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Global mediations

On the changing ecology of satellite television news

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ABSTRACT

The last few years have witnessed an explosion in the number of 24/7 satellite news channels around the globe. Some theorists have heralded the arrival of 24/7 news delivery systems and channels as definitive of processes of globalization and foundational in the creation of a 'global public sphere'. Others view them as simply the latest expansion of Western-led corporate interests and vehicles of cultural imperialism, propagating news flows from the West to the rest. This article contributes up-to-date empirical findings and arguments that variously support and problematize aspects of both these overarching theoretical positions and debates and does so by systematically mapping for the first time all 24/7 news channels broadcast in the world today. Our findings reveal a field characterized by complex stratifications, formations and flows that prompt the need for refined conceptualization and theorization.

KEY WORDS

24-hour news ■ global public sphere ■ globalization ■ localization ■ media flows and formations ■ political economy ■ satellite news ecology

Introduction

From the pioneering broadcasts by CNN during the first Gulf War in 1991, 24-hour news has rapidly gained currency and the last few years have witnessed a veritable explosion of 24-hour satellite news channels around the world. The implications of this phenomenon for traditional approaches to the formations and flows of information and culture, however, have yet to be fully fathomed. This article empirically maps for the first time the full extent and diversified complexity of today's satellite news ecology and draws out implications that variously challenge, endorse or qualify major theoretical positions within the field of international and global communications research.

By harnessing satellite technology's ability to broadcast across borders, regions and even continents, 24-hour news channels have transcended former barriers of geography and territory that encumber terrestrial television news. This 'deterritorializing' effect coupled with their 24-hour, 'always on', approach to news, has prompted some theorists to herald the arrival of these channels as definitive of processes of globalization (Chalaby, 2003; Hannerz, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999, 2003; Volkmer, 1999, 2003). Building on Marshall McLuhan's notions of a 'global village' (1964), Volkmer (1999, 2003) argues that the ability of satellite news channels to simultaneously broadcast around the world and bring audiences together during key moments of 'breaking news' is engendering the emergence of a genuinely 'global public sphere' and laying cosmopolitan foundations of citizenship (Volkmer, 2003: 15). Channels such as CNNI and BBC World have also been credited with 'internationalizing' the news and challenging conventional divisions between 'domestic' and 'foreign' content (Flourney and Stewart, 1997; Volkmer, 1999, 2003). The contemporary global media scene can also no longer be characterized as a one-way flow from the West to the rest given the increasing 'contraflows' emerging both from within the broadcasts of mainstream Western networks and through the rise of new, non-Western, satellite networks such as Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera (El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002; Flourney and Stewart, 1997; Johnston, 1998; Volkmer, 1999, 2002, 2003).¹ In the context of globalization discussions these arguments align closely with a 'globalist' position, as classified by Held and McGrew in their 'great globalization debate' (2003). For these theorists, the rapid proliferation of the 24-hour news genre reflects real, structural changes in the global news landscape that exemplify the spatial-temporal transformations that lie at the heart of processes of globalization, namely: stretched social relations; intensification of flows; increasing interpenetration; and global infrastructure (Held, 2004).

Others are less convinced. Based on traditional geo-political economy approaches these theorists insist that the contemporary satellite news landscape, much like the broader international media market, continues to be dominated by the major Western players and economic processes (McChesney, 2000, 2003; Sparks, 1998; Thussu, 2003). In times of economic liberalization marked by deregulation, privatization and transnational corporate expansion (fuelled in part by the market exploitation of digitalization and new delivery technologies), these processes have, if anything, only become exacerbated as transnational corporations and regional formations of capital 'colonize communications space' (Boyd-Barrett, 1998). The cultural imperialism

thesis, underlined by the 1974 UNESCO report on international media flows (Nordenstreng and Varis, 1974), essentially still holds firm; proliferating 24-hour satellite news channels are simply vehicles for the global expansion of corporate capitalism and continuing Western dominance (Boyd-Barrett, 1998; McChesney, 2000, 2003). While the growth of regional news channels may give a sense of democratization, Thussu (2003) contends that in reality a 'CNNization' of television news is taking place: networks such as CNN and the BBC remain the agenda-setters in the global news market with smaller, regional players monitoring their content and adopting their models of production. Rather than a diversified 'global public sphere', then, these regional channels represent a universalization of 'US-style' journalism and an increasing homogenization of news structures and content around the world (Thussu, 2003). Falling within Held and McGrew's (2003) category of globalization 'sceptics', these theorists contend that there is little that is 'global' in the contemporary media scene and that the expansion of the satellite news industry more accurately reflects the relentless capitalist expansion and worldwide 'Westernization' of media activity. The discourse of globalization is here apt to be seen as an ideological cloak concealing the geo-political realities of Western power and corporate interests.

Much of the research conducted in relation to 24/7 satellite news within both these 'global dominance' and 'global public sphere' paradigms has tended to focus on the major global players such as CNN, the BBC and Fox. While CNN and BBC World, particularly, symbolize for many the reality and nature of global satellite news provision and have attracted the most research interest, this focus inadvertently excludes from view a more complex field of 24/7 satellite news provision in the world today. The rapid growth of satellite news channels in the last few years has given rise to a reconfigured world media ecology that seemingly problematizes both traditional geo-political economy expectations and global public sphere claims. When we examine the full range of contemporary 24/7 channels now available around the world we necessarily move beyond a Western-centric view and from this vantage point can better conceptualize, and theoretically reflect on, the changing satellite news landscape, its complex stratifications and contemporary reconfiguration. In short, there is a regional, transnational and global complexity here that demands increased recognition and theorization.

