutch Marines and the French Foreign Legion. Given the tactical and strategic circumstances, an outbreak of civil war at this stage might have seemed unlikely. The *Australian's* correspondent in Cambodia during the elections, David Lague said that many journalists failed to check the military situation even though they were writing stories about how it might affect the election:

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273 UNTAC, "Military Component", Briefing Paper, 30 April 93.
What needs to be remembered about Cambodia is that it took the Vietnamese two weeks to sweep Pol Pot's forces from Cambodia. Two weeks!, leaving them in a position from which they never recovered. They mounted what was a damaging and morale sapping guerrilla war from the period when the Vietnamese invaded to the period of the UN sponsored election. At no point did they ever appear likely to topple the Phnom Penh government. They never had the military power to do that.²⁷⁴

However, Lloyd's opening sentence in his analysis of Cambodia's prospects maintained the rather ominous outlook. (Sentences have been numbered to locate them in the story):

(1) Cambodia goes to the polls this weekend, already divided by a civil war; but the elections are likely to bring only more war.

UNTAC's public relations spokesman, Eric Falt, emphatically denied that there was a continuing civil war in Cambodia, describing the Khmer Rouge activity as reduced to a small scale insurgency.²⁷⁵ Lloyd's claim that the elections were likely to bring more war was at that time an unsupported assumption.

(2) The Khmer Rouge and government forces have already ensured that the United Nations sponsored elections will not be comprehensive.

UNTAC reported that 70% of the 4.7 million Cambodians who registered to vote, came to the polls in the first two days of voting.²⁷⁶ On the final day of voting, Falt told the evening press briefing:

We made a bet. We bet on the Cambodian people. In return they have given UNTAC their trust, and tonight with almost 90% voter participation, we can safely say we have won our bet.²⁷⁷

Given that voting was not compulsory, the percentage of registered voters who cast their ballots was very high indeed (more than double the proportion of those who

²⁷⁴David Lague, op.cit..
²⁷⁵Falt, op.cit..
²⁷⁷UNTAC, *Daily Press Briefing Notes*, 28 May 93, 1.
voted in some recent US Presidential elections). It is clear that the Khmer Rouge and government forces had failed utterly, if as Lloyd suggested, it was their intention that the elections would not be "comprehensive".

(3) Disruptions will surely discredit whatever results there are.

The Khmer Rouge failed to launch its threatened attacks on the poll and in spite of an incident in Kampot province on the opening day of voting, most voting was not disrupted, as evidenced by the high and early voter turnout. On the evening of 25/5/93, Falt confirmed that even some (more than 500) Khmer Rouge civilians and soldiers had actually joined the voting.278

(5) Increased violence, in naked quests for power, will move into the void.

This assumption that violence would increase was not substantiated by events during the election. At the Supreme National Council meeting on 29/5/93, Prince Sihanouk warmly congratulated all members of UNTAC, particularly the Special representative, Mr Akashi, "on behalf of Cambodia and the Cambodian people". The Prince had called the electoral process a "tremendous and historic success".279

Writing in the Good Weekend ("The spoils of peace", 15.5.93), Lindsay Murdoch made specific claims about UNTAC's bungling and overspending. However, Lloyd would make a generalised unsupported claim that all of UNTAC's effort was misspent.

(27) The UN has managed to blow $2.8 billion on this exercise so far.

278 UNTAC, Daily Press Briefing Notes, 25 May 93, 2.
279 UNTAC, Daily Press Briefing Notes, 29 May 93, 1.
The verb "blow" used colloquially in this instance means to waste money. $2.8 billion was the total estimated cost of UNTAC operations until September (the full fifteen months of operation), not May 1993 as suggested by Lloyd.\(^{280}\)

(28) Only a tiny part of that money has gone into Cambodia and that seems to have gone into setting up brothels.

In June 1992, the international community responded to a UN call for aid to Cambodia by pledging US $900 million. Aid projects during the transitional period were administered by UNTAC but approved by the Supreme National Council (SNC), where all of the major Cambodian political parties were initially represented. Thirty-five projects worth US $250 million were endorsed in this way.\(^{281}\) None of them had "gone into setting up brothels".

(32) The Hun Sen Government has hardly displayed a positive attitude to peace or to the elections themselves.

The Hun Sen government (State of Cambodia) was frequently accused of political violence during the campaign. However, unlike the Khmer Rouge (Democratic Kampuchea), Hun Sen's party remained part of the transitional governing body, the SNC, and campaigned throughout the election period. In this case, Lloyd appears to be making yet another unsubstantiated value judgement.

(33) Funcinpec (which might actually stand a good chance of coming first in a free poll) and the Buddhists don't seem to have much faith, either.

Funcinpec won most votes (45%) in the election which it supported before and after the poll. In this instance, "Buddhists" appears to be a reference to the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party which was represented on the SNC and also officially supported the election. The reference was unclear because while only one party

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\(^{280}\)UNTAC, "Fact Sheet", 15 March 93, 3.
\(^{281}\)UNTAC, "Rehabilitation Component", Briefing Paper, 19 January 93, 1.
used "Buddhist" in its name most political parties in Cambodia described themselves as "Buddhists". On the day this article appeared in print, the Buddhist religious leadership were nearing Phnom Penh on a peace march calling for support for the elections. (See: "The case of the invisible Buddhists", Chapter Nine).

(34) Officials from both have said they will probably reject the results, if the ruling regime wins from the six day polling.

This claim by anonymous sources was unsupported by further evidence.

(35) Most of the other 16 parties contesting the 120 member constituent assembly probably feel similarly.

Twenty political parties registered to contest the election.282 How they might feel about the results before they were announced appeared to be unsupported speculation.

(36) All seem united at least by disliking the UN Transitional Authority (UNTAC) as much as Vietnam and Vietnamese influences.

The claim about dislike for UNTAC was not supported by evidence or quotations in this article. Contrary to Lloyd's generalisations about the ancient struggle between the Khmers and the Vietnamese, many Cambodian nationalists received training and support in Vietnam. Hun Sen and other officials from his Cambodian People's Party were installed in office by Hanoi after the Vietnamese invasion.

(37) The violence, which will surely be stepped up from tomorrow, is a sad direction for this country of fewer than nine million people, with nearly 100 percent inflation, little aid, and a huge deficit, adrift in one of the fastest growing economic regions.

Contrary to what Lloyd confidently predicted, incidents of violence declined after election day. The poor state of the Cambodian economy, after almost forty years of intermittent warfare was and is an established fact.

282Ibid, 5-14.
(38) The world's largest peacekeeping effort - 16,000 soldiers, 3,500 police and 1,000 poll workers from 32 countries - may become the UN's most humiliating failure.

Australia's then Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, said in answer to a question in the Australian Senate on 24 May 93, that the large voter turnout showed Cambodians had faith in the peace plan (which he had helped engineer).\(^{283}\) Compared to the UN operation in Somalia, the Cambodian elections would appear remarkably successful and certainly not "the UN's most humiliating failure".

(39) Whatever the result of the elections it will not be a credible result.

On May 29, the UN's special representative declared the election "free and fair".\(^{284}\) This view was unanimously endorsed by the UN's Security Council. The UN later dismissed complaints about the polling process made by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP).

(40) It will mean only further instability.

The former adversaries, the CPP and Funcinpec subsequently formed a government of national reconciliation, under the patronage of Prince Sihanouk who became King under a revised constitution. [The coalition lasted until 1997].

For a country so accustomed to war, Cambodia remained largely at peace throughout the election process. Contrary to Lloyd's central prediction, the elections did not "only bring more war". In general, his re-iteration of the common theme of expected violence was advanced with little substantiation. There were only two sources (a historian, C.P. Fitzgerald and Democratic Kampuchea spokesman, Mak Ben) named in the entire 42 sentence story. Neither of them could be regarded as central players in the election process.

\(^{283}\) AAP, "Gareth Evans buoyed by Cambodia poll", 24 May 93.
\(^{284}\) UNTAC, \textit{Daily Press Briefing Notes}, 29 May 93, 1.
David Lague saw failed predictions of widespread violence as a part of "post Vietnam nostalgia" among journalists, resulting in reports grounded in ignorance and misapprehensions:

I wouldn't like to think people wished to see widespread bloodshed. But the story did develop in a disappointing way for many journalists. It wasn't as sensational as they would have hoped. I think that this was a result of a total misunderstanding of the military situation in Cambodia. One of the things that was evident from the beginning and was certainly clear from my earlier visits to Cambodia and from extensive briefings from military officials both in Cambodia and in Australia even before the peace keeping mission was launched, was that the Khmer Rouge as a military force was almost grotesquely overrated.285

Seen in isolation, Lloyd's feature story could be dismissed as sloppy or just ill-informed journalism. However, read in the context of dozens of other reports which expected the worst, it can be seen as an example of how news values which stress "violence, war, corruption, disaster etc." could distort knowledge of the "cultural, political and economic progress of the Third World" (in this instance Cambodia). In this case, the writer relied almost entirely on previous knowledge of the "Orient", ignoring contemporary events which many Cambodians saw as deeply significant. His story was grounded in the prevailing expectations of other outsiders, so that even Western sources such as UNTAC, which might have contradicted these expectations, were not included. He could as a result, be said to have got the story utterly wrong. Nevertheless upon publication, his version of the "truth" could be expected to influence his readers, perhaps contributing further to their version of "truth" about Cambodia.

The Man called Eric Falt

How could it be that people are only interested in this negative coverage, in the blood and in the fire? It is just not fair. We have

285Lague, op.cit..
worked so hard. We have been aggressed [sic] by the media like few of us have seen ever. We don't quite understand why.286

Eric Falt, UNTAC's chief spokesman in Phnom Penh.

UNTAC and the man called Eric Falt have never observed the consequences of their unscrupulous activities and deeds. Therefore, UNTAC and the man called Eric Falt, themselves should observe and look at their ugly face in the mirror. If they just resort to making accusations about others, no problem can be solved.287

Khmer Rouge Radio.

The friction between reporters seeking adventure stories and UNTAC's desire to dampen pre-election fears, led to a souring of relations between Australian journalists and UNTAC media staff. The focus for the journalists' antagonism was the UN's chief spokesman in Cambodia, Eric Falt, a 30 year old French journalism graduate most recently employed in the French Mission to UN headquarters in New York. During the election period, Falt played a pivotal role in the distribution of "official" information at his twice daily news briefings under the portico at UNTAC headquarters in Phnom Penh. He supplied press accreditation and could approve or deny interviews with all UN officials. Perhaps most importantly he controlled journalists' access to UN transport services which could take reporters to the most remote parts of Cambodia.

Australian expatriate journalist, John Pilger, described Falt as an upwardly mobile French diplomat who had a vested interest in downplaying incidents of violence which might reflect on the UN's "success".288 Others including the Age's Lindsay Murdoch were openly scornful of Falt's daily briefings. In return, Falt claimed that many journalists had come to Cambodia to report on violence which largely did not exist:

286Falt, op.cit..
287Voice of the Great Cambodian People, CN 17199. Monitored by Foreign Broadcast Information Service (USA), 1 May 93, 1-2.
288Pilger, op.cit., 28 September 93.
Many people who are here as journalists believe they are living again what their elders lived in Vietnam. Vietnam revealed a large number of people who went back to fame and fortune and they want to do it too. In large part it is simply not true. They view Cambodia as a similar story. It is in Cambodia, neighbouring Viet Nam, and they have covered this as a war beat. It is not a war beat. It is a new beat, maybe a UN beat. There is not a war going on. There is a small insurgency which is sometimes fuelled by what the media says about it...\(^{289}\)

The analysis of Australian newspaper reports would appear to confirm Falt’s contention that many journalists saw Cambodia in general and the 1993 election in particular as a "war" story. The small proportion of stories overall about UNTAC’s election preparation would indicate that few saw it as Falt suggested as part of a "UN beat". These different perceptions of what constituted "news" in Cambodia was at the core of the friction with the journalists.

Falt believed that journalists had come to Cambodia with preconceptions fixed firmly in their minds about what stories they would report. He had little complaint about the accuracy expressed in the narrow context of most individual stories. Rather, he believed that the news values and priorities which they brought with them stopped them from seeing and reporting on what he saw as the wider story, "positive" news.

It is significant that he thought that they had been influenced by the fictionalising of Cambodia, most notably *The Killing Fields*; the 1984 Hollywood version of New York Times correspondent, Sydney Schanberg’s writings about the Khmer Rouge victory. *The Killing Fields* was constructed to look like a quasi documentary. The film’s Producer, David Puttnam had previously produced *Midnight Express* (1978), *Local Hero* (1983), and *Chariots of Fire* (1981) The cinematographer, Chris Menges, was a former documentary maker whose first feature work was for the British *cinema verite’* director, Ken Loach.\(^{290}\) Much of *The Killing Fields* was

\(^{289}\)Falt, op.cit..

shot on location in nearby Thailand, using Cambodian refugees as extras. Falt believed that some of the journalists had been caught up in the fiction:

They are filming a movie [in their heads]. They are filming their own movie. They feel they are in *The Killing Fields*. But they are not. *The Killing Fields* are [sic] over and with a little more work it won't happen again. It's very surprising and disappointing because it shows in their reporting.291

Meanwhile, he believed the very large numbers of journalists who had come to Cambodia for the elections had resulted in intense competition for stories which would confirm their expectations and satisfy their editors. Each "beat up" printed, added to this process of confirmation, increasing the pressure on reporters to match stories of violence. In Falt's view, this created an imagined world in Cambodia which owed more to fiction than his perceived reality:

It is striking to go to the Gecko Club [the unofficial press club during the election] and hear all these young people talking, 'Oh wow did you hear there is a KR [Khmer Rouge] battery on the other side of the river', or that 'Ta Mok was seen entering the Chinese mission this morning'. Ridiculous rumours like that you hear all the time... 'I went to Mondol Kiri and found this lost group of fighters' or 'me the hero, braving the KR in the jungles in the north-west'. You hear and read this kind of reporting. It is very appealing when you are in New York, you think, 'Wow what a guy!' but when you are on the ground it doesn't correspond to any kind of reality.292

Like Edward Said's 19th century Orientalists, the visiting journalists were, in Falt's view, "objectively" reporting Asia through a fictional framework created by those who had gone before. Evidence which conflicted with the new Orientalists' preconceptions was often ignored, leading in this case to a high proportion of stories about the threat rather than the reality of violence. Falt's failure to provide information confirming these preconceptions was seen by these journalists as part of a cover up by the UN:

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291Falt, op.cit..
292Ibid.
I am always amazed to what extent the press think there is a conspiracy behind everything. Behind every event there is usually a group of people that think there is something going on, something that we are hiding, something we are not telling them. Most of the time it is wrong. 95% of the time, 98% of the time, it is wrong. There is no conspiracy whatsoever.

John Pilger saw Falt's inability to give the journalists what they wanted as a sign of Falt's cynicism. However, Falt's unwillingness to pander to journalists in this case, may instead be merely an indication of his inexperience in public relations and his naïveté about journalism practices:

I am thirty years old and I have worked in government institutions for a limited period of time and I have time to change and go back to journalism if I want to. It leaves me wondering whether I want to. Do I want to be part of the crowd? I am not sure any more. All throughout my youth I wanted to be a journalist but I always thought I would make a difference if I reported on the news. Now I find myself on the other side of the fence for a few years and I don't understand. I am shocked. I am traumatised. I don't exaggerate. I don't know if I want to go back into the field of the media because what I see I don't like.

When Falt's views on journalists were later published in Hong Kong, they drew an immediate and angry response at the Foreign Correspondents Club. Michael Mackey, a British journalist, accused Falt of failing to admit UNTAC's failures. Mackey said that until he went to Cambodia for the elections, he had forgotten how arrogant international bureaucrats and their staffs could be:

At a time when the UN is both heavily in debt and looking to extend its peacekeeping operations, why were people who were openly disdainful of media, running a high profile campaign that seemed to be without awareness of either news values or journalistic needs? Even if this was happening by default, it is an indictment of the UN's personnel, management and strategy that calls into question its ability to deliver.

**Bugging the General**

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293Ibid.
294Ibid.
If people including journalists are unaware of the extent to which they seek to confirm their expectations and theories, it may be in part because the processes that allow this to happen operate below the level of consciousness. Reporters may honestly believe that they are objectively considering all sides to an issue, while in practice they are processing information in a way that confirms what they expect or believe.296

S. Holly Stocking and Paget H. Gross, *Understanding Errors and Biases that can affect journalists*.

The uneasy relationship between UNTAC public relations and the Australian media flared into open conflict after journalists "bugged" a tense meeting of Cambodia's Supreme National Council in the run up to the election. Reports initially thought to be leaked from the closed meeting, claimed that UNTAC had "authorised" offensive action by Cambodian factions defending the poll. The claim which was picked up by Reuters, was subsequently carried by news organisations around the world. The dispute was exacerbated when it became known that journalists had tuned into the SNC meeting, and were circulating a transcript of the taped discussion.

The story at the centre of the dispute was the Reuters Daylead on Cambodia for 20 May 93, circulated under the by-line of the Australian reporter, Mark Dodd, the newsagency's full time correspondent in Phnom Penh. It began:

(1) UN Peacekeepers, alarmed by Khmer Rouge threats to disrupt next week's national polls, on Thursday authorised other Cambodian factions to launch attacks to protect polling stations.
(2) UN Military commander Lieutenant-General John Sanderson gave the authorisation after the Khmer Rouge attacked a strategic town in Central Cambodia late on Wednesday.
(3) Sanderson told a meeting of faction leaders in Phnom Penh that the three armed groups still participating in the May 23-28 election would be allowed to conduct offensive operations to protect polling sites.
(4) "Clearly in some cases there is a need for offensive action," the Australian General said, but asked the factions to inform the UN transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) of any proposed military action.297

297 Mark Dodd, "UN authorises offensives to guard Cambodia polls", 20 May 1993, 1.
The following day, the report was carried with some variations in the *Australian Financial Review*, the *Australian*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Advertiser*, the *Herald Sun* and the *Newcastle Herald*. Lindsay Murdoch also led with the General's statement in his by-lined reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*. Through AAP, it received widespread coverage in Australia's regional newspapers.

Yet the story differed substantially from UNTAC's preferred public relations message for the day. Eric Falt, the UNTAC spokesperson, gave a characteristically bland version of the SNC's priorities at his daily press briefing. He began:

> The Special Representative [Mr Akashi]) had opened the [SNC] meeting by calling the political campaign "a great success". He said that a total of 1,529 meetings and rallies had been held in Cambodia, "without a single major incident of violence". An estimated 800,000 people had attended these gatherings and "the Cambodian people had a splendid opportunity to listen to the opposing views of a wide range of political parties."

This low key report contrasted significantly with the somewhat alarmist theme pursued prior to the elections by most Australian media. Akashi was quoted as saying that Cambodians would come to vote in their millions. On the question of voting security, Falt said UNTAC had taken stringent measures to ensure the best possible safety during the election. Akashi was quoted again as saying:

> Our mandate as Peacekeepers is restricted to self defence, but this very much includes the right to defend our mission. As UNTAC troops have been obliged to show on a number of occasions in the last month, we do not hesitate to return fire vigorously if attacked. We shall be equally vigorous in defence of the Cambodian elections.

Falt's briefing failed to mention Lieutenant General Sanderson at all and he deflected questions about Sanderson's role in the meeting. Some Australian journalists saw this as an omission by intent; an indication of incompetence, if not

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duplicity. Lindsay Murdoch later expressed a view representative of many reporters, when he said that he simply did not trust what Fait was telling him.

On this story it has been important to get beyond what the UN has been releasing because I don't think the UN has been fair and honest in what it has released. That reflects the nervousness of contributing countries such as Australia. People have been concerned that not too much news of the violence gets out because it might frighten the families of the soldiers. We have a duty to get out what is happening.\textsuperscript{300}

UNTAC public relations responded swiftly to the Reuters Daylead with a telephoned complaint to the Bangkok Reuters Bureau chief, Kevin Cooney, who was in charge of the news agency's temporary newsroom at the Cambodiana Hotel. The complainant was the Military spokesman, Lt. Colonel, Richard "Dick" Palk, an experienced Australian army PR who worked directly to General Sanderson. He claimed that Dodd's report took Sanderson's remarks out of context:

> It is very rare that I have situations where I need to take the press to task because it is not a good relationship to have to take them to task. But when you feel strongly about something, and I feel strongly about it, because I have known for twelve months the angle the General has been taking. The point is that Mark Dodd also knows that angle. So I was willing to say, 'Now come on Doddie, this is not fair and accurate reporting. You know what he means. You just tried to get a story out of this'. But no, no, I would not ask for Mark's replacement. I am just willing to tell him that we think he did wrong and we would like him to do better next time.\textsuperscript{301}

Kevin Cooney subsequently declined to comment on the affair, other than to say that Reuters stood by the accuracy of the story. However, Dodd saw Palk's intervention as an attempt to intimidate him. He still believed that Palk had called for his dismissal, in spite of Palk's denial. Dodd articulated a somewhat harsher version of Palk's telephone call to Cooney:

> I think I was accused of being responsible for any deaths of UNTAC Peacekeepers, which I think is a cruel and sadistic statement. I think if it really did endanger the lives of peace keepers

\textsuperscript{300}Lindsay Murdoch, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{301}Richard Palk, Personal Interview, 30 May 93.
then possibly we would have to review the news worthiness of the story. If lives were really going to be put in jeopardy then we would assess running the story.

He said that he had received full backing from his news organisation, but conceded he might feel more vulnerable had he been working independently as a freelance.

I do have the good fortune to be working for a mammoth news organisation which isn't readily intimidated by the UN spokesmen. I would guess people who work for smaller organisations, or freelancers, are a lot more exposed and may feel that by running such a story they may be cut out of future news and decide on that basis not to run the story.

Dodd maintained his report was "fair and accurate".

We were quite convinced about the accuracy of the story. That was paramount above everything else and we were comfortable with it. We certainly didn't do any retraction which is what they wanted.

He claimed that UNTAC were trying to manipulate the news by applying pressure on journalists who wrote revealing or embarrassing stories:

I think UNTAC would like to see themselves in the best possible light and that does mean filtering some stories. Or down playing significant incidents. Particularly on a sensitive issue like giving the green light on offensive action where Sanderson would like to see himself as the definitive Blue Beret, that is a strictly neutral person. By going on the record and saying to the factions, 'OK go on the offensive, if need be, but please consult us beforehand', might have been giving the wrong message to the Khmer Rouge.

UNTAC declined to leave the matter there. Palk, under the direction of an "irate and ropable" General Sanderson, issued a statement to the Phnom Penh media, accusing the Reuters journalist of selective reporting. The statement said that the Force Commander categorically denied the validity of reports that he had authorised the Cambodian factions to launch attacks to protect polling stations. Sanderson said that there had been a totally inaccurate interpretation of his views:

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302Mark Dodd, op.cit.
303Ibid.
304Ibid.
305Ibid.
At the SNC meeting, General Sanderson stated that in the regions adjacent to NADK areas of influence the Cambodian factions would need to undertake defensive operations in support of the electoral process.

In his statement to the meeting, he said that there are varying definitions of self defence and clearly it is necessary for some offensive actions to take place for self defence. This clearly includes actions to restore control over villages which would otherwise be deprived of the opportunity to vote. He added that UNTAC had asked all factions to moderate their behaviour in this regard and stressed that UNTAC would be monitoring their actions to ensure that there is no coercion or intimidation of voters.

