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How the West Extends its Control Over Journalism Worldwide

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Political developments are often emotionally charged, and even journalists who are expected to maintain an objective approach to reporting can find themselves swept away by sensational headlines and the temptation to wade into controversy without fully analysing background information that might significantly alter established narratives.

Because of this, some journalists find themselves playing the role of commentator rather than investigator, often leaving out critical information in a rush to contribute to one of two sides amid a political divide. In some cases, journalists may appear to be doing their job by « investigating » deeper into news stories, but do so in a transparently one-sided manner, thus negating their role as an objective observer.



In Thailand, this can be clearly seen in English-language coverage, particularly from The Nation and the Bangkok Post. In the rare instance that journalists from either paper « investigates » independently into any given headline, it is generally one-sided and

transparently politically-motivated.

And more often than not, these papers appear to be taking their lead from foreign news sources, particularly those in Europe and North America. One would expect newspapers from region to region to develop their own unique angles and perspectives regarding the news, but upon following the money, we will soon see why this more often than not doesn't happen.

The Industrialised Journalist Mill



Pravit Rojanaphruk, currently a commentator at Thailand's Khoasod English, is perhaps one of the most transparent examples of just what is wrong with newspapers across Asia. He proudly boasts of his various Western media affiliations and fellowships with his Twitter profile reading as follows:

> MSc (Oxon), British Chevening Scholar 2001-2002, Reuter Fellow 97-98, Katherine Fanning Fellow 2009, Salzburg Sem. Fellow.

If these scholarships and fellowships actually cultivated real principles of journalism within recipients, they might actually be noteworthy milestones in a journalist's career.

However, what they instead represent, is a concerted attempt by the Western media to extend its influence further abroad, and to help align global news coverage uniformly to their perspective and to serve their interests.

Journalists like Pravit, then, serve as an extension of Western media coverage rather than a representation of Thai journalism. Journalism by definition is the reporting of news, and news is by definition noteworthy information.

What Pravit and others like him are prone to do, however, is interweave opinion and commentary into what is often strained, spun or even fabricated information. And this is