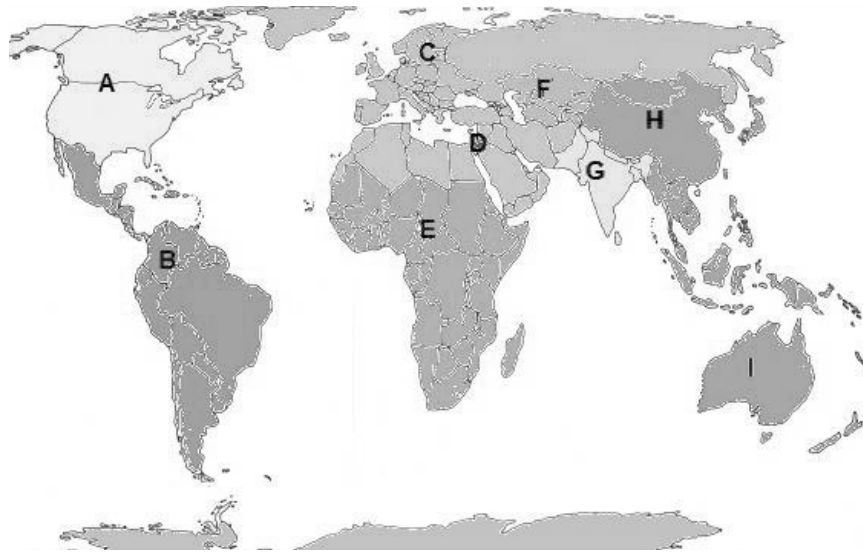
Against this theoretical backdrop we now systematically map and address critical features of the fast-changing ecology of contemporary

24/7 satellite television news, marshalling findings and discussion of relevance to these wider debates. We address, in turn:

- (1) the prevalence of 24/7 satellite news channels around the world today;
- (2) the underlying ownership structures of these formations;
- (3) issues of 24/7 satellite news 'reach' and 'access';
- (4) arguments and evidence concerning 24/7 news 'localization'; and
- (5) news channel programme schedules and structures to discern possible homogenization in terms of 24/7 models of news output.

The contemporary satellite news map: proliferation and ownership

Table 1 24-hour news channels around the world today



News Channel ¹	Ownership and Language	Reach ^{2,3}
Global⁴		
CNN & CNNI	Time Warner, various languages	All Regions
BBC World	UK public broadcaster – commercial, English	All Regions
CNBC	NBC & Dow Jones	All Regions
Bloomberg TV	Michael Bloomberg	All Regions
Fox News	News Corporation, English	A, B, C, D, H, I

News Channel ¹	Ownership and Language	Reach ^{2,3}
North America		
MSNBC	Microsoft & NBC, English	A (USA)
CNN fn	Time Warner, English	A (USA)
Headline News	Time Warner, English	A (USA)
C-SPAN 1, 2 & 3	US Cable Industry – non-profit, English	A (USA)
CTV Newsnet	Canada's Bell Globemedia Company, English	A (Canada)
CPAC	Canadian Cable Industry – non-profit, English and French	A (Canada)
CBC Newsworld	Canada's public broadcaster, English	A (Canada)
RDI	Canada's public broadcaster, French	A (Canada – Quebec)
LCN	Canada's TVA Group, French	A (Canada – Quebec)
Local/city-based news channels	Various, English	A (US cities only)
South America		
Todo Noticias	Argentina's Grupo Clarin, Spanish	B, some A
Globovision	Venezuelan private, CNN affiliate, Spanish	B (Venezuela)
Globonews	Brazil's Globo Group, Portugese	B (Brazil)
Telesur	Latin American govts, 51% Venezuela, Spanish	B
Europe		
Euronews	European public broadcasters, various langs	C, some F
Sky News	35% News Corporation, English	C, some H
France 24	France's public broadcaster, French, English, Arabic	C, some D, F
Russia Today	Russian news agency RIA–Novosti – non-profit, English	C, some D, F
BBC News 24	UK public broadcaster, English	C (UK)
RAI News 24	Italy's public broadcaster, Italian	C (Italy)
n-tv n24	Germany's Bertelsmann, CNN (minor), German	C (Germany)
TVE 24 Horas	Germany's SevenOne Media, German	C (Germany)
CNN Plus	Spain's public broadcaster, Spanish	C (Spain), some A
RTP Noticias	CNN and Spain's Sogecable, Spanish	C (Spain)
SIC Noticias	Portugal's public broadcaster, Portugese	C (Portugal)
SIC Noticias	Portugal's SIC Network, Portugese	C (Portugal)
TV2 News	Denmark's public broadcaster, Danish	C (Denmark)
YLE24	Finland's public broadcaster, Finnish	C (Finland)
Antena 3	Romania's Intact Group, Romanian	C (Romania)
N24	Romania's Central National Media, Romanian	C (Romania)
CT24	Czech public broadcaster, Czech	C (Czech Rep.)
TVN 24	Poland's ITI Media Group, Polish	C (Poland)
TA3	UK's Millennium Electronics, Slovak	C (Slovakia)
La Chaine Info	France's TF1-Bouygues Group, French	C (France)
BFM TV	France's Nextradio TV Group, French	C (France)
CNN Turk	CNN & Turkey's Dogan Media Group, Turkish	C (Turkey), some D,F
NTV	Turkey's NTV Media Gp, Turkish	C (Turkey), some D,F

continued . . .

Table 1 24-hour news channels around the world today *continued*

News Channel ¹	Ownership and Language	Reach ^{2,3}
West/Central Asia, Middle East		
Al-Jazeera	Qatar government-financed, Arabic	D, some A, C, F, G, I
Al-Jazeera Int.	Qatar government-financed, English	D, E, some A, C, G, H
Al-Arabiya	Saudi MBC Group, Dubai-based, Arabic	D, some F
Al-Ekhbariya	Saudi Arabian state-run, Arabic	D, some F
Al-Hurra	US-based, US-government funded, Arabic	D, some F
Al-Alam	Iran state-run, Arabic	D, some F
South Asia⁵		
Zee News	India's Zee Group, Hindi	G, D, some A, C, E
NDTV India	India's NDTV Group, Hindi	G, D, some C, E
NDTV 24x7	India's NDTV Group, English	G, D, some C, E
Sun News	Indian Sun Network, Tamil	G, D, some A, H
Udaya News	Indian Sun Network, Kannada	G, D, some A, H
Asianet News	India's Asianet Ltd, Malayalam	G, D
Indiavision	Private Indian network, Malayalam	G, D
Gemini News	Indian Sun Network, Telugu	G, D
Teja News	Indian Sun Network, Telugu	G, D
ETV2	India's Eenadu Network, Telugu	G, D
TV9	Private Indian network, Telugu	G, D
South Asia⁵		
PTV World News	Pakistan's state broadcaster, Urdu & English	G, some F, D
ARY One World	Pakistan's ARY Network, Urdu and English	G, some F, D
Star News	News Corporation, India-based, Hindi	G, some C, D, H
Doordarshan News (also terrestrial)	Indian public broadcaster, Hindi & English	G (India)
Aaj Tak	India Today Media Group, Hindi	G (India)
Headlines Today	India Today Media Group, English	G (India)
Sahara Samay	India's Sahara Group, Hindi	G (India)
CNN-IBN	Time Warner and India's TV18 Group, English	G (India)
Times Now	India's Times Group and Reuters, English	G (India)
IBN7	India's TV18 Group, Hindi	G (India)
Janmat TV	India's SAB Network, Hindi	G (India)
Tez	India's India Today Media Group, Hindi	G (India)
India TV	Private Indian network, Hindi	G (India)
Star Ananda	News Corporation & ABP, India-based, Bengali	G (India)
Tara Newz	India's Tara Network, Bengali	G (India)
Punjab Today	India's STV Enterprises, Pubjabi	G (India)
People TV	India's Malayalam Comm. Ltd, Malayalam	G (India)
Manorama News	India's Malayalam Manorama News Gp, Malayalam	G (India)
Local/city-based news channels	Various, various Indian languages	G (Indian cities only)

