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Asian News Values -
Changes And Challenges

By

Neville Petersen
'Asian news values - changes and challenges'

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Introduction

According to the 'fourth estate' view of Western journalism the goal of 'objectivity' is attained by the conscious exclusion of values. Nowadays, it is widely conceded 'that journalists have tried to be objective but neither they nor anyone else can in the end proceed without values' (Gans 1979:39). Journalists working in some parts of Asia regularly produce stories that are consciously value-laden, while those working according to traditional Western press understandings try to put values that they are aware of to one side. One side admits the presence of values, the other does not. One tradition consciously pursues national goals, the other does not accept this as an obligation.

Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia are among the countries that can be said to practice 'development journalism', the characteristics of which, according to McQuail (1984:94-96), are acceptance by the media that they have a role to play in carrying out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy; that journalists have responsibilities as well as freedom in news gathering; that the state has a right to intervene in media operations for development ends.

In other countries, such as the Philippines and Thailand, which claim to have a free press, lean towards the Western libertarian tradition of journalism which is staunchly opposed to government intervention and involvement in newspapers. But in these countries too, there are moves to encourage, but not impose, various forms of development journalism, within their particular media cultures. At the Consultation on Press Systems in ASEAN in Jakarta in 1988, organised by AMIC and the Indonesian Department of Information, which was an important milestone in the comparative study of regional value systems, Filipino and Thai delegates subscribed to the final declaration on the role and responsibility of the area's press. This included the principles that the press should support efforts at nation-building and be a partner in national development; should help mould a national identity; should promote social harmony; should help explain public issues and policies to facilitate their implementation (Mehra
In this context, the President of the Philippines, Mrs Aquino, clearly had a purposive and supportive role for the media in mind when she told foreign journalists that their 'tremendous power' should be used 'to build up rather than tear down', while provincial journalists were advised to commit themselves to 'the larger and enduring interests' of the nation rather than to the short-term interests of their employers (Aquino 1989:127,129). In Thailand 'there is increasing acceptance among Thai journalists of the concept of development journalism which is gaining popularity in many other Asian countries' (Chirasopone 1989:95-96).

Development journalism is not the norm in many other parts of Asia, where governments are sometimes seen by those in the media as being in league with powerful interest groups to suppress news that is not advantageous. In some countries any partnership between the media and the state is referred to as 'an unholy alliance' (Ullah 1990:17) / there are indications that large sections of the press will act 'in the national interest' at times of threats to internal stability. In India, for example, journalists' organisations, on their own volition, have acted to identify and condemn those newspapers which have helped fan communal violence (Chakravartty 1990:27-28).

In recent years, Asian news values have become a major focus of attention both within the media and by media researchers and observers. One of the major reasons is that a better educated and informed generation of journalists are prepared to undergo self-examination, especially in the aftermath of major national crises. The poison gas leakage from the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal is a case in point. It raised important questions about the role of the press in promoting human rights and in mobilising national and world sympathy for the victims, as well ensuring as similar disasters were much less likely (Chakravartty 1990:31). In Sri Lanka, professionals reviewing press performance during the insurgency have found the press perpetuated and reinforced ethnic prejudices, instead of promoting tolerance and compassion. It is not too late, one has argued, for the media to build anew and play a role in fostering unity and respect for human rights in the years ahead (Ratnatunga 1990:119-121).

Clashes between Western media norms and those working in accordance with Asian national understandings in recent years have brought about codification, explanation and defence of values believed to be appropriate, and in some cases unique, to countries of the region. In the case of Singapore, disputes between the Government and foreign-owned publications ('the offshore press') targeting Singapore readers, over comment on domestic politics (Parker 1988), produced arguments from Mr Lee Kuan Yew, while still Prime Minister, addressed to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, that press activity that was not related to the shared values and national
identity of his state, could prove dangerously volatile for its racial and religious mix (Lee Kuan Yew 1989).

In 1986, an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 April) making certain allegations about the family of the Indonesian President, badly affected relations between Indonesia and Australia. As a result, however, there was a rash of speeches, by Australian and Indonesian ministers and diplomats, as well as letters to the editors of the newspapers, which allowed public scrutiny of differing media practices and beliefs in both countries of an unprecedented kind (Milne 1990). It was at this time that many Australians would have become aware that the Indonesian national ideology Pancasila forms the philosophical basis of the national press system. While most Australian journalists would still not condone some of the practices of development journalism, they at least had some understanding of its rationale. The journalist responsible for the *Herald* article later conceded that 'some allowance should be made for cultural differences' (Jenkins 1987:58).

