



## China's Efforts to Shape the Information Environment in Cambodia

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## Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has embarked on a campaign to shape what audiences around the world read, hear, and watch about China. This report is part of a series that assesses Beijing's efforts to influence the media environment in the neighboring Mekong countries—Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand. This report focuses on China's efforts to reach audiences in Cambodia. To place China's efforts into context, this report begins with an overview of Cambodia's information environment—the aggregate of key individuals, organizations, and systems that help shape opinion by disseminating news and information. Next, the report identifies key narratives that China is promoting to audiences in Cambodia and examines each of the tactics, tools, and techniques that it is employing to do so. The report concludes with a discussion of observations regarding the effect of China's efforts and issues to watch as the Cambodia information environment—and China's footprint there—evolves.

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# Executive Summary

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## Introduction

This report is part of a series that assesses Beijing's efforts to influence the media environment in the neighboring Mekong countries. It focuses on China's efforts to reach and shape the views of audiences in Cambodia.

## Key findings

***Cambodia's media environment underwent an abrupt transformation in 2017 and 2018.*** To maintain political control in the lead up to the 2018 Cambodian general elections, Prime Minister Hun Sen led a crackdown on the media. The crackdown helped to assure the Cambodian People's Party's (CPP's) victory in the 2018 election and left a government-controlled information environment that is intolerant of dissenting voices. This transformation in Cambodia's media environment led to three important developments:

1. Public trust in traditional media decreased.
2. Independent media outlets were forced to go digital to survive.
3. China was given an opportunity to displace traditional foreign media actors, such as Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA), and significantly increase its presence in the Cambodian information environment.

***China has sought to fill the vacuum in Cambodia's information environment in the following ways:***

- ***Producing content tailored to appeal to Cambodian audiences.*** China Radio International (CRI) regularly produces Khmer-language reporting on local events likely to be of interest to general audiences in Cambodia. This is unique to CRI's Khmer service, and is not the case in the other Mekong countries, where People's Republic of China (PRC) state-run media reporting tends to be overwhelmingly Sino-centric.
- ***Providing content to Cambodian media outlets.*** Multiple content-sharing agreements with key Cambodian media outlets result in broad republication of content from several PRC media outlets, including Xinhua, *Global Times*, *People's Daily*, and CCTV/CGTN. CRI also formed a partnership with Cambodia's state-run radio station, RNK, to establish Cambodia-China Friendship Radio (CCFR).

- ***Investing in Cambodian media outlets.*** PRC-based entities have invested in local mobile and multimedia platforms such as TNAOT News and ASEAN TOP NEWS, both of which frequently republish content produced by PRC media outlets. Of note, all of these outlets are widely seen as pro-government. In addition, a Chinese investment group engaged in a joint venture with Cambodia's Interior Ministry to establish NICE TV.
- ***Establishing itself as a key source of support in developing local information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.*** Huawei is developing the Kingdom's 5G while China Unicom, WeChat, Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corp. (ZTE), and South East Asia Telecom (SEATEL) are also involved with ICT development in Cambodia.

***China uses its presence in Cambodia's information environment to promote narratives that further its strategic interests. Key PRC narratives include the following:***

- ***China supports the Hun Sen government.*** When many countries condemned Hun Sen's media crackdown and arrest of his political rival, Beijing expressed support for Cambodia's prime minister.
- ***Cambodia benefits greatly from its partnership with China.*** Beijing portrays itself as Cambodia's number one economic partner.
- ***China is a responsible member of the international community and helps Cambodia—and the world—fight COVID-19.*** PRC media's Khmer-language reporting highlights China's contributions to Cambodia's fight against COVID-19, while accusing the US of failing to live up to its own international obligations.

***Despite the privileges offered by the Hun Sen government, PRC state-run media appears to have had limited success supplanting the enduring popularity—and credibility—of Western media outlets such as RFA, VOA, and Radio France Internationale (RFI).***

- When we spoke with Cambodian media professionals and experts, a recurring theme was that PRC media suffers from a lack of credibility among audiences in Cambodia.
- Several local Cambodian media experts also noted that PRC media outlets partner exclusively with pro-government Cambodian media outlets, which also lack credibility among Cambodian audiences.

## Issues to watch

The Hun Sen government has welcomed PRC media, as well as Chinese investment in Cambodian media outlets and ICT. Nevertheless, Chinese narratives face challenges. Some issues to watch that would indicate that Chinese narratives are becoming more or less impactful include the following:

- ***Xinhua or other PRC state-run media launching Khmer online news portals.*** Of China's state-run media outlets, only CRI publishes news and information in Khmer. In neighbouring Mekong countries, both CRI and Xinhua operate local-language news outlets, but this is not currently the case in Cambodia. If China launches a Khmer Xinhua portal, Facebook page, or mobile application, it would indicate that China values a second outlet (in addition to CRI) where it can exercise full editorial control over narratives it aims to promote to local audiences.
- ***An increase in the popularity and perceived credibility of Chinese-financed, Cambodia-based media outlets.*** Outlets in Cambodia that receive Chinese support appear to make little effort to conceal their patronage. If these outlets achieve widespread popularity—and establish greater credibility among Cambodian audiences—PRC narratives might be more likely to gain traction.
- ***An increase in publicly expressed anti-China sentiment.*** Local media experts and media reporting suggest that anti-China sentiment is most noticeable in areas targeted by growing Chinese investment. These sentiments, especially if reflected in local media, may be a key indicator that Chinese narratives are failing to resonate with local audiences.
- ***More joint production of content between PRC and Cambodian media outlets.*** Cambodian media professionals suggested that content that is jointly produced by PRC media outlets together with local Cambodian media outlets would be more likely to resonate with local audiences, compared to exported PRC media content.

## Recommendations from experts & media professionals in the region

The Cambodian media professionals and experts with whom we spoke over the course of our research suggested ways that the international community could help to support the integrity of Cambodia's information environment. These include the following:

- ***Support the establishment of a regional media alliance.*** Political sensitivities in Cambodia make it difficult for local journalists to report on some domestic issues, but reporters in neighboring countries may not face similar restrictions. Journalists based in other countries could publish investigative reporting about local events in Cambodia, creating an opportunity for local journalists to pick up the story. This would provide a layer of protection for Cambodia-based journalists who report on politically sensitive topics.
- ***Provide funding for independent media.*** In an environment in which just a handful of outlets receive an estimated 99 percent of advertising revenue, smaller independent media outlets often struggle to survive financially. This makes Chinese funding more attractive. Independent media needs sustainable funding that does not seek to influence or compromise the journalistic integrity of their work. Reports by the Center for International Media Assistance provide useful resources for international donors looking for effective strategies for supporting independent media.<sup>1</sup>
- ***Support efforts to promote digital literacy.*** External actors like China use trends like the complexity of the modern information environment and the rise of social media to promote misleading information. Providing media consumers in Cambodia with the skills to find, identify, evaluate, and use information, especially on social media, will empower audiences to form views and opinions based on truthful information.

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<sup>1</sup> The Center for International Media Assistance has published several reports exploring strategies for how to provide effective support for media development, see: <https://www.cima.ned.org/publications/>.

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# 1. Overview of Cambodia's Information Environment

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## *Quick Country Facts*



- Literacy rate (2015): 80.5%<sup>1</sup>
- Internet penetration (2018): 93%<sup>2,3</sup>
- Mobile phone subscriptions (per 100 people in 2018): 116<sup>4</sup>
- Total population (2018): 16,926,984<sup>5</sup>
- Languages: Khmer (official),<sup>6</sup> French (spoken by approximately 3% of population)<sup>7</sup>
- UN Least Developed Country status<sup>8</sup>

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## 1.1 Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has embarked on a campaign to shape what audiences around the world read, hear, and watch about China.<sup>9</sup> In a report to the 19th Party Congress, Chinese president and CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping voiced the aspirations of this campaign, stating, “We will improve our capacity for international communication so as to tell China’s stories well, present a true, multi-dimensional, and panoramic view of China, and enhance our country’s cultural soft power.”<sup>10</sup> This report is part of a series that examines Beijing’s efforts to influence the media environment in the neighboring Mekong countries—Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand.

This report focuses on China’s efforts to shape the information environment of its neighbor, Cambodia. To place China’s efforts into context, this report begins with an overview of Cambodia’s information environment—the aggregate of key individuals, organizations, and systems that help shape opinion by disseminating news and information. Next, the report identifies key narratives that China is promoting to audiences in Cambodia and examines each of the tactics, tools, and techniques that it is employing to do so. The report concludes with a

discussion of observations regarding the effect of China's efforts and issues to watch as the Cambodia information environment—and China's footprint there—evolves.

## 1.2 Background & key developments

In the recent past, Cambodia had one of the freest and most diverse information environments in Southeast Asia.<sup>11</sup> According to a Cambodia-based diplomat, “The [peacemaking] processes in the early nineties left Cambodia with a lively civil society and the freest press in Southeast Asia.”<sup>12</sup> However, Cambodia's media environment underwent an abrupt transformation in 2017 and 2018. To maintain political control in the lead up to the 2018 Cambodian general elections, Prime Minister Hun Sen led a crackdown on the media. The crackdown helped to assure the Cambodian People's Party's (CPP's) victory in the 2018 election and left a government-controlled information environment that is intolerant of dissenting voices.<sup>13</sup> This transformation in Cambodia's media environment led to three important developments:

1. Public trust in traditional media decreased.
2. Independent media outlets were forced to go digital to survive.
3. China was given an opportunity to displace traditional foreign media actors, such as Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA), and significantly increase its presence in the Cambodian information environment.

These developments are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

### 1.2.1 Public trust in traditional media decreased

Experts in Cambodian media suggest that, after experiencing several decades of a comparatively free press, Cambodians have become savvy media consumers. Because they are accustomed to seeing a variety of viewpoints expressed in the media, they are relatively adept at identifying editorial spin and are skeptical of propaganda.<sup>14</sup>

Since the government consolidated its control in 2017 and 2018, popular trust in mainstream media appears to have suffered, most likely because of the uniformly pro-government bent of the mainstream media outlets that survived the crackdown.

Currently, the state or individuals with close ties to Prime Minister Hun Sen own nearly all mainstream media outlets.<sup>15</sup> For example, the once-independent *Phnom Penh Post* was sold to an owner with ties to Hun Sen, who subsequently fired journalists critical of the government.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the two free-to-air news channels—National Television of Kampuchea (TVK) and Bayon TV—are both state run, resulting in television news coverage that is largely monolithic and focused on coverage of official statements and government activities.<sup>17</sup>

The result, according to a 2019 survey conducted by the Cambodian Development Resource Institute, an independent development policy research institute, is that Cambodians' trust in media as an institution is low—behind schools, local institutions, courts, and police, but above politicians.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.2.2 Independent media outlets forced to go digital

Despite the government's grip on mainstream media, independent media outlets have managed to survive online. According to Cambodia media experts, some online outlets have hired journalists from recently shuttered independent mainstream media outfits to carry on publishing independent news and information.<sup>19</sup> These online outlets are increasingly popular sources of news. The rising popularity of online media is likely fueled by decreasing costs of internet access and Cambodia's young population, with 26.4 being the median age in 2020.<sup>20</sup>

Facebook is especially popular in Cambodia; it is a key platform for Cambodians to consume news. In 2019, about 8.3 million of the approximately 15.8 million internet users (74 percent via mobile internet devices) in Cambodia are active Facebook users.<sup>21</sup> This is in part a result of Facebook's cooperation with local telecommunications companies. Since 2015, Facebook has operated its Free Basics program in partnership with Cambodian telecommunications companies. The program provides basic online services to Cambodians without incurring data charges.<sup>22</sup>

Some of the most popular Facebook pages in Cambodia belong to independent news outlets. VOA Khmer has the second most popular Facebook page (after Prime Minister Hun Sen's page) with 7.3 million followers; Radio Free Asia (RFA) Khmer and the *Post Khmer* are in third and fourth place, respectively. Citizen journalists also have an active presence on Facebook. They are bolstered by semiofficial initiatives, such as the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) Citizen Journalism Program, but they are also subject to arrest for "incitement against state authority" if their Facebook posts are deemed overly critical of the government.<sup>23</sup> Some shuttered media outlets have turned to Facebook as a platform to continue publishing news. The *Cambodia Daily*, for instance, continues to publish original reports on its Facebook page.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.2.3 China significantly increased its presence in the Cambodian information environment

The absence of legal restrictions on foreign media has allowed China to help fill the vacuum left by Hun Sen's crackdown. When RFA and VOA broadcasts were taken off the air, China Radio International (CRI) began partnering with local stations to carry its broadcasts.<sup>25</sup> However, CRI appears to have had limited success competing with the enduring popularity—and credibility—of Western media outlets such as RFA, VOA, and Radio France Internationale (RFI). Several local media experts described VOA and RFA as their preferred

sources of news. When asked whether CRI was popular, they said no.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, VOA's Khmer Facebook page is the second most popular in Cambodia, behind only the page of the Cambodian Prime Minister.