Table 1 24-hour news channels around the world today *continued*

News Channel ¹	Ownership and Language	Reach ^{2,3}
East Asia		
CCTV-9		
(International)	China's state broadcaster, English	H, some A, C, F, E, G
Channel News Asia	Singapore's MediaCorp (Govt owned), English	H, some G, D
Phoenix News	News Corporation (majority) HK-based, Mandarin	H
CCTV News	China's state broadcaster, Mandarin	H (China), some F
CTI TV News	Taiwan's CTI Gp, Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
ETTV News & News S	Taiwan's Eastern Broadcasting Co., Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
Era TV News	Taiwan's Era Multimedia Gp, Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
FTV News	Taiwan's Formosa Media Gp, Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
SET News	Taiwan's Sanlih Entertainment Gp, Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
TVBS Newsnet	HK's TVB Group, Mandarin	H (Taiwan)
TVB News	HK's TVB Group, Cantonese	H (Hong Kong)
News 1 & 2	HK's Wharf Holdings Ltd, Cantonese	H (Hong Kong)
JNN News bird	affiliate of Japan's TBS & JNN Groups, Japanese	H (Japan)
Asahi Newstar	Japan's Asahi Group (Sony-minor), Japanese	H (Japan)
YTN	Korea State Electric Corp, CNN partner, Korean	H (Korea), some A
TTV1 Nation Channel	Thailand's TTV cable operator, Thai	H (Thailand)
UBC News Channel	Thailand's UBC Pay TV Operator, Thai	H (Thailand)
ABS-CBN News	Philippines' ABS-CBN Group, Tagalog & English	H (Phil.), some A, D
Astro News (pkg of int. news progs)	Malaysian Astro Gp (Govt. stake), various langs	H (mainly Malaysia)
Oceania		
Sky News Australia	BSkyB(News Corp), Aust's 7&9 networks, English	I

Notes

- 1 The list of 24-hour news channels was gathered by systematically going through the inventories of each satellite system around the world (www.lyngsat.com). It is accurate as of the date at which the Lyngsat sources were accessed (December 2006).
- 2 The reach of each channel was estimated fairly conservatively and involved an examination of both the 'footprints' of carrier satellites and the channel's distribution networks within each region. Regions where a channel was not available through mainstream satellite and cable distribution networks were not included in its reach.
- 3 Country names, where in brackets, indicate the principal audience of the channel within the region.
- 4 Channels with a substantial reach in more than 4 different regions have been defined as 'global'.
- 5 The South Asian region has been the most dynamic, with new channels entering and exiting the market quite rapidly. This list would best be treated as indicative of the range of channels rather than exhaustive.

Table 1 comprehensively charts the ownership and reach of all global, regional, national and sub-national 24-hour satellite news channels currently broadcast in and around the world today.² Not only is the number of channels at well in excess of 100 noteworthy in itself, but the

table also points to the remarkable fact that these channels now cut across virtually every region of the globe, with many of them broadcasting in different languages. Clearly 24/7 television news has established itself as a worldwide presence, and has done so in a relatively short time period. This proliferation of 24/7 news channels also shows no signs of abatement with plans for new 24-hour news channels currently underway in Bangladesh, New Zealand and some of the Central Asian states as this article goes to press (DTG, 2005; Hannah, 2006; Manning, 2006). Another notable feature is that while the total number of channels seems to be ever increasing, only a handful of these can be defined as 'global' in reach; with the vast majority operating principally at regional, national and even sub-national levels. This suggests an increasing 'localization' of the 24-hour news genre, a finding that we return to later. To better discern the details collated in Table 1, we first provide a brief overview of its salient features, region by region, before moving on to issues of ownership.

At the very top of the table, we see that the only channels with a 'global' reach are major Western players, lending credence to the thesis of continued Western dominance in the news market. While CNN, BBC World and the financial channels are available in every region on our map, Fox News is also rapidly expanding its market base with substantial access in six out of our nine regions. As we move into each region, however, the picture becomes a little more complicated. In North America, there are several 24-hour news channels in the USA and Canada which are nationally based, in addition to the global US channels. A particularly interesting phenomenon here is the rise of local, city-based 24-hour news channels that specifically focus on events *within* major cities, a substantial departure from the 'global' orientation of the pioneering 24-hour news players (more about this later). In South America, there are relatively few news channels in comparison to other regions. Interestingly, while the dominance of Brazil as a media powerhouse in the region has been widely discussed (Sinclair et al., 2002), in terms of news provision there is only one, nationally based channel, Globonews, with regional players emerging from Argentina (Todo Noticias), and more recently, from Venezuela with their majority-owned Telesur network. Turning to Europe we see a substantially higher number of channels available, but again, only two of these have substantial reach across the region, Euronews and Sky News. The vast majority of channels are nationally focused, broadcasting in different languages, which perhaps indicates the 'limits' of otherwise 'deterritorializing' satellite technology when broadcasting in regions as linguistically diverse as Europe.

One of the newest and more widely discussed regions to enter the satellite news market is West Asia or the Middle East (Azran, 2004; Sakr, 2001; Volkmer, 2002, 2003; Zednick, 2002). A number of channels have been launched in the last few years which cater not only to the Middle East but also to other Arabic-speaking regions in North Africa and the Central Asian states. Notable amongst these, of course, is Qatar-based Al-Jazeera which is rapidly expanding its audience base outside the Arab-speaking world and has recently launched an English language channel in November 2006 (Alterman, 2005). Moving to South Asia, the news market is indisputably dominated by the Indian media juggernaut. The appetite for 24-hour news channels seems to be insatiable in this region (Page and Crawley, 2001). With several Indian channels broadcasting to the region and beyond, as well as dozens of nationally based channels, there are grounds for arguing that new forms of regional 'little cultural imperialisms' may be taking place (Sonwalker, 2001). The linguistic diversity of the region is illustrated not only at the regional and national levels but also in the launch of numerous local, city-based news channels which broadcast in the different languages of the various metropolitan cities. The region of East Asia, however, presents a considerably more complex picture. While the number of 24-hour news channels available is fairly substantial, most of these again are nationally focused, including the five channels emanating from one of the traditional regional media centres, Taiwan. The regional players, not surprisingly, include China, with their English language CCTV-9 network which is clearly pitched at an international audience, and the Hong Kong-based Phoenix News. Particularly noteworthy, however, is the emergence of a new regional news network from an otherwise minor Asian player, which is gaining audiences both within East Asia and across South and West Asia – Channel News Asia from Singapore.