It is apparent that some consider that the ideological component of development journalism brings about the need to rethink professional practices. The time necessary to evaluate sensitive material may not accord with Western ideas on recency and commercial competitiveness. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, encapsulated this view when he told the World Press Convention in 1985 that the media could target customers but only within 'the bounds of decency and responsibility'. He added that 'contrary to what is thought in many of even the best journalistic institutions, the deadline is not sacred. The public good is sacred' (Mahathir 1990:116). An authority on development values, the Editor of the Indonesian daily *Kompas*, Mr Jakob Oetama, believes there is a responsibility to take every issue into consideration 'with unmitigated seriousness and introspection'. What is needed is 'sophistication and the power of reflection' - the distancing of journalists from the events they report to leave room for 'intellectual awareness' (Oetama 1989:138-139). This appears to be almost the antithesis of deadline oriented journalism.

A very different wave of journalistic values has already broken on Asian shorelines. This represents the values associated with the dramatic increases in the international flow of news, particularly in television. Live or same-day reports from every crisis now reaches more than 1.5 billion people in developing countries on television every day. This in turn has put pressure on the wire agencies. 'In the 90s television, topical pictorial coverage, will determine the picture of the world for more people than ever before' (Keune 1991:10). This has been typified by the rapid expansion of the areas of the world now covered by news exchanges by satellite, with the expansion of ASIAVISION, the launch of AFRO-VISION last year, the growing popularity world-wide of the American 24 hour all news service, CNN, particularly since the Gulf War, and the rush to introduce competitive formats, with both Mexico and Japan in the fore. The BBC's round-the-clock Asian
News and information channel, part of its World Service Television, now reaches 38 nations. An essential ingredient of this heady news coverage mix is the latest in modern satellite technology - satellite news gathering (SNG) or the direct relaying of events by a mobile ground station at the location of an event. 'Advances in the magic of television technology have changed news producers wherever they may live', and have encouraged and facilitated the fast-paced, entertaining slick news 'show' (Wallis and Baran 1990:7). The era of 'news at the speed-of-light' is upon us (Siegenthaler 1991:46). Evidence of this technologically based professionalism has already started to appear in news supplied by overseas networks and agencies.

These developments immediately bring to mind warnings from sociologists about over-emphasis on speed of reporting. The more immediacy is emphasised 'the more subject journalists are to manipulation by public officials who know how to prey on people with stopwatch mentalities', Schudson says (1986:81). According to Murdock, the more emphasis on speed, the more news identifies with current events and 'the concentration on the immediate present edges out the accounts of process and history necessary for critical understanding' (1980:61).

The new satellite technology has also come under criticism from experienced news professionals. While they recognise there is intrinsic value in new technology providing eyewitness accounts of a far greater range of events, resulting at times in considerable emotional impact (as with the pictures of the suffering of refugees in Ethiopia which led to the worldwide raising of funds by Bob Geldof), they have drawn attention to the impact on traditional news gathering standards. Serious questions have been raised about the acquiescence of the media in broadcasting material sanitised by the military during the Gulf War, 'where news and technology of the 90s truly collided' (Siegenthaler 1991:45) and when 'the media were condemned to broadcast what others directed or invented' (Keune 1991:49). In addition, it is argued, those appearing 'on-the-spot', both anchorpersons and others flown in specially, were not in a position to be fully informed or able to provide contextual information. Those with experience were locked into feed points to dialogue with anchors and not able to collect information. In this 'cargo-cult journalism of the satellite age' the knowledgeable are ignored in favour of the view that 'immediacy is veracity'. It has developed into 'a competition for a backdrop' (Starowicz 1991:109-110). Editors are marginalised with the result that superficial reporting reaches the audience unfiltered.

