

Chapter 9

The global newsroom: convergences and diversities in the globalization of television news

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The ideal of the 'informed citizen' has always been regarded as central to the functioning of democracies. An informed citizenry is considered to be a prerequisite for full citizenship for at least two principles, central to a democratic system of government: first, because in a democracy, those who govern should at all times be held accountable to the governed; and second, because democracy is based on active participation by citizens in the social and political life of society. Clearly, both principles are predicated on citizens being informed about the activities of government and the affairs of society (for a recent discussion of the relations between communication and citizenship see, for example, Murdock and Golding 1989). It is because of this that the mass media, primarily in their 'information function', have been hailed, cliché-style, as 'the lifeblood of democracies', pivotal for the functioning of healthy and vibrant democratic systems.

While citizenship has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of membership in a given society, over the last few decades the concept has taken on a global dimension. The notion of 'global citizenship' received considerable impetus from post World War II attempts to structure a new world order, a vision powerfully expressed in the symbolism associated with the establishment of the United Nations Organization. 'Global citizenship' implied the possibility of a supranational, global identity. These aspirations were greatly enhanced, first by the visions, and eventually by the development, of new technologies of communication that held the promise, for the first time, of a truly global communication system. Instant global communication, it was felt, offered the possibility

of the emergence of a 'global village' – a global community, in which all citizens had access to the same informational and cultural resources – the foundation of a global citizenship.

Like many other utopias, this one too foundered on the harsh realities of the post WWII world, riven by cultural differences and conflicts, political and ideological antagonisms and immense economic inequalities. The information and knowledge resources on which a global citizenship must be based – free speech and free access to information, the capacity to process, comprehend and 'negotiate' such information, a sense of having a stake in the global flow of information, of being fairly represented in it and of the relevance of that information to one's interests, concerns and aspirations – were never evenly distributed around the globe, either at the level of the production of that information, or at the level of consumption.

Nevertheless, the technological precondition for the emergence of a global community – the development of a communication technology capable of creating a global communication system – has, indeed, been fulfilled. For the past decade or so, a global communication system based on communication satellites has been in place (Wallis and Baran 1990). We may inquire, therefore, what implications flow from this global communication system for the development of a globally knowledgeable audience.

This chapter attempts an initial examination of that question, by focusing on one aspect of that global system, namely the convergences and diversities in news events and news stories broadcast by different television news organizations, who are participants in a cross-national news exchange system. Two aspects of these convergences and diversities are examined; the topics, or events covered, and the meanings given to these events, as conveyed in the stories broadcast in different countries. The contribution that a news exchange system might make toward creating shared perceptions of the world across national boundaries is then discussed.

'THE SKY IS FULL OF STUFF'

We begin with a familiar observation. Every day, hundreds of miles above the earth, images that become the substance of television news span time zones, continents and cultures; images of social unrest, of peaceful political change and of natural and man-made

disasters; vignettes of human triumph, suffering and folly; pictures of an increasingly interconnected world. 'The sky is full of stuff,' says one American news executive. 'We just take it down from the satellites' (Small 1989: 27). As a result, viewers of television news around the world might see the same, or similar 'stuff' on their evening news programs. McLuhan's hyperbolic 'global village' appears to have arrived, courtesy of a satellite-based global television news system.

But in what sense is television news becoming 'global'? True, viewers around the world may see the same, or similar pictures, and witness the same events, but are they told the same 'story', or do they indeed decode those stories in similar or diverse ways? Moreover, in what sense is the globalization of television news a truly new phenomenon, deserving our attentions in new ways?

Claims concerning the globalization of the news media are not, of course, new or even recent (see, for example, Schramm 1959 and Hachten 1987). The printing press crossed national and cultural boundaries long before television. The international news agencies have been in the business of disseminating news materials around the world for almost a century and a half (Boyd-Barrett 1980, Fenby 1986). Radio and films were oblivious to national boundaries almost since their inception. Yet the advent of satellite technology, facilitating the instant transmission of visual materials around the world, may be argued to have ushered in a qualitatively new stage in the globalization of news.