Having highlighted the increasing pervasiveness of 24-hour news in regions around the world, it seems equally important to signal some of the silences. In the region of Oceania (including Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands), there is only one 24-hour news channel, Sky News Australia, which caters principally to Australia and New Zealand but substantially includes content from its parent network, Sky News UK. While the dearth of local channels in this region could be explained to some extent by its small population and, therefore, the non-viability of multiple players, the situation in Africa is particularly conspicuous. While the African region has access to a number of Western and Asian news channels, there is not a single indigenous 24-hour news channel available. It should be clarified that in both Oceania and Africa there are

satellite channels that include news content (Australia's ABC Asia Pacific and South Africa's SABC Africa),³ but these are not 24-hour 'all-news' channels and include a substantial amount of drama and entertainment content. While this may, ostensibly, indicate a lack of political enthusiasm and/or financial viability for 24-hour news services in these parts of the world, it nonetheless signals the continued peripheral status of certain regions in the global 24/7 marketplace of information flows.

The extent to which the growth of 24-hour news channels has pluralized the global news market and weakened the stranglehold of major Western players cannot really be assessed without returning to political economy considerations of ownership and control. Table 1 also charts the ownership status of all 24-hour news channels around the world today. Clearly, there is considerable evidence here to suggest the continued supremacy of major Western corporations in media markets around the globe. Time Warner, through its CNN and CNNI networks already has access to every region on the globe, and this is further reinforced by its commercial interests and affiliations with regional and national channels across South America (Globovision), Europe (n-tv, CNN Turk), South Asia (CNN-IBN) and East Asia (YTN). The influence of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation appears to be even more pervasive. The expansive reach of the Fox News network is coupled with substantial commercial interests in Europe (Sky News), South Asia (Star News), East Asia (Phoenix News) and Oceania (Sky News Australia). Within regional and national markets, however, ownership structures appear to be more intricate. Most regions include channels owned by a range of different national and local commercial entities. The substantial presence of public and non-profit broadcasters in every region is also noteworthy, particularly in Europe where the public broadcasting tradition seems to have been carefully sustained. While the dominance of major Western corporations at the global level certainly cannot be overlooked, at regional and national levels ownership configurations reveal an increasing complexity and heterogeneity that offers a less Western dominated reading of news flows and formations than has been proffered by traditional geo-political economy approaches. This is not to suggest that regional and national formations of capital as well as political elites are not also involved in the regionalized 'colonization of communications space' (Boyd-Barrett, 1998), but it does challenge relatively fixed ideas about Western media dominance and opens up a more complex and dynamic field of regional and transnational media organization than traditionally conceived.

Table 1 reveals, then, that the contemporary satellite news landscape

is a dynamic and rapidly expanding one with information flows increasingly overlapping and intersecting both within and across regions. While the major Western players retain a foothold in media markets around the world, traditional configurations of 'centre' and 'periphery' seem to be increasingly shifting, exemplifying Sinclair et al.'s suggestion that 'each geo-linguistic region is itself dominated by one or two centres of audio-visual production' (2002: 8). What is particularly interesting in respect of 24-hour news, however, is that these configurations are not always aligned with established patterns of media flows within each region. While traditional media centres such as India may be strengthening their media capacity to wage 'mini-imperialisms' (Sonwalker, 2001), in other regions, such as South America, the Middle East and East Asia, new and unpredictable centres of media activity are emerging.⁴ This expanding range of channels, however, should not automatically be construed as indicating an increasingly diversified global news market with a 'level playing field' available to all. As mentioned earlier, the number of channels with a 'global' reach remains small with the vast majority restricted to audiences at regional and national levels.

Reach vs access

For many theorists the arrival of satellite television has revolutionized notions of territory and space, and the ever-increasing range and plurality of channels broadcast over the air space of every region around the world demonstrates the emergence of a genuinely diversified 'global public sphere' (Hannerz, 1996; Volkmer, 2003). While satellite technology's ability to transcend borders cannot be disputed, such claims need to be tempered by the enduring structural and economic barriers to access to satellite television that remain in most markets. Terrestrial television is 'free-to-air' with a well-developed distribution infrastructure in most nations around the world; satellite television, on the other hand, is generally accessible only at a subscription cost (even if individual satellite channels may be 'free-to-air') and faces considerably more structural hurdles when it comes to distribution (Parker, 1995). The US market, together with a number of smaller European states such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland, is amongst the most developed with cable and satellite television penetration rates at over 70 per cent, but in most other countries, including the UK and Australia, penetration rates only range between 10 and 50 per cent (Office of Communications, 2005; Worldscreen, 2005). It is within this subset of homes, then, that the myriad of satellite channels available worldwide

Table 2 Reach vs access – an Australian market example

	CNNI	Fox News	Sky News Aus	Al-Jazeera	CCTV-9	ZEE News	Euro-news
Available over Australian air space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
Carried by major satellite TV providers as a general channel	✓	✓	✓	×	×	×	×
Carried by major satellite TV providers as a special channel at extra cost	–	–	–	✓	×	×	×
Carried by specialist satellite TV providers at substantial installation and subscription cost	–	–	–	✓	✓	×	×
Available by any other known means	–	–	–	–	–	×	×

compete for access. It is also at this level that the major global players with entrenched distribution networks in most markets hold considerable advantages over their regional counterparts. Television viewership has always been a numbers game but in the satellite news market reach and audience statistics, as we shall illustrate, need to be interpreted and dissected even more carefully.