A recent analysis of TV News suggests that another technological level, that of local area computer networks (LANs), a new sort of pressure on news selection decisions has emerged which affects the production process, as everyone wants to be first with a news flash. The results are concentration on 'spot' news rather than analysis or issues, while a concentration on speed leads to errors. 'A rumour
becomes a fact and starts off a chain reaction' (Wallis and Baran 1990:220). In the Gulf War 'continuous coverage necessitated the broadcast of every rumour, press conference and local gossip' (Keune 1991:49). As one news executive put it: 'In sensitive situations, war or not, a superficial correspondent is a guided missile' (Siegenthaler 1991:47).

The likelihood of these critical views ultimately prevailing over the economic rationale, which links ratings points with new, up-tempo formats and the pressure to increase profits, is very uncertain. John Lent has already observed that the speed with which much new mass communications technology has been introduced in Asia has resulted in much dialogue previously given over to development journalism, ethics or freedom of expression being shifted to the prices, uses and capabilities of the hardware (1989:23). This paper will look at the possible impact of the internationalisation of technology related news philosophies on the news values of Asia. It will examine such questions as the degree of commitment to various forms of development journalism and other professional beliefs of the region, the impediments to such commitment and to the introduction of practices based on them. This is related to the supposition that the more deeply-rooted the journalistic beliefs of the region, the more likely they are to withstand challenge. It is entirely based on recently published material by journalists and researchers, some of which is impressionistic, and therefore still requiring scientific validation. It is an analysis which points to future research, and not an empirical study.

Results

(i) The adequacy of Asian value systems

It is apparent that there are a number of influential journalists and media commentators in Asia who have a healthy scepticism about the revolution in communication technologies and are worried about the eventual journalistic outcomes. This would make it less likely that the new technologies are being automatically accepted as an extension of professional norms. In view of these changes, it is argued, 'the question of objectives, values and the role of the press acquires even greater significance as the potential for both doing "good" as well as "harm" are now enormous' (Yadava 1991:136). Further, while in the Indian experience the development of communication technology has enabled the media to sensitise public opinion about human rights, it has also powerfully strengthened the machinery of the state and vested interests in resisting questioning of their authority on these issues (Chakravartty 1990:22-24). An academic from Thailand has drawn attention to the large-scale investment needed in the new technology by the privately-owned print media, which means a heavier emphasis on profitability (Chirasopone 1989:98).

Closely linked with this perspective is the perceived need to give greater priority to the formulation and instillation of professional values in those countries which have not embraced
development journalism. Some even suggest that there is a vacuum which needs to be filled, a situation which offers little prospect of the region's mass media workers being able to turn back competing professional claims based on unquestioning assumptions about the new technology. In order to ensure a sense of commitment by journalists to the principles of their profession and to their fellow Filipinos, the Philippines needs journalism schools which should not only develop skills but also value formation, according to one observer (Gonzalez 1989:77). From the same country there is a suggestion that the low priority placed on development journalism by the press might, to some extent, be changed if tabloid publishers and journalists were persuaded to promote belief in national development through workshops and seminars (Shafer 1991:9). In India there are appeals for the careful examination of the development, place and role of journalists, in view of the changes in communication technologies (Yadava 1990:136). The lack of commitment to journalistic values in Pakistan is implied by the statement that the Government 'converts journalists into intellectual prostitutes who would sell body and soul for a fast buck' (Bulleh Shah quoted in Rizvi 1990:81).

If there is an inadequate value structure in those countries working according to Western libertarian traditions, it could be related to the growing view that the model of libertarianism most frequently cited in Asia is not proving adequate for Asian conditions and cannot resolve the region's difficulties in terms of media aims and content. The libertarian theory as described by Siebert and Peterson (1956) evolved in the last century in response to social philosophies and conditions applying at the time. It enshrined the individual's right to free expression and the right to publish on the understanding that it cost little to set up a printing press and there would be so many newspapers that a wide range of opinions and viewpoints would be published. From this multiplicity, much of it lies and gossip, it would be possible for an individual to discern 'truth'. The right to publish was thought far more desirable than veracity of the 'facts' chosen.

Three factors have weakened this theory overall and have certainly reduced its relevance in Asia. As newspapers have become part of larger and larger conglomerates, the number of those published has fallen consistently. It requires considerable capital to start a major publication. This has both reduced the number of editorial viewpoints and has made the corporate and multi-national viewpoint dominant. Newspapers expressing left-of-centre views have been forced to close. There is a view that access to news columns has equally become more restrictive.