Perhaps more significant, People's Republic of China (PRC) media outlets provide content to some of Cambodia's most popular online news outlets, including Fresh News and DAP News Online. Both outlets frequently republish reports by China's official Xinhua News Agency and other PRC state-run media outlets. This topic is discussed in detail in Section 2 of this report.

## 1.2 Popularity of different types of media

The popularity of various types of media with Cambodian audiences is as follows:

- **Internet and social media** outlets are the most popular sources of news in Cambodia. According to a 2017 report by the CCIM, online news sources supplanted television as the country's most popular news medium in 2016.<sup>27</sup> Today, Cambodia has more than 15.8 million registered internet users, including 8.4 million active social media users.<sup>28</sup>
- **Television** is the second most popular source of news in Cambodia and the most closely entwined with ruling party interests, according to the 2017 CCIM report. Ruling party affiliates own 8 of the top 10 stations, including Hun Mana, Prime Minister Hun Sen's daughter; Kao Kim Hourn, a senior official in the prime minister's office; and Kith Meng, a tycoon linked to the CPP.<sup>29</sup> The most popular TV stations and programs are primarily entertainment-focused.<sup>30</sup>
- **Radio** is the third most popular source of news in Cambodia based on a 2015 Cambodia Media & Research for Development (CMRD) survey.<sup>31</sup> Despite its decreasing popularity following the government's 2017 shuttering of 32 radio stations, which had broadcast VOA, RFA, and Voice of Democracy (VOD), radio remains important for rural Cambodians, who only recently gained widespread access to smartphones and data packages.<sup>32</sup>
- **Print** news is the fourth most popular source of information, according to the 2015 CMRD survey. Newspaper and magazine circulation has decreased since 2015, suggesting print is still declining in popularity. CPP-affiliated media outlets dominate the print market.<sup>33</sup>

## 1.3 Key domestic media outlets

Cambodia’s major media outlets are owned by the state or by media groups with close ties to Prime Minister Hun Sen.<sup>34</sup> The three government-owned media outlets are the state news agency Agence Kampuchea Presse (AKP), Radio National Kampuchea (RNK), which operates 12 FM radio stations, and TVK, which has one television channel (terrestrial free-to-air).<sup>35</sup> Of note, none of these ranks among the most popular media outlets.<sup>36</sup>

The CPP indirectly controls key outlets with broader consumer bases than state-run media. For example, the private Cambodian Broadcasting Service (CBS) has 47 percent of the TV viewership in Cambodia (operating four free-to-air channels: Cambodian Television Network (CTN), CTN International, Cambodian News Channel, and MyTV).<sup>37</sup> CBS’s parent company, the Royal Group, is owned by Kith Meng, a long-time adviser to the prime minister who is deeply connected to the ruling CPP.<sup>38</sup> In addition to owning terrestrial television channels in Cambodia, the Royal Group owns a telecom operator, digital television services, and internet service providers (ISPs). This concentration of media ownership makes Kith Meng “one of the most influential media owners with potentially the highest leverage on public opinion in Cambodia,” according to a 2016 Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) report.<sup>39</sup> Tables 1–4 list key local actors in the media.

**Table 1. Key online outlets**

Name	Type of media	Description	Average daily reach	Ownership
Fresh News	Online, TV, Radio	Popular Khmer, English, Chinese online news website with a reputation for being pro-government and pro-China. <sup>40</sup> Most international news provided by Xinhua.	Most popular domestic news site, <sup>41</sup> and third most-visited domestic site, <sup>42</sup> 3.8 million Facebook followers	Lim Chea Vutha, vocally pro-Chinese businessman
Sabay News	Online	Popular Khmer online news outlet with offices in China. <sup>43</sup>	2.479 million Facebook followers	Owned by Sabay Digital Corporation
VOD	Online	English and Khmer digital news outlet.	1.3 million Facebook followers <sup>44</sup>	Run by Cambodian CCIM <sup>45</sup>
DAP News	Online	Popular Khmer online news website, reposts content from Bayon TV (owned by Hun Sen’s wife). <sup>46</sup>	807,558 Facebook Followers <sup>47</sup>	Soy Sopheap is the owner and director of DAP Media Center, which runs Deum Ampil Daily News, Deum Ampil Radio, DAP website <sup>48</sup>

Source: CNA.

**Voice of Democracy: Last major independent news outlet**

After Hun Sen’s 2017 media crackdown, VOD, a radio and digital news service run by the Cambodian Center for Independent Media, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), remains the only significant domestic news outlet with the capacity to produce original news content, according to a Cambodia media expert. As an NGO-run news outlet, it depends on financial support from donors.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Beehive Radio and Women’s Media Center are among the few remaining truly independent domestic Khmer-language independent outlets. However, they, too, depend on Western support.<sup>50</sup>

**Table 2. Key television outlets by estimated audience share\***

Name	Description	Average daily reach	Ownership
Cambodian Television Network (CTN)	Government-affiliated broadcaster, primarily for entertainment, sports, and news.	Audience share* 30%	Cambodian Broadcasting Service Co, LTD, 100% owned by Kith Meng <sup>51</sup>
Hang Meas HDTV	Considered most independent television station in Cambodia by CCIM. <sup>52</sup> Broadcasts news and entertainment.	Audience share 23%	100% owned by Ing Chhay Nguon
National Television of Cambodia (TVK)	State-run broadcaster, news and information, 91% of coverage devoted to domestic development. <sup>53</sup>	Audience share 30%	Cambodian government
NICE TV	PRC-backed television station that claims to disseminate “homeland security news.”It covers law enforcement activities as well as entertainment. <sup>54</sup>	Audience share unknown; 9,800 subscribers on YouTube	PRC-based group NICE Culture Investment in joint venture with the Ministry of Internal Security in 2017 <sup>55</sup>
TV5	State-affiliated broadcaster that offers news and entertainment. News programming overseen by the Ministry of Defense.	Audience share 9%	50% owned by Cambodian Ministry of Defense, 50% owed by Thai media company KATANA <sup>56</sup>
TV3	State-affiliated broadcaster that offers news and entertainment programming. Broadcasts Thai dramas during primetime. Distributed to 13 network stations by Apstar 6 (Hong Kong) satellite.	According to TV3 website, 90% of Cambodians receive news from TV3	KCS Cambodia Company Limited, owned by the Phnom Penh municipal administration <sup>57</sup>
Bayon TV (BTV)	Government affiliated station, 90% of coverage devoted to domestic development topics. <sup>58</sup>	Audience share 4%	Owned by Hun Sen’s daughter, Hun Mana <sup>59</sup>

Source: CNA.

\*Audience share refers to the percentage of households with television sets in use or tuned to a particular station during a specific period of time. Audience share data sourced from 2018 Media Ownership Monitor report by Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) and RSF.<sup>60</sup>

**Table 3. Key radio outlets**

Name	Type of media	Description	Average daily reach	Ownership
Women’s Media Center (WMC)	Radio	Focused on social change for women. Considered one of the most independent news outlets in Cambodia. <sup>61</sup>	One of the most popular radio stations among youth in Cambodia <sup>62</sup>	A nonprofit organization that does not have shareholders. First executive director is Chea Sundaneth <sup>63</sup>
Radio National Kampuchea (RNK)	Radio	12 radio stations nationally, rebroadcasts both VOA and CRI. <sup>64</sup>	“Low popularity” according to 2015 audience survey <sup>65</sup>	Cambodian government
FM103	Radio	English-language popular music.	Most popular English-language radio station in Phnom Penh and surrounding areas <sup>66</sup>	Ownership unknown

Source: CNA.

**Table 4. Key newspapers by circulation**

Name	Type of media	Description	Average daily reach	Ownership
<i>Rasmei Kampuchea (Light of Cambodia)</i>	Print and online newspaper	Khmer-language daily, pro-government editorial stance <sup>67</sup>	Total daily circulation (2013): 18,000. Claims to have largest readership in Cambodia. <sup>68</sup>	Say Chhum, president of the Cambodian Senate and vice president of the CPP, acquired the paper in 2005 under order from the Ministry of Information <sup>69</sup>
<i>Koh Santepheap</i>	Print and online newspaper	Khmer-language daily, pro-government editorial stance <sup>70</sup>	Second largest readership, according to media reports.	Yin Phanny and Thong Uypang, is affiliated with the CPP and many of its reporters work at the Interior Ministry <sup>71</sup>
<i>Phnom Penh Post</i>	Print and online newspaper	English and Khmer daily, positions itself as a newspaper with high journalistic standards, running a high percentage (81.4%) of nongovernment-related stories <sup>72</sup>	Total daily circulation (2015): 51,324 (English), 21,570 (Khmer).	Sivakumar S. Ganapathy, Malaysian investor who owns a public relations firm that has worked with Hun Sen <sup>73</sup>
<i>Cambodia Daily</i>	Online newspaper (formerly in print)	English and Khmer nonprofit news service; mission is to provide unbiased objective news about Cambodia and provide journalism training to Cambodians	1.12 million Facebook followers (English + Khmer account total).	100% owned by Bernard Krisher, Tokyo-based son of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany who started the paper in 1993 as part of a philanthropic project <sup>74</sup>

Source: CNA.

## 1.4 Key factors that shape Cambodia's information environment

Several factors play a key role in shaping Cambodia's information environment. They include the following:

- Regulations on press or individual freedoms of speech
- Regulations on foreign actors in the domestic information environment
- Foreign media presence and availability
- Diversity of foreign partners who can assist with deficits in media content, training, or infrastructure

### 1.4.1 Regulations on press or individual freedoms of speech

Cambodia ranks relatively low in terms of press freedom. France-based RSF ranked Cambodia 143 out of 180 countries on its World Press Freedom Index, citing Prime Minister Hun Sen's 2017–2018 media crackdown and subsequent consolidation of control over major news groups through ownership ties.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the US-based freedom and human rights NGO Freedom House gives Cambodia a 1 out of 4 for free and independent media.<sup>76</sup> The main tools that the Hun Sen government has used to restrict the media include laws and regulations, control over licensing, online censorship, and the encouragement of self-censorship among Cambodian media professionals. This net result is that the diversity of voices in the Cambodian media environment has been curtailed and pro-government outlets enjoy a privileged place.

The Cambodian Constitution and Law on the Press provide Cambodians with the rights to free speech and freedom of the press. However, both documents also include articles that the Hun Sen government has used to constrain the media. Article 41 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia grants its citizens "freedom to express their personal opinions, the freedom of press, of publication and of assembly." However, Article 41 also states that no citizen can use these rights to affect "public order and national security," and that the "the regime of the media shall be regulated by law."<sup>77</sup> The state uses both clauses to punish criticism of the ruling party.<sup>78</sup>

The Law on the Press, adopted in 1995, governs the Cambodian media. The first three articles guarantee freedoms of press and publication, confidentiality of sources, press independence, and prohibit pre-publication censorship. However, Article 12 of the law specifies that the "press shall not publish anything that may affect public order." The government invokes this article to punish its critics, and it has been used to sue and jail journalists for allegedly threatening "political stability" and "national security."<sup>79</sup>

### Lèse-majesté law in Cambodia

In early 2018, the Cambodian parliament passed a lèse-majesté provision to its criminal law that outlaws insults to the country's monarchy. Offenders can receive a prison sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to \$2,500.<sup>80</sup> Since its adoption, the law has been used to jail several Cambodians for commenting on or sharing Facebook posts that the government deems insulting to the monarchy.<sup>81</sup>

The government regulates media content, programming, and licensing through national legislation and oversight by the Ministry of Information (MOI). MOI duties comprise the allocation and renewal of licenses (print and broadcast), which gives it control over broadcasting companies as well as print newspapers, magazines, and electronic media.<sup>82</sup>

Rules introduced ahead of the 2018 election require all Cambodian ISPs to install software to monitor and block content deemed illegal, including on social media.<sup>83</sup> In September 2017, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, following a request by the General Department of Taxation, ordered ISPs to block access to the *Cambodia Daily's* IP address, as well as its Facebook page and Twitter account.<sup>84</sup>

The government's efforts to punish critics have led many in the Cambodian media to practice self-censorship. During the lead up to the July 2018 general election, which pitted the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party against Hun Sen's incumbent CPP, Ou Virak, the head of local think tank Future Forum, noted, "Self-censorship is the best form of restriction. You don't have to pull a trigger, and you don't have to waste any bullets."<sup>85</sup> Many journalists admit to self-censorship, saying that politics—particularly anything critical of the government—is off-limits.<sup>86</sup>

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*"Self-censorship is the best form of restriction. You don't have to pull a trigger, and you don't have to waste any bullets."*  
—Ou Virak, President of Future Forum

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### **Fighting “fake news” in Cambodia**

“Fake news” is both a real threat and an excuse by the government to restrict the information environment. Hun Sen has used broad accusations of fake news as pretext for the closure of media outlets critical of his administration. At the same time, Cambodian journalists worry about real fake news, with one saying, “I do believe in the democratization of information, but there’s just so many fake stories and unverified stories out there, and unfortunately people believe them.” In March of 2020, the MOI issued a decision on the establishment of a fake news monitoring committee. According to the MOI press release, “the committee’s task is to monitor the spread of fake news and misinformation on social media, as well as to block websites, accounts, or pages that promote false information that cause social unrest.”