Table 2 illustrates some of the complexities relating to reach and access, in the context of a handful of satellite news channels in the Australian market. All the channels listed in the table, with the exception of Euronews, are beamed over Australian air space. However, out of these, only CNNI, Fox News and Sky News Australia are carried by major satellite television providers as general channels, with Al-Jazeera available as a special channel at extra cost. CCTV-9 can only be accessed at substantial costs through specialist satellite television providers, while ZEE News, in spite of its presence over Australian air space, is not available through any known distribution means. Both CNNI and CCTV-9 would claim the Australian region in their *reach*,⁵ but, as Table 2 clearly illustrates, gaining *access* to the Australian market is not simply a matter of entering its air space, and is contingent on a number of additional factors including partnerships with local satellite television providers, subscription rates and the packages of channels on offer. Similar hierarchies of access would be discernible in most satellite tele-

vision markets with global players such as CNNI and BBC World easily available while the choice of regional and national channels on offer differs by area. These structures of distribution and access arguably reinforce traditional political economy arguments highlighting the continuing supremacy of the major Western players in satellite news markets around the world.

The ability of non-Western news channels to generate 'contraflows', as suggested by some theorists (Volkmer, 1999, 2002, 2003), is also called into question by these inequalities of access. While an increasing number of non-Western channels are beamed over the air space of Western nations, the extent to which they are distributed and available within Western households is often fairly limited. To provide a simple analogy, CNNI is available in virtually every Indian household with satellite television, while in the USA it is considerably more difficult and expensive to gain access to ZEE News broadcasts. These distribution structures are creating an interesting paradox in which the news markets of the non-Western world, in many cases, are more pluralized, offering a mix of regional and national channels alongside the major Western players, while Western news markets remain dominated by their own channels with few non-Western choices.

There is, however, one particular dynamic that is generating a small but steadily increasing stream of 'contraflow' to the Western world – the growing population of non-Western diasporas within most Western states. Mobilizing linguistic and cultural ties, a number of satellite news channels from Asia and the Arab-speaking world are expanding beyond their regions to reach their diasporic communities within the West (Chan, 2002; Ray and Jacka, 2002; Sinclair et al., 2002; Sonwalker, 2001; Volkmer, 2003). News channels from India and China for example, as Table 1 illustrates, are increasingly available in the markets of the USA and Europe where the populations of these ethnic groups are particularly concentrated. The ability of these channels to penetrate mainstream Western news markets, however, is yet to be seen.

With the exception of these small trickles of 'contraflow' then, the reach and access of a handful of major Western news channels remains the most pervasive. The substantial majority of 24-hour satellite news channels around the world today operate at regional, national and even sub-national levels with few flows taking place across regions. While in many instances the reach of these channels is restricted by the structural limitations described above, a number of emerging satellite news channels are *choosing* to focus on smaller and more localized audiences, and departing from the 'global' outlook of the major Western players.

Within a number of regional satellite news markets this 'micro' level approach is proving to be successful with audiences for national and local news channels far outstripping those of global players. It is this increasing 'localization' of the 24-hour news genre and its theoretical implications that we now discuss further.

'Globalization' and 'localization'

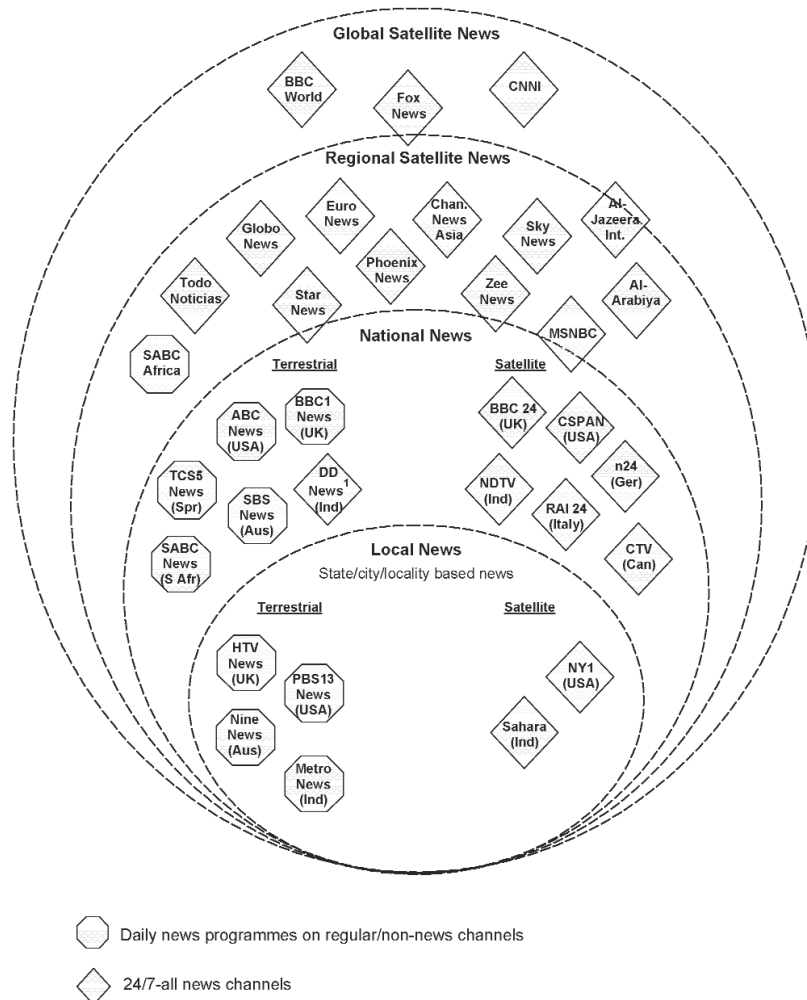
The earliest 24-hour satellite news channels were heralded as symbols of the 'global' news organization (Chalaby, 2002; Feist, 2001). Drawing from marketing strategies that forecast growing global convergence and homogenization of national cultures, these channels set out to attract audiences around the world, working under the assumption that news in particular travels easily across borders and is less culturally rooted than other television genres (Chalaby, 2002; Morley and Robins, 1995). CNN and BBC World, the pioneering 24-hour news networks, harnessed the potential of satellite technology to broadcast, for the first time, common sets of programming across a range of television markets around the globe. As many theorists have noted, however, the initial enthusiasm for these 'global' broadcasts wore off and the audience numbers for these channels remained small and relatively stagnant (Chalaby, 2002; Sonwalker, 2001; Thomas, 2003). In a number of regions, cultural and linguistic barriers proved to be particularly resilient, and the needs and preferences of different audiences increasingly varied (Chalaby, 2002; Melkote et al., 1998; Sonwalker, 2001). From the mid-1990s onwards, a gradual localization of the satellite news genre became discernible, both at the level of global news players ('from the top down') as well as within regional and national markets ('from the bottom up') with the rise of new, locally based channels.