Secondly, while many still speak of Western newspaper practice as if the traditional model of libertarianism still applies, what has been called the 'social responsibility' theory has now become so widely accepted and applied in varying degrees
that a newspaper working in accordance with libertarian beliefs that have not been modified by social responsibility considerations is now hard to find. 'Social responsibility' meant taking a moral responsibility for what was printed and, in particular, vouching for factual accuracy, taking the effect of published messages into account, and, in general, countering the tendency to allow the 'adversary of government' principle to outweigh all others. Some of the great advocates of social responsibility, Upton Sinclair, Walter Lippman, Norman Angell, and Hillaire Belloc, all believed irresponsible newspaper owners were intervening in the process of communication between governments and the governed. While maintaining that the press should monitor governments closely for aberrant behaviour, and should avoid being used for 'propaganda', they also believed that governments had a right to be heard and that relevant information at their disposal be made available to the public. Libertarian publishers were notorious for using political material very selectively in accordance with proprietorial leanings.

Thirdly, people are now thought not to be so capable of determining 'truth' among the distortions. They need help to do so.

Libertarianism in its raw form was clearly dominant in the Philippines prior to the martial law decree of President Marcos in 1972, being characterised by its sensationalism, and its unashamed promotion of the political interests of proprietors (Fernandez 1989; Shafer 1991). Since restrictions were lifted on the press in 1986, a new code of journalist ethics adopted and a Press Council established to eliminate journalistic excesses (Fernandez 1989), hopes for greater responsibility are held but the product is being watched anxiously for verification. Doreen Fernandez has warned that 'changes and adjustments in ownership may be setting up once more some of the structures and vested interests of the 1950s' (1989:80) while Shafer observes that the tradition of an unrestrained and adversarial press is well established and has proven resilient (1991:3). Dornila is adamant that the reputation of the press is once again that of being irresponsible and sensational. The growing reliance on political gossip is 'one of the important reasons why the credibility of the press is low' (1990:98).

In other countries where libertarian ideals are dominant there is also some concern about where this is leading. With the removal of press restrictions in Taiwan in 1988, a range of issues previously banned can now be openly debated. But at the same time some believe that some of the worst forms of libertarianism are now appearing. The media 'are unconsciously falling into the traps of market forces, both political and commercial', forming close ties with political interests, and introducing 'trials by the press, sensationalism and invasion of privacy' (Chu 1990:103).

(ii) Profitability and social responsibility
Libertarianism is based on the belief that mass communications should be privately controlled, run as capitalist enterprises and profit-oriented. Its emphasis on individualism, in contrast to the collectivistic theory of society, meant that the proprietor has always been conceded the right to run the paper his or her way, as it is private property. Overt proprietor intervention was a feature of the Western press until it came under challenge from the 1950s and 1960s onwards. These days the newsroom environment is usually held to reflect the interests of a wider corporatism. The public good and national well-being tends to be equated with the welfare and shared beliefs of the multi-faceted corporations, of which the newspaper industry is only part. A socialisation process is commonly believed to ensure that this view of the world is paramount (Benham, Finnegan and Parsons, 1988:92). This frequently means the exclusion of alternative viewpoints. Lent is one of many who believe that "the close alliances between media barons and business, industrial, political, and military powers present serious limited upon the expression of diverse viewpoints and to the watchdog function some Asian presses have performed" (1989:18).

So far empirical evidence to support this contention is lacking, despite its apparent logic. We do not yet know enough about the transmission of ideology within newsrooms (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1987:43). What can be said is that many journalists today still adhere to libertarian principles regarding the rights of the proprietor. In other words, libertarian beliefs encourage the continuation of practices which ensure that the special interests of the company are always a journalistic consideration.