His comments related to the electoral security arrangements which have been made with the armed forces of the three factions participating in the elections. Under these arrangements the factions will be responsible for assisting UNTAC, conveying information on possible or actual threats to the election and ensuring security in the zones under their control.

These arrangements have definitely not included an authorisation by UNTAC to the Cambodian factions to undertake an offensive against any faction. This would not be in the spirit of the UNTAC military mandate which is clearly a peacekeeping mission and not a peacemaking one.306

It is now necessary to compare the Reuters Daylead and the response to it by considering what the General actually said. At the time of the media briefing on May 20, UNTAC's public relations team appeared to be unaware of the fact that journalists had by-passed them through bugging the SNC meeting.

The SNC members present that day who included UNTAC officials, Cambodian Peoples Party and international representatives, used microphones attached to a low powered FM transmitter to communicate with translators. However, journalists waiting downstairs for the meeting to end, were able to pick up the broadcasts on their radios and record them on their portable cassette machines.

The following transcript is of the part of the discussion where journalists identified the UNTAC military component commander, Lieutenant-General John Sanderson. While it should be stressed that it is not a complete recording of the meeting, it was the section circulated and used by Australian journalists:

306Palk, op.cit., 21 May 93.
(1) We have discussed the question of military defence in the countryside with all factions and we have made the point that it is absolutely essential that they secure the countryside for the electoral process.

(2) We don't anticipate in much of Cambodia that this will be a big problem.

(3) Clearly on the edges of those zones where the party of Democratic Kampuchea has indicated its intention to interfere with the process, it is essential that the factions who are participating conduct defensive operations to ensure that the polling process can take place.

(4) And there have been a number of places in Cambodia where we have been concerned about our ability to conduct the election and we have raised this with the military factions and said, if you don't defend those areas we will not be able to conduct elections there.

(5) In most instances where we have raised this there has been an appropriate response but this is a response which will need to be taken up right through the election process.

(6) Now we have defined this clearly as self defence of the areas for which they are responsible.

(7) We all know there are varying definitions of self defence and clearly it is necessary for some offensive action to take place for self defence.

(8) We have asked all factions to moderate their behaviour in this regard.

(9) Clearly we want to reduce the climate of fear and intimidation in the countryside and to this end we have asked people to reveal to us their plans and we have the intention of observing military action on the part of all factions throughout this process to ensure there is no coercion or intimidation of people on their way to the polls, or indeed intimidation of people in their intention to go to the polls.307

To consider Reuters's interpretation of the Sanderson transcript, it is necessary to examine the relevant part of the circulated Daylead story, sentence by sentence. A copy of this story was offered by Palk as the subject of complaint. It was also the version of the story which a computer search made in Hong Kong, revealed as being held in Reuters archives.

Slug: UN authorises offensives to guard Cambodia polls

Sentence one:

307Lieutenant-General John Sanderson, unpublished transcript, 20 May 93.
(1) UN Peacekeepers, alarmed by Khmer Rouge threats to disrupt next week's national polls, on Thursday authorised other Cambodian factions to launch attacks to protect polling stations.

The opening sentence is written in the style of a standard news agency intro, as described in *A Handbook for Reuters journalists*: in that it is devoid of clutter and attempts to summarise the story offered.308

(a) *UN Peacekeepers* is a term created by the UN to describe their own operations and as such, is not likely to be regarded as controversial in this context.

(b) The use of the verb *alarmed* (frightened, apprehensive) was clearly a value judgement which conflicted with the official statement released by Akashi at the news briefing on the same day. It would also appear to conflict with the transcript sentence (2), "We don't anticipate in much of Cambodia that this will be a big problem ".

(c) *by Khmer Rouge threats to disrupt next week's national polls*. The Khmer Rouge were indeed at this stage threatening to disrupt the election, even though in fact they subsequently did not do so.

(d) *on Thursday authorised* The verb "authorised" (empowered, permitted, sanctioned) would appear to be a little strong, after a reading of the transcript, which suggested the UN *accepted* the situation rather than actually approving of it. There was no explicit authorisation in the transcript and any interpretation that it did exist must assume that it was implicit.

(e) *other Cambodian factions to launch attacks to protect polling stations*. The term Sanderson used in the transcript, "some offensive action" has become *attacks*, a word not apparently employed in the transcript. The word *attacks* is used in context in the Daylead with *attacks* by the Khmer Rouge; described elsewhere in the story as *fierce fighting*. Meanwhile, Sanderson further qualified his reference to "some offensive action" (which could mean manoeuvring and does not necessarily mean military combat) by adding:

308 Macdowall, op.cit., 111.
(8) We have asked all factions to moderate their behaviour in this regard.

Sentence Two:

(2) UN Military commander Lieutenant-General John Sanderson gave the authorisation after the Khmer Rouge attacked a strategic town in Central Cambodia late on Wednesday.

(a) "UN Military commander Lieutenant-General John Sanderson gave the authorisation, repeated the assumption of explicit sanction."

(b) after the Khmer Rouge attacked a strategic town in Central Cambodia late on Wednesday. Sanderson was speaking in general at the SNC meeting about security. Linking the Khmer Rouge attack in the same sentence with Sanderson's alleged decision would seem to suggest that the decision was driven by crisis. In the transcript of the meeting, Sanderson said in reference to securing the countryside for the electoral process:

(2) We don't anticipate in much of Cambodia that this will be a big problem.

This view was confirmed in that day's official UNTAC assessment which said that "the military situation continued to be generally quiet but tense".309

Sentence Three:

(3) Sanderson told a meeting of faction leaders in Phnom Penh that the three armed groups still participating in the May 23-28 election would be allowed to conduct offensive operations to protect polling sites.

(a) The meeting of faction leaders referred to in the story was in fact the meeting of the Supreme National Council; Cambodia's governing body under the United

309 Falt, op.cit., 20 May 93.
Nations mandate. One wonders whether the reporter would refer to a meeting of the Australian cabinet in similar terms.

(b) The *three armed groups still participating in the May 23-28 election* appears to refer to the CPP and Funcinpec which formed a joint government after the election. The use of the word "still" implies that other groups had withdrawn.

(c) The three groups, according to the Daylead, would be allowed *to conduct offensive operations to protect polling sites*. In the Reuters story, *offensive operations* replaces Sanderson's "offensive actions". Sanderson's qualifying "some" has been dropped. In the transcript of the meeting, Sanderson said that he had stressed to all factions that it was absolutely essential that they secure the countryside for the electoral process. He said:

(3) Clearly on the edges of those zones where the party of Democratic Kampuchea [Khmer Rouge] has indicated its intention to interfere with the process, it is essential that the factions who are participating conduct defensive operations to ensure that the polling process can take place.

Sanderson said that unless the factions engaged in defensive operations, voting would not be able to take place. In the Reuters story, *allowed to conduct offensive operations* would appear to have been drawn from sentence seven of the Sanderson transcript.

(7) We all know there are varying definitions of self defence and clearly it is necessary for some offensive action to take place for self defence.

In this context, *allowed to conduct offensive operations* would appear to be an exaggeration of the General's intent.

**Sentence Four:**

(4) "Clearly in some cases there is a need for offensive action," the Australian General said, but asked the factions to inform the UN
transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) of any proposed military action.310

This sentence contained the only direct quote attributed to Sanderson. Yet the precise words of the Reuters story, *Clearly in some cases there is a need for offensive action*, should be compared to the transcript, "clearly it is necessary for some offensive action to take place for self defence". In this limited context, the Reuters report may seem a fair summary of what Sanderson actually said. However at Reuters at least, direct quotes are supposed to be just that. *A handbook for Reuters Journalists* states that:

> Quotes are sacred. Do not alter anything put in quotation marks, other than to delete words and then only if the deletion does not alter the sense of the quote.311

This misquotation seems remarkable, given that it was the only quote used and considering the importance Dodd placed on access to a taped transcript, when defending the accuracy of the story:

> Quite clearly, we had the force commander, Lieutenant General John Sanderson on record, stating there would be the need for action, giving the green light for offensive action by the factions to protect the polling sites during the election. He is on the record on that and we have him on tape.312

If that were the case, one wonders why the transcript was not more fully reported. Perhaps Dodd was initially unaware of the significance of what he had reported Sanderson saying. Palk claimed Sanderson had been taken out of context. Dodd denied this.

> No. We had the quotes, all the back up and all the relevant information. It certainly was not sensationalist. It was buried in one of the stories.313

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310Mark Dodd, "UN authorises offensives to guard Cambodia polls", 20 May 1993, 1.
311Macdowall, op.cit., 152.
312Dodd, op.cit., 29 May 93, 1.
313Ibid.
As part of his defence of his reporting, Dodd, claimed that the story was a sub-edited version of what he had originally written. This would not be an unusual practice for newsagencies which frequently re-write or combine smaller stories to create Dayleads. Palk said that initially this rewriting had formed part of the Reuters explanation:

I rang up only to discuss the matter with Dodd and they would not put Dodd on the phone but put the Reuters Bureau Chief who said, I might add, the spin on the ball, or the spin on the story was put on it not at their office but at Hong Kong. It was rewritten. He was saying, 'yeah you really caught us out. The story which came out was a bit of a beat up but it really wasn't our fault'. The beat up came from another part of the agency.\(^{314}\)

The story version that Dodd offered as his own was titled, "Fighting forces UN into bunkers". It began with a much more clumsy lead.\(^{315}\)

(1) The Khmer Rouge attacked a strategic town in Central Cambodia overnight and the UN gave permission to other factions to take military action to protect polling stations in national elections that begin on Sunday.

It becomes clear that the sub-editor considered Sanderson's "statement" the most important aspect of the story and in typical newsagency practice, brought it close to the lead. In Dodd's Daylead, the first four sentences referred to Sanderson. In "Fighting forces UN into bunkers", Sanderson was relegated to sentences eleven, twelve and thirteen.

(11) Cambodian factions participating in the elections would be allowed to conduct military offensive operations to protect polling sites, the UN military commander, Lieutenant-general John Sanderson, told a meeting of faction leaders.

The key word here is "allowed" (permitted, acknowledged, take into account) is in this military context, a much softer word than "authorise". Given the restructuring

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\(^{314}\) Palk, op.cit., 30 May 93.

\(^{315}\) Mark Dodd, "Fighting forces UN personnel into bunkers", Reporter's draft story, 20 May 93.
of the story, to take in Sanderson higher up, it would appear that the sub-editor had
darkened the shades of meaning to strengthen the story.

(12) "Clearly in some case [sic] there is a need for offensive action", the Australian general said.

The quote employed here was almost identical to the Daylead. Perhaps the sub-editor knew not to alter direct quotes, other than to correct "case" to read "cases".

(13) Sanderson requested the factions to inform the UN mission of the proposed military action.

In this case, sentences twelve and thirteen were merged to create sentence four in the Daylead.
Conclusion:

1. The Daylead rested on a single direct quote which appeared to be imprecise. The reporter appeared to err in failing to abide by his own newsagency's standard procedures and quoting precisely.

2. Given the importance placed on the transcript, the reporter might have been more extensive in his use of direct quotes from it. This gives rise to but does not in itself substantiate Palk's claim of selective reporting.

3. The story used a single sentence to link the Sanderson decision to an attack by the Khmer Rouge. However, there is no evidence submitted of an actual link between the violence and the decision. In this context, it would appear to be an attempt to play on the emotive overtones associated with the Khmer Rouge, while ignoring other events such as the political murders committed that day by other factions.

4. There has been a definite attempt to stress Sanderson in the Daylead, compared to "Fighting forces UN into bunkers". The use of the terms alarmed and authorised would appear to be an exaggeration. Even Dodd's original allowed may in the context be imprecise and a little too strong. This would appear to confirm Palk's claim of a "beat up".

However, none of these conclusions substantiate Sanderson's claim that journalists gave "a totally inaccurate interpretation of his views". Dodd's main mistake lay in failing to report the transcript more fully, rather than getting the story entirely wrong. Whatever the language used to describe it, it was clear that UNTAC military forces would not have intervened if the factions advised them of the need to pursue tactical offensives to pursue the strategic aim of a fair and free election. An army officer would understand the difference between strategy and tactics. Journalists
who were not familiar with military objectives, might perceive a conflict in aims which would make the story more newsworthy. A soldier might see this as a "beat up". Eric Falt saw it as part of journalists' misdirected attempts to find violence or the threat of it where there was little likelihood of it occurring.

We issued a denial. Nothing was published. No denial. "No we are not wrong. We think we are right". The fact of the matter was that they were wrong.316

Both sides in the dispute believed their interpretation of the SNC meeting was correct. The antagonism was fired by their refusal to budge from their respective positions. In spite of this, the questionable report was reprinted around the world, including Australia, without further apparent comment or clarification.

The Thump of Mortars

Parachute journalism reinforces a pack mentality which has always plagued foreign reporting. Correspondents who hurry off to a new place stick together, interviewing friends who arrived earlier and competing to find the most dramatic angle of the story. Wherever there are a few resident correspondents, a Parkinson's law of journalism holds that news increases in direct proportion to the number of visiting reporters in town.

Mort Rosenblum317

I am not saying I follow the pack. On many occasions I am off from the pack. In this part of the world [in Asia], pack journalism is not as prevalent as it is in Australia.

Lindsay Murdoch318

Before dawn on the first day of voting, a violent thunderstorm swept over the uneasy sleep of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. The thunderclaps shook many awake.

Some Westerners thought they had been woken by artillery fire; by the phantom Khmer Rouge batteries rumoured to have moved up that week to striking range

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316Falt, op.cit., 25 May 93.
318Murdoch, op.cit., 25 May 93.
across the Tonle Sap River. 'I thought,' Shit it's on. The war has started,' UNTAC's special prosecutor, Mark Plunkett, said that day. However, to many Cambodians the thunder meant something different. It signified the beginning of the wet season, the end of the dry and perhaps, the beginning of prosperity. The storm was seen as a good omen for the elections.

On the first day of voting, the visiting Australian journalists fanned out across the countryside, literally looking for trouble. They hoped to report on what was expected to be the opening round of the Khmer Rouge offensive. Most, including the ABC's Evan Williams, the Canberra Times' Ian McPhedran, and AAP's Terry Friel went north to where UNTAC had reported clashes that week near Battambang. They had been relying on news agency reports of Khmer Rouge activity. Friel said he expected violence:

[I went] Just to see what the situation was, what the security was, what the voter turn out was in an area where the Khmer Rouge are active. There are a large number of Australians in both Siem Reap and Battambang. I wanted to talk to them, see how they felt, see how their lifestyle was, how they felt about being in Cambodia and see their day to day tasks.319

In contrast, the Age's Lindsay Murdoch went south west, acting on the advice of veteran correspondent, James Pringle, who had been covering Indochina for much of the three decades since Hugh Lunn met him in Saigon (See Chapter Three). In 1993, he was writing for the South China Morning Post and The Times of London., married to a Cambodian and owned property in Phnom Penh. He knew the area well. About a year previously, he had written a piece on Khmer Rouge activity around the town of Chhuk in Kampot province. Kampot had been a stronghold of Khmer Rouge activity since before the war with Vietnam. Pringle said that Chhuk, a market town of more than 10,000 people, was encircled by the Elephant Mountains, which still harboured Khmer Rouge bases.

319Friel, op.cit., 27.5.93.
Murdoch, an experienced journalist who made his name reporting the Costigan Inquiry into organised crime, intentionally networked with other journalists to keep him up to date on developing stories. Based in Singapore, a city with an excellent airport and first rate telecommunications, his far flung beat ran from Kashmir in the west to Thailand and Indochina in the east. He said that as a matter of practice, he often exchanged tip offs with other foreign correspondents such as Pringle:

I have a network that I talk to all the time. That includes journalists who travel the same beat. I know what they are up to, I keep in touch.\textsuperscript{320}

He said he frequently pooled knowledge with other correspondents to get quickly to what he considered the heart of the story:

I can't keep up with everything. If I land in a country, things are happening quickly and there is a need to cut through the bureaucracy, to find what's happening, where I should go and who I should speak with. A quick way of doing that is by contacting colleagues who live in that country. They are confident to ask for help on stories that I have just done or which I am on top of. Likewise, I can ask them for help to quickly get on top of stories.\textsuperscript{321}

The drive to Chhuk began as dawn was breaking on election day. Mark Plunkett, a former Australian journalist, took a day off from investigating political murders, to act as chauffeur in his white UN Landcruiser. Murdoch and Pringle were joined by two more senior members of the press corps in Cambodia; the \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}'s Rodney Tasker, and the Chief of the Agence France Press Bangkok Bureau, Antoine de Nerciat.

Cambodia's Highway 3 chronicles the Indochina war as it unfolds towards the impoverished province of Kampot. A crack Khmer Rouge division closed on Lon Nol's beleaguered forces down this road. The rutted bitumen passes rusting

\textsuperscript{320}Murdoch, op.cit., 25 May 93.
\textsuperscript{321}Ibid.
wrecks, and shattered buildings, detouring over creaking Bailey bridges constructed over the demolished originals. Massive irrigation works, built by Year Zero's forced labour, only to be breached by typhoon rains, can be seen eroding into red mud in the nearby paddy fields.

Just outside Chhuk, where the Elephant Mountains come down to the verge, the highway intersects with the Pol Pot trail, an old guerrilla supply route. It was dead quiet there on election day. The Khmer Rouge had already left their nearby bases. They were attacking just a few kilometres away, at a little village on the Chhuk Pagoda road.

**Text Analysis**

Accompanying the reporters' party to Kampot allowed the author a unique opportunity to witness what they saw, listen to what they heard, and examine their findings. By doing so an attempt could be made to answer the questions:

When does networking become pack journalism?

Do pooled resources necessarily result in similar reports?

Three of the journalists who took part in the visit to Chhuk, filed copy that night to their respective news organisations. To try to answer these questions in relation to their reports, it was necessary to examine and compare their intros, sources and direct quotes.

**Lead sentences**

In most news writing conventions subscribed to by journalists, the lead as North Americans call it or the intro as it is known by the British, usually contains the key news the journalist has found. Sally White in her recent book *Reporting in Australia* summarises the convention thus:
A hard news story is shaped so that the most important information comes at the beginning. In the subsequent paragraphs, additional information - detail amplification, quotes, dissenting opinion, background, is placed in descending order of importance.\textsuperscript{322}

It should follow that a study of the lead sentences of the Chhuk stories revealed what the reporters thought was the most important news.

Murdoch:

(1) Villagers can hear the thump of Khmer Rouge B-40 rockets and mortars as they go to vote in Cambodia's first free election in decades. (24 words)

Pringle:

(1) Incredulous but nervous foreign election officers watched in amazement as laughing Cambodian villagers in their Sunday best lined up to vote within easy earshot of Khmer Rouge rockets and mortars. (30 words)

De Nerciat

(1) Khmer Rouge forces clashed with government forces Sunday and briefly detained two French soldiers monitoring polling operations in this southern Cambodian district, UN officials said. (25 words)

In the opening sentence, all three focused on the attack near Chhuk, employing the richly meaningful words, "Khmer Rouge". Murdoch and Pringle both mentioned the use of rockets and mortars in relation to villagers' voting. Pringle merely said they were in "earshot" while Murdoch applied onomatopoeia to make the attack more graphic. Pringle inserted an explicitly Western perspective with the otherwise irrelevant, "Incredulous but nervous foreign election officers". However, both reporters grasped the key to the main story of the day, which was itself a turning point in media perceptions of the Cambodian elections. The Cambodian population were turning out to vote, in spite of the Khmer Rouge. In the case of Chhuk, they were doing so within "earshot" of a Khmer Rouge attack. Journalists who had been

\textsuperscript{322}Sally A. White, \textit{Reporting in Australia}, 1991, 164.
prepared to report a Khmer Rouge onslaught were forced to ask the question: if these villagers in the heart of Khmer Rouge territory were willing to defy the guerrillas, how much support and for that matter strength, did the guerrillas really have?

In his opening sentence, de Nerciat, adopted a rather narrow, if nationalistic concern for the two French legionnaires. They were subsequently released unharmed, in a minor incident in an otherwise eventful day. In an example of how obsession with a sectional or local angle can obscure the bigger story, de Nerciat appeared to have missed the point of the day's developments.

Direct quotations

Direct quotations are a key element in stories written under most Western news writing conventions. In the case of the Chhuk reports, all three reporters quoted the Sikh police Captain controlling the laughing crowds of voters waiting at Chhuk's main polling station.

Murdoch:

(5) "Back, get back, you will get your turn," yelled a peacekeeper, Captain Mohindar Singh of India, as people pushed forward to be searched for weapons before being allowed to vote.

Pringle:

(9) "The people are very happy," said Captain Mohindar Singh, 45.  
(10) He and another Indian peacekeeper fought to control hundreds of enthusiastic Cambodians who surged around the polling station, waiting to cast their ballots in the first multi party election since 1972.

De Nerciat:

(12) "They are frightened because of their old memories," said Mohinder Singh, an Indian with the UN civil police.  
(13) "But they know the situation and in their heart of hearts, they know that the Khmer Rouge can only make so much trouble," he added
All three journalists took part in the short, impromptu interview, which was held as they moved in a group around the polling station. However, they used different parts of it, indicating that at least in this case, collaboration did not extend to writing the story.

However, both Murdoch and Pringle used almost identical quotes from a young Cambodian mother. Pringle provided the translation while Murdoch took notes:

Murdoch:

(7) "I am afraid of the Khmer Rouge, but that won't stop me from voting," said Ms Koun Tien, 22, as she stood in line with her baby daughter, ignoring the thud of shells across the rice fields.

Pringle:

(8) "I am afraid of the Khmer Rouge but it won't stop me from voting," said Mrs Koun Thien, aged 22, as she stood in line with her baby daughter.

The only difference between the two quotes was the use of the word that instead of the word it. It should be noted that this interview was recorded in Chhuk itself, with the fighting taking place several kilometres away, outside the polling station at Chhuk pagoda where the "thud of shells across the rice fields" could be softly heard.

All three journalists quoted Alexandra Hall Hall, who was supervising the voting at Chhuk pagoda polling station. All of them used her well down in the story, perhaps as a source of colour.

Murdoch:

(19)"We could hear the thump, thump, thump, thump of the fighting, but I told everybody to ignore it and get on with the job," she said.
(20) "It is quite amazing. Things are going quite smoothly. The people are enthusiastic about casting their votes. They are frightened but the people look to me. If I look frightened, they get frightened".
(21) Ms Hall\textsuperscript{323} a Bangkok based British diplomat, said the Khmer Rouge could easily creep up to the building where she will spend the night with the ballot boxes.

(22) The jungle where they hide is less than a kilometre away and the noise of the fighting was not diminishing.

(23) "I feel uneasy. I go through bouts of panic but then get over it," she said. "The main worry is that the Khmer Rouge is so unpredictable."

Pringle:

(11) Ms Alexandra Hall Hall, 29, a Bangkok based diplomat who is also an election volunteer, peered through an old shell hole in the polling station and looked nervously towards the forest just a kilometre away. and said, "The Khmer rouge could emerge from the jungle at any time. I get panic attacks from time to time because the Khmer rouge are so unpredictable."

(13) "Still it's thrilling to be here to watch the Cambodians vote, and I plan to sleep in the polling station tonight to protect the boxes."

De Nerciat:

(8) In a polling office not far from the scene of the fighting, a Bangkok based British diplomat attempted to reassure voters worried by the violence.

(9) "I told them all to ignore it and get on with their jobs," said Alexandra Hall Hall.