The first moves towards localization involved the differentiation and adaptation of erstwhile homogenous broadcasts of global channels, to suit the preferences and palates of local audiences (Chalaby, 2002; Sonwalker, 2001).⁶ Channels such as CNN and BBC World split their satellite feeds and launched different versions of their channels to cater to the disparate geo-linguistic regions around the world (Chalaby, 2002). While the necessity for these global players to localize their content could be construed as evidence of the impermeability of cultural and linguistic barriers, and the 'limits' of globalization, Chalaby (2002) contends that this sort of localization can often facilitate and even accelerate processes of globalization. By offering local versions of their global programming, these channels remained competitive in culturally

diverse markets without necessarily losing their international flavour. As Chalaby points out: 'When CNN International broadcasts in German the channel retains its American identity and distinctive news treatment' (2002: 199–200). A more fundamental localization of the satellite news genre, however, appears to be taking place within regional and national spheres with the growth of a number of 24-hour news channels that cater specifically to national and local audiences. As Table 1 demonstrates, these channels now constitute the majority in the contemporary satellite news market. Increasingly, the international news landscape is characterized by overlapping stratifications and multifarious flows and formations with new players emerging at every level and from almost every region around the globe.

Figure 1, based on a selected handful of terrestrial and satellite news players, illustrates the multiple layers of news programming available in most markets today. What is particularly exemplified is that though satellite technology's ability to broadcast across borders remains undiminished, a number of satellite news channels are choosing to narrow their reach and focus on audiences within national and local markets.⁷ In most parts of the world today, these regional and national incarnations of the 24-hour news genre have been extremely successful, with considerably larger viewership than the global players, whose audiences remain confined to wealthy elites and upper class professionals across different regions (Chalaby, 2002; Hope, 2004; Parker, 1995; Sonwalker, 2001; TBS, 1999). And this push for greater localization shows little sign of abatement (Parker, 1995; Sonwalker, 2001; Thomas, 2003), with markets in India and the USA witnessing the emergence of city and even locality-based 24-hour news channels.

As more and more regional and national players enter the 24-hour news market, there has also been a departure from the 'global' orientation of the pioneering channels. CNNI and BBC World worked hard to shed links with their countries of origin and diminish notions of 'foreignness' in their news content (Feist, 2001; Kung-Shankleman, 2003; Volkmer, 1999). As one CNN executive explained, 'To a very large extent we've tried to make CNN International's place and country of origin neutral ... There's a fixation on ... not sounding like an American' (quoted in Kung-Shankleman, 2003: 87). With more recent arrivals in the news market, however, there has been a resurgence of national and regional identities. Fox News, in spite of its increasingly global reach, retains a staunchly American identity. The recently launched Telesur news channel purports to present news 'from a Latin American perspective' (Daniels, 2005). Singapore's Channel News Asia



Note: 1 Also available via satellite

Figure 1 Global to local television news – 24/7, satellite and terrestrial

describes itself as ‘created for Asians by Asians’ (Channel News Asia, 2006). And the recently launched 24-hour international French channel, France 24, is intended ‘to cover worldwide news with French eyes . . . and to carry the values of France throughout the world’ (BBC News, 2006). While a number of these channels are ‘outward’ looking and hoping to gain international audiences, their approach differs markedly from the more cosmopolitan ideals that theorists have associated with CNN and other global networks (Hannerz, 1996; Volkmer, 1999, 2003).

These 24-hour news channels seem in many instances in fact to be acting as symbolic representatives of disparate national and regional identities within the global news market, advancing their distinct perspectives and interests.

In the context of the satellite news market the assertions of regional identities from some of the channels described above, therefore, could most certainly be construed as defensive and even reactionary to the growing pervasiveness of global news channels.⁸ Such developments have led some theorists to assert, then, that the rise of these new, localized 24-hour news channels, with their distinct regional and national approaches is providing multiple and overlapping tiers of programming, and underlines the emergence of a genuinely diversified 'global public sphere' (Volkmer, 2003). The rapidly expanding satellite news landscape, they argue, is characterized not by the 'sameness' of McLuhan's 'global village' (1964), but by an increasing heterogeneity and plurality that encompasses a range of alternative perspectives from around the world (Sinclair et al., 2002; Volkmer, 2003). However, it has to be said that the availability of an increasing number of channels or even regional and local channels does not in itself guarantee diversity, local representation or authentic expressions of difference and oppositional views.

Our findings and the discussion above relating to the structures and ecology of the satellite news landscape indicate that there is some evidence to support both 'global dominance' and 'global public sphere' positions and interpretations. We also suggest, however, that any evaluation of the extent to which the contemporary global news sphere is diversifying or homogenizing and genuinely contributing to an emergent global public sphere of engaged views and values is incomplete without an analysis of the actual content of the range of channels on offer. To address this issue further, we now finally turn to a brief discussion of the programming content of 24-hour satellite news channels.

24-hour satellite news programming

The emergence of satellite news channels, with their 24-hour 'all-news' cycles and advanced, cutting-edge technologies, has been credited with revolutionizing news production and practice, creating a new and distinct television genre driven by 'live' breaking news (Bennett, 2003; Hope, 2004; Semati, 2001; Thussu, 2003). In an increasingly saturated and fiercely competitive media environment, however, journalism's traditional impetus for 'being first' (Feist, 2001) has translated, say others, into a single-minded fixation with 'live' television, which comes

at the expense of 'real' and considered journalism (MacGregor, 1997; Semati, 2001; Thussu, 2003; Walker, 2003). Rather than more detailed coverage, as one might expect with the luxury of a 24-hour schedule, there is a pressure to feed the 24-hour 'beast' (Feist, 2001; Walker, 2003) and 'conflict-driven', sensationalized and 'thin' news reporting is in essence what is being produced and globalized (Thussu, 2003).

Few studies to date, however, have attempted to interrogate the actual structures and form of 24-hour news through an engagement with its actual content.⁹ We suggest that it is in and through a more systematic, empirical examination of actual television news broadcasts that the impact and influence of the 24-hour news genre can more accurately be discerned (see Cottle and Rai, forthcoming). For the purposes of our present discussion, we provide a first look at some of the complexities involved through an examination of the programming structures of a handful of 24-hour news channels.