This was dramatically demonstrated in Australia earlier this year during the inquiry into the print media industry by a House of Representatives Select Committee. It found that there was a significant level of direct owner intervention in editorial matters, and also influence, through newsroom absorption of beliefs and philosophy, and that concentration of ownership increases risk of intervention and is potentially harmful to plurality of opinion. However, such was the force of arguments about proprietors' essential responsibilities to shareholders, the protection of investment capital, the critical need to maximise profitability and the need for owners to have sympathetic editors, that it concluded that it may not be possible to separate the legitimate business interests of the proprietor from the editorial process of the fair selection and presentation of news. It was moreover unable to say with certainty that corporate culture influences the news product or that the high level of print media concentration has resulted in biased reporting, news suppression or lack of diversity (Report 1992:261,290). This was a marked victory for advocates of the market-oriented approach to publishing as against that of the public interest groups and the Australian Journalists' Association who argued that the role of the press in a democratic society demands that the public have a right to expect that news has been
selected independently of the interests of the owner.

There appears to be no doubt that there is a widespread perception that media owner interests do not always coincide with those of journalists or the public. In countries with a libertarian slant, owners are always seen to prevail at the expense of whatever contrasting professional values might be held by their employees. In Thailand, 'economic expedience often triumphs over a newspaper's public service obligations' (Chirasopone 1989:98). In Sri Lanka, newspapers taking a fiercely warlike line during the ethnic conflict and foreign involvement in the 1980s 'were able to rapidly increase their circulation figures at the expense of the more moderate government-owned newspapers' (Perera 1991:142). In the Philippines, 'major newspapers are engaged primarily in supporting the greater economic or political interests of their stockholder' providing news with the greatest appeal to stimulate profits which works against adoption or achievement of development goals (Shafer 1991:10). In India, the freedom of the press is constrained by the interests and wishes of the proprietor and the pressure of advertisers. Anything adversely affecting the interests of any business associated with the owner 'can hardly get into the newspaper' (Chakravartty 1990:24-25). In Pakistan it is claimed that newspapers will not print instances of human rights violations because it is felt these are not popular with consumers. 'For most big newspaper owners, journalism is not a profession; it is an industry' (Rizvi 1990:80).

(iii) Profits and values in development journalism

In Malaysia, 'the mass media have to weigh and consider the various implications of raising issues that might affect the stability and well-being of the nation', particularly the extremely precarious balance of her multi-ethnic population (Idid 1989:48; Idid and Pawanteh 1989:78). They have participated in campaigns to promote national unity and development. Even within this context there is criticism of press performance, Idid and Pawanteh drawing attention to the lack of media interest in promoting the programs of the national philosophy, Rukenegara, aimed at uniting the races through acceptance of common values. This is a case of a market rationale and professional values based upon it taking precedence over a development initiative. The authors observe that, unfortunately, the media believe the programs 'have low media appeal as news items and are rarely highlighted in the local media' (1989:82-83).

This theme has also been taken up by Oetama who notes that news of development is very often left out of Indonesian newspapers because of their commercial character. 'This commercial side can be very dominant, treating the news as merchandise.' He argues that the principle that should be laid down 'is one where the business side of the press is subordinate to its idealistic side' (1989:146,140). In view of the rapid increase in newspaper circulations and market considerations, 'maintaining and consolidating media
credibility and integrity should be a priority item', requiring the preservation of national press ideals, the tightening of professional ethics and standards, and the raising of a corps of educated and trained media people (Said 1990:49-50).

Either because of inherent marginality or journalistic failings, it appears that much development news is not being presented in a manner which will attract readers. Some of it lacks credibility. Here newspaper choices are being made at the more pragmatic level of values related to journalistic commonsense. News about development is only ranked seventh on a scale of preference of those Malaysians who took part in an audience study by Idid and Hasim in 1989, a finding reflected in the low usage of such news in five ASEAN newspapers (Hasim 1990:11-13). A comparative study of trade news in China and Taiwan resulted in a finding that 'the more vigorously the media promote the government agenda of development programmes to the public, the more likely they are to sacrifice accuracy in reporting the reality' (Zhu 1991:47).

Some observers have already identified the popularisation of development news and enhancement of its credibility as a significant challenge, linking it with the need for journalists to adopt a more creative and positive approach as part of the process of professional absorption of values associated with it. In Singapore, the media is offered advice to package information with human interest and to put complex matters in readable and simple terms. Keeping the media briefed on Government thinking is seen as a way of ensuring journalists share broadly its values and perceptions (Nair 1989:89).