Clearly, the Hall Hall quotes used by all three are based, at least in part, on a single interview. Both Pringle and Murdoch quote Hall Hall as saying that the Khmer Rouge were unpredictable. Both refer to her sleeping with the ballot boxes and both refer to her suffering panic attacks, even if the language reported differs in each direct quote.

Both Murdoch and de Nerciat quote Ms Hall displaying British phlegm by advising people to ignore the violence and get on with their jobs. De Nerciat reports that she was reassuring voters. Murdoch wrote that she was speaking to her polling staff.

\textsuperscript{323}Lindsay Murdoch later remarked that if he filed a story from a place spelled Chhuk, using a source with a double barrelled name, the "subs would think I'm pissed again". Ms Hall-Hall's name was abbreviated accordingly.
Both quotes appear to have come from a short interview which the author tape recorded with Ms Hall Hall at Chhuk Pagoda polling stations. Mortar shells and rockets could be heard in the middle distance:

We arrived at five thirty with the equipment, flags, and woke up the polling team who were still asleep and put out the equipment and there were people coming to vote from about six o'clock, very quiet just waiting fifty metres away.

Yet there has been fighting going on within earshot of here!

Yes there has. More shelling here actually. You could hear "boom, boom", about twenty minutes worth. So I told them all to ignore it and to get on with their job.

And are they doing that?

Hall Hall: Absolutely.

Indeed there were only two quotes exclusive to an individual journalist.

Murdoch:

(12) "We just want peace..that is all," said a middle aged man who brought his family. 'If voting will help get peace, we will vote."

Meanwhile, James Pringle, referred to "incredulous but nervous foreign electoral officers" and quoted a London clerk whom he found at Chhuk Pagoda.

Pringle:

(2) "It would be hard to imagine anything like this in Britain," Mr Pat Morgan, 30, an election volunteer who works in London town hall, as joyous Cambodians who said they feared the Khmer Rouge nevertheless queued to vote in a shell scarred school.

(3) "The enthusiasm is incredible, even though as voting started we could hear rockets flying," Mr Morgan said.

These unremarkable observations mirror the points made by Ms Hall Hall who was quoted by all three.

Sources

324Alexandra Hall Hall, Personal Interview, 23 May 93.
Only De Nerciat referred directly to UN officials in his report on Chhuk. However, during the visit the journalists all sought and received briefings from the UN. The group twice visited the French Foreign Legion command post in Chhuk, seeking information on the local military situation. De Nerciat translated. The Legionary officer described the situation as "dangerous" and on the second visit told the group to leave the area. The journalists also visited the UNTAC CIVPOL (civilian police headquarters in Chhuk, where they were told things were quiet. Neither of these sources were named in any of the stories.

**Conclusion**

The journalists in the group collaborated on the choice of location. The pooling of information allowed them to find the only substantial attack launched by the Khmer Rouge on election day. On arrival they saw and heard mostly the same things (e.g. the sight of the happy voters in Chhuk or the sound of the mortars). Mostly they quoted the same people. Differences in the actual wording of direct quotes could more likely be blamed on difficulties in note taking, rather than attributed to having the same person saying different things in different interviews.

However, it would seem that is where the co-operation ended; where, if you like, the pack broke up. The intros show how they saw the story differently. De Nerciat adopted the French angle and missed the international story unfolding before him. Pringle and Murdoch, both understood the implications of the Cambodian people rejecting violence to vote. Yet they described it differently. Pringle, perhaps conscious of his British audience in Hong Kong, took in quotes from a British civil servant, high up in the story. Murdoch relied more on direct observation.

Certainly, the journalists who took part in the Chhuk expedition could be seen to be participating in "pack journalism". In this case however, they could not be accused of "competing to find the most dramatic angle of the story". Rather, the reports
could be seen as the product of a pooling of local knowledge, language skills, contacts and transport, in a remote and potentially dangerous location.

**Election Day Reports**

Election day in Cambodia largely failed to confirm journalists' gloomy prognostications about the United Nations poll. UNTAC estimated that up to two million voters, or more than a third of those registered, cast their ballot on the first day. The exuberant mood was caught by the *Age*'s Lindsay Murdoch who found that ordinary Cambodians were determined to vote irrespective of the Khmer Rouge's opposition.

(4) They dressed in best clothes and, just after daybreak, went in their hundreds to the school and waited impatiently to vote.

At the polling booths, Cambodians laughed and joked and queued patiently while the sometimes rather rough UN Police frisked them for concealed weapons. A similar scene was repeated across the country. This overwhelming support for the elections was reflected in the photographs used by the Australian press the following day. The Khmer Rouge had been exposed as a "paper tiger".

In contrast to photographs published prior to the voting, election day was largely depicted as a sea of eager faces. A photograph of Cambodians crowding against a wire Phnom Penh fence, waiting to vote, was carried in five newspapers: the *Australian Financial Review*, the *Advertiser*, the *Age*, the *West Australian* and the *Australian*. A photograph of a smiling Cambodian national, Moul Samneang, voting in Sydney, was carried in both the News Limited papers, the *Australian* and the *Telegraph-Mirror*. The *Australian* also carried a photograph of Sonn Sann greeting Buddhist peace marchers. The *Courier Mail* showed an expatriate Cambodian, Sophai Su and his daughter, Angela. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, maintained the

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ominous pre-election media mood by showing an armed Australian soldier at the ready, guarding a Blackhawk helicopter. Inside the paper, an amputee voter was seen being checked for weapons. The *Australian Financial Review* carried a large graphic with its full page feature article, "Cambodia votes: the world waits". The graphic centred on a map of Cambodia showing Khmer Rouge areas and included drawings of a Blackhawk helicopter and a faceless soldier.

In all, press coverage on May 24 consisted of seven news stories, seven wire stories, two features and one editorial. Headlines carried many of the usual key words which had become almost clichés during the campaign, "Khmer Rouge", "violence", "tension", "gauntlet" and "tragedy". But there were also "prayers" and "peace".

Reporters were still in the process of turning their predictions around in the face of the unexpectedly successful polling. The polls were reported as particularly successful, given the expected disruptions. Violence was still an issue to journalists, even in its absence. In the story titled, "Cambodians turn out peacefully for poll", the Hong Kong based Australian correspondent, David Lague, still managed to introduce the words "widespread violence" into his lead:

(1) Historic United Nations organised elections in Cambodia began peacefully in most areas yesterday despite the widespread violence and killing during the campaign.

Lague's lead was correct in detail, but questionable in implication. Although the UN conceded that violence occurred during the campaign, it was claimed that there was relatively little military violence by Cambodian standards. In the second sentence, however, Lague provided the context for the scale of disruptions.

(2) The Khmer Rouge had threatened to disrupt the elections but the polling opened in more than 1400 voting sites without incident.

(3) UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia military officials reported that the Khmer Rouge had attacked two towns in Kampot
province and caused a temporary halt in voting but the ballot centres re-opened after the attackers departed.

Relying on "military" sources, Lague referred to the attack near Chhuk in Kampot province, where Murdoch had witnessed a mortar attack the previous morning (Sunday). Lague said later that journalists may have concentrated on conflict as a way of justifying their posting:

There would not be much point arriving in Cambodia and beginning to pump out stories about the absence of a threat and the fact that this would be a peaceful and largely harmonious election. I can't divorce myself totally from this. It was not unreasonable to suspect that the Khmer Rouge would make some gesture. I don't think that was too fanciful. What was [fanciful was] the estimations of their capacity to do so.326

AAP's Terry Friel provided substance to claims of electoral disruptions with a report which blamed the ruling State of Cambodia for at least some of the attacks. His story (ANR 087) was filed on May 23 and circulated to AAP subscribers at 1932 Hours Sydney time.

(1) As Cambodians began voting in the first free elections in two decades today, the United Nations accused the ruling government here of widespread political violence.

An investigation of 200 political slayings could not be dismissed as an insignificant incident. However, even with this taken into account, it could be argued that the major story on May 23 was the voting, which had been so long in preparation and in which so many people participated. Under these circumstances, Friel's lead sentence could be seen to be making nominal reference to the election process itself, before darting back to the favoured theme of "violence". Indeed sentences (2) and (3) dropped reference to the voting altogether and proceeded to expand on the violence angle.

(2) Releasing results of UN investigations into 200 slayings in the past two months, UN Human Rights Chief, Denis McNamara, said political violence and human rights abuse was a major problem

326Lague, op.cit., 4 January 94.
which would be one of the biggest challenges of the new government.

(3) The UN blamed the ruling State of Cambodia (SOC) government for 15 of the deaths and said it was implicated in several more.

Indeed, voting did not become an issue in the story again until the thirteenth sentence in a sixteen sentence report. When Friel's story was reproduced in print, sub-editors identified violence as the key angle in the story. In the Australian on May 24, Friel's by-lined report was headlined, "UN accuses Hun Sen forces of violence".

Reporting for the West Australian, in a story titled, "Peace early poll winner", Andre Malan wrote:

(1) Democracy has begun its painful birth in Cambodia, with the United Nations Peacekeepers taking the honours against the Khmer Rouge on the first day of the elections which the guerrilla faction has vowed to disrupt.

While giving credit to UNTAC's success, it should be noted that Malan still left the door open for possible disruptions. He indicated this option by using "has vowed" rather than past tense, "vowed". Violence even in its absence, was still implicit. In the second and third sentences, Malan answers an unstated call for information on conflict.

(2) By late yesterday, there was only one report of a polling station being closed due to guerrilla activity.
(3) However, the booth in Kampot province, south west of Phnom Penh, re-opened after a skirmish in a nearby town.

In sentence (4), he returned to the main events of the day; the peaceful voting.

(4) In the cities of worn French colonial charm and in the villages from the steamy river plains in the south to the mountainous jungles of the north, millions of humble Khmer people have begun the trek to polling stations for an election they hope will end decades of terror for their tragic country.
Perhaps the most original, if somewhat curious angle, adopted on election day by the Australian press, was that used by Eric Ellis of the *Australian Financial Review*. He chose to lead in his story for his newspaper's Monday edition with news of a traffic accident which had occurred the previous Friday.

(1) A fatal car accident involving Australian troops in Cambodia marred an otherwise enthusiastic start to United Nations sponsored elections to end the nation's 20 years of bloodshed.

The lead contained the familiar formula of the military, violence (albeit a traffic accident) and the elections. However, claiming the incident "marred an otherwise enthusiastic start" to the elections would appear to be tenuous in the extreme. One is forced to ask for whom was the election marred? How could this incident, while tragic for those involved, eclipse in importance Friel's 200 political slayings or for that matter the voting itself? How would anyone, apart from those directly involved as well as those who received reports from UNTAC, even know that the incident occurred? How is this angle appropriate for a specialist business newspaper?

Further, the three dead Cambodians were not even identified as such in the opening sentence; they were relegated to being merely a passive adjunct to "a fatal car accident involving Australian troops". It would seem that three Cambodians being killed was regarded as being less important than the Australian involvement.

(2) The accident, in which a four wheel drive vehicle driven by Australian soldiers killed three members of a Cambodian family on motorbikes, took place near Svay Rieng, in Cambodia's south east, near the Vietnamese border.

Traffic accidents were common in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge systematically destroyed most motor vehicles after 1975. Fuel restrictions and lack of foreign exchange funds meant that most Cambodian roads remained empty of private vehicles until UNTAC's establishment in 1992. Aid money and UNTAC expenditure released a flood of small Japanese motorcycles into inexperienced and
untrained Cambodian hands. At the time of the elections, there were no driving schools, or for that matter road rules, operating in Cambodia.

(3) The incident, last Friday evening, sparked a tense face off during which guns were drawn by the UN personnel and local militia.

Guns were however common and easily available. Even a foreigner could go to Phnom Penh's central market and purchase an AK 47 assault rifle for a nominal sum. A "face off" involving weapons was almost an every day occurrence.\(^{327}\)

The AAP story on the incident (May 24, ANR 162) was a little more prosaic in its approach. It reported the deaths in a standard news agency "catchall" style lead.

(1) Three Australian soldiers were threatened by armed men after their United Nations vehicle was involved in a collision in which three Cambodians, including a government official, died.

This time the fact that it was Cambodians who died was at least mentioned in the opening sentence. However, the deaths were still secondary to the claim that Australian soldiers "were threatened by armed men". Once again it would seem that the journalist in question, regarded the welfare of fellow countrymen as more important than the deaths of unnamed "Oriental" people.

(2) An internal military investigation had been launched into the incident, Australian Army spokesman, Captain Kirk Coningham said here tonight.

However, in the second sentence Friel at least identified and named the source of the information. Ellis merely stated that the Australian Embassy confirmed the accident. AAP reported it involved three people riding a single motor cycle, not

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\(^{327}\)Non military violence involving guns was common place. UNTAC's chief investigator, Australian Federal Police Superintendent, Bill Kirk, told the author that Cambodians who had no recourse to a legal system, often resorted to violence to resolve disputes. Even arguments over extra marital affairs (which were not uncommon with many men away on military service) could result in death, he said.
"motorbikes" as Ellis reported. None of the Australians involved were hurt in the incident.

**Conclusion**

Most Australian journalists went to Cambodia wrongly expecting that Khmer Rouge violence would dominate the election. UN public relations staff despaired that journalists pursued stories which fulfilled expectations of violence rather than report on what the UN saw as the success of the election process. Reporters were faced with a contradiction; should they accept the line given by the official sources in press releases and conferences, even when that line directly conflicted with the violence expected of the Orient? Journalists became convinced that UN staff were withholding evidence of Khmer Rouge actions, leading them to tape a closed meeting of the country's administrators. Reuters subsequently proved reluctant to correct exaggerated reports of that meeting, even though alarmist stories had been printed and broadcast around the world.

Even a team of the most experienced correspondents had to go to great lengths to find and report on an isolated Khmer Rouge action against the polling. Indeed, predictions of widespread violence were proven wrong on election day when most of the Cambodian population turned out peacefully to vote.
CHAPTER NINE

ELECTION WRAP UP

The case of the invisible Buddhists

What were the media finding NEW in the violence? What was new in the violent incidents that were reported, exaggerated, recklessly predicting more of the same. Despite the lack of novelty they were still reported. Indeed after twenty years of war, during which little organised and vocal dissent was heard, thousands of people expressing their desire for peace, indeed daring to express their views about anything in this country, WAS new.

Liz Bernstein\textsuperscript{328}, Cambodian Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation.

One ought again to remember that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness: therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be.

Edward Said\textsuperscript{329}, Orientalism.

Foreign journalists' emphasis on reporting Cambodian "violence" led them to largely ignore the political and economic issues being debated by the Cambodians. A peace march organised by Cambodia's religious leadership went almost completely unreported by the Australian press. The story fell outside the conventional Western reporting of the "Oriental" issues articulated by Anthony Smith in The Geopolitics of Information: e.g. seeking stories involving "violence, war, corruption, disaster, famine, fire flood" etc. Buddhism and Buddhist beliefs were not reported as a significant political force. Indeed through negative stereotyping which borders on racism, they were portrayed as curious examples of "Eastern" exotica.

\textsuperscript{328}Liz Bernstein, Personal Letter to Author, 20 September 93, 2.
\textsuperscript{329} Said, op.cit., 1978, 67.
Organised religious beliefs play little or no direct part in contemporary Australian parliamentary politics. Australian election campaigns are dominated by politicians drawing on scripts created by professional writers who are in turn backed by modern consumer research. Cynicism about the process is endemic both among the perpetrators (the politicians and their campaign staff) and the mediators (the journalists), whose job it is to transmit the sometimes specious material to an increasingly cynical Australian public. Such interventions as there are by religious groups (e.g. the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence's reports on poverty) are unequivocally treated as side issues which are either quickly integrated into or dismissed from prepared strategies for the respective campaigns.

In contrast, the Buddhist religion has a long history of deep involvement in Cambodian politics. This manifested itself in the 1993 election campaign in direct action aimed at ending the fighting. Led by one of Cambodia's best known religious figures, Maha Gosananda, the clergy staged a peace march which began symbolically at the ancient seat of Cambodian nationalism, Angkor Wat. While Angkor Wat may be famous to Europeans as an historic curiosity, an international tourist attraction, to Cambodians it is a living religious centre, as well as a potent symbol of the birth of Cambodian cultural, political and military nationalism. However, as semiologist Thomas Sebeok asserts, to understand the importance of such symbolism, one must be aware of the pre-existing social conventions. It would appear that the international press corps were not.

The 19 day peace march, the Dhamma Yietra (literally "pilgrimage of truth"), intentionally took the Buddhist monks, nuns and laity through the war ravaged areas of Siem Reap, Kompong Thom, and Kompong Cham, arriving in Phnom

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Penh the day before voting started.\textsuperscript{331} The journey was difficult and dangerous as Maha Gosananda later recounted to the \textit{Bangkok Post}:

> Our resolve was tested two days before our march began, while we gathered for meditation outside Siem Reap. We could hear fighting going on outside and bullets were fired through the temple walls. Three of our people were wounded— one was shot in the shoulder. But the situation gave us the opportunity to understand the suffering that surrounded us all. Our mission was to end the war and suffering, by peaceful means. We all had to overcome a test of our faith before we could begin our march. That was our Karma and we all had to see it through.\textsuperscript{332}

Gosananda and his followers were acting within the political, social and religious traditions of Cambodia. In pre-colonial times, Buddhism and the Cambodian state were indissolubly linked. The religion was supported by the state, with the King, who at some stage in his life would have taken the yellow robe himself and lived as a monk, as its chief lay patron. The promotion of education and learning was in the hands of the Buddhist monks, whose most senior religious officials held responsibilities that were temporal as well as spiritual.

Outside the capital, the Buddhist monks in the villages played a unifying role, joining practical with moral guidance and acting as repositories of Cambodian history and the lore of the community. When in the rapidly changing world of the 1950's and 1960's, Prince Sihanouk sought to mobilise all those elements which could advance his policies, he paid careful attention to the benefits which could be gained through the goodwill of the Buddhist religion.\textsuperscript{333}

For centuries, Buddhism, together with the monarchy, had been the glue which held Cambodian society together. The Khmer Rouge socialist experiment attempted not only to tear the fabric of that society apart, but also to destroy parts of it

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{332}Patrick Cusick, "Maha Gosananda, a true peace maker", \textit{Bangkok Post}., 30 May 93, 34.
\end{footnotes}
altogether. They expelled monks from their Wats, smashed the Buddhist images and turned their Wats into stores. Many monks were killed; the rest were forced to exchange their saffron for black cloth of the Kampuchean citizen and work in the fields.\textsuperscript{334}

After the Vietnamese invasion, Buddhism was again legalised, although not encouraged by the new communist government in Phnom Penh. By 1993, Buddhism, with Gosananda as a supreme patriarch, underwent a visible resurgence in Cambodia.\textsuperscript{335} UNTAC estimated that by then more than 90 percent of the population observed Theravada Buddhism.\textsuperscript{336} Buddhist monks had resumed their role as the educated elite across the country, with a network as extensive as the largest of the political parties contesting the election.

During the Dhamma Yietra, the foreign press corps received regular updates on the marchers' progress at the UNTAC daily briefings. On May 10, Eric Falt announced that he had invited the Venerable Yos Hut to speak to journalists about the march.\textsuperscript{337} On May 17, Falt told journalists that hundreds of thousands of Cambodians had shown up along the roadside with buckets of water, incense and flowers to receive the blessings of the walkers. Most of them had come from villages located five to six kilometres away from the road. Even the poorest communities had offered food and water and shelter for the night.\textsuperscript{338}

In Kompong Thom, a former Khmer Rouge stronghold, 4,000 people had reportedly greeted the marchers with chants and prayers. Journalists at the briefing on May 17 were told that the slogan "May we have peace from this day forward" had been the rallying cry of the population. Falt told the briefing that day:

\textsuperscript{335}John Holloway, Personal Letter to Author, 3 November 93.
\textsuperscript{336}UNTAC, "Introduction to Cambodia", \textit{Welcome to International Observers}, 23.4.93, 1.
\textsuperscript{337}UNTAC, \textit{Daily Press Briefing Notes}, 10 May 93, 1.
\textsuperscript{338}UNTAC, \textit{Daily Press Briefing Notes}, 17 May 93, 1.
The event was but one of the signs that comforted UNTAC about the prospects of the upcoming elections. It exemplified the ardent desire for peace of the Cambodian population who [sic] was determined to go to the polls despite pressures and the threats.\textsuperscript{339}

On May 18, Falt told the daily briefing that the marchers were within 60 kilometres of Phnom Penh, less than one hour’s drive down a safe, good quality road in any one of the available four wheel drive vehicles. Falt said that the Buddhists had written to him hoping that their endeavour would attract some interest on the part of the international press. He quoted them as concluding with the words:

\begin{quote}
War stories are not the only ones happening in Cambodia today.\textsuperscript{340}
\end{quote}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Australian Press reports 19 May 93}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{News Outlet} & \textbf{Headline} & \textbf{Theme} \\
\hline
Advertiser & Assassination fears grow as poll date nears. & Threat of violence. \\
\hline
Advertiser & Peacock for Cambodia. & Election observers. \\
\hline
Age & Cambodian rebels rally against poll. & Threat of violence. \\
\hline
Australian & Families to stay in Cambodia for poll. & Dependants will not be evacuated. \\
\hline
Australian & Troublemakers face poll ban. & Threat of violence. \\
\hline
Courier Mail & Troops fly out for poll. & Blackhawks re-inforce Australian military. \\
\hline
Hobart Mercury & Dossier of a genocidal madman. & Political violence. \\
\hline
Hobart Mercury & Cambodia poll sabotage fears. & Threat of violence. \\
\hline
Newcastle Herald & Khmer 'safe' & Political violence. \\
\hline
S.M.H. & New fears for safety of our boys in Cambodia. & Threat of Khmer Rouge. \\
\hline
West Australian & UN boss decries violence & Political violence \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

However, "war" was almost entirely what the Australian press reported, when stories were printed the following day, 19 May 93. Of the eleven stories run in the Australian newspapers under study, all but two were concerned with questions of

\textsuperscript{339}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{340}UNTAC, Daily Press Briefing Notes, 18 May 93, 1.
military preparedness, actual violence or the threat of violence. Of the remaining two, a story in the *Australian* reported on the decision not to evacuate families, in the face of an implicit threat of violence. Three headlines openly refer to "fears", while there are other references to "assassination", "rebels", "troublemakers", "troops", "sabotage", "violence" and even "a genocidal madman". The Buddhists call for peace and for that matter the peace march itself, went unreported.

On that day, only one newspaper, the Adelaide *Advertiser*, reported briefly on the peaceful activities of Opposition Foreign Affairs spokesman, Andrew Peacock, who went to Cambodia as an international observer of the election process. The *Advertiser* did not send a correspondent to Cambodia, so that its sub-editors relied on news agency copy throughout the election. Yet even within the *Advertiser* itself, Peacock's visit was regarded as the least important angle. It represents only 14.28% of the space allocated to "Assassination fears", receives only 40% of the headline height and is not sourced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Headline size</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Sq. Cent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assassination fears</td>
<td>1.5 Centimetres</td>
<td>State of Cambodia, Eric Falt, Yasushi Akashi.</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grow as poll date nears. Peacock for Cambodia.</td>
<td>.6 Centimetres</td>
<td>No source reported.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On May 21, Falt began the briefing by informing reporters that the Dhamma Yietra had reached the outskirts of Phnom Penh. The Buddhists planned to stage a major demonstration at Phnom Penh's Independence monument: a national symbol of the end of the colonial era. Their itinerary for the next two days had been announced on May 20 and was posted in the Spokesman's Office. In the capital, it became clear for anyone wishing to see that Cambodians' respect for their traditional teachers endured the holocaust. As the long saffron and white peace march wound round the

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*UNTAC, Daily Press Briefing Notes, 21 May 93, 1.*
Independence monument and down Tou Samouth Boulevard, city dwellers filled the footpaths in a silent show of respect. Some wept openly while many bowed their heads as the monks and nuns passed by. Others held up small children or carried elderly relatives on their backs.