Sources: *Challenges for Independent Media*. Cambodian Center for Independent Media. 2017. Accessed Mar. 25, 2020. <https://www.ccimcambodia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Challenges-for-Independent-Media-2017-English.pdf> “Decision on the establishment of fake news monitoring committee,” Open Development Cambodia, Mar. 12, 2020, accessed Mar. 23, 2020, <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/announcements/decision-on-the-establishment-of-fake-news-monitoring-committee/>.

## **1.4.2 Regulatory framework for managing foreign media actors**

It appears that Cambodia has few laws and regulations focused on managing foreign media. We identified only one: Article 18 of the Law on the Press states that foreign ownership of Khmer-language newspapers shall not exceed 20 percent of the total of Khmer-language newspapers in Cambodia. However, foreign-owned outlets will not be forced to close if there is a decrease in the number of domestically owned newspapers that causes the ratio to shift and exceed 20 percent.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, foreign media actors are subject to the same laws and regulations used to punish domestic actors for criticizing the government. Some have had their broadcasting or publishing licenses taken away. In 2017, the government used licensing regulations to force US-funded RFA and VOA off the air. The government claimed that the outlets lacked the correct licenses and accused their offices of being unregistered with the authorities.<sup>88</sup> RFA was forced to cease in-country operations in September 2017 after the Minister of Information said that the broadcaster “had not asked for permission from the ministry [to broadcast], so the ministry [had] to shut them down in order to uphold the law on media.”<sup>89</sup> The VOA radio office in Phnom Penh was allowed to reopen in June 2019 following requests by VOA and a May 2019 meeting between the Minister of Information, the US Embassy charge d’affaires in Phnom Penh, and the deputy director of the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM).<sup>90</sup>

### 1.4.3 Foreign media presence and access to foreign media

Data from polling, social media statistics, and insights from Cambodia media professionals indicate that VOA and RFA are the most popular and trusted foreign media outlets operating in Cambodia.<sup>91</sup> These outlets have been broadcasting in Khmer for decades—VOA since 1955 and RFA since 1997. RFA Khmer’s popularity rose rapidly because it focused specifically on local news and information about Cambodia. Although both RFA and VOA broadcast services were curtailed in 2017 during Hun Sen’s crackdown, their online print, audio, and video reporting continue to be popular, and VOA has resumed broadcasts via in-country frequencies and local affiliates.<sup>92</sup>

US media outlets are not the only foreign media present in Cambodia. RFI has broadcast its Khmer service through relays in Cambodia since 2013. By 2014, its weekly listenership had passed 1 million.<sup>93</sup> As with RFA, however, Hun Sen targeted RFI Cambodian FM relays for shutdown in 2017. It is now available by shortwave or streaming online, where its presence—especially on Facebook—continues to be a popular source for news and information. China’s CRI Khmer content, branded locally as Cambodia-China Friendship Radio (CCFR)—broadcasts live from its Phnom Penh office 18 hours a day. (We address CCFR in detail in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.) Australia’s Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Khmer streaming radio and digital news is also available, but with only tens of thousands of followers, compared to the US, France, and China’s millions of followers of their online Khmer news.

State-run Cambodian media broadcast news from foreign media outlets. TVK, for instance, broadcasts programming from international partners including Japan’s NHK, China Central Television (CCTV), VOA, Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and France24.<sup>94</sup>

Thai television programming and Korean films appear to be Cambodia’s most popular forms of international entertainment. Several Cambodian media professionals said that, although Korean movies are the most popular, especially among younger people, Chinese, American, Indian, and Thai films also have a following.<sup>95</sup> According to a 2015 audience study by CCIM, 23 percent of Cambodians enjoyed Thai drama series.<sup>96</sup> The popularity of Thai TV entertainment also spurred a Thai-Cambodian joint venture between Mica Media and the Ministry of Defense; together they own channel TV5, which attracts 9 percent of the TV viewership in the country.<sup>97</sup> Table 5 shows key external media actors that are present in or broadcast within Cambodia, ranked according to their social media following.

**Table 5. External actors in Cambodia’s information environment**

Name	Type of Media	Description	Ownership	Social Media Following
VOA – Khmer	FM radio, streaming TV, video, print digital	90 minutes of daily Khmer FM radio broadcast and video packages broadcast on affiliate TV stations in Cambodia <sup>98</sup>	US government (USAGM)	7,323,828 Facebook followers
RFA – Khmer	Streaming audio, video, print digital	FM radio broadcast no longer available, digital streaming news and information in Asian countries whose governments prohibit access to a free press	US government (USAGM)	6,872,572 Facebook followers
RFI – Khmer	Streaming audio and print digital	FM radio broadcast no longer available, digital streaming news and information	French government	4,159,120 Facebook followers
CRI – Khmer (Cambodia China Friendship Radio CCFR)	FM radio, streaming TV, video, print digital	18 hours per day of live Khmer and Chinese news, music, and language instruction broadcast in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap <sup>99</sup>	PRC government	1,182,951 Facebook followers
SBS Radio Australia – Khmer	Streaming audio and print digital	FM radio broadcast no longer available, digital streaming news and information	Australian government	18,682 Facebook followers

Source: CNA compiled data from media outlets’ websites.

### 1.4.4 Diversity of foreign partners and allies

The United Nations classifies Cambodia as a Least Developed Country (LDC). This status reflects significant across-the-board deficits in criteria categories for income, human assets, and economic vulnerability.<sup>100</sup> To try to achieve the development necessary to “graduate” from LDC status, Cambodia has relied on foreign assistance in many areas. Between the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 and the 2018 general election, the US and Europe devoted billions of dollars in aid to Cambodia, largely in the hopes of transforming it into a liberal democracy.<sup>101</sup> Between 1992 and 2017, Cambodia received \$20.68 billion in foreign aid, not all from Western countries. Through the mid-2000s, Japan was the top contributor with \$2.8 billion, followed by the US with \$1.3 billion. In the 2010s, China began increasing its aid to Cambodia and surpassed other countries’ contributions, reaching \$3.1 billion in 2018.<sup>102</sup> With the 2018 election viewed by many in the international community as undemocratic, the US and EU largely suspended aid to Cambodia.<sup>103</sup> Although Japan continues to provide Official Development Aid through grants and loans to Cambodia, Chinese aid to Cambodia is now far greater than that of any other country, with another \$588 million in aid pledged between 2019 and 2021.<sup>104</sup>

Although many countries reduced their support to Cambodia following the 2018 election, Cambodia's media sector still receives international support from a variety of sources, including the following:

- Germany's Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung funds Cambodia's main journalism institution, the Department of Media and Communication at the Royal University of Phnom Penh.<sup>105</sup>
- The Vietnam News Agency (VNA) supports Cambodia's state news agency AKP and other agencies of the Cambodian MOI with personnel training that focuses on designing and producing news on mobile devices and electronic newspapers.<sup>106</sup>
- The Japanese government's international aid organization Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) carries out information and communications technology (ICT) development support for Cambodia's National Information Communications Technology Development Authority, the government agency responsible for managing internet development in Cambodia.<sup>107</sup>
- From 2012 to 2015, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development worked with four Provincial Departments of Information in Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampot, and Siem Reap to enhance the role of news media in promoting good governance.<sup>108</sup>
- The EU as recently as 2018 was financially supporting the production of CCIM's reports on the challenges of independent media in Cambodia.<sup>109</sup>
- In 2018, China's State Administration of Radio and Television donated radio and television production equipment to the Cambodian MOI.<sup>110</sup>
- In August 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Cambodia Media Lab as part of its Media Alternatives Project; it focuses on supporting media entrepreneurship in Cambodia.<sup>111</sup>
- The US Embassy in Phnom Penh offers training on technology use in media reporting and production.<sup>112</sup>

**Table 6. International sources of support for Cambodian media**

Name of Organization	Home Country
Australian Aid	Australia
State Administration of Radio and Television of China	China
European Commission	EU
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung	Germany
Deutsche Welle Akademie	Germany
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Japan
Swedish Program for ICT in the Region (SPIDER)	Sweden
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	Sweden
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	UN
UNDP	UN
Open Society Foundations (OSF)	US
US Embassy Phnom Penh	US
Vietnam News Agency (VNA)	Vietnam

Source: CNA.

## 2. China's Efforts to Shape the Media Environment in Cambodia

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The Chinese party-state has an extensive and wide-ranging array of tactics, techniques, and tools for shaping narratives in the international media. They include the following:

- Tailoring the content produced by China's state-run media outlets to be more accessible, credible, and compelling to foreign audiences.
- Maximizing channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content to reach as broad an audience as possible.
- Influencing foreign media outlets and journalists to promote China-friendly narratives and suppress narratives that China finds objectionable.
- Using entertainment as a means of promoting China's narratives to global audiences beyond the news media.

The checklist in Table 7 offers a framework for taking stock of China's efforts to shape the media environment in a particular place—in this case, Cambodia. Checkmarks indicate tools China currently employs in the Cambodia information environment. Question marks indicate tactics for which we have no evidence of use by China but are worthy of continued monitoring.

Table 7. Checklist: China’s playbook for shaping the information environment in Cambodia<sup>113</sup>

 <b>China’s playbook for shaping the information environment in Cambodia</b>	
<b>Tailoring PRC media content to appeal to Cambodia audiences</b>	
✓	Producing content in Khmer-language
✓	Reporting on local events that do not necessarily involve China
✓	Recruiting foreign voices
<b>Maximizing channels for distribution of China’s narratives</b>	
✓	Selling or providing content for free to Cambodia media
✓	Jointly producing content with Cambodia media outlets
✓	Authoring opinion pieces for Cambodia media outlets
✓	Buying space in Cambodia media
✓	Establishing a presence on foreign social media
✓	Investing in Cambodia media outlets
✓	Investing in overseas telecommunications infrastructure
<b>Influencing foreign media to promote only China-friendly narratives</b>	
?	Promoting self-censorship among Cambodia’s journalists and scholars
✓	Purchasing a right to shape content
✓	Hosting international media forums and conferences
✓	Hosting education and training programs
<b>Using entertainment to promote Chinese narratives</b>	
✓	Exporting Chinese-produced entertainment
✓	Investing in the Cambodia film industry
✓	Promoting PRC-controlled social media platforms

### **Chinese academics advocate strategy for tailoring content to Southeast Asian audiences**

In a 2019 article in the Chinese journal *International Communications*, published by the China International Publishing Group under State Council Information Office guidance (SCIO), Chinese academics advocated the development of a long-term strategy for strategic communications targeted at Southeast Asia. The objective would be to promote Chinese messages and counter US strategic communications aimed at the region. Elements of the proposed strategy include the following:

- **Precise communication** tailored to each country, with a unique communication strategy designed to meet audience needs.
- **Increased Chinese language teaching** to “tell China’s story to the target country in a subtle way.”
- **An emphasis on economic, social, and environmental issues**, which the US “tries to wield to serve its political purposes” but are issues on which “China has become closer and closer to Southeast Asian countries.”

Source: Chen Jingjing (陈静静), “A Comparative Study of US and Chinese International Broadcasting For/To Southeast Asian Countries,” (zhong mei dui dongya guojia guoji zhuanbo de bijiao yanjiu; 中美对东亚国家国际转播的比较研究, *International Communications* (Duiwai Zhuanbo; 对外转播), no. 9 (2019), accessed Jan. 17, 2020, <http://mall.cnki.net/magazine/Article/DWDC201909006.htm>.