In Indonesia too, as well as understanding the issues of development, the media 'must find a proper way to report these issues in an appealing journalistic form' (Oetama 1989:143). There it is argued that development journalism need not mean that inadequacies, failure and corruption cannot be reported; that because of its support of government priorities the press accepts the status quo without question and does not concern itself with the fundamentals of social issues. 'Reports on failure are presented in such a way that the inadequacies and reasons for failure are clearly delineated, short of giving the image of incompetence, let alone despair.' The press must also present stories of achievement and success. In these ways it is hoped 'to transform the commitment of developmental press into daily journalistic practice' (1989:145,143) and provide a vision which the press can share. It is interesting that journalistic apathy due to Government regulation has also been identified in Malaysia as a problem. Journalists have gone to the extreme of avoiding sensitive issues altogether. Instead of this 'indifferent attitude', they should be positive and help 'expose the evils of racialism' (Idid and Pawanteh 1989:85).

(iv) Indigenization
As Lent has pointed out, the actions taken to indigenize and balance news flow in Asia in the 1980s have resulted in the assertion of cultural diversities (Lent 1989:22). These included the setting up of news agencies in nearly every country, the establishment of Asian wires, the lowering of tariffs on the transmission of news, the opening up of more Asian branches of international news agencies and the setting up of regional press services. In the case of the Malaysian news agency Bernama, access to national news from the capital which it provides, as well as news from other states, has changed some of the characteristics of the ethnic and provincial press, and has helped bring about 'a united and integrated nation' (Arbee 1990:57-58).

Evidence of the growing awareness of the importance of providing a national perspective on external as well as internal events is provided by the case of Taiwan. There, despite increased use of news supplied by four of the major world agencies, newspapers are increasingly sending their own correspondents and special writers abroad to report on international news, thus reducing their dependency on Western oriented versions of events. This is providing an alternative and, at times, superior service by and for Taiwanese (Tang and Chan 1990:75-76).

Yet while one might expect that the emphasis given to the provision of the means of distributing to regional and international audiences news relating to national viewpoints and progress would translate into professional news values, it appears that this is not necessarily the case. In his survey of foreign news in five ASEAN newspapers, Hasim found very few foreign news items credited to the national news agencies in Southeast Asia, a result he found 'difficult to understand' (1990:13). In drawing attention to the problems plaguing the national news agencies in 1989, namely problems of speed of transmission, quality of presentation, competition with major agencies and lack of funding, he adds that the publishers and editors of certain Asian newspapers 'usually employ news values and judgements passed down by Western journalists' (1989:22). If this is so it helps explain why there might be this disparity between the goals and beliefs of communications policy makers and the values that are internalised by those making critical decisions about the final product. It would also seem to point up the need to examine more closely the points at which there is an interface between Western and indigenous beliefs about the news.

(v) Personal values
The importance of the interests and goals of journalists themselves, as well as those of the organisations for which they work, is only now beginning to attract research interest (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1987:124). Events are interpreted and constructed situationally and contextually according to personal and organizational criteria of value. Individuals in institutions not only are aware of the organisation's commonly held norms, but they have personal feelings about a whole range
of worldly issues which affect their judgements or emphasis (Walits and Baran 1990:237). In his study of four news organisations, Gans identified 'enduring values' in the news - ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership. These were not consciously inserted but represent assumptions about community beliefs or about the existence of a consensus (1979:40-43). Lichter, Rothman and Lichter found that journalistic 'objectivity' is unattainable 'since even the conscious effort to be objective takes place within a mental picture of the world already conditioned, by some degree, by one's beliefs about it' (1986:296). In the analysis of the TV coverage of industrial issues in Britain, the Glasgow University Media Group found 'a value consensus framework' which continually reinforced 'a managerially skewed view of industrial relations' (1980:188-189).

This subject is raised here because it appears that so far little is known of the personal values of Asian journalists and how they interact with institutional beliefs, the collective beliefs of their professional colleagues and external pressures. How journalists personally view the world, and what assumptions they make about it and the society they serve, would provide important insights into the importance attached to promoting development goals, and the chances of responsible forms of libertarianism serving development purposes. The framework of beliefs within news organisations is no less important. Occasional glimpses of the thinking of individuals, such as the work on provincial journalists in the Philippines, show a complex and intriguing range of motivational beliefs (Shaffer 1990).