On the second day of the voting, the Buddhist clergy were given a reception at the Royal palace by Prince Sihanouk. According to Patrick Cusick, writing in the Bangkok Post, the Prince acknowledged that the power of Buddhism, as demonstrated by Maha Gosananda, was the solution to Cambodia's suffering, where weapons and dictatorships had failed. His son, Prince Ranariddh, the leader of the avowedly Buddhist Funcinpec party and subsequent winner of most votes in the election, saw the march as a catalyst for peace:

The huge turnout for the peace march on the day before the election made people understand that they were experiencing a new beginning a lasting peace. They realised that they were going to vote and that they had the freedom of choice. . . .

The truth is that Cambodians have had enough of violence has put an end to the Khmer Rouge as a major force to contend with. At the end of the day, the Khmer Rouge are led by pragmatists.

There's a new dawn over Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge and others who use intimidation and fear are out of step with the times. Buddhism has a major role to play in the new Cambodia. We are in deep gratitude to what the Buddhist peace walks achieved. It was an historic occasion on the second day of the free elections when my father met with Maha Gosananda and made it clear to all that the peaceful way of Buddhism was the way to end our long period of war.  

Yet Australian journalists and newspapers covering the election had largely ignored the march. Of the 345 press items in the overall study, there were only six press photographs of Buddhists. These were obtained from wire service syndications. The accompanying stories did not refer to the peace march. It is significant that the photographs or captions also did not identify any of the Buddhist monk's

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342 Cusick, op.cit., 30 May 93.
leadership. As photographic subjects they were stripped of individual subjectivity and reduced to stereotypes.

Table 9.3
Breakdown of photographs of Buddhist Clergy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Caption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17/5/93</td>
<td>Australian Financial</td>
<td>Buddhist monks hold Funcinpec party campaign posters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/5/93</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Buddhist monks sip cola and fan themselves during political rally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/5/93</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>A Buddhist monk rests during a break on the 16 day, 350 kilometre March for Peace from Siem Reap to Phnom Penh. Thai and Japanese monks have joined the march, organised by a senior Cambodian monk. (Reuters).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/5/93</td>
<td>Sunday Age</td>
<td>End of the Road: Buddhist nuns file past the royal palace in Phnom Penh yesterday at the end of their week-long peace march from the north of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/5/93</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>Opposition candidate, Son Sann greets Buddhist monks and nuns who arrived in Phnom Penh from Angkor Wat on a peace march. (AFP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/6/93</td>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>Prince Power: Buddhist nuns join yesterday's protest calling for Prince Norodom Sihanouk to take charge of an interim government to rule Cambodia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing about colonialist literature, Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, argues that the reduction of the "native" to a stereotyped product, "commodifies" him/her to a "resource" which can be exploited.

The European writer commodifies the native by negating his individuality, his subjectivity, so that he is now perceived as a generic being that can be exchanged for any other native (they all look alike, act alike, and so on). ^344

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^343This seemed surprising if only because Gosananda was a former resident of Sydney, where he had been prominent in the local Cambodian community.

^344Abdul Jan Mohammed, op.cit.,1985, 64.
It would seem that while the technology had improved in the post-colonial era, the exploitative use of "native" subjects remained unchanged. The Buddhists were rendered voiceless: the photographs depicting anonymous examples of "Oriental" exotica, strangely dressed bit players in a violent drama in a strange and distant land.

The peace march appeared to have rated only a single reference in text: in the *West Australian* on 24 May 93. Even this reference is contained in the last four sentences of the report, "Tension high as votes cast".

On Saturday, a procession of hundreds of peace marchers who have crossed the country from north to south arrived in Phnom Penh to coincide with the election. As a monk leading the procession attempted to launch a symbolic dove of peace, an angry fist fight broke out between two Japanese photographers jostling for position. The Khmers in the crowd were unsurprised. Violence is nothing new to them.

The mention is remarkable not only for its rarity and considered insignificance. It is laced with unconscious irony. A monk at the end of a "pilgrimage of truth" symbolically sets peace free, while journalists are distracted by minor violence. Meanwhile, the reporter assumes that s/he can read the minds of the Cambodians watching. They seemed unsurprised. By what? Is it at the violence as the reporter suggests or is it at the behaviour of the foreign press corps?

It seemed that not only did most journalists fail to report on the peace march, most did not even bother to check it out, even after it came under fire at Siem Reap. One of the marchers, Liz Bernstein, said later that not a single journalist joined the walk until UNTAC media met them at Kompong Thom. She said that only three freelance journalists later met them at Skun about 3-4 days walk (or several hours drive) from Phnom Penh. She blamed the media disinterest in the peace process on
"the cynical pre-occupation with violence". She blamed journalists for exacerbating apprehensions:

Much of the fear and tension in the pre-election weeks was indeed magnified, if not created, by the media. The endless reports of violence, real or imagined, and the expectation of more, created a situation of panic. The UN Secretary General ordered UN staff out of the country, in a reaction to all of the media reports, unfounded and sensationalistic as they were, so that even the Secretary General had little confidence in the UN elections. The people panicked when hearing this, stocking up on rice MSG and other staples, planning to lock themselves in their apartments on the first day of the elections... the peace walk had an incredible calming and reassuring effect on the city, indeed the country.345

Even in Phnom Penh, the peace march appeared to involve more people than any other political rally during the entire election campaign. So why did Australian journalists largely ignore the Buddhists and their role in Cambodian elections? Logistics and communications were not a problem. The Buddhists quietly made themselves available for interview and photo opportunities. Eric Falt despaired about the lack of coverage:

That is one of the frustrating aspects. I think that it [the march] is as sensationalist [sic] as someone getting killed, in terms of media appeal. I have day after day stood up in the briefings about their progression from Siem Riep to Phnom Penh, giving them details about how many people were greeting them. We went to great lengths to have some information about that almost every day, as much as possible, hoping that somebody would use it. Television has used it because it is interesting but otherwise, nothing. Print media nothing.346

Falt saw the failure to report on the march as a failure of journalists' news values. This different interpretation of the "truth" combined with his unwillingness to tell journalists what they wanted to hear, contributed to Falt's unpopularity as a media spokesperson. Perhaps, it was a statement of his integrity and naiveté, that he was still angry at the time of interview, complaining about the journalists' short-sightedness.

345Bernstein, op.cit., 20 September 93, 1.
346Falt, op.cit., 24 May 93.
On May 28, the Cambodian Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation called a news conference in Phnom Penh to express concern about the way the election was being reported. The conference was publicised in a news release distributed at the UNTAC daily briefing. One of the march’s leaders, the Venerable Yos Hut, told those journalists who attended that they should be reporting on the efforts to find peace, not focusing on and encouraging more violence:

You came to report news for your countries around the world. There is a lot of good news in Cambodia - the election which many Cambodians went to cast their votes, already about 90% (of them), and this is big news. The Dhamma Yietra is big news in Cambodia. Yet you prefer sensational news. The Dhamma Yietra should be considered very good news. The Dhamma Yietra, calling for peace, received big support from the whole Cambodian community. We invite you to spread the good news in the world.347

There is no evidence that the news conference was reported in the Australian press. It appears that no Australian journalists accepted the invitation to attend. The Buddhists’ story was neglected because it was perceived to be outside conventional news values. Sue Downie, the United Press International and Australian Broadcasting Corporation stringer in Phnom Penh, acknowledged that reporters were aware of the march, but chose not to report on it. She articulated a conservative and narrow definition of news as new words said by important people:

They [the Buddhists] didn’t have much to say. You have a paragraph saying x thousand peace marchers arrived in Phnom Penh. But unless the monk is saying something different to what he said before, something new and dynamic, you are not going to get the coverage, especially on election day.348

The fact that regular statements were relayed to journalists by UNTAC, indicated that the monks had a great deal to say. However, Downie was suggesting that she (and other Australian journalists) considered what the monks were saying was unimportant. That is, their calls for peace fell outside the journalists’ news values.

347 Bernstein, op.cit., 2.
348 Sue Downie, Personal Interview, 27 May 93.
In her eyes, monks lacked prominence and the statements they made were of little consequence. The action taken by the marchers to arrive in Phnom Penh with timeliness on election day, was not enough to stop the story being overshadowed by events the journalists considered more important. This represents an explicit example of Said's contention that Westerners writing about the "Orient", convert raw reality to suit the perceived needs of their Western audience. In the Australian experience of politics, religious leaders were of little prominence and what they said was considered to be almost of no consequence to most voters. In the Cambodian context, Buddhist religious leaders were of extreme prominence, perhaps only second to the most senior members of the royal family.

So what of the consequences of the Buddhist peace message? Let us assume for a moment that Gosananda, the Buddhist priests and laity, Sihanouk and Ranariddh were wrong in their stated beliefs that Buddhist prayers could alter perceived reality. Let us continue to use Western rationalist methods of interpreting and analysing politics. Even a cursory reading of Cambodian history, reveals the significance of the Buddhists in domestic politics. Many of the books on the Vietnam war, written by an earlier generation of reporters, stress the importance of the Buddhists in that relatively recent Indochinese conflict.349

Yet in the period under study, it was clear that Cambodian beliefs in spiritual values were considered almost insignificant in Australian reports on the election. The culturally based Western assumption that political candidates were the key players in politics was further betrayed by Downie's explanation of what she considered to be more important news which eclipsed the Buddhists:

We had Sihanouk's son saying he was not going to allow the Khmer Rouge into the government. Now that's a bigger story than a monk saying he wants peace. We all want peace. Everyone wants

349 e.g. Neil Sheehan, op.cit., 1988, 334/335.
peace. He wasn't saying anything new. Just a different man in a different cloth.\textsuperscript{350}

Although an experienced correspondent, based in Phnom Penh, Downie was clearly operating within Western political perspectives. Ranariddh understood the significance of the Buddhist peace march to Cambodians. Downie, like many of her colleagues, apparently did not. The "untreated strangeness" of "a different man in a different cloth" influencing politics was simply rejected. In this view of the world of Australian politics, religious leaders ought not to be considered of political importance. In the news values of many Western journalists, they ought not to be "news".

\textsuperscript{350} Downie, op.cit.
Post election press coverage

I noticed that in the last few days when the Khmer Rouge didn't do anything there was a big downturn in interest. The first day was fine. Everyone was excited. Everyone went for it. After that, people were walking around saying "What are we going to do now? If there is no story we'll go". Hundreds of journalists have been leaving in the last few days because nothing happened.

Sue Downie351

I think there is something wrong [with news values] when you hear as I heard last night, television crews saying "Nothing is happening. There is no murder. We are going home tomorrow".

Eric Falt352

Australian press interest in the Cambodian election ebbed and flowed with journalists' expectations of conflict.353 Print coverage (measured in square centimetres) declined dramatically after the first day of voting, when it became evident that the election would not be disrupted by widespread Khmer Rouge military action.

Coverage reached a peak of 7,695 sq. cm. on Monday, May 24, when the first reports of voting were printed in the newspapers. The space allocated by newspapers was boosted substantially by the generous use of photographs (see Election Day Reports), indicating the perceived importance of the beginning of the voting. However, coverage fell dramatically the following day.

The West Australian's Andre Malan, AAP's Terry Friel, and the Australian's David Lague all departed from Phnom Penh on Friday, May 28, before any voting figures were announced. The Australian Financial Review's Eric Ellis had already gone. The Canberra Times' Ian McPhedran left Saturday, May 29. In cutting their visits

351Ibid.
352Falt, op.cit., 25 May 93.
353Note: the time lag created by newspaper production schedules means that press reports quoted in this chapter invariably refer to incidents the previous day.
short, one is forced to conclude that these reporters did not see reporting the voting results as a critical part of their coverage of the Cambodian elections. Certainly, counting did take longer than expected and the costs of keeping a reporter overseas can be substantial. However, leaving an election before any of the votes were announced would be inconceivable to a reporter covering a similar event in Australia. The premature departures added credibility to Eric Falt's claim that correspondents had failed to find the military violence they had come to Cambodia looking for.

**Interest Flags**

The lowest coverage of the week (1,345 sq. cm.: the fourth lowest in the entire study) came on May 30, when the *Sunday Herald Sun* included Reuters and AFP stories reporting, "UN says Cambodia poll 'free and fair'.

(1) Phnom Penh: The chief UN peacekeeper in Cambodia yesterday declared the country's first multi-party election in decades free and fair and told warring leaders to abide by the results.
(2) "I have no hesitation in declaring that the conduct of the election was free and fair," Yasushi Akashi told a meeting of the all faction Supreme National Council (SNC).

The report also quoted the Khmer Rouge rejecting the poll and calling for new elections. However, a statement supporting the poll made by the Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia, Mr Fu, appeared to go unreported. It should be remembered that China was for many years Democratic Kampuchea's international champion, which provided a lifeline of arms and aid. Significantly, Mr Fu chose at this point to back the poll. He told the SNC of his support for Akashi's determination:

We in China have come to promote the Cambodian peace process with sincere friendly sentiments for the Cambodian people. (. . .) The credit for this success should be attributed to the joint efforts of the SNC led by his Royal Highness Prince Sihanouk and UNTAC. The patriotic enthusiasm and sense of responsibility shown by the Cambodian voters fully reflects their strong desire for peace and
reconstruction of their homeland. I hope that this desire will be respected by all Cambodian parties.\footnote{UNTAC, \textit{Daily Press Briefing Paper}, 29 May 93, 2.}

It appears that Mr Fu's remarks, in spite of their international importance, were not included in any of the Australian press reports of that day's developments.

The departure of many Australian reporters forced newspapers to rely even more heavily on news agency copy for their Cambodian election coverage. Even though such copy often failed to reflect subtle if substantial developments, it was adequate to cover the predictable. Press coverage increased substantially the following day, May 31, after results began to be posted (3, 261 sq. cm.). The \textit{Courier Mail} reported:

\textbf{Dead Heat in Cambodia poll}

(1) Phnom Penh: Cambodia's Government was in a virtual tie with the main opposition party yesterday in early results from the country's first multi party election in decades.

(2) With fewer than 500,000 ballots counted out of 4.2 million cast, the Cambodian People's Party of Prime Minister, Hun Sen had 41.1 percent of the vote and the royalist Funcinpec faction had 40.1 percent.

Both the \textit{Canberra Times} and the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} featured an Associated Press syndicated photograph of an Australian Army Black Hawk crewman delivering a ballot box. The \textit{Australian Financial Review} showed amendments being made to the UNTAC tally board while the \textit{Age} claimed to show Cambodians reading newspapers to find election results: which in fact had not yet been released.

\textbf{Conflict and "truth"}

A claim of improprieties in the election process made by the Cambodian People's Party, brought coverage back to 4,265 sq. cm. on June 1. In a further development that morning, the CPP announced at a Phnom Penh news conference that unless
the UN agreed to by-elections in four provinces where it claimed "irregularities", it would not accept the outcome of the elections.

Party spokesman, Sok An, cited six points of contention, claiming that UNTAC had breached an "understanding". Initially, he was unwilling to provide further details. He clearly expected journalists to report his claims without question. When pressed by reporters, Sok An claimed that UNTAC had agreed to admit political party representatives to "safe havens" where votes were being held prior to counting. When reporters demanded specific proof of "irregularities", he reported one "serious incident" where a Funcinpec official had been admitted. This represented one alleged breach. "Give us proof not just claims!" , a reporter shouted.

Sok An further claimed that Cambodian born UNTAC electoral staff had been soliciting votes. This claim was not substantiated. He also claimed UN seals on ballot boxes had been broken and the special ink used to stop people voting twice did not work. Sok An reported that ballot papers had also been seen falling from UNTAC truck number 5451. This totalled four alleged breaches, still short of the six claimed.

"Has there been electoral fraud?", Sok An was asked by a BBC reporter. "Yes", he replied. "Who is responsible?", he was asked. "We don't know", Sok An replied to groans.355

Reporters present indicated disbelief that UNTAC would or could rig the election. As Japanese journalists came to blows as they grabbed at the multi lingual news releases, the consensus among their European colleagues was that the Cambodian People's Party was trying to subvert the election even before counting was over.

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355 Transcript of meeting with SOC, 1 June 93.
James Pringle said such complaints at this stage indicated "trouble to come". Lindsay Murdoch, an otherwise outspoken critic of UNTAC, was succinct. "Sok An was talking bullshit", Murdoch said as he walked out of the news conference.

The expectation of renewed conflict, this time over election procedures, led to Australian press coverage increasing to 5,196 sq. cm. on June 2. Using Reuters copy, the Herald Sun reported:

(1) The UN stepped up security around its Phnom Penh radio station yesterday after Cambodia's ruling party threatened to reject the result of last week's historic election and warned of unrest.
(2) "We've increased soldiers and defences over at the radio station," a UN official said.

For the moment at least, the theme of threat and possible violence had been revived for the Australian press. Four newspapers, the Advertiser, the Herald Sun, the West Australian and the Australian, reprinted the Reuters First Day lead, "UN steps up security in Cambodia", by Mark Dodd. The Canberra Times used a Bangkok datelined Reuters story, "Khmer Rouge to fight if ruling party resists result". One story carried in the Daily Telegraph (which did not have either correspondent or a stringer in Phnom Penh) was un-attributed.

In the SMH, Lindsay Murdoch reported that Sok An "failed to produce hard evidence and talked in general terms of complaints about the refusal of the UN to secure ballot boxes". In the Age, he used the transparently artificial journalistic device, "political observers" to suggest that "the Government's actions have been orchestrated by hard-line communists within the ruling State of Cambodia (SOC) who are not prepared to lose or share power".

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356 Rumours swept Phnom Penh of a military coup being planned by SOC hard-liners. Sue Downie took them seriously enough to have her photographic slides and negatives sent to Thailand for safety.
"It's not worth taking any chances," she said. "I know what these people are like".
357 Reuters, LBY 099, 16:29: 11 hrs. 1 June 93.
358 Reuters, LBY 167, 18:54:19 hrs. 1 June 93.
Table 9.4

Australian Press Reports 2 June 93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Paper</th>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertiser</td>
<td>UN steps up security over poll warning</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Cambodia poll dispute threatens crisis</td>
<td>Lindsay Murdoch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>UN braces after Phnom Penh threat</td>
<td>Mark Dodd (Reuters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Financial Review</td>
<td>Cambodian ruling party demands new elections</td>
<td>Sheri Prasso (AFP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canberra Times</td>
<td>Cambodia poll ruction</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The messengers of peace</td>
<td>Ian Mc Phedran</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Khmer Rouge ready for war</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Evans 'to back UN decision</td>
<td>AAP</td>
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<td>Courier Mail</td>
<td>Phnom Penh threat to dispute poll</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>Ruling Party in new poll call</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newcastle Herald</td>
<td>Phnom Penh demands new poll</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>UN Rejects demand for fresh election</td>
<td>Lindsay Murdoch</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Australian</td>
<td>UN alert as poll fairness queried</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choppers fly flag of peace</td>
<td>AAP (Filed by Terry Friel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prior to departure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegraph Mirror</td>
<td>Demand for new election</td>
<td>Unsourced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meanwhile, the Australian Financial Review, the Canberra Times, the Courier Mail and the Newcastle Herald used Dodd's Second Daylead, "Cambodia tense with government threat".

Phnom Penh, June 1, Reuters - Cambodia's ruling party threatened Tuesday to reject the result of last week's historic UN election and Khmer Rouge guerrillas retaliated with a threat of renewed war. "We cannot accept the election result if it (the election) is not free and fair," said the chief spokesman of the ruling Cambodian People's party (CPP), Sok An, who demanded new elections be held in at least four provinces.359

359 Reuter, LBY 290, 23:01: 16 hrs. 1 June 93.
Dodd's reporting was written in classic news agency style, in that he reported what was claimed and threatened by Sok An, rather than analysing whether it contained any substance. In doing so, Dodd fell into a trap often encountered by "objective" reporters. Glasser believes the inflexible use of standardised style reflects a preoccupation with form which overshadows any concern for the validities of the realities the journalist presents:

For the journalist this means interviews with sources; and it means official sources with impeccable credentials. It means juxtaposing conflicting truth claims, where truth claims are reported as "fact" regardless of their validity. It means making a judgement about the news claim even if that judgement serves only to lend authority to what is known to be false or misleading.

By merely repeating that Sok An had complained about "irregularities", without questioning or challenging the substance of the claim, Dodd perhaps unwittingly gave credence to statements which the questioning at the news conference had indicated were founded in mendacity. In this case, the conflicting "truth claim", UNTAC's official response, appeared to arrive too late to be carried in Australia's press. It fell between deadlines.

On the afternoon of June 2, UNTAC's chief electoral officer, R.H.F. Austin, released a twenty-one page document detailing his response to the SOC/CPP complaints about the election. At the evening news conference, Professor Austin said that he was "unhappy and obviously saddened" by the CPP threat to refuse to recognise the results:

There was no evidence of fraud. Neither was there evidence to suggest that the scope (of problems and irregularities) had been sufficient to justify rejection of the results in question. The refusal

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360 Walter Lippman wrote in 1946 that; "News and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished. The function of news is to signalise an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them in relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act". Walter Lippman, "Stereotypes, public opinion and the press", op.cit., 167.

Austin's rebuttal was subsequently picked up in the latter part of the Reuters story, "Cambodia royalists appear poll winners". However, it appears that Austin was not reported at all in the next day's Australian press. The Reuters story quoting him was filed mid-evening so that time zone differences made it too late for use by most Australian newspapers. It seems that at least in this case, even the conflicting "truth claim" never appeared.

The incident demonstrated the failure of conventional "objective" reporting techniques when confronted with a dogmatic assertion of communist-authoritarian "truth". Perceptions of the "prominence" of the official involved as well as the inherent "conflict" in the situation helped make the story newsworthy, while accurate quotations of the accusations fulfilled a limited definition of objectivity. Under such circumstances, journalists are under pressure to file quickly, working under the assumption that later stories will provide balance. News agencies and increasingly radio and television have the capacity to transmit such information across the world almost instantly, even from the back streets of a ruined and impoverished city like Phnom Penh. However, wide ranging accusations demand detailed rebuttal and cannot be quickly balanced by counter claims. Almost twenty four hours later, when UNTAC's reply was prepared and released, the news focus had moved on.

362UNTAC, Daily Press Briefing Paper, 2 June 93, 2/3.
363Reuter, LBY 870, 21:50:57 hrs. 2 June 93).
364The Reuter office established at the Hotel Cambodiana, was equipped with a portable satellite uplink facility which could be used in the field. Japanese television crews were similarly equipped, allowing regular live crosses to Tokyo:
"We use satellite phones in a number of places around the world. We must have at least a couple of dozen of them. You can set up a satellite phone from just about anywhere in the world and file to just about anywhere. This is modern technology."
Graham Earnshaw, op. cit.
News agency style, which tries to separate reporting from analysis, failed to alert readers to the unsubstantiated disinformation being presented as "fact". In this case, newspapers without access to an on the spot correspondent were themselves particularly disadvantaged, with sub-editors forced to assess the story at face value.