Table 3 lays out the typical weekday television schedules of five 24-hour news players. It includes the three major Western networks, CNNI, BBC World and Fox News, as well as two non-Western, regionally based channels, India's NDTV 24x7 and Singapore's Channel News Asia. Looking, first, at the two pioneering global networks, we see some similarities and differences in their approaches. Both channels exhibit a level of cyclicity in their schedules, though their approach differs, with BBC World adhering to a strict, repetitive 'news-on-the-hour' format while CNNI prefers periods of 'rolling news' with only headline updates every hour. In the case of both channels (especially BBC World), a 'prime time' period is not clearly discernible, underlining their more 'global' orientation to audiences and the physical and audience reality that 'the sun comes up somewhere all the time' (Chalaby, 2003; Volkmer, 1999: 25). The schedules of both channels are also subject to change the most often, making way for 'live', 'breaking news' events as they happen (BBC World, 2006). Moving to Fox News, we see that aside from an overnight period of 'rolling news', their schedule is considerably less repetitive. There is a broader range of talk and discussion-based programmes, all of which are of 1-hour duration (as opposed to CNNI and BBC World's preference for half-hour programmes). Furthermore, in spite of Fox News's increasing global audience, its schedule reveals a fairly distinct 'prime time' period, based on US Eastern Standard Time, underlining its primary focus on American audiences and continued assertion of its national identity. Turning to our non-Western, regional players, NDTV 24x7's schedule is slightly different again, with much less repetition and a mix of distinct half-hour and 1-hour programmes that include news,

Table 3 Typical weekday schedule of five 24-hour news players^{1, 2}

Time ³	CNNI (Aus EST)	BBC World (Aus EST)	Fox News (USA EST)	NDTV 24x7 (Ind)	CNA (S'pore)
9am	CNN Today (rolling news)	BBC News Asia Business Rpt & Today	Fox News Live (rolling news)	News	Prime Time Morning Int. News & Amazing Asia
10am		BBC News World Business Rpt		Crime and the City	World Today Get Real
11am		BBC News Asia Today & Business Rpt		Stocks Call In	World Today Asian Home News
12pm	World Sport	BBC News Asia Today & Business Rpt		News Investments Call In	World Today The Agenda
1pm	Insight World Report	BBC News Asia Today & Business Rpt	Dayside w/ Linda Vester	Power Lunch	Amazing Asia Yours Truly Asia
2pm	CNN Today (rolling news)	BBC News World Business Rpt	Fox News Live	News The 2.30 Factor	World Today Amazing Asia
3pm		BBC News World Business Rpt	Studio B w/ Shepard Smith		Asia Today Infusion
4pm	NewsNight from USA	BBC News World Bus. Rpt & Sport	Your World w/ Neil Cavuto	News Doctor NDTV	World Today Amazing Asia
5pm	Business International	BBC News Click Online	Big Story w/ John Gibson	News	Asia Today Yours Truly Asia

continued . . .

Table 3 Typical weekday schedule of five 24-hour news players^{1,2} continued

Time ³	CNNI (Aus EST)	BBC World (Aus EST)	Fox News (USA EST)	NDTV 24x7 (Ind)	CNA (S'pore)
6pm	Larry King Live	BBC News Hard Talk	Special Report w/Brit Hume	The Evening News	Infusion Amazing Asia
7pm	World News World Sport	BBC News Earth Report	Fox Report	Business 24x7 Sport 24x7	Asia Tonight Inspirations
8pm	Business International	BBC News Asia Today & World Bus.	O'Reilly Factor	Tonight at 8 Newsnight	Airport Special My Money, My Life
9pm	World News World Sport	BBC News Hard Talk	Hannity and Colmes	The 9 O'Clock News	Prime Time News The Fight against Terror
10pm	World News Asia	BBC News World Bus. Rpt & Sport	On the Record w/ Greta	The X Factor Mumbai Live	Singapore Tonight Singapore Business
11pm	World News World Sport	BBC News Fast Track	O'Reilly Factor	Crime and the City Night Out	Asia Tonight My Money, My Life
12am	World News Asia	BBC News	Special Report w/Brit Hume	News	World Tonight

Notes

1 Additional weekly programmes include, CNN: *International Correspondents, Diplomatic License, Talk Asia, Global Challenges*; BBC: *World Uncovered, Reporters, This Week, Talking Point*; Fox News: *War Stories, Heartland, At Large with Geraldo Rivera*; NDTV 24x7: *Walk the Talk, The Big Fight, Investigation, We the People*; CNA: *Insight, The Agenda*, 360

2 Programmes in bold indicate regular, daily news bulletins and updates.

3 The schedules for CNNI and BBC World, given their separate satellite feeds for the Asia-Pacific region, are based on Australian Eastern Standard Time; for the other networks their schedules are based on the time zones of their primary markets, since they only broadcast one, nationally based, feed to all regions.

talk and discussion. Singapore's Channel News Asia, on the other hand, reveals a schedule that more closely resembles that of BBC World, with a similar 'news-on-the-hour' format, albeit with a broader range of programmes through the day. Both channels indicate their principally national orientation through a clear 'prime time' period that is highlighted even in their programme titles (*Tonight at 8*, *The 9 O'Clock News*, *Prime Time News*, etc.).

Even at this fairly broad level, then, Table 3 signals some of the differences and complexities in approaches to the 24-hour news genre both within and across the disparate global and regional satellite players. In general, regionally and nationally oriented channels seem to be less repetitive in their programming, with timelines that clearly cater for localized, defined audiences. They are also less focused on the coverage of 'live' events with more talk and discussion-based programmes featuring on a regular basis, as compared to their global counterparts who limit these to their weekend schedules only. Between the non-Western players, there are differences again in their levels of adaptation of the 24-hour news genre. While Channel News Asia seems to retain a closer affinity to the major Western players, a conclusion reinforced by comparative research conducted elsewhere (Natarajan and Xiaoming, 2003), the Indian NDTV 24x7 channel seems to adopt a more independent approach to satellite news, stemming, perhaps, from the more developed and professionalized nature of the Indian news industry (Sonwalker, 2001). Even a cursory examination of these channels, therefore, suggests that assertions of 'Westernization' or 'CNNization' (Thussu, 2003) need to be tempered by a greater recognition of existing news cultures and media strengths in different regions around the world. In some cases, the 24-hour news genre may be undergoing what Sinclair et al. describe as 'a process of indigenization', with Western models of practice adapted and moulded to local cultures, resulting in the creation of new 'hybrid' genres (2002: 13). Furthermore, with global, regional and national players increasingly competing within the same markets, the distinctions between them are not only understandable but likely to intensify, as each 24-hour channel tries to carve out its own unique identity (Farhi, 2003). These arguments suggest that rather than a shared, homogenous format, the 24-hour news genre is increasingly evolving and diversifying with 'new' and 'old' players redefining and reorienting their approaches to remain viable in a rapidly expanding news market. These complexities demand closer empirical examination if their impact and influence on the broader ecology of television news is to be properly evaluated and understood (see Cottle and Rai, 2006; Cottle and Rai, forthcoming).