On what grounds do we make this claim? Our reasons are two-pronged. First, we would argue that the institutional arrangements for transmitting and exchanging television news materials, spawned by the availability of satellite technology, have transformed the global structure of news dissemination around the world, toward a greater decentralization of the system. Second, we argue that the differences between the flexibility and degree of 'openness' (see, for example, Fiske 1987) of verbal vs. visual texts render the dissemination of visual materials qualitatively different from the 'old' system of news transmission by the wire agencies. Let us elaborate.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF TELEVISION NEWS

The globalization of television news is the product of the harnessing, in the service of news production and dissemination, of the new technologies of recording and transmitting visual

materials. The introduction of satellite technology into the global dissemination of television news has not only extended the reach and increased the speed with which visual news materials are transmitted around the globe, but has also spawned new institutional arrangements dedicated to the international dissemination of television news materials (Sherman and Ruby 1974, Kressley 1978, Fisher 1980, Eugster 1983, Lanispuro 1987).

At least three 'arms' of that system need to be identified here:

- 1 The international television news agencies Visnews and WTN (Worldwide Television News), outgrowths of the 'traditional' news agencies Reuters and UPTN, distribute television news materials around the clock to television news organizations around the world.
- 2 International satellite-delivered news services, such as the US-based CNN and the British-based *Super Channel* and *Sky News*, provide fully shaped television news programs via satellite to clients in Europe and around the world.
- 3 Systems of television news exchanges have been set up under the umbrellas of a number of regional broadcasting organizations, such as the European Broadcasting Union, the Asian Broadcasting Union, Arabsat and Intervision, based in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The news services of these organizations are linked to each other as well as with the news organizations of the US television networks. The following discussion applies primarily to the news exchange system.

Collaboration between these organizations forms the basis of the global news exchange system. Through a constant flow of telex messages and daily telephone conferences between specially designated 'news co-ordinators' and news liaison personnel based in the broadcasting organizations in different countries, an ongoing exchange of information is maintained about the availability of, and interest in, visual materials of news events (Lantenac 1975, Lindmuller 1988). The news exchange services and agencies also provide the technical support arrangements for the electronic sharing of these news materials. The relatively small group of 'news co-ordinators' and liaison personnel perform a primarily 'gatekeeping' function, albeit on a global basis. Hence the metaphor of 'The Global Newsroom'.

These arrangements have important implications for the traditional argument about 'media imperialism' - i.e. the view,

popularized in the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to which western media institutions and interests dominated the global media system, and served as the back door for the reintroduction of western economic and cultural influences into Third World countries (e.g. Tunstall 1977, UNESCO 1980).

Our impression, based on observations of the operations of the Eurovision News Exchange system conducted during 1987, and of the relationship between Eurovision and other regional news exchange organizations, is of a rather decentralized and mutually dependent system. During our observations, for example, we noticed a considerable degree of interaction between the European and the Asian systems, characterized, we thought, more by a peer relationship than dominance and subordination. Admittedly, our evidence is impressionistic, yet it seems that the era in which two or three global news agencies dominated the flow of world news from bases in London, Paris or New York is, perhaps, gradually being superseded by one in which Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur (the co-ordinating centers for Asiavision) play a role more on a par with the one played by the centers of the EBU news exchange system in the various European capitals.

CONVERGENCE, DIVERSITY, DEPENDENCE

The impact of the global newsroom can be studied in part by examining some of the patterns of story *usage* by the national services which participate in the Eurovision News Exchange. Among the appropriate questions to ask in this regard are:

- 1 Considering all the national services which air stories from EVN feeds, how much diversity and how much convergence do we find in patterns of usage across services?
- 2 Focusing on individual national services as the unit of analysis, how dependent is each service on the Eurovision News Exchange for its 'foreign' news footage?

The data reported here come from a content analysis of television news stories which aired during the main evening newscast of eighteen different television news services and from an examination of official EBU documents reporting story use for the thirty-six national broadcast services which are regular and associate members of the Eurovision News Exchange. Videotapes of eighteen different main evening bulletins were collected for a two-week

period (weekdays only), 16–20 February and 15–19 June, 1987. Newscasts examined ranged from *ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings* to *Heute* on ZDF to the Arabic language broadcasts of Jordanian television.

A total of 2,569 different news stories were coded by trained graduate students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Maryland.¹ Coders were fluent in the language of the newscasts they coded. Each story was initially given a multi-word descriptor which told what the story was about. After preliminary coding, each story about the same persons/events was given the same, short 'name'. In addition, coders also recorded, among other things, the amount of time the story received and whether it could be classified as 'foreign' news from the perspective of the country on whose broadcast it aired (for a discussion of the problematic nature of classifying news as 'foreign' and 'domestic', see Levy and Barkin 1989).