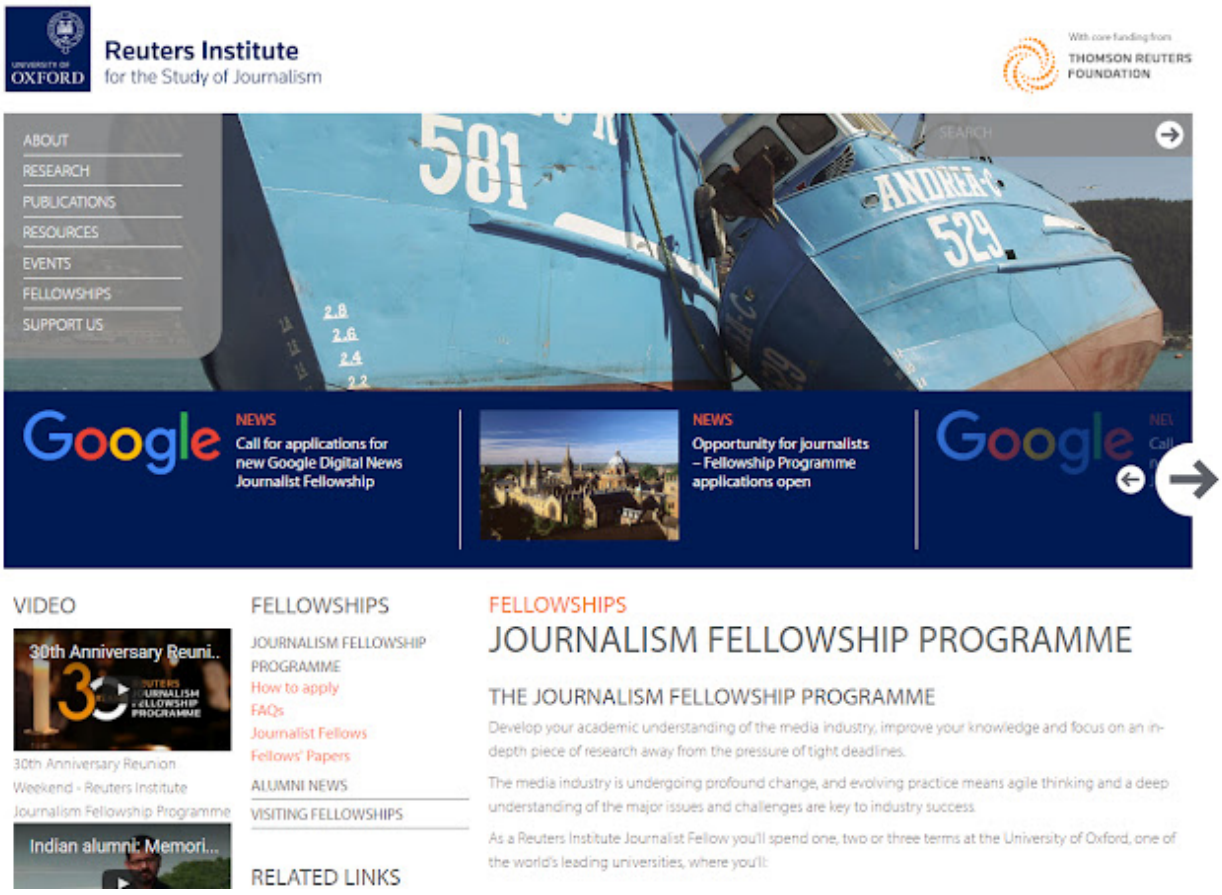
done to align Thai news with those expectations and norms taught to them during their fellowships abroad in Europe and North America.The Reuters Journalism Fellowship Programme alone has processed hundreds of journalists around the world, putting them through between 1-3 terms at the University of Oxford to undergo a program of stringent indoctrination into the ways of Western journalism. It is virtually impossible for a fellow to undergo this process and leave as an independent journalist.Activities, according to the Reuters Institute's own website include:

- *Attend seminars given by a diverse and high-level range of guest speakers who will share their insights into key industry trends and developments*
- *Work with an experienced supervisor, usually an Oxford academic, to produce a research paper of publishable quality*
- *Visit world-class news organisations and gain insights into how they are approaching industry challenges. Previous visits have included trips to Thomson Reuters, The Financial Times, The BBC, The Economist and The Guardian*
- *Join trips to key UK cultural and political organisations and institutions. Previous destinations have included Oxfam, the House of Commons and Stratford-upon-Avon, home of Shakespeare*
- *Exchange ideas and experiences with a diverse and international peer group. Around 25 Fellows a year join us from high-level media organisations all over the world. Strengthen your network, develop a global set of contacts and gain insights into international trends and developments*
- *Benefit from the extensive learning facilities offered by the University of Oxford, including the world-famous Bodleian Library and access to various seminars and lectures across the university. You are also encouraged to engage with the university's cutting edge specialist research facilities, including centres for African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Eastern and Western European, Japanese and Chinese studies*
- *Be given visiting scholar status of Green Templeton College*

For inexperienced young men and women who aspire to be journalists, to be afforded this opportunity would be both immensely flattering and emotionally as well as professionally transformative. For a young journalist in Thailand to be afforded the opportunity to travel to the UK, to attend one or more terms at the world renowned University of Oxford and to be given an opportunity to see the inner workings of news organisations like the BBC, Thompson Reuters, The Economist and The Guardian would be an overwhelming experience. And it is meant to be.

If Only Real Journalism Was Being Promoted…

The journalists who complete such fellowships and return to their home countries, are forever linked to the institutions and individuals they met and worked with during their time abroad. They take back with them to their home countries not the tools of an objective journalist, but the indoctrination, culture, interests and angles of a Western-centric worldview. To those who have completed the fellowship, they often confuse this Western-centric worldview with being « objective, » but it is most certainly not.