Conclusions

As documented above, 24-hour satellite news today reveals a dynamic, rapidly expanding and increasingly differentiated ecology. In this article, we have mapped, for the first time, the full extent of its proliferation and pervasiveness around the world. With over 100 channels available today, comprising commercial, public and non-profit broadcasters, at global, regional, national and even sub-national levels, the growing presence of 24/7 news is beyond dispute. Our research has also demonstrated the increasing complexities of the contemporary satellite news landscape, with overlapping and intersecting flows and formations that problematize conventional theoretical approaches to international communications and news flows in particular. While the growth of channels in disparate regions around the world could, to some extent, be interpreted as 'globalizing', with a more varied assortment of sounds and images creating an increasingly diversified 'global public sphere' (Volkmer, 1999, 2003), our evaluations of ownership and reach lend credence to traditional political economy arguments underlining the continued supremacy of major Western players in transnational and world markets (Boyd-Barrett, 1998; McChesney, 2000, 2003; Thussu, 2003).

Nonetheless, the case for 'global Western dominance' and cultural imperialism, we suggest, is weakened by a tendency to overlook the dynamics *within* non-Western news cultures. As our research bears out, in a number of regions around the world today, the news landscape is characterized not by 'one-way' flows but rather 'multi-directional' flows (Sinclair et al., 2002), which, in some instances, can be interpreted as reinforcing regional 'mini-imperialisms' (Sonwalker, 2001), while in other areas, as elevating and empowering erstwhile minor media players (Singapore, Middle East). As our discussions on reach and access suggest, however, this increasing complexity should not automatically be construed as indicating 'contraflows' back to the West (Volkmer, 1999, 2002, 2003). In spite of satellite technology's transnational broadcasting capabilities, non-Western news players continue to face considerable structural inequalities in their access to Western markets. *Within* non-Western regions, however, we would argue there is an increasing plurality, with non-Western and Western players competing side-by-side in 24-hour news markets, thereby challenging discourses on blanket cultural 'invasion' and Westernization (Sinclair et al., 2002; Sonwalker, 2001).

A particularly noteworthy development is the increasing 'localization' of the satellite news genre with more and more channels

catering to audiences within national and sub-national spheres. Satellite technology's expansive, transnational broadcasting capabilities are deliberately being abandoned, in favour of more localized and circumscribed transmission that often overlaps with the domains of terrestrial television. This signals a broader shift in approaches to satellite television itself, as its technological capabilities are separated and extracted from the globalization discourse that has conventionally surrounded it, and are harnessed and exploited in new and unforeseen ways. Thus, in such ways, the contemporary ecology of satellite news reveals complex stratifications with multifarious flows and formations that can both span across regions stimulating greater global integration and convergence, and concentrate and intensify within regions engendering localization, regionalization and even fragmentation.

The intricacies and complexities revealed in this article, therefore, problematize theoretical orientations towards 24-hour news as essentially homogenizing or diversifying. Even our brief overview of a handful of disparate programming structures signals differences in approach and levels of adaptation of the genre. We suggest, therefore, that any conclusive evaluation of the form and nature of 24-hour satellite news now needs to move beyond both a priori 'political economy' expectations and arguments and more recent 'global public sphere' claims about the news media's contribution to global cosmopolitanism, and encompass a more systematic, empirical engagement with the formations, flows and forms of 24/7 news providers and their output today (Cottle and Rai, forthcoming). Our position, on the basis of the findings and discussion presented, remains that while both these theoretical prisms are essential for approaching and understanding current 'global' media phenomena, their respective insights, interpretations and explanations now need to be sharpened and refined in closer empirical engagement with the changing field and output of satellite news. Specifically, we need to attend to the ways in which news issues including major global concerns are represented and refracted, discussed and challenged in and through satellite news channels and examine the extent to which these variously open up or close down the possibilities for pluralized communications and the expression of contending and alternative views, values and world visions. Only by attending to the communicative complexities of satellite news and its public structuring of issues and conflicts, we suggest, can we secure the detailed evidence with which to further adjudicate between the paradigmatic claims of 'global dominance' and 'global public sphere' approaches. Here, as elsewhere, we suspect that there is considerably more complexity than

current theoretical debates and discussion seem to allow for (see Cottle and Rai, 2006; Cottle and Rai, forthcoming). The review and discussion of the fast-changing field of 24/7 satellite news with its overlapping formations and local-to-global configurations and flows is offered here as a prelude to this wider research effort.

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Notes

- 1 A number of studies focusing on the CNN network have highlighted its content-sharing arrangements with non-Western media outlets such as Al-Jazeera and the role of its 'World Report' programme which operates with a global 'carrier' format providing airtime for reports from international broadcasters around the world, thereby bringing their content to Western audiences (Flourney and Stewart, 1997; Johnston, 1998; Volkmer, 1999, 2003).
- 2 See note 1 of Table 1 for an explanation of how this list was collated.
- 3 It is worth noting that the South African channel, SABC Africa, was initially launched as a 24-hour news channel but, ostensibly due to poor audience numbers, changed its format and widened its scope to include drama and entertainment programming.
- 4 In South America, Venezuela and Argentina as opposed to Mexico and Brazil; in the Middle East, Qatar and Saudi Arabia as opposed to Egypt; in East Asia, Singapore as opposed to Taiwan.
- 5 The estimates for reach used in this article, however, are considerably more conservative; see note 2 of Table 1.
- 6 Chalaby (2002) summarizes the localization of these international channels as including the introduction of local advertising windows, translation of content, the introduction of local programming windows, and ultimately, the launch of a separate regionalized channel.
- 7 Their decision to select a satellite platform could, ostensibly, be explained by the lower barriers to entry that exist in most parts of the world with respect to the satellite television industry as opposed to terrestrial television (licensing, regulation, etc.).
- 8 Channels such as the Latin American Telesur and France's France 24 have acknowledged their prevailing impetus to counter the influence of global, American channels such as CNN (Da Lage, 2003; Daniels, 2005).
- 9 Some exceptions include Bae (2000), Natarajan and Xiaoming (2003) and Ayish (2001), all of which concentrate on comparisons of news topics that featured in broadcasts across Western and non-Western networks.

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