We begin our analysis of diversity and convergence in usage patterns with Table 1, which reports on the extent to which the news stories transmitted on the Eurovision News Exchange actually appeared on any news program of the Eurovision member nations. Based on a day-by-day examination of EVN usage reports for June, it appears that the most heavily used story of any day was seen on a minimum of thirteen to a maximum of twenty national services.² Similarly, the second most heavily aired story of any given day during the sample week was used by anywhere from eleven to seventeen national services.

Table 9.1 Most frequently used EVN stories by day

Day	Story	No. of services airing
June 15	Korea unrest	19
	Italy vote	17
June 16	Reagan speech	20
	Korea unrest	15
June 17	M. Rust flies into Red Square	15
	Corsica terrorism	13
	Subway vigilante sentenced	11
June 18	Korea unrest	11
	Korea unrest	13
June 19	Bardot auction	12
	Korea clashes	19
	Spain bomb blast	19

For example, on 16 June, EVN footage of President Reagan's televised speech in which the President discussed a laundry list of items including the economic summit, tensions in the Persian Gulf, talks with the Soviet Union and the US budget deficit, appeared on newscasts of twenty national services. That multi-subject story was the most widely used EVN story of both the day and week.

By contrast, later in the week (18 June), only thirteen national services carried EVN-derived footage of student unrest in South Korea, but that was still the day's most commonly aired story from the Eurovision News Exchange.

While the most frequently used EVN stories tended to be hard, often-breaking news, occasionally soft or feature news is also widely aired. Several Eurovision news co-ordinators told us that stories about animals (pandas, whales and water-skiing squirrels) often received wide 'play'. Similarly, celebrity news too was sometimes widely used. On 18 June, for example, an item about an auction of film star Brigitte Bardot's personal effects was the second most widely used story, airing on eleven different national services.

Overall, the data in Table 1 demonstrates that for some 'big' stories of the day, there is substantial, but not complete, convergence of coverage across the thirty-six services we examined. Indeed, this less than complete convergence is further illustrated in Table 2 which shows that no story appeared on all thirty-six national services or even on twenty-one out of the thirty-six full and associate members of the Eurovision News Exchange.

Only one story during the June sample week (Reagan speech) was used by twenty national services, while three out of seven (42.7 per cent) of all stories transmitted on an EVN feed were used by four or fewer national services and 87.2 per cent of the week's EVN stories were not used by two-thirds of member services. However, every story transmitted was aired by at least one national broadcast service.

What is one to make of this pattern of convergence on the 'top' stories of the day, coupled with substantial diversity on any day's lesser news? First, it is clear that since television news is a picture-driven medium, the sheer availability of news footage undoubtedly makes it more likely that a story will be broadcast by any news service if it contains pictures. Thus, the existence of the global newsroom increases the likelihood that different news

Table 9.2 Percentage of EVN stories used on different numbers of national news services

National services	Percentage of EVN stories	
0	0.0	(0)
1	1.8	(2)
2	12.9	(14)
3	15.7	(17)
4	12.3	(13)
5	5.6	(6)
6	5.6	(6)
7	7.4	(8)
8	9.3	(10)
9	1.8	(2)
10	8.3	(9)
11	3.7	(4)
12	2.8	(3)
13	4.6	(5)
14	0.9	(1)
15	1.8	(2)
16	0.0	(0)
17	1.8	(2)
18	0.0	(0)
19	2.8	(3)
20	0.9	(1)
Total	100.0	(108)

programs in different countries will have the same or similar news.

Second, the convergence of coverage we observed also implies a measure of *shared professional culture*, a certain commonality in news values and news judgments, across all national services. At the same time, the diversity of judgments on lesser items also suggests that this sharing of news values is not complete and that national social and political differences, as well as differences in journalistic norms between nations, also play a part in shaping patterns of news coverage. Finally, these data point to considerable 'slack' in the influence of the Eurovision News Exchange on national news coverage. Viewed collectively, at least, the behavior of the national television news services does not appear to reflect a system in which Eurovision plays a strongly dominant role.