We can look at the Reuters fellowship program and see news organisations like Thompson Reuters, the BBC, The Economist and The Guardian held up as examples of journalism. This is despite their active manipulation of information toward particular political objectives rather than accurately informing the public.

In particular, these news services played crucial roles in promoting wars like the US-UK led invasion of Iraq in 2003, intentionally obfuscating critical information the public and policymakers required to make an honest assessment of the decision to go to war.

The BBC in particular has been embroiled in impropriety ranging from deceptive news coverage to paid-for documentaries and even criminal conduct committed by individuals, and covered up institutionally.

But news organisations serving special interests is nothing new. One must expect this realistically, to a certain degree, regarding any news organisation operating around the world. It is not a matter of whether or not they are serving special interests, it is a matter of whose interests they are serving.

While Thai-based news organisations would be expected to serve special interests in Thailand, they do not, specifically because of the Wests industrialised 'journalist mills.' These fellowship programs, training seminars and campaigns are undertaken to ensure the widest possible consensus globally to Western special interests, regardless of what nation journalists may be from or what nations they are currently operating in.

That is why The Nation and the Bangkok Post feature editorial slants nearly indistinguishable from those of Western news agencies. While Pravit is very open and proud of his indoctrination into this system of mass-produced consensus, others employed across the Thai media are not. Some digging, however, into the backgrounds of journalists who

repeatedly and suspiciously repeat talking-points originating from abroad usually reveals a similar and extensive « resume » of foreign fellowships, education and indoctrination.

History is Repeating Itself

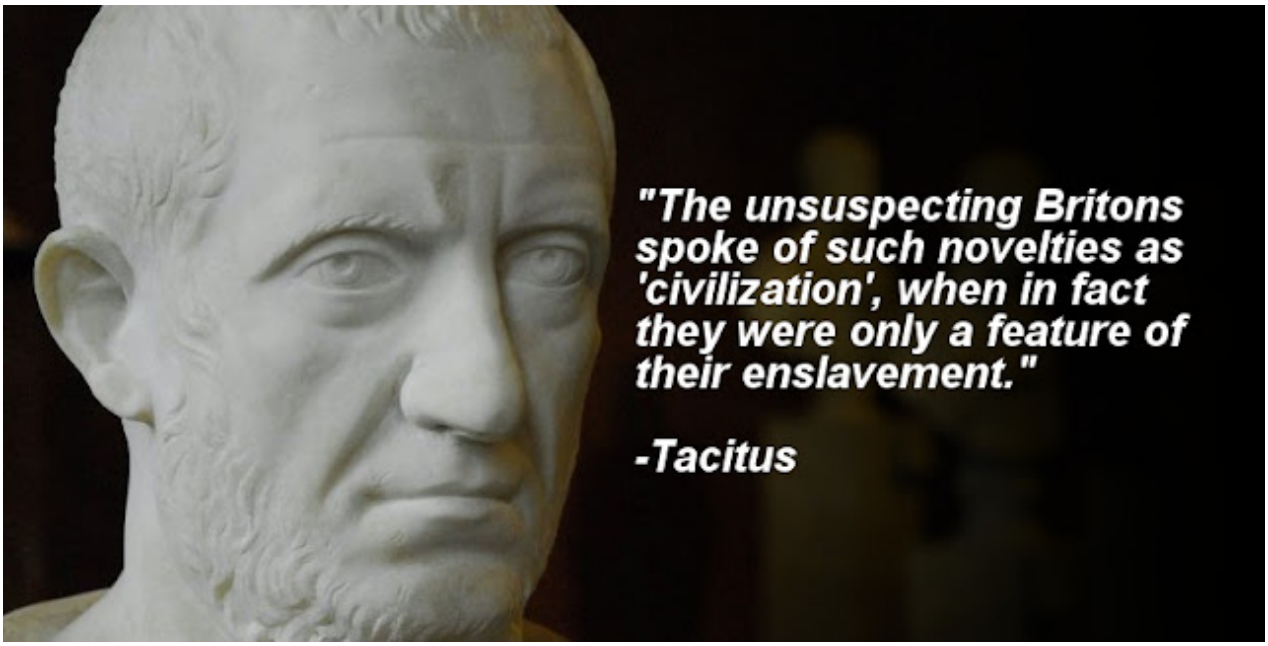
Understandably, for people hearing this for the first time, it sounds like an incredible conspiracy theory. However, upon thoughtful examination, it is merely the predictable repetition of history unfolding.