**Sihanouk Intervenes**

The following day, Thursday, June 3, Australian newspaper coverage fell slightly to 4253 sq. cm.. In a SMH story headlined, "UN warns of violence as government begins pullout, Lindsay Murdoch pursued the withdrawal of CPP agents from polling stations. Murdoch reported "fears of government initiated violence". Four newspapers, the *Mercury*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Telegraph-Mirror*, and the *Herald Sun* ran with an early Reuters story, "Sihanouk tries to broker Cambodian power problems", by Mark Dodd. The story continued with the theme of crisis and implicit threat of conflict.

Phnom Penh, June 2, Reuters - Head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk has invited leaders of Cambodia's two main opposing parties to a meeting to tackle the political crisis emerging from last week's UN elections. 365

Dodd's language while couched in flat news agency style, contained emotive terms, flagging the author's opinions. The parties (which subsequently joined in an uneasy coalition) were "opposing". They had been called to meeting like footy players, to "tackle" not an identified "crisis" but one which was "emerging".

Only two newspapers, the *Advertiser* and the *West Australian* concentrated on the election results: which showed, with 80% of the votes counted, that Funcinpec was in the lead. None of the newspapers surveyed carried a Reuters report from neighbouring Thailand, "Thai top brass says Cambodia conflict to stabilise", by Sonia Hepinstall who correctly downplayed the threat of violence.

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365Reuter, LBY 574, 12:31:37 hrs. 2 June 93.
Bangkok, June 2, Reuters - Cambodia's ruling party is unlikely to stage a coup if it loses the UN-supervised election, Thailand's top generals said on Wednesday.
"There are some protests made by the CPP (Cambodian People's Party) but that will not lead to violence," Thai army chief General Wimol Wonganwitch said in a rare meeting with foreign reporters.366

The Thai generals, with their network of local intelligence and troops on the border proved to be correct in their assessment of SOC.

However, most of the Australian press were not to be denied a crisis. The Australian newspapers of June 4, carried reports of a new twist in the post election power broking; Prince Sihanouk had issued a statement declaring himself Prime Minister. Variations of this story were carried in the Age, the SMH, the Canberra Times, the West Australian, the Telegraph Mirror and the Newcastle Herald. The Australian reported, "Sihanouk averts Cambodian Crisis":

(1) The Cambodian leader, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, in a dramatic move to defuse a potentially explosive situation, formed a new coalition government yesterday with himself as prime minister and head of the armed forces.

The language employed in the AFP originated report evoked images of chaos, crisis and militarism. Sihanouk's move was "dramatic" while the situation was, like a bomb waiting to go off, "potentially explosive".

(2) His son, Prince Norodom Ranrariddh, who heads the royalist Funcinpec opposition party, and the former Cambodian Prime Minister, Mr Hun Sen, immediately became deputy Prime Ministers and their respective rival governments which fought for sovereignty over Cambodia in a thirteen year civil war were dissolved.

In fact, both "governments" were not dissolved and remained as they were. At the time the report was written, Ranariddh was believed to be at Ampil in the Northwest

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366 Reuter, LBY 686, 17:11:39 hrs. 2 June 93.
because his plane had been denied landing rights at Phnom Penh airport. It was subsequently reported that Ranariddh had raised questions about Sihanouk's plans because they did not accurately reflect the outcome of the elections. In the UNTAC press briefing on the evening, Eric Falt announced the final results to the ordinary ballots.

Nation-wide 3,786,841 ordinary ballots had been counted. Thus far the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) had received 1,463,626 valid votes (38.7%). The Funcinpec Party had received 1,715,788 valid votes (45.3%). The Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP) was third with 139,899 valid votes cast.

Funcinpec had won the elections. However, Australia's press had other news priorities for Cambodia. Falt announced the following day that UNTAC had received a message from Prince Sihanouk, "stating that he was no longer able to preside over a council, with Prince Ranariddh as vice president and Mr Hun Sen also as vice president".

Having built Sihanouk's surprise intervention as a move to end a reported "crisis", it seemed to follow that his withdrawal would prompt the threatened and much forecast "chaos". Press coverage increased significantly the following day, June 5, to 5586 sq.cm. Writing in the Sydney Morning Herald, Lindsay Murdoch reported, "Prince's peace deal in ruins":

(1) Plans for peace in Cambodia were today in chaos after the country's unpredictable head of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, renounced a national coalition government less than twelve hours after he had formed it.

It may have been that Western reporters were unaware of the implications of Sihanouk's machinations which were conducted beyond their scrutiny, in closed

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367Reuters, LBY 596, 22:44:12 hrs. 3 June 93.
368Reuters, Phnom Penh, LBY 452, 12:45:55 hrs. 5 June 93.
369UNTAG, Daily Press Briefing Paper, 1900 hrs., 3 June 93.
negotiations. However, Murdoch suggested that the blame for reporters' inability to forecast the political developments should be projected onto Sihanouk himself. Where a Western politician might have been seen as privately power broking, the Prince was tagged "unpredictable" (erratic, unsure, uncertain, unreliable, unsafe, chancy, doubtful).

Chaos failed to eventuate on June 5, as Sihanouk (suffering from cancer) retired to his bed. Press coverage on June 6 slumped to 1486 sq.c.m. The *Sun Herald*, apparently oblivious of the previous day's newspaper stories, carried the news, "New govt falls in Cambodia". The Sunday *Herald Sun* reported that "Cambodia waits on sick prince":

(1) Cambodia's political future was shrouded in uncertainty last night, after a meeting of the Supreme National Council was cancelled.

**Sihanouk and the Stars**

Sihanouk's next political gambit was almost obscured by a reference he made to Astrology. That so much media attention could be paid to a relatively minor aspect of Buddhist religious practices, hitherto largely ignored in the coverage of the elections, indicates negative stereotyping. Mark Dodd reported on 6.6.93:

(1) Acting on the advice of royal astrologers, Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk said on Sunday that he would not attempt to form a new government of national reconciliation until his birthday next October.

(2) "Astrologers have advised me not to pressure for a new government because I won't succeed until my birthday next October 30," the Head of State said to a crowd of 5,000 gathered outside the royal palace in Phnom Penh.

(3) Smiling and joking with "his children", Prince Sihanouk said the royalist Funcinpec party led by his son, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, was continuing to insist on holding the balance of power in a new government following last month's UN-run elections.

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371Mark Dodd, "Sihanouk-No government in stars until October", Phnom Penh: LBY 854 Reuter, 6 June 93.
The story was picked up by eight of the nine daily newspapers in this study. All of these featured the astrology angle in their headlines.

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**Table 9.5**

**Sihanouk and the stars headlines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Outlet</th>
<th>Headline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Advertiser</td>
<td>Stars set Cambodian timetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Time is not right, stars tell Sihanouk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Financial Review</td>
<td>Sihanouk's stargazers tell him to delay his next move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courier Mail</td>
<td>Sihanouk waits on stars to form govt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Telegraph Mirror</td>
<td>Stars guide Sihanouk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>Sihanouk guided by stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Sihanouk sees the answer in the heavens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle Herald</td>
<td>Sihanouk guided by stars</td>
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</table>

The real politick reason that Sihanouk was unable to form a government was given much further down in the version of the story published by the *Newcastle Herald* on 7/7/93.

(18) Prince Sihanouk said he could not form a reconciliation government with only the support of the Phnom Penh government. (19) "Hun Sen requested me to share a national reconciliation government, but I cannot do it, with only him," he said. (20) "The four parties are refusing to co-operate. They stay separate," he said referring to the country’s main political rivals, including the radical Khmer Rouge.

In other words, Sihanouk could not immediately form a national government, because he lacked the political support to do so. This is perfectly rational in Western political terms. Yet the reporter chose to highlight the apparently irrational and many Australian editors chose to print it. While Australian politicians might rely on the divinations of the pollsters to determine election dates and other critical issues, they would never want to be portrayed as being "guided by stars". In this context, the reference to astrology as the key reason for delaying the formation of a government, represents a little more than what may be the curious behaviour of the Prince. It
demonstrates how unstated Western cultural assumptions, can affect news values and through them the public view of Asian political leaders.

Through the eyes of many Western journalists, Sihanouk was something of an enigma who did not fit into neat Western political categories. At one time or another, he had been in alliance, if not in government, with nearly all of the Cambodian factions of both right and left. Subsequently, he had either been at war with or had persecuted most of them. Yet, all of the parties, including the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, wished to be seen deferring to him. He founded the Royalist Party, Funcinpec, but did not contest the poll. After the election, he emerged yet again as Cambodia's most influential leader. In his book, *War and Hope*, Sihanouk explained his transitory alliances in Buddhist terms, seeking the middle path to benefit Cambodia:

I had humiliation upon humiliation heaped upon me by Lon Nol and his followers, then the Khmer Rouge. I have plumbed the depths of the indescribable horror that has been the lot of the loveable and innocent Khmer people for so many years, far too many. Through it all, my people have continued to love me, and my one desire is to provide them with the means to thrive and rebuild their country, to enjoy to live once more, after surviving the most infamous living hell the world has ever known.372

When one considers Sihanouk's reported belief in astrology, one should remember that fortune telling is a common if somewhat peripheral aspect of Buddhism as practised in Indochina and Thailand. Most Wats have fortune tellers working in their grounds. Some of the more important (e.g. the Royal Palace in Bangkok and Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh) have adopted modern technology by installing fortune telling machines. Political leaders in Indochina frequently consult astrologers while making plans.373 Court astrologers have been a feature of Cambodian royal life

373One might consider the following anecdote on Vietnam by former Australian foreign correspondent, Dennis Warner:

'Let me explain,' said Madam Chuong patiently. 'Last Thursday, I went to a fortune teller - the very best here. He said that I was in trouble, that my son's
since ancient times. However, astrology in the Australian context has different layers of meaning. The study of astrology is often seen as a pastime for the gullible, if not weak minded. While most Australian newspapers carry astrology columns, it would be fair to generalise that most of their journalists see this as a ploy to attract circulation rather than an attempt to provide serious information or advice for the readership. The association of astrology with a major political decision by Sihanouk, attempts to imply something about Sihanouk himself. In the Cambodian or Thai context, it would be perfectly normal for the Prince to consult astrologers. In the Australian context, it implies an almost childlike faith in superstition.

Writing about 19th century chroniclers of Asia, Edward Said observed:

The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal".374

Said could almost be writing about the way many Australian journalists perceived Sihanouk. In the case in question, reference to astrology re-inforced negative stereotyping of him as an "eccentric" if not "unstable" political leader; the stereotypical "eastern" potentate who in this case is disturbing the well laid plans of the west and its allies. Those journalists might be accused of seeing the "Orient" in 19th century terms; from a perspective where Asia was something to be entertained and excited by, even to be marvelled at, but not to be taken entirely seriously.

life was in great danger. He could be saved only if a close friend who lived far away could reach Saigon by the following Monday'. And so she had sent a cable to me in Australia. And I had responded. So all was well. It was, too. The Court action, as predicted, was abandoned. Khien (Madam Nhu's younger brother Tran Van Khiem) was released from prison after some months, and finally was allowed to leave the country and join his parents in Washington. As for me, I bought a book on astrology, and am now better equipped to be a reporter in South-East Asia.'


Television

I am essentially a photo journalist. . . . We are picture led. We are dominated by our media. If we don't have the pictures, we don't have a story. If we don't have the Khmer Rouge firing rockets or launching an attack it is very difficult to convey it (the story). . . . We had (to use) some video eight material of the aftermath of an attack.

Adrian Brown, Channel Nine's Stringer in Cambodia

Only two Australian television networks sent reporters to Cambodia to report on the elections for their news bulletins. ABC television sent Sally Neighbour, its Hong Kong based television correspondent, while Nine commissioned Adrian Brown, a British television journalist. Neighbour filed seven reports for the ABC during the period under study while Brown filed two for Nine.

Adrian Brown had been working in the Asian Bureau of the British based TV AM when the station failed to renew its licence in 1991. He bought the editing and camera gear he had been using from TV AM and set himself up as a small Hong Kong based agency. In October 1991, he was contacted by Australia's Channel Nine who he said told him, "We don't have anyone in Asia at present and we are getting interested". Brown contracted to "get a lot of stories that ordinarily they would not send someone from Australia to cover". Under the arrangement, Brown said that he would usually produce one or two stories a week for Channel Nine News, as well as sending a story a month to A Current Affair and Sunday or Business Sunday. "But it varies," he added. "You could be busy doing a story every day for two weeks. But that isn't average". In Cambodia, the Hong Kong Agency was also contracted to supply news to CNN, Sky TV and Fox Television.

375 Adrian Brown, op.cit.
376 Stories were filed on 21 May 93 (Pre-elections), 23 May 93 (Elections), 24 May 93 (Election follows), 26 May 93 (Siem Reap Sitrep), 31 May 93 (Results), 2 June 93 (CPP threats), and 4 June 93 (Sihanouk governs).
377 These stories were filed on 22 May 93 and 23 May 93.
378 Brown, op.cit.
However, Brown said that he had some difficulty persuading the Nine producers that a television team should be sent to Cambodia to produce News stories. Nine were usually interested in "populist" stories; personality centred reports with strong local (Australian) flavour. It was considered that the complexities of the Cambodian elections might lose viewers:

It was a story I had to push for to cover. . . . The feeling I got was that there was not a lot of interest in Australia about Cambodia. I think people had just become bored with it really. My own feeling that there was so much else going on. We had the UN being shot at in Bosnia and we had South Africa blowing up. At the end of the day, Cambodia represented a low level war, a forgotten war in a corner of Asia. The level of death was not as high as elsewhere. It was really level two. You were competing against far more important international news stories.379

The anticlimactic lack of violence reported on polling day saw the Cambodian elections swiftly deleted from the news agenda on which it had been so precariously lodged. By Monday, May 24, it had become apparent that the story was not the expected one of voting marred by violence; it had become a "good news" story. Brown and his team left Cambodia the following Thursday, after filing two stories for Channel Nine News:

It [Cambodia] just fell off the running orders of news bulletins. We weren't the only ones who pulled out. A few may have stayed on but the core of those covering it as a news event had gone by then. I think the time to have gone (to Cambodia) would have been a few months before, to do a few reports on Cambodia preparing on the elections. I did one report on the election itself but you could have done more earlier.380

Brown said that the story duration of about one minute thirty seconds, favoured by Nine, made it particularly difficult to convey the subtleties of Asian affairs. Nine worked to a strict formula and longer stories were usually not welcomed. He said

379Ibid.
380Ibid.
that the two minute thirty story required by Sky TV, allowed him more margin to develop stories:

Every word counts. It is hard. You try to get it right when you can. But sometimes I fail. You get into the process of eliminating information in order to get it down to a more manageable length for a client. It is a discipline. If you can convey the key facts in eight paragraphs, that is a skill. You have to strip it down to the bare essentials like a Reuters report. It is very hard because you have so much buzzing around in your head. You have so much information and very often you need more time. I think a better length is two to two and half minutes. But the commercials have twenty two minutes of air time (in the News) and they have a lot to get in. You can tell a story in a minute and a half. But with Cambodia and stories like it, you end up leaving a lot of information out.381

Sally Neighbour was appointed to the ABC’s four person Hong Kong Bureau in 1993. The brief was to cover fifteen countries in eastern Asia; virtually the whole region with the exception of Japan, Vietnam and Indonesia where the ABC maintained local bureaux. She was primarily responsible to ABC Television News and Current Affairs, although at times she could be asked to contribute to the programs Foreign Correspondent and Four Corners:

I report things as they occur. If there were an earthquake or a coup, a massacre in the streets or an election or some other newsworthy event I would be sent there. In between times, it’s a matter of choosing interesting places to go where we know we can get a few less topical stories that we think might be timely and interesting.382

The ABC shifted its Asia Television Bureau north from Singapore to Hong Kong in 1992, to more effectively tap the huge flows of Asia wide information available in Hong Kong. However, the correspondent would find little time to reside there, being required to relentlessly seek picture stories from a region divided by a multiplicity of cultures, religions, lifestyles and economies. She would be accompanied on these forays by a two man camera crew, vision and sound gear, as well as portable editing packs, so that packaged stories might be beamed back to

381 Sally Neighbour, Personal Interview, 14 December 1992.
382 Ibid.
Australia via local earth stations. She said she attempted to research stories before arriving to shoot them; drawing by necessity on secondary sources, disembarking not only with ready made preconceptions but frequently with pre-arranged interviews:

You have to make lots and lots of phone calls, and to a place like Cambodia that can be difficult. You have to call all the people you might want to speak to. You want to be briefed on what is happening, where the safe areas are, because you don’t want to be shot by the Khmer Rouge or blown up by land mines. We need to make arrangements to get visas. At least it is easy in Cambodia because you can pick them up at the airport. But with a place like China it might take two months to get a visa for the cameraman.\footnote{Ibid.}

Although ABC reporters may be less tied to tight formulas than their commercial counterparts, they too have difficulty placing Asian stories on Western oriented news agendas. Neighbour agreed with Brown that editors often needed to be persuaded to run stories. She said that it was sometimes necessary to “beat up” stories, at least when the they were under discussion with editors:

You don’t beat up the story itself, but you have to make it sound pretty sexy to get them interested. There is a feeling in Sydney that Asia is not all that interesting. There is a lot of hype with politicians talking about Australia becoming part of Asia, having to look north and so on. but when it comes to practice it is not really followed through. A lot of people in Sydney say that there isn’t really a lot of news in Asia.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Reporting Polling Day**

Both Neighbour and Brown filed television news reports at the beginning of voting on 23 May 93. Both reports began with ominous images of United Nations military guarding the voting against an implied threat of violence. Brown went upstream from Phnom Penh with the Royal Marines, emphasising the vulnerability of the Cambodian people by juxtaposing shots of soldiers with those of Cambodian children watching the voting. Meanwhile Neighbour’s report opened in a street of
the capital, featuring soldiers from the UN’s Ghana battalion who had mounted a heavy machine gun on a small truck. The tumultuous images of smiling and enthusiastic Cambodians queuing to vote at Phnom Penh stadiums were carried well down in the body of both reports, indicating that these television journalists regarded the threat of violence as more important than the successful election.

The pre-eminence of the imagery could be seen in the relatively small amount of time the reporters allocated to actual words (actuality) quoted, as opposed to words delivered in voicers and voice to cameras in the television news reports. Brown’s report contained two extracts from interviews. A Cambodian voter was allowed six seconds to express support for the peace process. The head of the UN mission, Mr Akashi, was given fifteen seconds to say, “I am confident that we have the minimum acceptable conditions for free and fair elections. Not the maximum, far from it”. Akashi was followed by the now familiar shot of the heavily armed Ghanaians. Brown’s one minute thirty three seconds report concluded with the image of a machine gun nest guarding the UNTAC headquarters. His final vision was a voice to camera, heavy with foreboding. He said: “These elections are the culmination of the United Nations biggest ever peace keeping operation. But with the fear of the Khmer Rouge boycotting the poll, hopes for a lasting peace are grim.”

Neighbour’s report was longer (two minutes twenty four seconds) and as a result, contained more detailed imagery. However, the ABC report, like its commercial counterpart contained only two short quotes. The Australian military leader, General Sanderson, said; “From what I have seen it looks great. The weather is a little bit inclement, but it’s breaking and despite that the Cambodians seem to be out in great numbers.” However, the General’s stated optimism appeared to be contradicted by the series of images which followed; Australian soldiers disembarking at the airport, checking gear near an Australian Blackhawk helicopter, pivoting a machine gun,
and looking out over the Cambodian countryside with a helicopter mounted machine gun in the foreground. These shots were in turn followed by vision of Khmer Rouge soldiers drilling, including a close shot of a Khmer Rouge held gun. A Western commentator, with spectacles and safari suit, followed. He warned that, “After the election and after the withdrawal of UNTAC all the conditions for a new civil war and the partition of the country are in the ground”. A voice to camera by Neighbour provided a link to a series of shots of Prince Ranariddh campaigning. Ranariddh however was not quoted. The ABC report returned to the military theme with its concluding images. A UN soldier looked out from the UNTAC machine gun nest while a shot of Phnom Penh traffic focused back to the barrel of a machine gun.

**Television current affairs**

Channel Nine’s *Sunday* program sent reporter, Paul Lockyer, to Cambodia and arranged a live link with Phnom Penh on the morning of the first day of voting. Sunday’s presenter, Jim Waley, anchored the discussion from Channel Nine’s Sydney studios, opening with a predictable reference to “bloodshed”:

Waley: Cambodians begin voting today, in elections designed to bring peace and stability to the country after twenty three years of bloodshed and occupation. It has taken a massive UN peacekeeping effort to get this far, but so far there is little evidence that the high hopes placed on this poll will in fact be realised.

They began with a chat about the rainy weather in Phnom Penh which Lockyer thought might keep people away from the polls; a view which was at that moment being proven wrong just a few streets away. He also thought the rain might “stifle some of the activities of the Khmer Rouge”; which would seem highly unlikely given that the Khmer Rouge, like most other guerrilla groups, usually chose the wet season to launch their offensives. Lockyer reported correctly that the UN hoped that 95% of Cambodians would vote. However, he added that “the Khmer Rouge will be sustaining their terror tactics and they will be trying to intimidate people and keep
them away from the polls”. Although widely predicted in other media reports the Khmer Rouge did not intervene at most locations. Indeed in the run up to the elections, the Khmer Rouge’s enemies, the State of Cambodia and its forces, were allegedly responsible for most of the “terror tactics” being inflicted on election activists.385 Waley’s questioning remained focused on the Khmer Rouge:

Waley: Do you think the 95 percent of Cambodians will be influenced in any way by the shadow of fear inflicted by the Khmer Rouge?

In reply, Lockyer made the otherwise unsupported allegation that the five percent who had not registered to vote had indeed been influenced by Mr Waley’s “shadow of fear”. Meanwhile, the vision switched to clips with a military theme: Australian Army Blackhawk helicopters, armed guards at UNTAC headquarters, blue helmeted Ghanaian soldiers with their truck mounted machine gun, UN soldiers patrolling by truck, UN soldiers in a village.

Perhaps Lockyer’s reliance on preconceptions and a fertile imagination, rather than current sources, was revealed by the choice of words in his subsequent claim that, “out in the countryside, the Khmer Rouge have a dreadful reputation and you can imagine that people in those marginal areas will be intimidated”. He further incorrectly predicted that people in the countryside, “particularly in the north west or the south west” would not vote early. In fact, at about the time of this live report, this author observed hundreds of people queuing to vote in Kampot province south west of Phnom Penh. In the north west, the UN later reported that even Khmer Rouge families had marched in to vote. As for those who voted early, UNTAC estimated that by that evening between one point five and two million Cambodians had voted.386

385Mark Plunkett, Personal Interview, 23 May 93.
386UNTAC, Daily Briefing Notes, 23 May 93.
Waley: There are many international observers, including Australians like Andrew Peacock monitoring the election there. Are they being specifically targeted by the Khmer Rouge?

Lockyer: Not at this point.

Having apparently exhausted potential violence as an issue, Waley then turned to Prince Sihanouk, who Lockyer expected would “play a role” after the elections, perhaps as President or King. This statement about Cambodia’s most prominent political figure, failed to elicit a follow up question. Instead, Waley sought to wrap up the interview:

Waley: Paul in the next twenty seconds. What is the best we can expect from this poll realistically speaking?

Lockyer replied that the UN “privately” hoped that the Hun Sen regime would become a minority government. “The UN can endorse this as a success and then move on,” he said. In fact, Hun Sen’s party received only 38.22% of the votes cast, while Funcinpec received 45.47%. The two parties agreed to form a joint government with Sihanouk re-installed as King.