## **2.1 PRC narratives targeted at audiences in Cambodia**

China promotes narratives that it wants international media to convey. These narratives aim to (1) promote a positive image of China, (2) counter Beijing’s critics, and (3) support China’s national objectives. (See Appendix B for China’s global narratives.) China tailors these narratives to target audiences in specific regions or countries. Key narratives for Cambodian audiences include the following:

- **China supports Cambodia’s government.** Chinese officials and media promote the narrative that China and Cambodia have a mutually supportive relationship and publicly back each other on issues related to their “core interests, major concerns and principles of national dignity, sovereignty and independence.”<sup>114</sup> For example, when many countries condemned Hun Sen’s media crackdown and arrest of his political rival, China’s foreign minister expressed support for the prime minister.<sup>115</sup>

- ***Cambodia benefits greatly from its partnership with China.*** Beijing portrays itself as Cambodia’s number one economic partner. Chinese officials and media emphasize the benefits of PRC investment and aid to Cambodia, including BRI-related investment in Sihanoukville, China’s construction of roads and bridges throughout the country, and PRC humanitarian projects that provide medical care to Cambodians.
- ***China is a responsible member of the international community and is helping Cambodia—and the world—fight COVID-19.*** Chinese media frequently promotes the narrative that China contributes international public goods and assistance and works to support international institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO). This narrative has been prominent in PRC media reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Chinese media’s Khmer-language reporting frequently highlights China’s contributions to Cambodia’s fight against COVID-19, including sending doctors, testing kits, and other medical support.

The following sections offer examples of how China promotes these narratives using the tactics, techniques, and tools in its playbook.

## 2.2 Tailoring PRC media content

China’s state-directed media outlets tailor content in a variety of ways to make it accessible, credible, and compelling to audiences in Cambodia. The tools that China uses to achieve this include the following:

- Producing content—print, broadcast, and online—in languages spoken in Cambodia
- Reporting on local events
- Recruiting local voices in Cambodia to convey its messages



### 2.2.1 Producing content in Khmer

China’s official international radio broadcaster, CRI, produces content in Cambodia’s official language, Khmer. The state-run China Media Group’s (CMG) Asia Africa Language Program Center, established in 2019, supports production of media content in Khmer and 23 other languages in conjunction with CRI.<sup>116</sup> In addition, China.com’s Khmer-language website, Cambodian China.com, features news and entertainment coverage from CRI and the China International Broadcasting Network (CIBN). China.com is an official PRC portal, hosted by the China Internet Information Center, under the auspices of the China International Publishing Group and the State Council Information Office.<sup>117</sup>

Table 8. Chinese state-run media outlets producing local-language content in Cambodia

Media Outlet	Khmer	English
China Radio International (CRI; 中国国际广播电台)	✓	✓
China.com (中华网)	✓	✓
Xinhua News Agency (新华社)	✗	✓
China News Service (中国新闻社)	✗	✓
<i>China Daily</i>	✗	✓
China Global Television Network (CGTN)	✗	✓
<i>People's Daily</i> (人民日报)	✗	✓
<i>Global Times</i> (环球时报)	✗	✓

Source: Data compiled by CNA from the websites of each state-run media outlet.



## 2.2.2 Reporting on local events

PRC state-run media leverages partnerships with Cambodian news outlets to produce reporting on local events in Cambodia. CRI’s CCFR partners with Cambodia’s state-run radio station to produce Khmer-language content that includes segments devoted to local news, Cambodian cultural perspectives, as well as world news, and Chinese entertainment.<sup>118</sup> The Khmer CCFR CRI Facebook page, which has nearly 1.3 million followers, reports extensively on Cambodia-China bilateral relations and local events in Cambodia. Recent examples include the following:

- A report on an April 2020 meeting held by the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation to discuss wastewater treatment systems and “review future projects related to the management of the sewerage systems in the Kingdom of Cambodia.”<sup>119</sup>
- A report on the Cambodian minister of agriculture urging fiber-processing manufacturers to use local labor as much as possible. The article details the raw agricultural products used in local manufacturing of fiberglass and saltwater-resistant products.<sup>120</sup>
- A report highlighting China’s support for Cambodia in its fight against the 2019 novel coronavirus describes Huawei’s plans to partner with the Cambodian Ministry of Health to provide 5G wireless services to allow remote diagnoses of patients.<sup>121</sup> Figure 1 offers an example of how, through reporting on local events, CCFR promotes the

narrative that China is a responsible member of the international community and partner in the fight against the global COVID-19 pandemic.

### Cambodia-China Friendship Radio

CRI and Cambodia's state-run radio station, RNK, jointly established CCFR in December 2008. CCFR broadcasts daily from 6 a.m. to midnight in Chinese, and broadcasts English-language programming daily to Phnom Penh and the nearby area. Its programming includes Chinese and international news and Khmer and Chinese-language music. CCFR's content promotes the narrative that cooperation with China benefits Cambodia and other regional countries. In 2019, CCFR and the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia organized a contest in which young Cambodians created short videos describing how member countries benefited from Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, "a sub-regional cooperation mechanism connecting the six countries along the Mekong River." The winners of the competition received roundtrip flights to China, smartphones, and cameras.

CCFR's Khmer digital print content appears to be quite popular, with nearly 1.3 million Facebook followers. CCFR's presence on the FM airwaves is also nearing 100 percent availability throughout the country. In 2018, the minister of information approved two additional FM stations in Tebenkmun and Sihanoukville provinces to broadcast CCFR, which would cover more than 90 percent of Cambodia's total land area. CRI also operates the CCFR mobile application that is available for free download from both Google Play and the Apple App stores. The CCFR App's popularity is unknown, but according to the Google Play website, the App only has approximately 5,000 downloads.

Sources: "The MCs, Broadcast Schedule;" "Video: Lancang-Mekong in One Minute," People's Daily Online, Jun. 11, 2019, accessed Apr. 9, 2020, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0611/c90000-9586780.html>; "The 2nd China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation Regular Meeting Held in Cambodia," CCFR - CRI Online, Google Play, accessed Jul. 9, 2020, <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.china.app.cbd.gotop&hl=nl>.

Figure 1. Cambodia-China Friendship Radio CRI reporting on Huawei 5G help for COVID-19



Source: Cambodia China Friendship Radio - China Radio International, "CCFR.CRI," វីដេអូមីត្តភាពកម្ពុជាចិន Facebook, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/>.

In contrast to the CCFR CRI Facebook page, the CRI Khmer website does not have Cambodia-specific news sections. Instead, the Khmer-language print and video content that CRI hosts on its website consists of general international news, told from the Chinese perspective.



### 2.2.3 Recruiting local Cambodian voices

PRC media often seeks to “borrow” foreign voices to amplify and lend credence to Chinese narratives by creating the appearance that they are espoused people outside of China. PRC media does this in two main ways—by quoting local voices and by hiring local journalists.

Chinese state-run media targeted at audiences in Cambodia often quote Cambodian government officials, industry leaders, and average citizens to portray cooperation with China as beneficial. In addition, Xinhua has hired at least one Cambodian journalist. Xinhua’s Cambodian reporter in Phnom Penh routinely publishes reports on Chinese humanitarian and health work in Cambodia. A 2019 report, for instance, highlights a PRC initiative to treat juvenile heart disease in Cambodia called the “China-Cambodia Love Heart Journey.” The story focuses on a seventh-grader in a rural province who was diagnosed with a congenital heart disease by Chinese volunteer doctors, who then provided free surgery. The report quotes the boy expressing gratitude to the Chinese doctors and saying, “When I grow up, I want to be a doctor.”<sup>122</sup>

Xinhua’s Phnom Penh bureau has also reported on publications by local academics who praise China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). For example, Xinhua reported on the October 2019 launch of a book written by Cambodian academics from the Cambodia Maritime Silk Road Research Center (CMSRRC) of the state-run Royal University of Phnom Penh titled *The Belt and Road Initiative and Its Implications for Cambodia’s Development*. The report quotes Royal University scholar Neak Chandarith, saying, “Beyond economic development, the BRI also presents itself as a way toward building peace and friendship among countries by enhancing mutual understanding, trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges.”<sup>123</sup> Local Cambodia news outlets, including the popular Khmer, Chinese, and English-language editions of *Khmer Times* (with approximately 1 million Facebook followers) republished this Xinhua article.<sup>124</sup>

CCP mouthpiece *People’s Daily* has at least one reporter based in Phnom Penh, and in a 2016 article titled “Belt and Road boosts Cambodia-China Cooperation,” the author recounts an interview with Dr. Chet Chealy, president of Royal University. The article quotes Chealy: “China’s ‘Belt and Road initiative’ is very remarkable and very important for the development of countries along the route, including Cambodia.” He adds, “With the help of China, many Cambodian students have received scholarships to study in China.”<sup>125</sup>

Figure 2. Cambodian authors of 2019 CMSRRC book *The Belt and Road Initiative and Its Implications for Cambodia's Development*



Source: "The Belt and Road Initiative and Its Implications for Cambodia's Development," Facebook, 2020, accessed Apr. 1, 2020, [https://www.facebook.com/CMSRRC/posts/2790413837660137?comment\\_id=2790638377637683&reply\\_comment\\_id=2790767820958072](https://www.facebook.com/CMSRRC/posts/2790413837660137?comment_id=2790638377637683&reply_comment_id=2790767820958072).

## 2.3 Maximizing channels for distribution of China's narratives

In addition to tailoring content, China seeks to maximize the number and types of channels that it uses to distribute PRC-produced media content in Cambodia. These efforts include the following:

- Using Cambodian media outlets as channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content.
- Establishing a presence on social media platforms popular in Cambodia, especially Facebook.
- Creating new channels for distribution by investing in the development of telecommunications infrastructure and Cambodia media outlets.



### 2.3.1 Providing content to Cambodia media

PRC media outlets actively seek to place their content in Cambodia media through content-sharing agreements with Cambodian government organizations and local media outlets. According to Phos Sovann, head of the government's General Department of Audiovisual Information, the MOI has signed several bilateral memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Chinese media outlets. These include content-sharing MOUs between the Cambodian MOI and the Chinese Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, a second MOU between the state-run news agency AKP and Xinhua, and a third MOU between state run radio RNK and China's Guangxi Provincial Radio.<sup>126</sup>

Domestic media outlets in Cambodia frequently republish content produced by Chinese media outlets, especially Xinhua. Two online Cambodian news outlets in particular have become key distributors of PRC media content to Cambodian audiences—Fresh News and DAP News. These outlets are discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### **Key distributor of PRC media content to Cambodian audiences: Fresh News**

Popular Cambodian online news outlet Fresh News frequently republishes PRC-produced media content and promotes pro-China narratives. The vocally pro-China Cambodian businessman Lim Chea Vutha established Fresh News in 2016. The outlet has since become the most popular domestic Khmer online news outlet.<sup>127</sup> Fresh News republishes English and Chinese news from Xinhua and video content from CCTV and CGTN.<sup>128</sup> Lim is quoted telling the AFP, "As a Cambodian citizen, I declare that I support China, I support Chinese investment in Cambodia."<sup>129</sup> The online outlet also reportedly enjoys a close relationship with Cambodia's

ruling CPP. A 2017 *Phnom Penh Post* article noted that Fresh News often gets first access to information and government documents and rare exclusives with Hun Sen himself. Of note, the prime minister has praised Fresh News highly, calling it on par with 150-year-old news service stalwarts Reuters and the Associated Press.<sup>130</sup> According to a local media expert, Hun Sen has called for people to turn to his personal Facebook page and Fresh News to avoid “fake news.”<sup>131</sup>

Figure 3. Fresh News CEO Lim Chea Vutha at CCTV HQ in Beijing



Source: “Fresh News and Other 17 Journalists visit *Global Times*, China’s Largest News Organization,” Fresh News នឹងអ្នកព័ត៌មាន ១៧ប្រទេសផ្សេងទៀត ទស្សនកិច្ចនៅ *Global Times* ដែលជាអង្គការព័ត៌មានដ៏ធំនៅចិន, Fresh News, Aug. 6, 2019.