Discussion

We have identified some of the factors that might prevent the too-easy or automatic adoption of some of most criticised beliefs and practices of same-day satellite news technology. These are a cautious and questioning attitude to the technology and the acknowledgement that it needs appropriate professional and governmental supervision. In cases in which governments have adopted an approach to journalism which emphasises national development goals, there is some optimism that journalists will embrace the positive aspects of these policies within their journalistic creed. If this happens, these would presumably form core values in news assessment which might enable contrary technology related practices to be resisted. It is noteworthy that there are trends to a development mode within a social responsibility framework in some countries with a libertarian tradition which might ultimately provide the basis for a belief system which would win journalistic support. The trend to indigenization could possibly bring to the fore news criteria based on national considerations.

On the other hand, in general, there seems to be little in the way of alternative value formation to take the place of the
declining faith in the dogma of traditional libertarianism. This does not bode well for the appearance of a value structure related to national and regional needs which could dominate a clash with professional values heavily reliant on technology. Moreover, in the countries with development journalism there are indications that there are problems still in effectively conceptualising the practice in terms with which journalists are comfortable professionally and which meet professional understandings of audience needs. Much will depend on the presentation of development journalism as incorporating a positive and dynamic rationale and finding ways of giving professionals greater flexibility in the treatment of issues.

The frequently cited conflict between the increasingly important profit imperative in privately owned Asian media and the public-service oriented thrust which many people think it should have is another factor which weakens causes problems in the development of a professional ideology. The picture, imprecise as it may be, that one has of much Asian journalism if of professionals labouring within and subject to the framework of beliefs of media organisations which are aimed at profitability. What other values journalists might possess are very much a secondary consideration. While at times the interests of owners and governments might coincide, there is little in this situation which maximises journalistic commitment and creativity. Yet the philosophic paradox is that feel many feel owner rights are an inexorable and inescapable corollary to their libertarian beliefs which are supposed to be a precondition for 'freedom of the press'.

Journalistic codes of behaviour or ethics specifying certain basic values to be applied in news selection are one way of establishing a belief framework. They are intended to provide protection if newsworkers are to perform their role of imparting knowledge independently of the views of vested interests. Others prefer, or would like as well, Press Councils, to handle and report on complaints, or charters of editorial independence guaranteeing editors are not entirely subject to control by proprietors. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines are some of the countries with codes of ethics. Several have press councils while others are working towards this. In Australia, the House of Representative Select Committee on the Print Media has recommended the restructuring and strengthening of the existing Press Council and for proprietors, as well as journalists, to subscribe to the Code of Ethics of the Australian Journalists' Association (Report: 289, 293). No-one is under any illusions about the difficulty of bringing about the latter. Proprietors in Australia and elsewhere have traditionally seen such codes as weakening and undermining their rights as owners. The codes are also not binding and difficult to morally enforce if journalists do not have strong unions, as is apparently the case in many parts of Asia (Dornila 1990; Idid and Pawanteh 1989).
Some codes embody the national philosophy or the values of development journalism. Many represent hangovers from libertarian beliefs in that they avoid being prescriptive. While they are important in emphasising the importance of not obtaining news by misrepresentation, rejecting corrupt practices and forms of discrimination, they almost invariably concentrate on what journalists should not do, rather than what they could be doing. They are also replete with terms which are problematic. That is they can mean different things to different people (e.g. 'public interest', 'voice of my conscience').

Research for this paper has provided evidence that many Asian journalists and media commentators share the belief that journalists and their publications could be doing far more to bridge gaps between different races and different faiths, that they should be mission-oriented, that they should have greater concern for the moral well-being of the public they serve, that they should not let political coverage take precedence over social and cultural issues, that they should be providing more feedback from, and should be showing more concern for, the basic needs of their readers. These and similar aspirations would not appear to conflict with various political ideologies. They may have even have the potential for winning proprietor support. Certainly, it seems, a search for a more positive approach to defining journalistic values and goals is warranted, perhaps on a regional basis, given the common ground that seems to exist. This should occur sooner rather than later if it is thought important that indigenous definitions of the media be more firmly established, and be able to withstand the competition and challenge represented by the more extreme commercially driven values and practices associated with state-of-the-art technology.
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