Waley: And the Khmer Rouge waiting in the wings?

Lockyer: And the Khmer Rouge, still always waiting in the wings.

Waley: Paul Lockyer in Phnom Penh thank you for that. (Link terminated).

Live, sometimes called eyewitness, television reporting implies veracity. The journalist reports from some remote location while the viewer can watch the action as it unfolds. Yet the view is selective and the immediacy does not guarantee even basic accuracy. Indeed the pressure created by the live cross can mitigate against “fact” checking which would be otherwise routine journalism practice. As we have seen from the Pentagon news conferences carefully stage managed during the Gulf war, the result can be other than the truth. Off camera from Iraq, the US military fed
television's demand for action shots with spectacular bombings, created restrictive reporters' pools, denied access to the front, and supervised or censored interviews. Even the CNN team which was able to broadcast live from the scene of the action in Baghdad found it difficult to adequately interpret what they thought they saw, as the Western bombers swept in over the city. Peter Arnett later wrote: "We could see a lot from our ninth floor perch but certainly not everything. We didn't know what was happening out there." Arnett, who worked in newspapers in both Australia and New Zealand before making his name as an Associated Press correspondent during the Vietnam war, was keenly aware of the pitfalls in live television reporting:

My biggest concern was to avoid appearing stupid to a world-wide audience. I vowed to abstain from chatter, sentimentality and guess work - to report only what I saw. Superficiality is one of the perils of live television reporting but hesitation is a mortal sin. Still, it is not easy to speak before you think.

The Waley/Lockyer interview demonstrated some of the intellectual weaknesses of live, on location, television reports. The presenter had little more to go on than the view of the head and shoulders of the reporter, with a unfocused background of palm trees and traffic, as a visual cue as he framed his questions. If he had failed to properly prepare for the interview, he might have had to rely on preconceptions drawn from earlier reports.

In most cases, the live link does not generate new information; it merely opens a gulf which must be filled with the fruits of earlier research. Such "old" information presented as "new" can include previously recorded vision clips with themes which echo other journalists' work. Meanwhile the reporter must respond immediately while contending with the time constraints imposed by the high cost and limited

388Peter Arnett, op.cit., 369.
389Ibid, 368.
duration of the satellite window. While the question and answer format allowed informality and encouraged the viewer to see the reporter as performer and interpreter, it did not permit the precise responses which might result from the use of scripted material. As a result, many of Lockyer’s answers can be seen in retrospect to be unsourced and frequently inaccurate.

In practice, live television reporting can, while promising veracity, be so demanding that reporters can be tempted to make quick judgements based on sometimes insufficiently investigated assumptions. It may be too much to ask of even a carefully prepared and researched script to try to summarise the aftermath of the Cambodian elections in “twenty seconds”.

In contrast, SBS Television’s Michael Carey went to Cambodia to produce three lengthy documentaries which were broadcast much later on the Dateline program (in June and July 1993). Carey’s reports were structured around lengthy interviews where the images were added to provide continuity:

In parallel to going to the essential press conferences, we have been interviewing different groups, political parties and people. We will intersperse those blocks with other material we are filming. We are trying to do two things at once. We are trying to film a longer documentary story but we have got to know the day to day changes in the political scene so we don’t film a lot of stuff that is going to be redundant. It is really difficult for us. We are waiting for this to unfold a little bit further, for the options to become a little more concrete, before we embark on filming.390

Carey employed sources ignored by many of the other Australian journalists. His report on the tensions within the Cambodian royal family included interviews with Princesses Pupha Devi and Sisowath Leda Monivong and Princes Norodom Sirivudh and Norodom Chackrapong. He followed a Cambodian refugee, who he had interviewed in a Thai border camp in 1991, back to his new home near

390Micheal Carey, Personal Interview, 1 June 93.
Battambang. Rather than looking for examples of violence on election day, Carey chose instead to film a polling booth where the former refugee cast his first vote. SBS examined the political role, as opposed to the military threat, of the Khmer Rouge in the post election period. He built this story around Juan Jeldres, Sihanouk’s former personal ambassador. Carey supplemented Jeldres’ analysis with shorter grabs from other Westerners including Nate Thayer from the Far Eastern Economic Review, the former Australian Ambassador, John Holloway and Australian aid worker, sister Joan Healy.

Vision was borrowed from public relations sources to illustrate the analysis:

One of the problems is that you can’t be in more than one place at a time; unless you have a fantastic budget and a multiplicity of cameras. The UN had more than four cameras throughout the country. The Australian Armed forces had a cameraman too. We were going to go through the footage before we leave, to see what is useful, but that still doesn’t compensate for wanting to be everywhere at once. . . . If it is free and useful I will use it. We have already used some air to air shots from Blackhawks which we didn’t have. It was just another pretty picture which enhances the story.391

Other Cambodians interviewed by Carey included the military commander in the Battambang district, Major General Van Sophat, the chair of the Cambodian constituent assembly, Son Sann and perhaps most significantly, the Buddhist patriarch, Meha Gosananda; a major Cambodian political figure almost entirely ignored by the other reporters. Carey’s ability to reach Cambodian news actors was enhanced by the presence of a Khmer speaking, Cambodian born Australian, Hom Chorn, who acted as his interpreter and sound recordist. But what of the criticism that SBS was merely engaging in a more sophisticated form of parachute journalism? Carey saw the SBS approach as qualitatively superior:

We are not just in for the quick story and the party that goes on at the time. We are not just there for news. . . .Perhaps it is more

391Ibid.
applicable to the people who came before the election and were hoping to see the blood and guts of a return to civil war before the result of the election is known. Subsequently these people have left even before the counting of the results is complete. It seems to be perverse. Why would you come for an election and not wait for the result of the election? Particularly when the result of the election is going to determine how the political panorama is unveiled.392

ABC Radio

This is our region of the world. The BBC concentrates on its region, Europe. The BBC World Service is today leading with a story out of Italy. CNN is leading with a story out of Guatemala, in America's backyard. For the past week the ABC has been leading with stories out of Cambodia. I agree with Paul Keating when he says that Australia's future lies with Asia. This is our neighbourhood and we need to maintain our good relations with it. News on the region helps us integrate with it.

Trevor Watson.393

ABC Radio had the largest contingent of Australian reporters covering the Cambodian elections. The ABC brought Trevor Watson from Australia, as well as Evan Williams from Bangkok to Phnom Penh, while retaining the services of their stringer there, Sue Downie. The ABC journalists primarily filed for ABC News and the domestic current affairs programs, AM, PM, and the World Today. In Phnom Penh, Trevor Watson described the demanding routine:

Evan left for Battambang and Siem Reap yesterday and he is gathering material in the field. He will be returning this evening. It is a bit of a luxury to have two people covering a story like this. But in Asia, the time zone is quite similar to the Australian time zone. My day is similar to the working day in Australia. That means that there are programs to report for throughout the day, as the stories are developing, unlike in Europe or North America where a reporter covers the News day while Australia is sleeping and then files for morning news bulletins and morning current affairs programs and then goes to bed because there are no further developments that night. In Asia when I get out of bed in the morning, the first program to file for is the World Today and then we have PM and the evening news, Radio Australia bulletins, and then before I go to bed there are morning programs for the next day. Under those circumstances two reporters might seem to be a luxury but we are both working twelve and fourteen hour days.394

392Ibid.
393Trevor Watson, Personal Interview, 26 May 93.
394Ibid.
Most stories were filed through the ABC’s Sydney offices. While the ABC News stories were initially recorded and edited on its computerised BASYS system, most were dumped from memory, leaving only stories selected by the Sydney newsroom librarian as well as paper copies of bulletins. Since ABC Archives also only kept selected stories, the newsroom library files consequently represented the most complete record available. A search of these files focused on the 0745/0800 hours Radio National bulletins which could be expected to carry the stories wrapping up the previous day’s events. Stories from the electronic files were also included. In all, 42 ABC News stories were examined. Sources were directly quoted only 25 times, reflecting ABC News style which frequently relied on “Voicers”, where reporters offered taped voice reports in which they summarised the story without using actuality.

Sixty Four percent of the sources quoted by ABC News in this sample, were of non-Cambodian origin; a figure not far removed from the 61.5% quoted in the Newspapers. Among Cambodian sources quoted, Sihanouk was the most popular (four items). The ruling Cambodian People’s Party was quoted twice and Prince Ranariddh only once. Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) and Son Sann were quoted once each. General Sanderson and the military accounted for half of the Australians quoted (four items), while the Defence Minister, Senator Robert Ray was quoted once. The then Foreign Affairs Minister, Gareth Evans and his shadow, Andrew Peacock were also quoted once each. An electoral official was also quoted. Sources in five stories were attributed to a “UN spokesman”, presumably referring to Eric Falt and his public relations staff. Three stories quoted Mr Akashi, the Head of the UN mission to Cambodia. It would appear from this sample that the sources used by ABC journalists were much more tightly focused than those used by their colleagues from the newspapers. The ABC reporters appeared to concentrate on “key” sources who spoke fluent English and were available at news conferences.
When dealing with UNTAC, the radio reports relied even more heavily on such official sources.

ABC Radio journalists, like their newspaper counterparts, saw the activities of the Khmer Rouge and military affairs as the main story in the run-up to the voting. (from 9 May 93 to 23 May 93). Eight of the stories examined were devoted to this theme. (47% as opposed to the newspapers' 56.4%) while only four reported the election itself. Four more stories were concerned with non-military Australian angles such as the activities of the Australian volunteers.

However, it was the post election period where ABC Radio coverage differed most markedly. While most Australian newspaper coverage fell dramatically after polling day when it became apparent the imagined attack on the election would not eventuate, ABC journalists continued to file stories each day. The ABC dutifully reported the progress in counting, the Cambodian People’s Party challenge to the voting procedures, the UN reaction, Sihanouk’s intervention and the final results. Evan Williams, the ABC Correspondent in Bangkok arrived in Cambodia two weeks before voting began and remained there, filing stories, until the results became clear:

I think it adds depth to be on the ground. The week before the election there was a lot of manoeuvring going on, a lot of speculation, a lot of preparation. To leave now with the election a success, is maybe a mistake, because you won’t be a primary source picking up from the factions how they will react to a loss or a victory, or the deals will be done.

I must say it seems to be an odd way to cover an election, leaving before the votes are counted.

Exactly. Because I am based in Bangkok and it is easier to get here than for someone based in Hong Kong or Singapore who might have a wider patch to cover. Because there is no violence here, the interest in Australia and around the world has decreased significantly. The story has become less of a concern. I think it is becoming more interesting.395

395 Evan Williams, Personal Interview, 28 May 93.
Williams' view that Correspondents should be "on the ground" coincided with the ABC's stated aims to focus on coverage of Asia by placing more correspondents in the region. His description of himself as "a primary source" perhaps reflected the role of electronic journalists as news actors who interpret, present and were sometimes seen to interact with the story. Both Watson and Williams strongly expressed the contention that ABC journalists were concerned with significant issues rather than merely conflict.

However, the pre-election coverage which concentrated on the perceived military threat, indicated that ABC journalists shared their print colleagues' News Agendas. The ABC reporters were willing participants in the foreign correspondents' culture. They socialised with, worked with and were inevitably influenced by their newspaper colleagues. While ABC journalists more consistently reported the voting process, as opposed to the violence, they shared their fellow journalists' failure to cover the Cambodian Peace movement.

Attempts "on the ground" in Cambodia, to challenge the dominant paradigm, had to overcome conventional news agendas back in Australia. Trevor Watson was the only Australian staff Correspondent who even attended a news conference called in Phnom Penh on 26 May 93 by the Human Rights Task force to condemn State of Cambodia abuses of the electoral process. Reed Brody, of the Washington-based International Human Rights Law Group, told journalists who did attend the news conference that no-one was being punished for human rights breaches. "Of course, we hope that it's going to change after the elections but it's going to require continued scrutiny by the human rights community", Brody said. Brody deplored the lack of an independent Cambodian judiciary and police forces, a failing which

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396 David Hill, op.cit., 17 February 94.
was later to hamper attempts to prosecute those responsible for the abduction and murder of Australian citizens in Cambodia in 1994.

After the news conference, Watson took Brody out onto a first floor patio, where he recorded a "one to one" interview. He filed the following story, slugged "Cambodia Rights", for ABC Current Affairs:

**Intro:**
In Cambodia, a coalition of privately funded human rights groups has appealed for ongoing human rights safeguards, after United Nations forces leave the country. In particular, a group calling itself the Human Rights Task force on the Cambodian election, fears of the safety of human rights activists. Trevor Watson reports that the group has declared this week's election largely free of human rights abuse but warns that no political party in Cambodia has a good human rights record.397

Watson reported that while the State of Cambodia regime could not be compared to the Khmer Rouge, its record was "far from admirable". He quoted Brody, who described Cambodia's human rights performance as "deplorable". Unlike most of his colleagues in Phnom Penh that day, Watson saw the news conference as an important story:

I think there is a place in all of the Australian media for a story like this. . . There is a place for it in the Age and on SBS Radio on Channel Nine and so on. Given the pressures that all of the journalists are working under here, it may be that it has too low a priority for a commercial organisation to commit any time to it at this stage.

*But today is a relatively quiet news day (in Phnom Penh) isn't it?*

It is a very quiet news day indeed. Again I can't really comment on what motivates my colleagues but at the moment the story still has a hard edge to it. There are still the artillery rounds stories. "The crump of mortars". While everybody who does a story like this has a concern with human rights, it may not have been, I hate to use the term, sensational enough at this stage.398

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398 Watson, op.cit.
However, Watson subsequently found that the ABC’s high rating domestic current affairs programs also declined to run the story. On the evening after the Human Rights News conference, PM instead chose to run Cambodia as its fifth item, using instead a live interview between its presenter, Ellen Fanning, and its Canberra Correspondent, Maxine McKew. They sought an Australian angle, discussing Michael Costello: the Australian public servant credited with “encouraging the international momentum in Cambodia”. The following morning, early AM ran a story on Prince Sihanouk changing his mind about the Khmer Rouge as its fourth and last item. The flagship program, AM, ran nothing on Cambodia at all. It would seem that the issue of human rights in Cambodia was not considered “sensational enough” by the ABC as well as its commercial competitors.

An examination of the rundowns (skeleton outlines) of ABC current affair programs which ran 64 stories on Cambodia in the period under examination indicated inconsistencies in perceptions of the importance of the elections. The World Today ran the most stories (22) and also ran a high proportion of the stories very high up in the bulletin. AM came next with 17 stories. However, Cambodian stories were given much less prominence, with only two stories leading AM. (On May 11, AM led with the story that 100 more Australian troops would be sent to Cambodia, while on May 24 it reported that voting had begun.) Indeed, most Cambodian stories (52.9%) were run well down the AM bulletin. In contrast, Early AM ran a third of its Cambodian stories as number one. At this time, Early AM usually only ran about four stories in total each day. During the period being studied, there was a tendency to run stories high up in Early AM and then drop them altogether in the 0800 hours program. PM, which was a much longer program (usually 10 or 11 stories), appeared to run only 13 stories during the period under study. Although it ran a higher percentage of stories first (15.4%) than AM (11.8%), PM ran most stories much lower down than any other program.

399 Trevor Watson, Personal Letter, 13 July 93.
The relative placement of stories in such programs reflect the importance placed on them by the supervising producers. A story placed at the head of the program or the bulletin, is in conventional terms, usually considered a "better story". Elements which make a story so might include timeliness, or even the quality of the audio. Yet in the case of the Cambodian elections, UN news conferences were held at times suitable for AM and PM. That is both programs went to air several hours after the scheduled conferences, allowing reporters and producers more than adequate time to prepare and process stories. In contrast, The World Today, went to air before the noon press briefings and more than sixteen hours after the evening briefings. Even though it was relatively disadvantaged by time zones, The World Today ran more stories than the other ABC radio current affairs stories.

ABC producers, like most other Australian journalists, belong to and feed off the wider journalism culture. Their ability to assess the work produced by their own reporters is built into a framework provided by routine reference to other news and information networks. Lindy Magoffin, the Executive Producer of The World Today, described this process as "reading in":

When I get in, I go through everything. I read five newspapers a day. I read the news assigned queue; that is a list of stories assigned in Sydney, I contact all of the interstate offices to see what they are doing. I go through all of the international wire services, not just one, I go through two or three. Having done all that, we then sit down and have an editorial meeting and decide what we will cover. The skeleton of the day is provided by the news stories of the day. But there is an awful lot flesh and fat that does not come from there. It comes from us, from things we have heard, from any number of places. They can be things we have been chasing for a long time.400

Stories which actually get chased depend not only on the ability to do so, such as the location of bureaux and the availability of satellite or audio line space, but also the willingness to follow certain stories up. Magoffin admitted a hierarchy of source

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400Lindy Magoffin, Personal Interview, 12 April 95.
countries as well as sources. Magoffin claimed that some stories were "simply not as relevant as a lot of other stories". She cited an industry saying, "minority issue equals minority audience". Even though ABC current affairs programs were usually free of commercial interests, insulated from ratings surveys and indeed through the ABC charter expected to provide informed alternatives, Magoffin believed that as an ABC producer, her options were limited by audience and community perceptions:

Yes there is absolutely no doubt about that. You can't run stories all the time that are so narrow. You can hear radios turning off all over town. You have to be careful how you balance things. When you are lining up a bulletin you know that there are some stories which are not as runnable as others. Yet some of those stories are ones which you have a responsibility to run. You have to make the mix a good one.401

So in terms of foreign news, which stories were preferred?

I think we tend naturally to lean towards stories in the United States more than say a story from Singapore because we are culturally, whether we like it or not, still closer to the United States. That obviously is going to change and I think it is changing. The United States [ABC bureau] is one of the few that actually feeds the World Today and therefore we do tend to run a lot of stories from the United States.402

Yet the location of ABC foreign bureaux can depend at least in part on perceptions of the availability of news stories demanded by ABC Executive Producers and editors. Magoffin was asked a hypothetical question, to consider within the context of her own program. If US Vice President Al Gore and Indonesian President Suharto were to die on the same day, which event would Magoffin consider the bigger story?

Al Gore. There is no question about that because Al Gore is from the country which is the leader of the Western world; the only super power apart from China. It is a globally more important story. I think they would get two thirds and a third coverage. There is no question in my mind about that.403

401 Ibid.
402 Ibid.
403 Ibid.
In this case, news values were explicitly framed in perceptions of power relations dating from the Cold war period. Asia may be as Trevor Watson suggested, "our region of the world", but in the minds of his editors news priorities were still being defined in terms of Western interests and priorities.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

The media play a key role in the life of every country, but it is a role which differs from one country to another. When these differences are misunderstood or ignored; as frequently happens in the Western media operating in developing countries, the result is friction.

Lee Kuan Yew

Australian correspondents may be right when it is said that coverage of Southeast Asia is flawed and selective. Yet their ideals of how Asia should be reported, notions which are bound up with the mythologies growing around a succession of correspondents since George Morrison, contrasted sharply with their practices. Their reporting was fraught with paradoxes. Correspondents who saw themselves as hardy individualists and who complained about the quality of Australian reporting, said they frequently relied on Western secondary sources to shape their opinions and "on the spot" reports. Reporters who claimed privileged insights to Asia were unable to speak local languages. Editors who claimed to want more news from the region downgraded stories of Asia, or gave preference to clichéd accounts of disasters or bizarre behaviour.

Australian "misreporting" of Asia can be seen to stem from a number of interrelated factors. Correspondents emerged from a colonialist culture which generated stereotypical images of Asia, which in turn influenced editor's and reporters' news agendas. They were the products of a conservative journalism culture, which demanded "expected" reports; in doing so contributing to a self perpetuating cycle of culturally loaded reporting. Within this cycle, journalism methodology was thought to provide accuracy through balance and quotes. Indeed, stories when seen individually could usually be deemed accurate in these terms. But when viewed collectively, journalists could be seen to be ignoring the wider picture, thereby

404 Achal Mehra, op.cit., 1989, 117.
contributing to the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes. Meanwhile, adherence to Western agendas resulted in a preference for bureaux located in Europe and the United States, resulting in even further reliance on international news agencies which were themselves headquartered in the financial capitals of the First World.

Covering Cambodia

Australian reporters' covered Cambodian election in a diversity of ways, each reflecting the culture of their organisation. SBS coverage was outstanding in that it sought to report the Khmer Rouge in the context of local politics, rather than as a stereotypical Oriental "other". As a multicultural broadcaster, SBS was established specifically to ensure editorial diversity in Australian radio and television. The ethnic groups which comprise its key audiences frequently inter-act with SBS management and program makers, through formal meetings, letters and broadcast material; providing insights and contacts. SBS News Executive, Diane Willman, said that SBS sought to "explore issues which are relevant to Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds:

SBS...must be many things, including information provider - the only source to many communities - news source, entertainer, educator, cultural vehicle, commentator and a medium for diverse community voices... They [SBS journalists] must endeavour to be responsive to the needs and expectations of their community audiences, and at the same time they must maintain high standards of balance, objectivity, integrity, accuracy and fairness.405

The SBS Dateline team left Australia to cover the Cambodian elections with an explicit editorial commitment to diversity; from a newsroom comfortable with using other than British and American syndicated information. Their expectations, moulded in their own newsroom culture, were that news need not be Anglo-American or even Eurocentric in nature.

405 Diane Willman. Letter. Sydney 16 November 96
Michael Carey, the team leader, was an experienced foreign correspondent who had previously produced in-depth reports on Cambodia. SBS employment policy which actively seeks to employ people from ethnic minority groups resulted in Carey being accompanied on the assignment to cover the 1993 elections by Horn Chorn, a native Cambodian. Chorn's local knowledge, combined with his fluent Khmer language skills, allowed Dateline to reach far beyond conventional Western sources. Their longer programs, combined with more time to consider and construct their stories, resulted in reports which reflected the complexity of the politics surrounding the Cambodian elections.

ABC reporters, in contrast, were hampered by having to report for a multiplicity of programs. ABC reporting was perhaps less stereotyped than that of its commercial television counterparts. It was certainly more comprehensive than the seemingly non-existent commercial radio reportage. Yet the ABC's advantages derived from an established system of bureaux might be diminished by a high turnover of short contract foreign correspondents. Expertise accrued in the field was frequently dissipated as former correspondents were either absorbed into routine domestic program production on their return to Australia, or on occasion promoted to the executive. While ABC reporters may have been committed to more representative news from Asia, their efforts could be stymied by Eurocentric priorities back home. In spite of expressed desire to change, the ABC's corporate culture was still influenced by its BBC heritage, its reliance on Western newsagencies and its strong and continuing identification with Western elites.