Fresh News also republishes content from the nationalistic *Global Times*, a non-authoritative subsidiary of the CCP’s official mouthpiece, *People’s Daily*. Fresh News has republished *Global Times* articles in Khmer, English, and Chinese.<sup>132</sup> In April 2019, *Global Times* hosted journalists from Fresh News including Keo Pisethry, the outlet’s political affairs officer.<sup>133</sup>

Figure 4. Fresh News Khmer cites *Global Times's* report on Chinese Navy



Note: This screenshot shows a Fresh News article that cites a *Global Times* report featuring an image of China’s first commissioned aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*. The article discusses the possibility that China will build a nuclear-powered icebreaker, which could help China develop a nuclear-powered warship.  
 Source: “To Establish a Balance of Power with the United States, China is Ready to Manufacture ‘Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carriers’...” ដើម្បីបង្កើតតុល្យភាពអំណាចជាមួយអាមេរិក មហាយក្សចិនត្រៀមផលិត«នាវាដឹកយន្តហោះចម្បាំង ដើរដោយថាមពលនុយក្លេអ៊ែរ» ឬអាចជាអ្វីផ្សេងពីនេះទៀត... Fresh News, Jun. 23, 2018, accessed Mar. 27, 2020, <http://freshnewsasia.com/index.php/en/internationalnews/90601-2018-06-23-03-09-20.html>.

## **Key distributor of PRC media content to Cambodian audiences: DAP News**

The popular DAP News online Khmer outlet also republishes PRC media content, including multiple articles written by members of the Cambodia-China Journalists Association (CCJA), which republishes content from Xinhua, *Guangxi News Channel* (广西新闻频道; *guangxi xinwen pindao*) and other Chinese state-run media outlets.<sup>134</sup> A 2020 Khmer article by a CCJA journalist on DAP News titled “Chinese aid and experts to fight against COVID arriving in Cambodia, showing the steel-strong and strategic partnership” promotes several PRC narratives—including, for example, that China is a responsible member of the international community and that cooperation with China benefits Cambodians.<sup>135</sup> The article makes the following assertions about China’s efforts:

- “More Chinese aid will be sent to Cambodia. When Cambodia has a good relationship with China the important things cannot go wrong, because China cares about Cambodia.”
- “The China-Cambodia friendship is as important as the two leaders’ commitment. Working everything together, as good neighbors, good friends and good brothers.”
- “China did not hesitate to send [COVID-19] aid to Italy and other European countries, and within the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] framework, Cambodia received Chinese assistance.”
- “After everything [COVID-19 related] has ended Chinese tourists will be coming to Cambodia to help revive the country’s economy.”
- “May the Cambodia-China Friendship ties that have been established during the time of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk and previous Chinese leaders, and until the current King of Cambodia and current leaders, continue to be doubled.”



relations.” The documentary promotes the narrative that China and Cambodia enjoy a unique friendship.<sup>138</sup>

### New CMG Asia Africa Media Center

The CCP Central Publicity Department (also known as the Central Propaganda Department) established the China Media Group (CMG) Asia Africa Language Program Center (中央广播电视总台亚洲非洲地区语言节目中心) in July 2019 to strengthen PRC state-run media’s reach and resonance across Asia and Africa. According to the Center’s Director, An Xiaoyu (安晓宇), the center will plan, produce, edit, and integrate media across platforms in 24 languages:

Arabic	Hausa	Korean	Pashto	Tamil
Bengali	Hebrew	Lao	Persian	Thai
Burmese	Hindi	Malay	Persian	Turkish
Cambodian	Indonesian	Mongolian	Sinhala	Urdu
Filipino	Japanese	Nepali	Swahili	Vietnamese

According to a 2019 CCTV report, the new center will improve the localization, timeliness, quality, subtlety, and popularity of media from and about China for the target countries. The report asserts that this will improve china’s political position by “raising international public opinion about China.” The report says that the new center will do this in several ways, including the following:

- **Cooperate with local media to “subtly influence” consumers.** The report suggests that by working with local media it can “imperceptibly influence the target audience.”
- **Produce locally tailored content faster.** The center will promote the integration of foreign agencies, expatriates, and foreign PR firms in order to respond more quickly to breaking events.
- **Produce media with the best user experience for local consumers.** The center will focus on localizing its media, emphasizing clear and easy to understand online and mobile content. The center will also explore new communication models like “celebrity studios.”
- **Create a multilingual, “invincible media army” of popular media personnel dedicated to the party.** The center asserts that its multilingual staff will serve as “magnets” in the local information environment.

Source: “CMG Asia and Africa Language Program Center established.” (CCTV online; 央视网). CCTV. (*zong tai yazhou feizhou diqu yuyan jiemu zhongxin chengli*; 总台亚洲非洲地区语言节目中心成立). Aug. 2, 2019. Accessed May 19, 2020. <http://www.cctv.com/2019/08/02/ARTIZfriU6sSG7P7AhwCvdAv190802.shtml>.

A recent 52-minute video produced by the China Media Group (CMG) Asia Africa Language Program Center highlights the third annual Chinese-Khmer film tour, led by the local CRI organization Cambodia-China Friendship Radio (CCFR). The Khmer video—with Chinese subtitles—features the 14-person film screening team (made up of 3 Chinese and

11 Cambodians) travelling more than 8,000 kilometers through rural Cambodia screening Khmer-dubbed Chinese films for local audiences.

The film depicts the team going to great lengths to carry out their work; we see them weather monsoon rains, paddle through river ways, and tow their vehicle convoy out of deep mud to bring their films to the people of rural Cambodia. In many of the scenes, tour members, local officials, and regular Cambodians speak to the camera about the benefits of the annual film tour, chiefly that it gives “Cambodian people a way to understand Chinese culture.” Of note, at least one of the films screened appears to be an American film.<sup>139</sup>

Below are several screenshots from the China Media Group (CMG) Asia Africa Language Program Center video.

Figure 6. CMG Asia Africa media center video portraying CCFR-led Khmer Chinese film tour



*"[The Chinese film tour] allows the Cambodian people to understand Chinese culture."*



*CCFR staff hand out Khmer Chinese film flyers in local market*



*“It closely connects [Cambodian] people to [Chinese] people”*

Source: “Chinese-Khmer Film Screening (Video),” ក្រុមបញ្ជាក់ភាពយន្តចិន-ខ្មែរ(Video), CCFR CRI, វីដេអូមិត្តភាពកម្ពុជា-ចិន, Apr. 22, 2020, accessed May 19, 2020, <http://cambodian.cri.cn/20200422/d856e12f-e6c3-2048-fe23-cb57a4d5b457.html>.



### 2.3.3 Authoring opinion pieces for Cambodia media outlets

It is common practice for Chinese officials to author opinion pieces in Cambodian state-run media outlets ahead of official visits and during other significant bilateral diplomatic events. These opinion pieces promote key narratives that China uses to encourage public and elite support for China's interests in the target country. Chinese President Xi Jinping, Prime Minister Li Keqiang, State Councilor Wang Yi, and Ambassador Wang Wentian have all written opinion pieces targeted at audiences in Cambodia. Below are some examples.

- Ahead of a 2016 state visit, President Xi published a signed article titled "A Good Neighbor and True Friend for Liver and Gall" in Cambodia's most circulated print newspaper, *Rasmei Kampuchea*.<sup>140</sup> In his article, Xi promoted the narrative that China supports Cambodia, writing, "On issues related to each other's core interests and major concerns, the two countries have joined forces and watched each other. In Cambodia's struggle for national independence and national liberation, maintenance and peace, China has given Cambodia firm support and assistance."<sup>141</sup> Of note, *Rasmei Kampuchea* also published Xi's book on governance in serial form over several months.<sup>142</sup>
- Ahead of his 2018 visit to Cambodia, Prime Minister Li penned an article that was published by many of Cambodia's key media outlets. During the visit, Li signed 19 aid and investment pacts with Hun Sen.<sup>143</sup> Li's article, titled "Building Bridges of Friendship and Cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong Region and between China and Cambodia," extolled the benefits of cooperation with China. It touted the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone for bringing "100 companies from China and elsewhere" and "creating nearly 20,000 jobs for the local community." Li's article stated that more than 600 Cambodian cataract patients "had regained their sight thanks to the Chinese medical teams carrying out the Mekong Brightness Action Initiative, and that heart disease patients in Cambodia were receiving life-saving surgery thanks to the Chinese "Love Heart Journey Program." Li concluded by asserting, "China has built more bridges and more roads in Cambodia than any other country."<sup>144</sup>
- In July 2018, the popular Cambodian digital outlet Fresh News published a signed letter by PRC State Councilor Wang Yi in celebration of 60 years of bilateral relations. The letter promoted the narrative that China supports the Hun Sen government, saying that China and Cambodia "have ever closer coordination in international affairs... and [our] comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation has achieved profound development and become a model for mutually beneficial cooperation on an equal footing among nations."<sup>145</sup>

Figure 7. Li Keqiang’s opinion piece in Cambodia’s English daily *Khmer Times*



Source: Li Keqiang, “Building Bridges of Friendship and Cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong Region and between China and Cambodia,” *Khmer Times*, Jan. 9, 2018, accessed Mar. 23, 2020, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/100760/building-bridges-friendship-cooperation-lancang-mekong-region-china-cambodia/>.

### 2.3.4 Buying space in Cambodian media

The Chinese government pays to place editorial-style pieces—advertorials—and supplements in Cambodian media. For example, a 2019 “special supplement,” paid for by Chinese corporations such as Bank of China (a Chinese state-owned enterprise) and Grand China Life Insurance, ran in the print and online Khmer, English, and Chinese-language editions of the popular *Phnom Penh Post*. The paid supplement included articles promoting the advantages of Chinese-Cambodian cooperation and the local benefits of BRI. One article written by the Chinese Embassy in Phnom Penh highlighted the Krauch Chmar Bridge project, which is financed by a Chinese concessional loan and constructed by the Shanghai Construction Group Co. Ltd. The article described the project as a “bridge of friendship between China and Cambodia.” It asserted that the “dream bridge” is “greatly significant for local residents, as the bridge will ease travel and spur economic development in central and northern Cambodia.” In an effort to portray the bridge as popular among locals, the article further notes that “over

6,500 residents attended the project’s groundbreaking,” and a CCTV special program on the bridge “received applause from all segments in China and Cambodia.”<sup>146</sup>

Figure 8. “Special Supplement” in the *Phnom Penh Post*, with articles promoting BRI projects



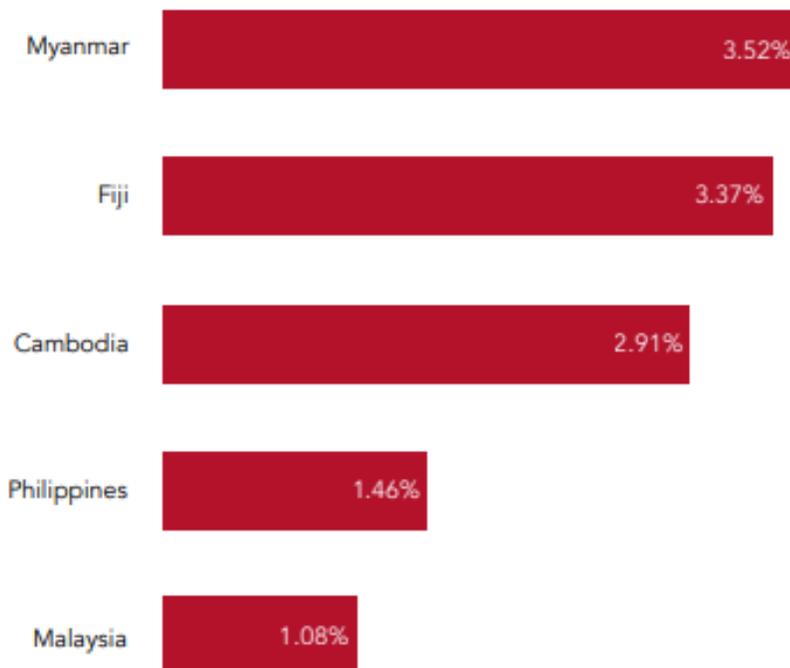
Source: “Bridge Over the Mekong River,” ស្ថានភាពកាត់ទន្លេមេគង្គភ្ជាប់ស្រុកក្រូចឆ្មារ និងស្រុកស្ទឹងត្រែង, *Phnom Penh Post* Special Supplement, Oct. 1, 2019, accessed Apr. 3, 2020, [https://www.phnompenhpost.com/sites/default/files/pdf\\_public/20190925\\_china\\_national\\_day\\_pk.pdf](https://www.phnompenhpost.com/sites/default/files/pdf_public/20190925_china_national_day_pk.pdf).