Ancient Roman historian Tacitus (c. AD 56 – after 117) would adeptly describe the systematic manner in which Rome pacified foreign peoples and the manner in which it would extend its sociocultural and institutional influence over conquered lands.

In chapter 21 of his book *Agricola*, named so after his father-in-law whose methods of conquest were the subject of the text, Tacitus would explain:

> His object was to accustom them to a life of peace and quiet by the provision of amenities. He therefore gave official assistance to the building of temples, public squares and good houses. He educated the sons of the chiefs in the liberal arts, and expressed a preference for British ability as compared to the trained skills of the Gauls. The result was that instead of loathing the Latin language they became eager to speak it effectively. In the same way, our national dress came into favour and the toga was everywhere to be seen. And so the population was gradually led into the demoralizing temptation of arcades, baths and sumptuous banquets. The unsuspecting Britons spoke of such novelties as 'civilization', when in fact they were only a feature of their enslavement.

We can easily see how fellowships fill a similar role today, with the West, openly aspiring to construct an international order, « educating » potentially influential foreigners in both English and « the liberal arts, » encouraging a preference for Western culture and perspectives and convincing them that such indoctrination is a novelty of 'civilisation' rather than a feature of control and a vector for Western influence into any particular country.



Under the British Empire, similar education and missionary programs were created to

replace independent and unique local perspectives and culture with the uniform perspective and culture of Britain, serving British aspirations of global hegemony.

Cambridge University Press' Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860 would note in a chapter extract that (our emphasis):

> Christian missionary activity was central to the work of European colonialism, providing British missionaries and their supporters with a sense of justice and moral authority. Throughout the history of imperial expansion, missionary proselytising offered the British public a model of 'civilised' expansionism and colonial community management, transforming [imperial] projects into moral allegories. Missionary activity was, however, unavoidably implicated in either covert or explicit cultural change. It sought to transform indigenous communities into imperial archetypes of civility and modernity by remodelling the individual, the community, and the state through western, Christian philosophies. In the British Empire, and particularly in what is historically known as the 'second' era of British imperialism (approximately 1784–1867), missionary activity was frequently involved with the initial steps of imperial expansion.

It is a bit ironic then that Britain, against which cultural colonialism was first used by the Romans, became a centre of power used then to disseminate cultural colonialism in service of naked imperialism under the British Empire, is now being used to disseminate a « softer » version of it under the guise of journalism and academia.

Like the sons of chiefs in Britannia, foreign journalists like Thailand's Pravit Rojanaphruk probably have honestly convinced themselves that these features of control and manipulation are instead the « novelties of civilisation. »

What Nations Can Do.

It is important for policymakers and the public alike to understand this aspect of modern journalism to both be aware of how it impacts news coverage, and of what possible measures can be taken to combat modern day cultural colonialism.

One possible measure could be national programs that attempt to recruit and build up a corps of local journalists who represent their nation's best interests, culture and perspectives. These journalists can then fill the ranks of local newspapers and TV stations, as well as influence news conferences and seminars both local and international from their own nation's perspective, rather than merely amplifying those of nations running international « fellowship » programmes.



For Thailand who has large government-funded news organisations like Thai PBS, universities and trusted news professionals, untainted by foreign indoctrination, can develop a truly Thai brand of journalism that is taught to political science and journalist students in school, and reinforced through the same sort of activities conducted by foreign fellowships overseas.

In essence, instead of depending on foreign fellowships and joint news organisation-university programs abroad, Thailand should develop is own domestically, as well as well-funded news organisations for Thai journalists to work at safely, securely and far from the ego-ensnaring temptations extended by foreign interests.

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