Among the newspapers, the West Australian was notable for its decision to send a photographer along with its Asia desk editor, Andre Malan. The paper's reporting placed emphasis on peace-keeping efforts, with particular reference to the work of West Australians. Appropriately, the stories culminated in a colour photo spread called "The Healing Fields" (5 May 93): a play on words reversing the meaning of
the title of the Hollywood movie which appeared to have so coloured the imagination of others. Malan said that the decision to send a photographer was "really a matter of logistics more than anything else":

When we planned the trip and did the expenses, we realised it was cost effective to have a photographer there. Fortunately the paper was fairly generous in its allocation for the Asia desk. It's possible for us to develop a reputation for being very good at recording and reporting Asia. ...I knew that we would not only get good pictures but also that we would get them in time. Consequently, the newspaper would give them a good run.406

Malan said his position as Asia Desk editor helped ensure that stories about Asia were given prominence which reflected the region's economic and cultural importance to his readership:

Before federation most of west Australia's trade was through the Indian Ocean, with Batavia, India and South Africa. Because of its isolation it was forced to look that way. After 1901, there was more of a national emphasis on trade with Europe. There is still a bit of a residue of feeling that West Australia is part of the Indian ocean. Also because of the relative small size of our community Asian people are probably a bit more conspicuous here [than the east coast]. We have become a bit of a Mecca, particularly for wealthy Indonesians and a lot of other people from Southeast Asia. We [West Australia] also have a very active Chinese Chamber of Commerce with very active connections throughout the region. Isolation and a very active Asian community contribute to us having a different perspective on Asia.407

Newspaper reporters such as Lindsay Murdoch epitomised the more traditional "guts and boot leather" approach to reporting. Relentlessly pursuing leads across the region, Murdoch appeared ready to go anywhere and talk to almost anyone to secure his story. His ability to challenge what was perceived as the status quo was reflected in his report "Is peace killing Cambodia?" (15 May 93) which catalogued excesses and possible corruption in the United Nations administration in Phnom Penh. Murdoch was one of the most prolific of the Australian correspondents,

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406 Andre Malan, Personal Interview, 23 September 96.
407 Ibid.
tirelessly punching out stories in a room conveniently located above a favourite venue for their convivial long lunches, the La Palotte French restaurant, just across from Phnom Penh central market.

Some might see Murdoch as a role model for Australian foreign correspondents. Usually accurate, sometimes courageous and almost always willing to question authority, Murdoch could have been a character in one of Christopher Koch's novels. Yet in spite of his diligence, Murdoch, like most other Australian newspaper journalists, neglected aspects of the election considered important by many Cambodians. He could be criticised not so much for what he reported, but rather for what was off his news agenda.

Newspapers which failed to send correspondents to Cambodia relied on imperfect news agency copy and their own journalists' imagination. Perhaps the clearest example of misconstruing events was to be found in the Adelaide Advertiser where South Australian based feature writer, Paul Lloyd wrote of "Voting for a return to the Killing Fields" (21 May 93). The author was familiar with Asia, having worked in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1971 for the South China Morning Post. Lloyd had previously visited Cambodia, but was not present in Phnom Penh during the election. The opinion piece lacked even contemporary Western sources. Lloyd dismissed the "phoney" UNTAC poll, overestimated the military strength of the Khmer Rouge, stereotyped Sihanouk as "the fun loving Prince" and predicted "a new bloody civil war" which he wrongly expected to follow hard on the heels of the elections.

The Case Study Reviewed

Australian perceptions of Asia were often viewed through reports by journalists whose reflections, it seems, were influenced by cultural assumptions which
predated the end of colonialism. These views inhibited the news gathering process. The case study of the Cambodian elections showed that:

- Correspondents overwhelmingly concentrated on an unsubstantiated military threat to the elections by the Khmer Rouge; endorsing perceptions of Asia as a place of violence and danger. They unsuccessfully sought evidence of Australian Army engagements which might be seen to resonate with colonial military interventions in Asia which date back to the Boxer uprising.

- Australian Correspondents neglected Cambodian sources who were actually engaged in the election process. They favoured foreign representatives of Western power; ironically led by a Japanese born, but New York based, diplomat, Yasusi Akashi. These preferences were endorsed by the survey of correspondents who said that, in general, diplomats, proved to be the most useful sources.

- While journalists sometimes wrote individual reports which questioned aspects of the UN administration, editorials favoured Western intervention in Cambodia. No serious attempt was made to seek overall "balance" by interviewing representatives of the otherwise much reported Khmer Rouge.

- An attempt to challenge the UN press release system, by using transcripts from a closed SNC meeting, foundered on a simple question of accurate use of quotations. As a result, the intention to produce an independent report of the SNC deliberations was flawed by exaggeration.

- The immediacy of radio and television failed to guarantee veracity. Radio relied heavily on correspondents voice reports; scripts which differed little thematically from the text produced by the news paper reporters. Much television reporting,
with the notable exception of SBS current affairs, relied heavily on military imagery, reinforcing perceptions of threat.

- Eric Falt's contention that correspondents' were unwilling or unable to correct mistakes once published or broadcast, proved to be accurate in at least one instance in the period under study.

- Australian journalists in Cambodia ignored Cambodian definitions of news, failing to effectively to report on the Buddhist peace movement, which involved tens of thousands of ordinary Cambodians. In doing so most correspondents displayed Western centred news values which pandered to home country expectations rather than reflect contemporary Cambodian political movements.

- Correspondents engaged in negative stereotyping of Asians. The depiction of Prince Sihanouk as an Oriental despot, bordered on racism. However, it reflected a tradition of negative Australian representations of Asia which began with George Morrison and continued with Frank Clune and Richard Hughes.

The survey of journalists reporting Southeast Asia indicated common dissatisfaction with the quality of the coverage. Clearly, lack of Asian language skills and a consequent reliance on English to gather information for stories, must have inhibited effective reporting which otherwise might reflect shades of political, social and religious differences which existed throughout the region. In that context, it seemed hardly surprising that such reporters saw English language Western style media outlets as the most useful sources of information. While many respondents complained of inadequate resources; not enough reporters, bureaux or space in the news hole, the more reflective blamed Australian news values which downgraded their stories and decreased the share of resources available for Southeast Asian
coverage. One claimed that such news values sprang from journalists' perceptions of the wider community's uninterest in Asia:

A lot of editors - despite the lack of the need to comprehensively cover the region - still assert that readers/viewers/listeners are more interested in domestic/parochial issues. Judging from the circulation/ratings figures of the "broad sheet" media (including TV/Radio) - which is generally more outward looking - compared with those of the more parochial tabloid media, they may well be right.

**Australian Journalism Culture**

In Australia, working journalists rarely discussed the assumptions on which their work was formed (the theoretical basis of their reporting and editing) other than to making reference to often vague notions of "Freedom of the Press". This lack of self-analysis meant that many assumed that value systems which they learned in Australia were universal. When foreign correspondents with such views arrived in Southeast Asia, this ignorance of "other" media procedures, could be interpreted as cultural arrogance. The result could be what Lee Kuan Yew called "friction".

Australian foreign correspondents learned their journalism practices and priorities within a Western journalism culture which tolerated if not encouraged criticism of governments, corporations and prominent personalities. Most Australian journalists still subscribed to a code of ethics which endorsed "respect for the truth and the public's right to know": notions grounded in Western concepts of liberalism, where government was believed to serve individuals regarded as rational beings. Like their American, British colleagues, they believed in their freedom to report what they perceived as the truth; operating within a structure of ideals defined by Fred Siebert in 1956 as the libertarian theory of the media. Yet in post colonial

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408 Mehra, op. cit., 1989, 117
410 Siebert argued that, in theory at least, the libertarian media aimed to serve the public:
"Under the libertarian concept, the functions of the mass media are to inform and entertain. A third function was developed as a necessary correlate to the
Asia, this challenging style of journalism could itself be seen as the product of cultural arrogance rather than simply insensitivity or indeed ignorance.

Earlier generations of Australian foreign correspondents, who wrote about relatively powerless Asians, were by and large unhindered by such views. They were free, like George Morrison, to ally themselves openly with colonialist powers, or like Frank Clune, to portray their subjects in "Orientalist" stereotypes, secure in the knowledge that most of the people and governments they reported on, would never learn what was being said about them. This Eurocentric fantasy world was shaken by World War Two which brought a modern Asian military power to white Australia's doorstep, ending the era of direct colonial administration. British, Dutch, French, American, Portuguese and even Australian colonies were as a result subsumed by a Japanese led greater Asia co-prosperity zone.

Yet the Australian foreign correspondents' culture persisted, introducing attitudes and journalism practices to new generations of Western journalists. The literary cliché of the hard bitten, bar frequenting but generous and egalitarian Australian journalist abroad, the Richard Hughes model, continued to be reflected in practising correspondents' behaviour. With a few notable exceptions such as the pro-communist Wilfred Burchett or liberal critic, John Pilger, most Australian correspondents still relied heavily on contacts with the remaining Western establishment in Asia.

The military and associated themes celebrated by Pat Burgess also endured in Australian reporting of Asia. As Eric Falt observed about correspondents in Indochina a generation later:

They have covered this as a war beat. It is not a war beat. It is a new beat, maybe a UN beat. There is not a war going on. There is a small insurgency which is sometimes fuelled by what the media says about it but it is very small and restricted to a certain parts of the country.411

Further, correspondents interviewed during this research frequently made "off the record" references about fellow colleagues who they claimed acted on behalf of Western intelligence agencies. With the exception of Richard Hughes, there was little other evidence to confirm these assertions. However, as Denis Warner suggested, there was sometimes a fine line between an active intelligence agent and an informant. It would seem more likely that correspondents frequently exchanged information with such agencies. In doing so, the intelligence agencies would benefit by gaining insights they would otherwise be denied and perhaps more importantly, gain access to Australian public opinion by disseminating selected information through correspondents' unsourced stories.

**Post-colonial Critics**

Such symbiotic relationships could be expected at the very least to generate suspicion among Asian nations which endorsed Development or Marxist modes of journalism; modes which demanded responsibility to Asian governments rather than Western notions of freedom of expression. Meanwhile, rapidly rising affluence and education standards in south east Asia, combined with increasingly sophisticated satellite information systems, have empowered these regional governments, to receive and analyse Australian foreign correspondents' reports within hours, if not minutes of their stories being filed. Australia Television, which began broadcasting from Darwin via Indonesia's Palapa satellites in 1993, could be reached throughout

411Falt, op.cit.
most of the region. It was seen by those with satellite dishes in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and China; countries whose governments have encouraged indigenous media philosophies which do not incorporate Western style media censure. It can be seen that Australian journalists abroad, swim in an increasingly informed and articulate sea of critics who do not espouse Western liberalism.

The former Editor in Chief of the *Hong Kong Standard*, Alan Castro said that Australian journalists' implicitly racist attitudes were frequently reflected in their reporting of Asia. Castro, who was born in the tiny Portuguese colonial enclave of Macau, first met Australian journalists in 1947. He was then beginning his long and distinguished career in Hong Kong journalism. Castro found it ironic that "a people renowned for their praiseworthy disregard for pose and pomposity" should have difficulties relating to Asia. Australian journalists were often unaware of their unintentional heavy handedness, he said. They became foreign intruders in Asian societies:

> They think that they have more to teach us than we have to learn from them. That is the extent of their arrogance. I think unconsciously they have adopted the old colonial attitudes. They come out here and they see that the white people are what they think are superior. Meanwhile, we Asians because of our colonial backgrounds, we tend to be to your mind timid, and they take that timidity for weakness and they take it for granted also.

*What does this mean for the way Australian journalists cover Asian countries?*

They come with what you call preconceptions, their own ideas about the way things are and should be. If it isn't, they will make it that way. They come from Australia, especially the present generation with very little knowledge of what Asians are.\(^{412}\)

Castro claimed that these imagined notions of Asian societies in part explained some Australian journalists offensive behaviour in Asia:

---

\(^{412}\)Alan Castro, Personal Interview, 13 December 93.
Asian people often think that you (Australian journalists) are deliberately trying to insult them, although you may not think that is so. You may think you are reporting something that is quite normal. Europeans talk about theories of racialism, but they have never felt it. Europeans have never felt the sting of racial prejudices and discrimination. They were the ones who dealt it. So they don't feel it. They ask, "Why are these Asians so sensitive?". They are not sensitive because they have never felt it.413

Indeed non-Western leaders who promulgated "Asian News values", saw the "liberal" definition of News as part of attempts by the Western world to maintain intellectual dominance of Asia.414 They accused Western journalists of precisely the sort of cultural imperialism defined by Said. According to Singapore's deputy Foreign secretary, Kishore Mahbubani, Westerners were guilty of a "smug knee jerk response", assuming that their views were naturally more moral than those of Asians:

It will be psychologically difficult for the West to accept the notion that alternative social and political choices can deserve equal respect. For 500 years, the West has been dominant in one form or another. After World War two, most of Asia, like much of the Third World, was politically emancipated. But the process of mental emancipation, on the part of the colonised and the colonisers, is taking much longer.415

Mahbubani called for "mutual respect"; respect for truths other than those defined by Western journalists. He accused foreign correspondents of hypocrisy founded in ignorance and intolerance of non-Western values. He warned that development through economic growth in East Asia would force a reassessment of the terms of debate, so that in future, "discussions will take place from a position of equality".

413Ibid.
414Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim "Keynote address". Asian News Values conference. Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club. 1 December 94.
Conclusion

Australian foreign correspondents are leading exponents of a professional culture which encourages reporters to meet the expectations of their editors, colleagues and competitors. They are the most recent recruits of an elitist correspondents club whose founding members identified with the European empires and their intellectual successors. Themes evident in the work of these earlier reporters can be seen to continue from one generation to the next.

Contemporary correspondents point to lack of adequate training, bureaux infrastructure and editorial agendas as reasons contributing to what many of them see as unsatisfactory coverage of the region. Yet analysis of their own work shows that their stated preferences for Western sources can be reflected in the sources quoted in their stories. They remain preoccupied with preconceptions of how Asia should be, as seen through Western eyes, rather than how many Asians feel it should be reported. In doing so, one finds that Australian correspondents' reporting of post colonial Asia is still framed in Western perceptions of the Orient.

This narrow selection of sources leads not only to misreporting of the event, but also to the sort of negative stereotyping imposed on Sihanouk, and for that matter the Khmer Rouge. Meanwhile, misreporting of the Cambodian elections did more than misinform Australian readers, listeners and viewers. It could be expected to contribute to a new set of false expectations among Australian journalists about Asia.
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Contemporary Australian foreign correspondents were asked to complete multiple choice questions to provide details which might otherwise be overlooked in qualitative interviews. They were also asked open ended questions which allowed them to give their views anonymously on news coverage. For the purpose of this study, they were defined as Australian journalists employed to produce reports on south and east Asia which were received by an Australian audience. They included staff correspondents stationed in the region, as well as stringers and some visiting reporters. The survey was distributed by mail, fax and in person during 1993-94. Sixteen journalists responded, representing a response rate of 84.2% of the target study group.

The responses have been consolidated for this Appendix. Open ended responses have been recorded in full.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Female</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Single</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Age**

- Under 20
- 20/25
- 25/30
- 30/35
- 35/40
- 40/45
- 45/50

**Primary Medium**

- Print 56.3%
- News Agency 0%
- Radio 31.3%
- Television 12.5%
Mode of Employment

- Correspondent 68.8%
- Stringer 12.5%
- Freelance 12.5%
- Other 6.3%

Annual Gross Income from Journalism (Australian $)

- $2-
- $2/5
- $5/10
- $10/30
- $30/40
- $40/60
- $60/100
- $100+
Experience as a Journalist

Experience in Asia
Most of the respondents completed cadetships, including those who had already completed journalism majors in their undergraduate degrees. One respondent nominated the ABC Basic Broadcasting course as her training. Three had no training in journalism.
Language Skills

Six respondents (37.5%) predominantly used English, while another four (25%) indicated knowledge of only European languages (two French, one Spanish and one Portuguese). Four claimed fluency in Indonesia Bahasa (spoken in Indonesia). One each also spoke Thai and Mandarin (China). Some correspondents claimed basic skills in Cantonese (Hong Kong and southern China), Mandarin, Thai and Khmer (Cambodia).

Sources


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
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<th>None</th>
</tr>
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<td>Antara (Indonesia)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernama (Malaysia)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai News agency</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>1 (Xinhua)</td>
<td>1 (&quot;Macau's local agency”).</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (Xinhua)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six respondents made no use whatsoever of any of the regional news agencies.

2. International News Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP (Dow Jones)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The journalists' reliance on western as opposed to regional news agencies, as a source of information, is clearly indicated. Reuter was the most preferred, scoring more than six times as high as three of the Asian agencies, and one of the American agencies.

3. National Newspapers (Specify)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</table>
4. **International Newspapers**

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Of Some Use</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Wall Street Journal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Herald Tribune</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents clearly preferred the Thai newspapers, among the ASEAN newspapers considered. The Bangkok Post and the Nation, both English language Thai owned papers were frequently nominated. However, the Asian Wall Street Journal and the International Herald Tribune, individual newspapers, also scored very high. Singapore's press scored the next highest among the ASEAN newspapers, even though it was subject to the strictest censorship in the region.

5. **National News Magazines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tempo*</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Today</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Investment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore Business</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Tempo, a Jakarta based magazine, was banned by President Soeharto in June 1993.
### 6. International News Magazines

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Magazine</th>
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</tr>
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<td>The Economist</td>
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<td>Far Eastern</td>
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<td>Economic Review</td>
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<td>Newsweek</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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### 7. Private National Newsletters

<table>
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<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
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<td></td>
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### 8. Government Newsletters

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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
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</table>
One respondent noted that Cambodian government communiques were very useful as a source of information.

9. International Newsletters

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any</td>
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One respondent said Amnesty International and Asiawatch had very useful newsletters.

10. News Feature Services

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>Upitn</td>
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11. National Radio

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
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311

* One respondent found The Voice of the Great Khmer People (Khmer Rouge Radio) of some use. Another nominated Metro News, a Hong Kong based commercial radio news service.

12. International Radio

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice of America</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Australia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

12. International Television

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Of Some Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC Asia</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
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</tr>
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13. National Television

<table>
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</table>
Singapore 5 11
Thailand 5 11
other 3 13

14. Publications of International Organisations

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Corporations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affiliates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any other UN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affiliated agency.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. **National Government Officials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two respondents found Cambodian Officials very Useful. Officials from Vietnam, Burma, Laos and Hong Kong were also noted.

16. **Officials of International Organisations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multinational</td>
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<td>Corporations</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN affiliated agencies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. **Embassies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
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<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diplomats</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most respondents nominated Australian Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates as very useful. However, representatives of Britain, the United States, France, Singapore, Malaysia and Holland were also deemed useful.
18. Politicians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Politicians from Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Hong Kong were deemed very useful. One respondent saw Hong Kong politicians as of some use.

19. Other Journalists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Journalists from Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Australia and other Western countries were deemed very useful sources. One respondent deemed Australian, British and German journalists as being of some use.

20. Any other sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Of Some Use</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Public Libraries</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Libraries</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One respondent named personal contacts as very useful.

21. News coverage of Australia in the rest of the region.

A. Give your own 1 to 12 ranking of the coverage in each of the following categories.

Business, finance and economic development were seen as the issues generating most reports about Australia. International relations were also seen as very important. Sports, disasters, Australian domestic politics, defence and military affairs, health, education and welfare were seen to be of moderate interest to Asian journalists. Culture and entertainment, agriculture and food and energy, environment and science were seen as the least important issues.

B. Do you feel that in general the coverage is accurate and balanced?

Yes 3
No 9

C. If the coverage in any category is not adequate, why is it not?
Coverage not adequate. They are not interested.
Perhaps an understandable lack of interest.
Lack of interest.
The amount of coverage is inadequate.
Not enough of it.

In Hong Kong it tends to be biased towards the UK view. In other regions there tends to be a view that Australians are anti Asian. Australia gets a lot of coverage but is possible taken less seriously in the fields of science and medicine because Australians don't take themselves seriously in these fields.

Despite mountains of geographic, political, diplomatic and economic evidence proving that Australia is part of Asia, regional media have not recognised it.

Not enough (Asian) foreign correspondents based in Australia.

Coverage is minimal and only focuses on issues that have an international effect; eg. Republicanism or scientific discoveries. I think it is inadequate in most areas. I think it is a reflection of the "perceived" degree of interest in Australia by international news editors of the English language media.

There is a certain smugness in Asia toward Australia. For example a fart epidemic will make page one, while few papers report on industrial reforms or economic recovery.

Lack of knowledge.

Not enough emphasis on human rights and environmental issues.

Asian journalists are not well trained or outward looking.

D. Do you have any suggestions for improving it?

Regional media must accept that Australia is part of the Asian region.
More aggressive promotion of Australia.
More study tours of Australia for journalists.
Sending correspondents to Australia would help.
The Australian government should encourage more foreign journalists to visit.
Improve the Australian government special visitors program.
Better cultivation of correspondents.
They [Asian countries] should make a bigger investment in news gathering.
Promote Australian technical expertise which is the highest in the region.

E. In your opinion, why has this not been done before?

Money.
Money is too tight.
Apathy.
Lack of confidence.
Culture gap.
Australia is not a high priority.
Australians tend to undermine one another.
Australia doesn't rate highly in world news compared to other countries.
I think the Asian media don't really regard Australia as part of the region.

22. News coverage of the rest of the region by Australia.

A. Give your own 1 to 12 ranking of the coverage in each of the following categories.

Business, finance and economic development, defence and military affairs, and disasters, were seen as very important issues. Justice, crime and human rights, Asian domestic politics and international relations were seen as important. Sports, culture and entertainment, health, education and welfare and lifestyles and living standards were seen as the least important issues.
B. Do you feel that in general, the coverage is accurate and balanced?

Yes.

Yes but very thin in some areas.

Yes but lacks depth.

Yes, albeit too shallow,

Impossible to generalise about Australia's coverage of the region. Some organisations like the ABC, the Australian and Fairfax cover the region adequately. Many other organisations don't bother to cover the region at all.

Reasonably (accurate and balanced).

Accurate probably but not balanced. Not enough of the positive things of the corruption or the greedy practices of the leaders.

I think generally it's probably accurate and balanced enough, but collectively it is so inconsistent and sporadic that it can give a distorted image, mainly by reporting isolated incidents, rather than trends and developing issues.

Improving but patchy.

No.
No. Focuses on the sensational, or issues that affect Australia directly. Makes little effort to delve into understanding in the cultural context.

There could be more interest in how a country really works as opposed to repetition of the accepted view of how a country works. This has a lot to do with snapshots of particular countries lodged in editors/sub-editors brains. However in mitigation, I have not struck much of this with the SMH. When I am proved right they give me credit for it.

C. If the coverage in any category is not adequate, why is it not?

Lack of interest but this is beginning to change.

Lack of long term analysis.

Lack of past exposure. Not sure what to look for.

Needs to be more continuous less sporadic coverage all round.

Regional news is confined to world pages.

Too little understanding of cultural differences.

Justice and crime (stories) will be perceived as too local. Asian sports (apart from cricket) are not considered important. Health, except where lifestyles are involved, is thought to be local.

Lack of resources.
Too few correspondents. Too few outlets for good analysis.

Australian media companies have failed to put sufficient resources into the region. Commercial radio and TV rarely bother to cover Asia.

Lack of resources in editorial training.

Eurocentric bias in Australian media. Inadequate resources committed to Asian bases.

Perceived lack of interest among the Australian public.

The Australian media allows the international news agenda to be set in New York or London.

D. Do you have any suggestions for improving it?

Just running a few more stories from Asia (on commercial radio and television) would be a move in the right direction.

[Journalists] should think more independently.

Emphasise Asian studies in the education training system.

More frequent reporting.

There needs to be a change in the mix of stories in papers.
More people permanently based in Asia.

Have more Australian reporters coming up with angles relating to Australia.

More effort on the part of news organisations.

More people working in Asia. More people working in Asia.

Media companies need to get serious about Asia.

**E. In your opinion, why has this not been done before?**

Stingy newspapers company finances and misplaced priorities.

News priorities and costs.

Apathy.

Lack of interest.

Lack of interest, ignorance, racism.


Our Eurocentric view of the world.