### 2.3.5 Establishing a presence on social media in Cambodia

As noted earlier in this report, Facebook is extraordinarily popular among internet users in Cambodia. Indeed, many access the internet exclusively through Facebook, and many Cambodian internet users follow Chinese media outlets on Facebook. In fact, according to AidData, a research lab at the College of William & Mary, Cambodia has the third-highest share of internet users in any East Asian or Pacific Island country that are Facebook followers of Chinese state-owned media outlets Xinhua, *China Daily*, CCTV, CGTN, Global Times, *People's Daily*, and China Radio International (see Figure 9). In total, PRC state-run media outlets operate eight Facebook pages targeting Cambodian audiences. CRI Khmer’s Facebook page is the most popular, with over 1.2 million followers.<sup>147</sup>

Figure 9. Top countries by average share of internet users who are Facebook followers of Chinese state-owned media



Source: Custer, S., Prakash, M., Solis, J., Knight, R., and J. Lin. (2019). *Influencing the Narrative: How the Chinese Government Mobilizes Students and Media to Burnish its Image*. Williamsburg, VA. AidData at William & Mary.

To reach audiences in Cambodia, CRI has an official Facebook page targeted to them. As of March 2020, the page, CCFR (@ccfr.ri), has 1,254,369 followers. The Khmer content on the CCFR Facebook page portrays China as a provider of international goods and services by highlighting activities such as Beijing’s contribution of COVID-19 testing kits to the WHO. The page also promotes the narrative that China supports Cambodia by highlighting bilateral military engagement, such as the participation of 256 People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops in the fourth annual joint “Golden Dragon” military exercise in Cambodia.<sup>148</sup>

Figure 10. CRI Cambodia Facebook content about PLA personnel training Cambodian troops



*"March 26, 2020 Army of the Seventh Brigade joins the Chinese Army for a joint live-fire drill at the Fox Fraser Techo Sen Kiri school in Kampot province, which has practical training on the field. In particular, the training teachers urged the whole army to study hard. Training to strengthen the two armies."*

Source: CRI-CCFR, "March 26, 2020 Army of the Seventh Brigade Joins the Chinese Army for a Joint Live-Fire Drill," ថ្ងៃទី២៦ ខែមីនា ឆ្នាំ២០២០ កងទ័ពនៃកងពលភ្នំលេខ៧០ បានចូលរួមហ្វឹកហាត់ជាមួយកងទ័ពចិន Facebook, Mar. 27, 2020, accessed Mar. 27, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ccfr.cri/photos/pcb.1560070074147834/1560069984147843/?type=3&theater>.



### 2.3.6 Investing in telecommunications infrastructure

China uses its vast economic resources to acquire and even create new channels for distributing Chinese-produced media content. One approach is to invest in the development of overseas telecommunications infrastructure, which is concerned less with promoting specific PRC-approved narratives and more with improving China's capacity to do so. In recent years, China has actively sought to expand its presence in Cambodia's telecommunications sector.

In Cambodia, China has invested in television broadcast infrastructure to promote the adoption of the Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast (DTMB)—a Chinese mobile and fixed digital television standard—and create opportunities to broadcast Chinese television programming there. In 2012, Cambodia signed a cooperation agreement in which it agreed to adopt DTMB and engage in joint production with Chinese media outlets in exchange for China’s help building the necessary infrastructure.<sup>149</sup> According to *China Daily*, the new digital network would increase “mutual understanding and trust” between China and Cambodia through the content that it broadcasts.<sup>150</sup> China has also donated broadcast production equipment to Cambodia. In 2018, for instance, China’s State Administration of Radio and Television donated radio and television production equipment to the Cambodian MOI.<sup>151</sup>

On the sidelines of the 2019 Belt and Road Forum, the Cambodian government signed a preliminary contract to develop a 5G network with Chinese telecommunications megacorporation Huawei.<sup>152</sup> In addition to Huawei, China Unicom, Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corp. (ZTE), and South East Asia Telecom (SEATEL) are working with private local telephone and digital service providers to upgrade the Kingdom’s networks (see Table 9).

**Table 9. Chinese investments in Cambodian telecom and ICT infrastructure**

Chinese company	Cambodian company	Type of Chinese investment
Huawei	Smart Axiata (8 million customers)	5G trials with Huawei <sup>153</sup>
WeChat	Smart Axiata (8 million customers)	Smart WeChat Go prepaid SIM compatibility for 3 million + Chinese tourists who visit Cambodia each year <sup>154</sup>
China Unicom	China Unicom (Cambodia subsidiary)	Building optical telecommunication pathways in the Kingdom as part of the BRI <sup>155</sup>
ZTE	Cellcard	5G rollout of 2,000 base stations through 2020 <sup>156</sup>
SEATEL	Southeast Asia Telecom (Cambodia)	\$400 million investment in Cambodia’s 4G network starting in 2015 <sup>157</sup>

Source: CNA.

## 2.4 Attempting to influence Cambodian media to promote China-friendly narratives

Beijing seeks not only to promote its narratives through its own state-run media but also to influence reporting by Cambodian media outlets and journalists. It does so by promoting censorship and seeking to shape the perceptions of foreign media professionals. Beijing is using the following tools to accomplish these objectives in Cambodia:

- Hosting international media forums and conferences
- Hosting education and training programs for foreign media professionals
- Purchasing a right to shape content by investing in local media outlets



### 2.4.1 Hosting international media forums and conferences

China has hosted or organized numerous media-related forums in which Cambodian officials and media professionals have participated. For example, China has held two “China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation” meetings, the first in Chengdu in 2018 and the second in Phnom Penh in 2019. The deputy director of the State Administration of Radio and Television of China, Fan Weiping, and the Cambodian minister of information hosted the second event. During the 2019 event, Fan put forward four proposals for China-Cambodia radio and television cooperation in the coming year. They included the following:<sup>158</sup>

1. Actively carrying out “news cooperation” and “enhancing the influence” of the China-Cambodia Friendship Radio (CCFR), operated by China Radio International and Cambodia National Radio.
2. Deepening cooperation on content that promotes mutual understanding and the traditional friendship between China and Cambodia.
3. Actively carrying out technical and industrial cooperation and supporting cloud radio media and other Chinese radio and television technology enterprises in Cambodia.
4. Actively participating in activities related to the “China-ASEAN Year of Media Exchange.”

Of note, only state-run Chinese and Cambodian media were listed as attendees at the cooperation meeting. Other private and independent Cambodian media do not appear to have participated.

Figure 11. Media cooperation agreements signed between government media officials



Source: “The 2nd China-Cambodia Radio, Television and Television Cooperation Regular Meeting Held in Cambodia,” 第二届中柬广电合作定期会议在柬埔寨举行, CCTV, 国际在线, Oct. 20, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, <http://news.cctv.com/2018/10/20/ARTIsjG10IKVPRvze4OvFskj181020.shtml>.



## 2.4.2 Hosting education and training programs

Some Chinese-hosted journalist trips for Cambodian reporters appear designed to promote positive coverage of Chinese investment in Cambodia. For example, a 2018 trip for Cambodian reporters hosted by Xinhua’s Guangxi bureau was described by Chinese-Cambodian ASEAN TOP NEWS as an effort “to show the achievements of China’s development in the new era by inviting editors and reporters from mainstream [media] in Cambodia to visit China,” and report on “China’s development experience to provide a reference for Cambodia’s economic and social development.”<sup>159</sup> As part of the media tour, the group of more than a dozen Cambodian media professionals and senior journalists from state and private outlets visited

neighboring Guangxi province, as well as Jiangsu Province, one of China’s most economically developed regions.<sup>160</sup>

Media professionals from Fresh News, including its pro-Beijing CEO Lim Chea Vutha, have also enjoyed all-expense-paid trips to China. RSF pointed to these Chinese-funded trips as one reason that “journalism with Chinese characteristics” is taking hold in Cambodia’s media landscape.<sup>161</sup> There is evidence to suggest that some Cambodian journalists are invited to China multiple times in a single year. We spoke with one Cambodian media professional who went to China three times in the last year.<sup>162</sup>



### 2.4.3 Investing in Cambodia media outlets

Recently, Chinese media groups have invested in Cambodian media outlets; three key examples are NICE TV, TNAOT News, and ASEAN TOP NEWS.

#### NICE TV

Launched in 2017, NICE TV is a joint venture between NICE Culture Investment Group from China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Cambodia's Interior Ministry, which reportedly holds a relatively small share in the venture.<sup>163</sup> NICE TV broadcasts in Khmer 24 hours a day, with daily programs that include news, education, arts, culture, entertainment, movies, drama series, and documentaries.<sup>164</sup> Deng Li, chairman of NICE Culture Investment Group, and Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng have reportedly touted the station as the “first Chinese-invested digital television channel in Cambodia” and claimed that it would “act as a bridge connecting China and Cambodia in culture and information.”<sup>165</sup> This partnership has sparked concerns that the Chinese company might leverage its partnership with the MOI to help upgrade Cambodia’s surveillance and tracking technologies.<sup>166</sup>

#### TNAOT News

Cambodia’s TNAOT News is also reportedly backed by Chinese investors. TNAOT has an online news site, mobile news app, and Facebook and Instagram pages. Both NICE TV and TNAOT publish a Khmer-language mix of entertainment, reporting on business, law enforcement and social issues; they avoid critical coverage of politics. According to a VOA interview with Liao Kai, general manager of TNAOT news, TNAOT is privately owned. However, he declined to provide details about its Chinese investors. Originally from China, Liao has lived in Cambodia for a decade.<sup>167</sup> TNAOT’s Khmer-language content tends to follow a pro-China editorial line.<sup>168</sup>

Figure 12. TNAOT report highlights China’s assistance to Cambodia in fight against COVID-19



Source: TNAOT, “Daily COVID-19 Update ” បច្ចុប្បន្នភាពនៃជំងឺកូវីដ ១៩ ប្រចាំថ្ងៃទី០២ ខែមេសា ឆ្នាំ២០២០, Facebook, Apr. 2, 2020, accessed Apr. 2, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/Tnaot.kh/videos/928424347576163/>.

## ASEAN TOP NEWS

Xinhua’s Guangxi provincial branch partnered with a consortium of Chinese and Cambodian media organizations in 2018 to launch a Phnom Penh-based Khmer and Chinese-language website and mobile app called “ASEAN TOP NEWS.”<sup>169</sup> The outlet describes itself as “an international news organization committed to providing multilingual news information in Chinese, English, Khmer and other languages to audiences in ASEAN countries.”<sup>170</sup> ASEAN TOP NEWS publishes media content from state-run Chinese outlets and is financially backed by a Chinese corporation called Guangxi Qifu Health Education Investment Group. It is unclear how much funding the outlet receives from Qifu Group. Tan Hongde, chairman of the Qifu Group, stated in 2019 that the “Qifu Group looks forward to establishing a longer-term, higher-level strategic investment partnership with ASEAN TOP NEWS in the future.”<sup>171</sup>

Figure 13. ASEAN TOP NEWS launch in Phnom Penh



Source: “Head Office of ASEAN TOP,” ស្នាក់ការកណ្តាល អង្គការព័ត៌មានASEANTOP, People News Asia Khmer, 2018, accessed Mar. 26, 2020, <http://peoplenews.asia/52967/>.

### PRC support for Cambodia’s Chinese-language media outlets

In addition to supporting Khmer-language media outlets, the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia supports several Chinese-language outlets targeted at audiences in Cambodia via the Cambodian Chinese Chamber of Commerce.<sup>172</sup> These outlets include *Jian Hua Daily* and the *Phnom Penh Evening Post*, both of which note support from the chamber, if not directly from the embassy.<sup>173</sup> Of note, some predominantly Chinese-language news outlets in Cambodia also have Khmer sections. *Jian Hua Daily* (东华日报), for example, run by the Association of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia, has a “Cambodian news” section in Khmer.

These outlets cater to the growing population of Chinese nationals living in Cambodia. According to the Cambodian secretary of state, the official number of Chinese citizens living in Cambodia had surpassed 210,000 in 2018.<sup>174</sup>

Table 10. Chinese-owned media outlets

Name	Format	Description	Owner	Social Media Following
<i>Jian Hua Daily</i> (东 华日报)	Print, online	Chinese and Khmer news, focused on issues related to Chinese living in Cambodia <sup>175</sup>	Federation of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia, with support from Chinese Embassy in the Kingdom of Cambodia <sup>176</sup>	21,893 Facebook followers <sup>177</sup>
<i>Cambodia Sin Chew Daily</i> (柬埔寨星洲 日报)	Print, online	Chinese and limited Khmer-language news, focused on Chinese living in Cambodia	Malaysia-based Sin Chew Media Corporation, a subsidiary of Media Chinese International Limited <sup>178</sup>	<i>Central Sin Chew Daily</i> Facebook page: 1,885,607 Facebook followers, <sup>179</sup> <i>Cambodia Sin Chew Daily</i> Facebook page not identified
<i>Phnom Penh Evening Post</i> (金边 晚报)	Print, online	News and information to serve Chinese-funded enterprises and build ties between the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and businesses <sup>180</sup>	Cambodian Chinese Chamber of Commerce <sup>181</sup>	Social media not identified
<i>The Commercial News</i> (华商日报)	Print, online	First Chinese business daily published in Cambodia after 20+ years of war <sup>182</sup>	Unknown	8,393 Facebook followers <sup>183</sup>
<i>Khmer Daily</i> (高棉 日报)	Print, online	Khmer-Chinese Daily “building a bridge of cooperation and communication at home and abroad” <sup>184</sup>	Khmer International Media Group Corporation <sup>185</sup>	14,153 Facebook followers <sup>186</sup>

Source: CNA.

*Jian Hua Daily* runs articles from Fresh News and the state-run news agency APK, both of which have content-sharing agreements with Xinhua. Recent Khmer-language articles on *Jian Hua Daily*'s website promote the Chinese narrative that Cambodia benefits greatly from its relationship with China. Examples include the following:

- “*Hun Sen Opens Groundbreaking Ceremony for National Highway 10.*” This article describes the new PRC-funded, 182-kilometer highway that will connect the Thai border to the Cambodian coast.<sup>187</sup> A *Khmer Times* article notes that China provided \$132.8 million to the Cambodian Ministry of Public Works and Transport for construction of the highway.<sup>188</sup>

- “Representatives of the Association of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia Held a Meeting with Doctors of the People’s Liberation Army’s 19th Medical Unit.” This article describes how Chinese PLA doctors have come to Cambodia to help the country combat COVID-19.<sup>189</sup>

Figure 14. Chinese newspapers in Phnom Penh: “Don’t allow US interference in Cambodia’s internal affairs” (left)



Source: Sun Narin and Kann Vicheika, “Cambodia-China Journalist Association Launched to Promote ‘Positive News,’” VOA Khmer, 2019, accessed Apr. 2, 2020, <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/cambodia-china-journalist-association-launched-to-promote-positive-news/4926568.html>;

## 2.5 Using entertainment to promote Chinese narratives

In recent years, Beijing has sought to expand its footprint in the global entertainment industry to promote a positive image of China to global audiences beyond the news media. China is actively exporting Chinese-produced entertainment and promoting PRC-controlled social media platforms in Cambodia. In some cases, the local audience is interested in China’s entertainment exports. According to one Chinese scholar, Southeast Asia is one of the major output destinations for Chinese TV series and movies. Among China’s surrounding countries, Southeast Asian countries watched the majority of Chinese movies per year, on an average of 2.8 times more than other countries.<sup>190</sup>



### 2.5.1 Exporting Chinese-produced entertainment

The entertainment content that China is exporting to Cambodia includes documentaries, cartoons, and historical dramas. A 2018 Xinhua article titled “China-Cambodia film and television cooperation is further strengthened” outlines the results of the first cooperative meeting between Chinese and Cambodian radio and television bodies.

The Chinese exports to Cambodia described in the Xinhua article include a 2018 multipart CCTV documentary series about the history and culture of Cambodia that is available in Chinese, English, and Khmer. China has also exported the children’s cartoon series “Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf” and the historical action drama “Justice Pao.”<sup>191</sup>

CRI has also produced a series of Khmer-language podcasts based on the Chinese literary classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, perhaps to better reach Cambodian audiences given the high mobile phone penetration rate.<sup>192</sup>

Figure 15. Chinese literature available as Khmer audio by free Apple podcast

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Apple Podcasts Preview



**Three Kingdoms Romance in Khmer**  
CRI  
Society & Culture

[Listen on Apple Podcasts ↗](#)

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DEC 7, 2014  
**Chapter 19 of Three Kingdoms Romance in Khmer**  
រត្តទី ១៩ នៃសាមគ្គីក

[▶ PLAY](#) 20 min

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DEC 7, 2014  
**Chapter 18 of Three Kingdoms Romance in Khmer**  
រត្តទី ១៨ នៃរឿងសាមគ្គីក

[▶ PLAY](#) 20 min

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DEC 7, 2014  
**Chapter 17 of Three Kingdoms Romance in Khmer**  
និទានរឿងសាមគ្គីក រត្តទី ១៧

19 episodes

The Chinese traditional novel Three Kingdoms Romance is never fail to attract readers all over the world. Now Cambodian Service of China Radio International and Cambodia-China Friendship Radio will present to all the listeners the wonderful story in Khmer language! Please follow us every Wednesday!

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Source: Apple Podcasts.

## 2.5.2 Investing in the Cambodia film industry

The 2019 film *Cambodian Love Story* was the first joint production between Cambodian and Chinese film companies. The film, featuring actors from Cambodia and China, is a love story between a Cambodian woman and a Chinese man. The chairman of the Cambodian Film Festival described the “transnational love story” as “indispensable in the cultural exchange between China and Cambodia.”<sup>193</sup> Of note, the film’s primary Chinese investor, Prince Real Estate Group (太子地产集团), is one of the largest real estate development firms in Sihanoukville.

Figure 16. Chinese poster and Cambodian opening ceremony for Chinese-financed film *Cambodian Love Story*



Source: “China-Cambodia Cooperation First Movie “Cambodian Love” Released in Cambodia,” 中柬合作首部电影《柬爱》在柬上映, China News Network, Nov. 11, 2019, accessed Apr. 3, 2020, <https://www.chinanews.com/qj/2019/11-11/9004527.shtml>.

According to the Cambodian digital news outlet Fresh News, a 2020 Chinese movie called *Guardian Angel* is set to film in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. According to the article, the secretary of the State Culture Ministry said that he “delights at the Chinese investment in the movie industry in Cambodia” and thanks China for being an “ironclad friend’ for seeing the potential of the kingdom’s cultural assets and heritages.” The article also quoted the minister’s statement that he “hopes the movie will serve the agendas of President Xi’s Belt and Road Initiative.”<sup>194</sup>

### 2.5.3 Promoting social media platforms subject to PRC control

Although Western social media platforms continue to be the most popular among Cambodians, use of PRC-based social media platforms is increasing. One Chinese social media platform in particular, TikTok, has gained popularity; in 2019, it had 500,000 users in Cambodia.<sup>195</sup> This was fewer than Instagram's 690,000 but significantly more than Twitter's 200,000 users in 2019.<sup>196</sup> In addition, Cambodians are increasingly using WeChat as a marketing tool to make inroads into Chinese markets, according to a 2019 report in *The Phnom Penh Post*. Of note, however, WeChat does not yet appear to have gained significant popularity outside of Chinese communities in Cambodia.<sup>197</sup> One Cambodia media scholar has suggested that Chinese social media platforms could supplant Facebook in terms of popularity if the Cambodian government chose to back them.<sup>198</sup>

## 3. Assessing the Impact of Chinese Narratives

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### 3.1 Reach and resonance

This report offers an understanding of the variety and scope of Beijing’s efforts to shape the information environment in Cambodia, but should not be viewed as a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of China’s efforts. Such an assessment would require extensive polling data and sentiment analysis that goes beyond the scope of this report and is difficult to conduct during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, during the course of our research, we did identify several factors appear to affect the reach and resonance of PRC narratives in Cambodia. These factors include the following:

***Chinese state-run media content reaches a wide audience in Cambodia, particularly through content sharing with state-affiliated online outlets.*** Fresh News, an online Khmer, English, and Chinese outlet that launched in 2017, has close ties to Xinhua, CGTN, and *Global Times*, publishing content from all three. Fresh News’ close ties to Chinese state-run outlets has not curbed its popularity as a news source domestically. It has over 3.8 million Facebook followers, is Cambodia’s third most-visited domestic site, and the Kingdom’s most popular domestic news site, according to Facebook, online analytics company Alexa, and Xinhua, respectively.<sup>199</sup> Other popular outlets with a large digital presence and social media following, such as *Khmer Times* and *DAP*, also regularly repost Chinese state-run media content. This suggests that Chinese narratives are reaching a relatively broad audience among Cambodians.

***PRC media lacks credibility among audiences in Cambodia.*** When we spoke with Cambodian media professionals and experts, a recurrent theme was that PRC media suffers from a lack of credibility among audiences in Cambodia. According to one Cambodian media professional, “China historically has not been viewed positively in Cambodia.”<sup>200</sup> Several local Cambodian media experts also noted that PRC media outlets partner exclusively with pro-government Cambodian media outlets, which also lack credibility among Cambodian audiences. According to one participant, the result is that Chinese media’s “effectiveness is lacking.” In addition, one Cambodian media professional noted that “quality is still an issue” with PRC media content, and assessed that Xinhua’s poor quality hindered its resonance among local audiences and made it less appealing to local media outlets that have to pay for it.<sup>201</sup>

***China is rapidly adapting its efforts to reach audiences in***

***Cambodia.*** Despite the apparent skepticism with which PRC media is viewed by Cambodians, there is evidence that Beijing is being adaptive in its efforts to improve the reach and resonance of its foreign-directed media. For instance, according to one Cambodian media professional, representatives from CCP mouthpiece *People's Daily* had been actively soliciting feedback from Cambodian journalists about

how to foster greater trust and cooperation with local media.<sup>202</sup> In addition, the newly established CMG Asia Africa Language Program Center is already working with local media outlets to produce content that is tailored to appeal to Cambodian audiences.

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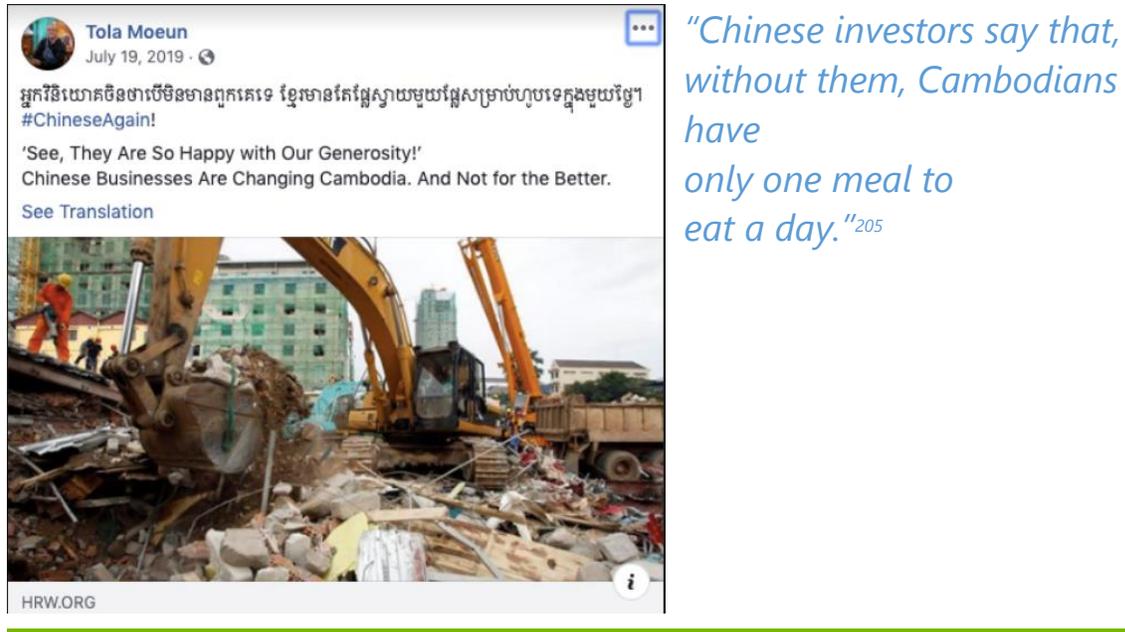
*“We don’t actually trust what PRC media representatives have been saying to us.”*

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***Domestic pushback against China’s presence in Cambodia may complicate PRC efforts to shape the media environment and limit the resonance of PRC narratives.***

The dramatic uptick in Chinese investment in Cambodia, and the corresponding influx of Chinese tourists and workers, has prompted concern among many Cambodians. According to a 2020 public opinion survey of Cambodian citizens conducted by the ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute and the ASEAN Studies Center, 57 percent of respondents said, “They are worried about China’s growing regional economic influence.”<sup>203</sup> On social media, some Cambodians have expressed blatant anti-Chinese sentiment. One Facebook user commented that “Chinese nationals have come to invest in Cambodia, prompting so many problems to Cambodia and making the people suffer,” under a post using the #ChineseAgain! hashtag.<sup>204</sup>

Figure 17. Facebook example of #ChineseAgain! hashtag used online



Source: Tola Moeun, "Personal Profile," Facebook Jul. 19, 2019, accessed Mar. 30, 2020, [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=%23ChineseAgain!%20cambodia&epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=%23ChineseAgain!%20cambodia&epa=SEARCH_BOX).