Media companies have looked to Europe and the USA to build their foreign networks.

They have not caught up with the times.
A hangover from the colonial past!

Managements are on the whole very slow to realise the importance of the Pacific rim to Australia.

Anyone who wants to change the mix needs to sit next to the sub-editor in charge of the page every day.

A lot of editors - despite the lack of the need to comprehensively cover the region - still assert that readers/viewers/listeners are more interested in domestic/parochial issues. Judging from the circulation/ratings figures of the "broad sheet" media (including TV/Radio) - which is generally more outward looking - compared with those of the more parochial tabloid media, they may well be right.
APPENDICES II

NEWS ACTORS

UNITED NATIONS

Boutros Ghali

Boutros Boutros Ghali was the Secretary-General of the United Nations. As such he brokered the Cambodian Peace Plan which led to the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). Mr Boutros Ghali was the UN's highest ranking official.

Akashi

Yasushi Akashi was the Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of Mission in Cambodia. Mr Akashi has served as United Nations Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs since March 1987, prior to which he had been Under-Secretary General for Public Information from May 1979. Before joining the UN he was Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. Mr Akashi was the chief executive of the seven UNTAC components; Police, Military, Human Rights, Civil Administration, Repatriation, Rehabilitation and Electoral. His office was located on the first floor of the old French residency at the centre of the walled UNTAC compound at Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh.416

Falt

Eric Falt, a 30 year old French journalism graduate, was the Head of Mission's official spokesman in Cambodia. The spokesman's office offered twice daily news briefings, weekly briefings for newcomers, press kits which included official documents and background material on UNTAC, scheduling of interviews with

416 UNTAC, "Secretary General appoints Yasushi Akashi as his Special Representative in Cambodia", Biographical Note, 9 January 92.
UNTAC officials, arrangement of visits to UNTAC sites, and assistance in booking seats on UNTAC aircraft. The office was situated in a demountable building about fifty metres away from the head of mission office. Eric Falt saw himself as a credible source of information:

> We think we have to give reliable information about what's happening in Cambodia. In a country where rumours are usually rampant, to say the least, it is useful to have a good service of information which is of course what we try to do. We check thoroughly our information and we relay it to the press. Especially the press wants timely and accurate information about all sorts of various events and we try to give them that of course, remaining focused on political events.

**UN Police**

The 3,600 strong UN civilian police component (CIVPOL), commanded by Dutch Brigadier general Klaas Roos, supervised local civil police to try to ensure that law and order were maintained effectively and impartially, while protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. CIVPOL consisted of a policy and management unit at headquarters in Phnom Penh, 21 provincial level units and 200 district level units.

**UN Military**

The military component consisted of 16,000 military personnel from thirty two countries. Commanded by an Australian, Lieutenant General John Sanderson (see Australian section) the UN military was responsible for the withdrawal and non return of foreign forces from Cambodia, mine clearance, weapons control and supervising the cease fire. It guarantied security during the election process. It operated at 86 cantonment sites and included battalions from the Royal Dutch Marines and the French Foreign legion, as well as from the Bangladeshi, Bulgarian,

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417 UNTAC, "Guidelines for Media", Briefing Note, 29 April 93.
418 Falt, op. cit.
420 UNTAC "Military Component", Briefing Paper, 30 April 93.
Ghanaian, Indian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Tunisian and Uruguayan armies. The military component produced its own bi-monthly twenty A4 size page, colour newsletter, *The Peacekeeper*, which featured stories written by officers about aspects of military operations.

**UNHR**

The United Nations Human Rights Component was responsible for investigating allegations of human rights abuses. These included the torture and murder of prisoners and the abduction and suspected murder of political activists. Australian human rights officers were responsible for the closure of Phnom Penh's main gaol after substantiating claims of extreme overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and abuse of prisoners. Human rights component training programs included workshops for Cambodian school teachers, university students, students in the Faculty of Law, medical doctors, government officials, and judicial officers. In addition to the thousands of training and briefing sessions held throughout the country, Human Rights Component staff also helped develop curricula for primary and secondary schools. Pamphlets, posters comic books, and T shirts were used to get the message to the population. Efforts designed to establish a foundation for the long term promotion and protection of human rights also included providing assistance in the form of technical expertise, training, and facilitating regional and international links, to the newly formed Cambodian human rights groups.

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UN Civil

Administered by a French national, Gerard Porcell, the Civil Component was responsible for five areas of control: defence, finance, foreign affairs, public security and information.

The Defence Service scrutinised the administrative structures of the armed Cambodian factions and the behaviour of their military personnel. The Finance service examined fiscal policies and allocation of funds, preparation and execution of budgets, banking, taxation, customs, wage salary practices, and the transfer and sale of assets. The Foreign Affairs service oversaw the issuing of passports and visas, the receipt and distribution of foreign assistance; and immigration, customs, and moratoria activities on border checkpoints. The Public Security service assessed the procedures of police and other ministries influencing law and order; it also examines law and the judicial system. The Information Control Unit reviewed printed and broadcast materials, and ensured fair access to information. There were 225 international staff attached to the Civil Component.424

UN Repatriation

As of April, 1993, 362,884 Cambodians refugees had returned home with the help of the UN repatriation program. More than 99 percent of them had been previously living in seven camps along the Thai border. Another 2,000 came back from Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia. Most of the former expatriates settled in the northern Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces. The UNTAC repatriation program included the movement of returnees, the provision of immediate assistance and food, and the reintegration program. More than sixty Quick Impact programs were founded to assist communities in absorbing the returnees. These included road and bridge repair, mine clearing, agricultural development, construction of

424UNTAC, "Civil Administration Component", Briefing Paper, 7 May 93.
wells and the improvement and construction of sanitation, health and education facilities.\textsuperscript{425}

**UN Rehabilitation**

The UNTAC Rehabilitation component was responsible for the co-ordination of aid worth more than US $800 million pledged to Cambodia by the international community. This development assistance consisted of loans at favourable terms, monetary gifts and grants, large scale or long term projects and small scale, short term projects. The rehabilitation component maintained a database of commitments, disbursements and needs. Computerised records aimed to ensure that projects complemented one another, serving as a check against duplication. \textsuperscript{426}

**UN Electoral**

The UNTAC Electoral Component was entrusted with the cornerstone of Cambodian recovery: the provision of free and fair elections. In consultation with the Supreme National Council (see Sihanouk), the component established electoral law and a code of conduct to govern the voting. It was also responsible for civic education and training, registration of voters and political parties, and the polling process itself.

Electoral staff were stationed at UNTAC headquarters in Phnom Penh, at 21 provincial offices and at approximately 200 district offices. They were augmented by about 1,000 international personnel seconded from governments during the polling process. The Electoral Component published its own bi-weekly, English language, twenty four page, A4 size newsletter, Free Choice, which featured stories on voting, electoral staff, education, political parties and clippings.\textsuperscript{427}

\textsuperscript{425}UNTAC, "Repatriation Component", \textit{Briefing Paper}, 9 April 93.
\textsuperscript{426}UNTAC, "Rehabilitation Component", \textit{Briefing Paper}, 6 May 93.
UNTAC Spokespeople

This category includes anonymous UNTAC sources such as "an UNTAC spokesman" or "UNTAC officials etc". It also includes members of the Office of the Special Representative such as Mr Behrooz Sadry, the Deputy special Representative. It excludes spokes people identified as being from UNTAC components.

UN Other

This category includes other UN sources such as decisions of the UN Security Council, as well as statements by New York based UN public relations operatives.

INTERNATIONAL

This category includes Foreign Ministers and diplomats, other than those from Australia and Cambodia.

Australia

Keating

Paul Keating was Australia's twenty fourth Prime Minister. He supplanted Bob Hawke as the national leader of the Australian Labor Party in December 1991. He had previously served as Deputy Prime Minister (1990/91) and federal Treasurer (1983/91). At the time of the Cambodian election, Mr Keating liked to stress his domestic economic record rather than a particular interest in Asia. In his official biographical notes, the Prime Minister said that during his term as Treasurer he had, "overseen the implementation of the most far reaching economic reforms in Australia's post war history". Mr Keating still noted that nine years previously in

1984, he was awarded "Finance Minister of the Year" by the financial/economic journal, *Euromoney*.

**Evans**

Senator Gareth Evans, was appointed Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1988. The Senator was the driving force behind the publication by the Australian government of a United Nations peace plan for Cambodia (the "Red Book") in 1989. He played an important personal role in negotiations leading to the successful adoption of the plan by the Paris International Conference on Cambodia in 1991. Senator Evans has sought to develop a strong conceptual framework for Australian Foreign policy, premised on Australia's role as an active middle ranking power with a strong Asia Pacific orientation. He also contributed to the establishment of the Australia Pacific Economic co-operation, a leading regional forum for the discussion of economic co-operation and the promotion of trade and investment links. The Senator previously held portfolios for Transport and Communications, Resources and Energy, and Attorney Generals.  

**Ray (Defence)**

As Australia's Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Francis Ray was responsible for despatching Australian military forces to Cambodia. His official biography describes him as a former "taxi driver, research officer and technical school teacher". He held Australian government portfolios including Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, as well as being Manager of Government Business in the Senate.

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429*Australian Consulate General, Hong Kong,"Gareth Evans; Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade", Briefing Paper, July 1993.*

Peacock

Mr Andrew Peacock, was the Australian Opposition spokesman on Foreign affairs. Mr Peacock, a former Foreign Affairs Minister, visited Cambodia during the election week as an International Observer.

Sanderson

Australian Lieutenant General John Sanderson served as Commander of the Military Component of UNTAC from March 1992 to October 1993. He saw operational service in East Malaysia and Vietnam where he was involved in mine clearance and reconstruction of war damaged infrastructure in the southern provinces. He was an instructor at the Royal School of Military Engineering and the British Army Staff College, where he specialised in counter revolutionary warfare and peacekeeping operations. He was appointed Commander of Joint Forces Australia in October 1993.431

Embassy

The Australian Ambassador, Mr John Holloway provided informal briefings requested by visiting Australian journalists such as the Australian Financial Review's Eric Ellis. Unlike other Australian Embassies or Consulates in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong, the Phnom Penh Embassy did not employ a press secretary. The Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh, a jumble of offices in two overcrowded post war houses behind a small security wall, was a curious contrast to the grandeur of the two renovated mansions which acted as the residencies for the Australian Ambassador and the First Secretary.

Palk

Lieutenant Colonel Richard "Dick" Palk, head of public relations for UNTAC's military component. A public relations specialist with more than fifteen years

experience, directly responsible to the Australian military commander, Colonel Palk was second only to Eric Falt in the UNTAC public relations hierarchy. As a senior serving Australian officer, he was able to supply Australian journalists with Australian military interviewees as well as prioritised placement on military transport to remote locations.

Primarily we get our information from operations branch which reacts to the material and also from the military information branch which analyses the material. However, we are also in direct contact with the military observers, for example.

_Well the military commander here is an Australian. How closely do you work with him?_

We are actually part of the force commander's office. So we work directly to him in the same way as it would work in Australia where the senior public affairs officer works directly to the chief executive.  

**Australian Military**

About 600 Australian military personnel were assigned to UNTAC in the run up to the election. Most of them were army signallers (communications specialists), who were outposted to other nationalities' units prior to the election. The main Australian base, identified by a large "kangaroos crossing" traffic sign was about a kilometre from Phnom Penh airport. A squadron of Blackhawk helicopters were brought from Townsville to be based at Battambang. Sources in this category include the Canberra based Director of Defence Public Relations, Brigadier Adrian D'Hague, as well as officers and men serving in Cambodia.

**Morris**

Former Brisbane cafe proprietor, David Morris, the Chief Executive of Morris Catering Australia, won a A$35 million UN contract to procure and distribute food for UNTAC staff throughout Cambodia. This ranged from running the canteen at UNTAC headquarters to supply rations to remote military outposts on the Thai

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432 Richard Palk, op.cit.
border. His more than 300 employees operated a private fleet of trucks, DC 3 aircraft and helicopters to deliver food throughout Cambodia.433

**Plunkett**

Mark Oliver Plunkett is a Brisbane based barrister who initially joined UNTAC as a human rights officer, based in the Khmer Rouge dominated "Liberated Zone" in Banteay Mean Chey Province. In February, he was appointed the UNTAC Special Prosecutor, at the head of a small task force which sought to investigate and prosecute the most extreme of the human rights breaches during the elections. As such, he had an up to date and informed assessment of the level of violence in the election. Mr Plunkett had a long association with the Australian Labor Party at national and Queensland state levels, as well as serving as a staff member of the Federal leader's staff. 434

**Canberra other**

This category includes spokespeople from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Australian based Electoral officers, as well as other federal politicians including the current Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tim Fischer.

**Other**

This category includes Australian electoral workers, volunteers, and a Transcendental meditation exponent who was planning to establish an agricultural school in Phnom Penh.

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433David Morris, Personal Interview, 26 February 93.
434In spite of these impeccable "Queensland" credentials, Brisbane's Courier Mail, a newspaper proud of its parochial bent, failed to report on Plunkett's sensational claims of UNTAC incompetence until the story was eventually picked up by AAP's Terry Friel.
CAMBODIA

Sihanouk

Appointed by French, the colonial power in Cambodia, to the throne in 1941, Prince (later King) Norodom Sihanouk has since played a pivotal role in Cambodian politics. After elections in 1947, Sihanouk initially supported the pro independence party of the urban intellectuals, the Democratic Party, but withdrew his support, abdicating in 1955 in order to lead his own political party, the Sangkum Rastyr Niyum. With the support of right wing leaders including Lon Nol, the new government moved to suppress opposition including the liberals as well as the legitimate communist grouping, the Pracheachon Group. The Sangkum Rastyr Niyum won elections in 1958 and 1962.

Meanwhile on an international level, Sihanouk attempted to steer a non-aligned course, which was frustrated as the war in Vietnam spilled over Cambodia's borders. In 1970, Lon Nol staged a coup against Sihanouk, causing him to align himself with Pol Pot's Maoist Khmer Rouge. After the Khmer Rouge occupied Phnom Penh in 1975, Sihanouk was declared titular head of state and placed under house arrest. However in 1978, Sihanouk was permitted to leave Cambodia to take up residence in Beijing, prior to the Vietnamese army's invasion which in turn forced the Khmer Rouge to retreat to the Thai border. In 1982, Sihanouk formed the royalist political party, the United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Co-operative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) which then formed an alliance with the Khmer Rouge against the pro Vietnamese government in Phnom Penh.

In 1990, he resigned as chairman of FUNCINPEC, prior to talks between the four major Cambodian political parties which were represented at the United Nations.

sponsored Paris Conference on Cambodia. The peace agreement which followed resulted in the establishment of an interim governing body, the Supreme National Council, which in July 1991, elected Sihanouk as President. Sihanouk took up residence in the Cambodian Royal palace in 1993 and was re-instated as King later that year. He is still regarded as semi-divine by many Cambodians.

Hun Sen

Hun Sen became Prime Minister of what was to become the State of Cambodia (SOC) in 1985, after serving as Foreign Minister since 1979. In 1993, he was also Vice President of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The son of a peasant family, Hun Sen had spent most of his adult life prior to the Vietnamese occupation as a member of the Khmer Rouge. He defected to Vietnam in 1977, at the height of Pol Pot's purge of pro-Vietnamese cadres. He lost an eye during the war.

Speaking at an election rally, Hun Sen said of himself:

Who is Hun Sen? Some say he's Vietnam's puppet; others say he is a Khmer Rouge member. During the struggle against the Americans, I was accused of being a Colonel of Lon Nol, but was not arrested...In Moscow, the centre of communism, the communists said Hun Sen is [sic] a liberal. In France, the liberal place, they say Hun Sen is a communist. What should I do? Whatever you say, Hun Sen is a Cambodian; he does things the Cambodian way. Only the Cambodian people can boss Hun Sen around.

CPP/SOC

The CPP developed from the first Cambodian Communist Party, the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party, which was founded in 1951, when the Indochina Communist Party established national parties in the region. In 1979 after the Vietnamese invasion, the Hanoi backed Cambodian state was renamed the People's

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437Cambodian Times, " A peasant, a prince and a mandarin", 24 May 93, 4.
439Hun Sen, Kampuchea Radio Network, as reported by US Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 15 May 93.
Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), and the party called the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea.

All of the members of the founding leadership with any revolutionary background, represented a continuity from the Khmer Rouge days, of which Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan were also a part. Nearly all of them either participated for a time in the administration of Democratic Kampuchea or would have willingly done so, had they been able to return from Vietnam.440.

The pro Hanoi government later changed its name to State of Cambodia (SOC), and in 1991, the party was re-named once more, becoming the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Although both the CPP and SOC are headed by members of the original "1979" leadership, members now espouse "free market" policies and articulate support for a democratic, multi party system. Prior to the elections, many government buildings were transferred from SOC to CPP "ownership" giving the party 250 offices throughout Cambodia. SOC used Atevoda, a supernatural being which can help humans, as its party symbol.441

**Ranariddh**

Prince Norodom Ranariddh was elected Secretary General of Funcinpec in 1989 and became its President in 1992. During the election campaign, Ranariddh closely identified himself with his father:

> Today, I feel I am born again after more than twenty years when the country fell into a holocaust. Funcinpec was established by Sihanouk and I am his son. I and my father are standing here with you.442

In 1993, he was appointed joint Prime Minister of Cambodia.

442Michael Hayes, "Ranariddh Kicks off Campaign", *Phnom Penh Post*, 23 April 93, 1.
FUNCINPEC

The Front Uni National Pour Un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif was initially a liberation front aimed at ending the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. It transformed itself into a political party at its Congress in February 1992. The party manifesto called for a liberal democratic government characterised by "multipartism" and a separation of powers among executive, legislative and judicial bodies. It also called for a "free enterprise, market oriented system".

Mr Ung Huot, the party's election campaign director said that democracy and the reconciliation of the Cambodian people would bring development at the economic and social level. "We should leave behind us our disputes between ourselves and all the hatreds, and start to rebuild the country," he said.443

During the election FUNCINPEC was clearly identified as the Royalist party by its symbol, a blue circle carrying Prince Ranariddh's portrait, backed by the Independence Monument and a sun ray.

Khieu Samphan

Khieu Samphan, the son of a judge who became leader of the Khmer Rouge, has been a Marxist since his university days in Paris where he ran the Union of Khmer students. On returning to Cambodia in 1959, he began publishing a left wing, French language newspaper, Observateur, while working as a high school teacher. In one of the swings which characterise the Sihanouk years, the paper was closed the following year, and Khieu Samphan detained for a time by Sihanouk's police.444

Once described by Sihanouk as one of the Khmer Rouge's "Super-intellectuals", Khieu Samphan, won a French Doctorate in economics by writing a thesis on Cambodia's economic and social ills.\textsuperscript{445} Khieu Samphan returned the compliment by dedicating his PhD to Sihanouk.\textsuperscript{446} In the 1962 elections, in which Sihanouk personally selected all of the deputies, Khieu Samphan was chosen to represent Kandal province. He later became a member of Sihanouk's cabinet, as a minister from the left. He was re-elected in the 1966 election, in spite of a swing to the right and Lon Nol, as well as a personal campaign by Sihanouk against him and other leading leftist candidates. Khieu Samphan became one of the "three ghosts" (elected politicians who fled to the forests) in 1967, after another crackdown by the Lon Nol forces.\textsuperscript{447}

In 1976, with the Khmer Rouge firmly in control of Phnom Penh, Khieu Samphan replaced Sihanouk as head of state, remaining as President of Democratic Kampuchea until 1979. Almost until the eve of the UN sponsored elections, Khieu Samphan attacked the voting process:

> The Cambodian nation and people have successively opposed this UNTAC election which destroys the Cambodian nation, people and race. In fact, UNTAC cannot organise this election because our entire nation and people oppose it. However, those allies need to show that an election is held in this or that place in zones temporarily under the control of the Vietnamese aggressors and their puppets, particularly in a number of cities and provinces, so as to publicise this on television and dupe the world public.\textsuperscript{448}

\textbf{DK/Khmer Rouge}

Like the CPP, the Khmer Rouge evolved directly from the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party. In 1960, Pol Pot, a former school teacher, was elected to the number three position in the Politburo at the Party's Second Congress, held in a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{445} Sihanouk, op.cit., 6.
\item \textsuperscript{446} Kiernan, op.cit., 192.
\item \textsuperscript{447} David P. Chandler, \textit{Brother Number One: a political biography of Pol Pot}, 1992, 82.
\item \textsuperscript{448} Khieu Samphan, 21 May 93, \textit{Voice of the Great National Union Front of Cambodia}, reported by the \textit{US Foreign Broadcasting Information Service}.
\end{itemize}
railway carriage at Phnom Penh's art deco railway station. Pol Pot became general secretary, or "Brother Number One" as he was known by the Khmer Rouge, after the disappearance of the incumbent Tou Samouth (after whom one of Phnom Penh's major boulevards is still named).

The Party Central Committee adopted the title, Communist Party of Cambodia, in 1966. Armed struggle began in 1968 with only a few hundred armed guerrillas. "We began with empty hands", Pol Pot said later. The Khmer Rouge, indirectly aided by the collapse of the South Vietnamese government and American withdrawals, stepped up the pressure on an increasingly isolated Phnom Penh government. The downfall of Sihanouk in 1970 gave the Khmer Rouge a unique tactical opportunity to declare a struggle of liberation in Sihanouk's name. Kampuchea's social disunity, together with outside pressures, provided a small and well organised group with the opportunity to bring a large group of peasants under its influence and in the end gain control of the whole country as a result of civil war.

Khmer Rouge forces marched into the capital on April 17, 1975, establishing the state of Democratic Kampuchea, declaring it day one of Year Zero. Border skirmishes with Vietnamese troops began shortly afterwards, with fighting reported in the Parrot's Beak area of Svay Rieng Province. In three years time, atrocities committed against ethnic Vietnamese, combined with continuing cross border raids, would prompt the Hanoi government to commit more than 150,000 troops to a full scale blitzkrieg, which would drive the Khmer Rouge back across the Thai borders.

449Vickery, op.cit., 15.
451Martin Stuart Fox, The Murderous Revolution; Life and Death In Pol Pot's Kampuchea, 1985, 34.
By 1993, Democratic Kampuchea was restricted to a "liberated zone" of isolated pockets in mountainous border areas in Battambang and Bantan Mean Chey Provinces. The Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) survived by exporting gems and forest timber through Thailand. A small Khmer Rouge insurgency also continued in the south west, around Chhuk, in long established bases in the Elephant Mountains.

**Buddhist Clergy**

Buddhist clergy marked the start of voting in Cambodia with an eight thousand strong peace march through the streets of Phnom Penh. Led by Cambodia's best known religious figure, Maha Gosananda, the marchers included thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as international and local supporters. The demonstration came at the end of a 19 day march through the war ravaged areas of Siem Reap, Kompong Thom, and Kompong Cham.

**Buddhist party**

The Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP) was led by Son Sann, a former Cambodian Prime Minister. A French trained economist, he was part of the Cambodian delegation to the 1954 Geneva conference which resulted in Cambodia's independence from France. He has been campaigning for the disengagement of Vietnam from Cambodia since 1979, founding the BLDP in 1992.

The party called for an economic system based on market forces and a social system based on freedom and individual responsibility. The result was said to be a "social market economy" where the state did not intervene in private business, but limited itself to setting a legal framework in which orderly competition can occur.
The BLDP proposed a policy of neutrality, rejecting foreign military alliances, except where Cambodia is obliged to defend itself or maintain law and order.\textsuperscript{452}