Critical reporting on the Chinese presence in Cambodia is not exclusive to citizen journalists posting to Facebook. Multiple domestic media outlets have also published articles critical of rising Chinese influence, including the following:

- *The Khmer Times*, which is considered a pro-government outlet, has published articles critical of rising Chinese influence, including an article on crimes committed by Chinese nationals, and an editorial suggesting that Cambodia should avoid the perception that it is taking sides in the Chinese and American geopolitical rivalry.<sup>206</sup>
- *Rasmei Kampuchei*, the most widely circulated Khmer daily, published an article in 2019 on the collapse of a seven-story building in Sihanoukville. In the article, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Land Management confirmed that the Chinese owners of the building had proceeded with construction despite local authorities telling them explicitly not to.<sup>207</sup>
- In 2019, the *Phnom Penh Post* reported on the arrests of nine Chinese nationals charged with running a brothel.<sup>208</sup>
- Similarly, *Khmer Share*, a popular online news outlet, reported on the abduction of three women by Chinese men at a massage parlor in Sihanoukville.<sup>209</sup>

***Chinese investment in Sihanoukville has exploded since 2017, angering many locals.***

Between 1994 and 2019, China invested US\$12.6 billion in 52 projects across sectors, including tourism services, property, special economic zones, infrastructure, and heavy industry in Cambodia.<sup>210</sup> The majority of Chinese investment has come since 2017; according to the Council for the Development of Cambodia, China invested US\$3.6 billion in 2016, which nearly doubled to US\$6.3 billion in 2017. Much of this investment has gone to projects in Sihanoukville. Based on a Chinese investment report from the Planning Office of the Sihanoukville Provincial Administration, US\$1.1 billion was invested there in 2017 alone.<sup>211</sup> A 2019 CCIM special report on this influx found that 60 percent of local respondents “felt they had been negatively affected by the [Chinese] development in the province.”<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, during the second Belt and Road Forum in 2019, China announced plans to launch a second phase of development in the coastal Sihanoukville province where it has already built over 100 casinos and dozens of hotels and resorts.<sup>213</sup>

**A local view of Sihanoukville**

One local familiar with Chinese activities in Sihanoukville explained that “Chinese investment in areas like Sihanoukville have driven up home prices, but locals in those areas that don’t own much property or businesses catering to Chinese don’t benefit. Another problem is that there are Chinese gangs, drugs, gambling, and human trafficking that has come along with the Chinese investment in casinos in Sihanoukville. Some Cambodians do not drive at night anymore in those areas because of concerns over crime and violence.”<sup>214</sup>

***Despite Beijing’s efforts to expand its footprint in Cambodia’s media environment, Western media outlets continue to enjoy far greater popularity.***

Experts on Cambodian media note that although CRI’s Khmer-language content has expanded, it is not nearly as popular as VOA and RFA. In the words of one local expert, “Here in Cambodia, when you talk about trust, you still think of VOA and RFA.”<sup>215</sup> Some experts also noted that the Chinese publications most often seen on newsstands in Cambodia are business-related and printed in Chinese and, therefore, lack popular appeal.<sup>216</sup>

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*“Here in Cambodia, when you talk about trust, you still think of VOA and RFA.”*  
*- Cambodian media expert*

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### **What can the international community do to support the integrity of Cambodia's information environment?**

In mid-June 2020, CNA held discussions with Cambodian media professionals and experts on the local information environment. During these discussions, participants offered several suggestions regarding how the international community could help to support the integrity of Cambodia's information environment. These included the following:

- **Establish a regional media alliance.** Participants suggested that a key function of such an alliance would be to protect journalists who report on politically sensitive topics. The theoretical example that was offered was that journalists based in another country publish investigative reporting about local events in Cambodia, creating an opportunity for local journalists to pick up the story.
- **Provide funding for independent media outlets.** Participants noted that local independent media outlets often struggle to survive financially and financial pressures can make Chinese funding more attractive. They expressed a need for funding that does not seek to influence or compromise the journalistic integrity of their work.
- **Support efforts to promote digital literacy.** Several participants noted that the complexity of the modern information environment and the rise of social media work to the advantage external actors like China. According to one participant, "People feel that it is impossible to have the truth. This is an advantage for China." Participants suggested that improving digital literacy in Cambodia would provide media consumers with the skills to identify and utilize reputable sources of news.
- **Provide objective, scientific research on issues that affect Cambodians.** One participant suggested that scientific research on issues faced by Cambodians could provide the basis for local journalists to report on those issues.

## **3.2 Issues to watch**

The vacuum left by Hun Sen's 2017–2018 media crackdown allowed China to seek a greater foothold in Cambodia's media environment. Cambodia's government has welcomed China's presence by backing cooperative agreements between PRC media and domestic state-run media outlets and welcoming Chinese investment in Cambodian media outlets and telecommunications infrastructure. Nevertheless, PRC media face challenges in Cambodia. CRI has thus far had very limited success competing with the enduring popularity—and credibility—of Western media outlets such as RFA, VOA, and RFI. Moreover, PRC narratives about the benefits of cooperation with China and BRI investment often fail to resonate among Cambodians who can directly observe the negative consequences of Chinese investment,

particularly in Sihanoukville. How China will choose to adapt to this situation remains to be seen. Key issues to watch include the following:

- ***An increase in the popularity and perceived credibility of Chinese-financed Cambodia-based media outlets, such as ASEAN TOP NEWS, Fresh News, and NICE TV.*** These outlets receive not only media content from China’s state-run media and financing from Chinese corporations, but also praise and preferential treatment from Cambodian government officials.<sup>217</sup> If these outlets achieve widespread popularity—and gain credibility among Cambodian audiences—PRC narratives might be more likely to gain traction among target audiences in Cambodia.
- ***An increase in publicly expressed anti-Chinese sentiment among Cambodians.*** According to Cambodian media experts and secondary reports, there is growing anti-China sentiment among the general population, especially in areas targeted by Chinese investment. One local even suggested that any major event could trigger a popular backlash against the Chinese presence in Cambodia.<sup>218</sup> Such anti-China sentiment has the potential to limit the resonance of pro-PRC narratives among target audiences in Cambodia and is worthy of careful monitoring as a barometer of the effectiveness of China’s efforts to shape the media environment there.
- ***More joint production of content between PRC and Cambodian media outlets.*** Cambodian media professionals suggested that content produced jointly by PRC media outlets and local Cambodian media outlets would be more likely to resonate with local audiences.<sup>219</sup>
- ***The launch of new Khmer-language services by Xinhua or other PRC state-run media outlets.*** Of China’s state-run media outlets, only CRI routinely publishes news and information in Khmer. To date, Khmer-language content produced by CMG’s newly established Asia Africa Language Program Center has only appeared on the CRI Khmer homepage. If CMG Khmer-language videos begin to appear on other platforms, this could indicate an effort to expand the reach of this increasingly tailored content. Additionally, in neighboring Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam, both CRI and Xinhua produce content in local languages. If Xinhua or another state-run PRC media outlet were to launch a Khmer-language portal, Facebook page, or mobile application, it would represent an additional effort by China to promote its narratives to local audiences in Cambodia.
- ***The Cambodia-China Journalist Association’s (CCJA’s) activities.*** Launched in May 2019, the CCJA’s espoused aim is “promoting media exchange and relations between Cambodia and China.”<sup>220</sup> It appears that one of the CCJA’s roles is to translate PRC media into Khmer for publication in domestic media.<sup>221</sup> CCJA has the support of the minister of information, who described it as “a new achievement resulting from the

comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation between Cambodia and China.”<sup>222</sup> Comments by Zuo Wenxing, political counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia, suggested that the CCJA would also help tamp down critical media coverage of the two countries’ relationship.<sup>223</sup> Of note, China typically uses such associations as a mechanism for organizing all-expense-paid trips to China for foreign journalists to influence their views of China.

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# Appendix A: China Radio International on Facebook

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China Radio International (CRI) has a noteworthy presence on Facebook in the five Mekong countries. CRI uses Facebook in each of these countries to broadcast content produced by Chinese state-media outlets in local languages.

Table 11 shows the reach of CRI to Facebook audiences by follower numbers.

Table 11. China Radio International on Facebook in the Mekong countries

Country	Facebook Account	Followers	Facebook Page URL
<b>Cambodia</b>	CCFR Beijing (China-Cambodian Friendship Radio)	1,257,270	facebook.com/ccfr.cri/
<b>Laos</b>	CRI-FM 93 Vientiane	1,185,992	facebook.com/crifm93/
<b>Myanmar</b>	CRI Myanmar	1,194,258	facebook.com/myanmar.cri/
<b>Thailand</b>	China Face	2,547,347	facebook.com/ChinafacecriThai/
<b>Vietnam</b>	Đài Phát thanh Quốc tế Trung Quốc	1,961,314	facebook.com/criviet
<b>Global</b>	China Plus News	20,941,191	facebook.com/chinaplusnews/

Source: Facebook, CNA.

## Appendix B: China's Global Narratives

<p><b><i>China is peaceful</i></b></p>	<p>China portrays itself as an inherently peaceful country that would never intentionally start a conflict.<sup>224</sup></p>
<p>How it supports PRC objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><i>Promotes a positive image of China:</i></b> Portrays China as peaceful and non-threatening</li> <li>● <b><i>Counters critics:</i></b> Counters concerns about the rapid growth of China's military power and regional assertiveness</li> <li>● <b><i>Supports China's foreign policy objectives:</i></b> Seeks to foster receptivity to China's diplomatic overtures</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>Cooperation with China is beneficial</i></b></p>	<p>China claims its approach to cooperation with other countries is mutually beneficial and "win-win."<sup>225</sup></p>
<p>How it supports PRC objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><i>Promotes a positive image of China:</i></b> Portrays China as generous and helpful</li> <li>● <b><i>Counters critics:</i></b> Counters criticism of China's economic aid and investment practices as being exploitive</li> <li>● <b><i>Supports China's foreign policy objectives:</i></b> Seeks to foster support for cooperation with China on a range of issues, including economic, technological, and security matters</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>China is a responsible member of the international community</i></b></p>	<p>China portrays itself as an upholder of the international system that provides public goods such as contributions to peacekeeping efforts, support to antipiracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, and disaster relief.<sup>226</sup></p>
<p>How it supports PRC objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><i>Promotes a positive image of China:</i></b> Portrays China as a responsible and active contributor to the international system</li> <li>● <b><i>Counters critics:</i></b> Counters accusations that China is a revisionist power that seeks to reshape the international system; also counters concerns about the Chinese military's expanding overseas operations</li> <li>● <b><i>Supports China's foreign policy objectives:</i></b> Seeks to foster support for China's expanding global presence and position China as a leader in the international community</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>China's approach to development and international affairs is different from that of the US/West</i></b></p>	<p>China often contrasts its approach to development and foreign policy with that of the US and other Western nations.<sup>227</sup></p>
<p>How it supports PRC objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><i>Promotes a positive image of China:</i></b> Portrays China as better than the US and the West</li> <li>● <b><i>Counters critics:</i></b> Deflects criticism by the United States and other Western countries, often by seeking to delegitimize their policies, positions, and activities</li> <li>● <b><i>Supports China's foreign policy objectives:</i></b> Portrays China as a more desirable partner</li> </ul>	

# Abbreviations

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AKP	Agence Kampuchea Presse
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BTV	Bayon Television
CBS	Cambodian Broadcasting Services
CCFR	Cambodia-China Friendship Radio
CCIM	Cambodian Center for Independent Media
CCJA	Cambodia-China Journalists Association
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CMRD	Cambodia Media & Research for Development
CMSRRC	Cambodia Maritime Silk Road Research Center
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CRI	China Radio International
CTN	Cambodian Television Network
DAP	online news outlet [abbrv. unknown]
DTMB	Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LDC	Least Developed Country
MOI	Ministry of Information
MOU	memorandum of understanding
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RFA	Radio Free Asia
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RNK	Radio National Kampuchea
RSF	Reporters Sans Frontieres
SBS	[Australia] Special Broadcasting Service
SEATEL	South East Asia Telecom (Cambodia) Co. Ltd.
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SPIDER	Swedish Program for ICT in the Region
TNAOT	Khmer news outlet and mobile app [abbrv. unknown]
TVK	National Television of Kampuchea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

USAGM	US Agency for Global Media
VNA	Vietnam News Agency
VOA	Voice of America
VOD	Voice of Democracy
WHO	World Health Organization
WMC	Women's Media Center
ZTE	Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corp.

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