However, if one shifts the level of analysis away from collectivities or systems and focuses instead on individual national services, a significantly different picture emerges. Table 3 examines

Table 9.3 EVN dependency for selected main evening bulletins

National service	EVN dependency 1 ^a	EVN dependency 2 ^b
BRT (Belgium-French)	42.5%	88.3%
TVE (Spain)	16.3	51.9
ARD (Germany)	12.8	40.0
IBA (Israel-Hebrew)*	10.5	66.7
TF1 (France)	6.1	41.3

Notes: ^aEVN dependency 1: Number of EVN stories aired/Total number of stories aired.

^bEVN dependency 2: Number of EVN stories aired/Total number of foreign stories aired.

*Data for the Israel Broadcasting Authority are based on only three days' reports, since the network was shut down for two days during the sample week by a strike.

the degree to which five national broadcast services depend on EVN materials for their main evening news bulletins. Data presented in the table were derived by comparing videotapes of those bulletins with videotapes of EVN feeds for the June week. The bulletins were chosen from a geographically diverse group of large and small countries.

The percentages reported in Table 3 represent two types of 'EVN Dependency': 'EVN Dependency 1', defined as the ratio of EVN-generated stories used in the main evening bulletin to the total number of stories appearing in the bulletin, and 'EVN Dependency 2', defined as the ratio of EVN-transmitted stories used in the bulletin to the total number of foreign news items aired. Thus, EVN Dependency 1 is a measure across the entire newshole, while EVN Dependency 2 assesses the impact of EVN materials for all foreign news coverage.

At the level of main evening bulletin there is considerable variation in EVN dependency by national broadcast service. The French-language service in Belgium, for example, depends on EVN materials for three-sevenths (42.5 per cent) of its total newshole and a very substantial 88.3 per cent of its foreign news coverage. By contrast, none of the remaining four main bulletins examined depended on EVN for more than one-sixth of their total stories, but all did depend on the Eurovision News Exchange for roughly half of their foreign reports, a significant degree of dependence.

THE PRODUCTION OF MEANINGS: VISUAL VS. VERBAL TEXTS

The second major theme of this chapter is based on assumptions about the relative 'openness' or closure of visual and verbal texts. By 'openness' we mean the extent to which these different kinds of texts constrain the meanings embedded in them or, alternatively, allow for multiple decodings of their meanings. Thus, it can be argued that verbal texts (e.g. news stories in the printed press) are relatively 'closed' (i.e. they constrain the range of interpretations or meanings of the events they report) since *any account of an event necessarily defines its meaning*. On the other hand, 'pure' visuals (i.e. visuals unaccompanied by a verbal caption or text) are relatively 'open', as they are susceptible to a wider range of interpretations or 'stories' based upon them. Let us illustrate with an anecdote (albeit perhaps not of a typical incident), related to us by a member of WTN's bureau in Tel Aviv. During an especially cold winter spell in Europe a few years ago, a cameraman on the bureau's staff suggested a story that could appeal to freezing European television viewers. He went to the Tel Aviv waterfront and shot some footage of bathers splashing in the sea (thus attempting to illustrate the different, milder climate). The footage was duly sent to WTN's headquarters in London, and from there was transmitted to WTN's clients. WTN's bureau chief in Tel Aviv, who regularly monitored the news on Jordanian Television, was surprised the following evening to see their footage on Jordan Television's news broadcast, used to illustrate a story about the decline of tourism to Israel. The pictures did, indeed, show a rather sparsely populated beach.

Intriguingly, the visuals exchanged through the Eurovision news exchange system are sent primarily in the form of 'raw materials', that is, unedited footage, including only 'natural sound'. The task of editing and shaping these materials into news stories remains in the hands of news editors in the different broadcasting organizations. Thus, while the same visual materials might be used by editors in different countries, the final shape of the stories they are telling, their narrative and thematic structures, and the meanings embedded in them remain in the hands of editors working with different national audiences in mind.

For students of television news this offers a very useful opportunity to compare the meanings in stories of the 'same' event,

and thus to examine comparatively whether and how such diverse meanings are constructed. Indeed, we are thus provided with a 'live laboratory' in which to explore the process of television's 'construction of reality'. Such comparative analysis is especially important in an era characterized by increasing globalization of television news, for it offers an important antidote to 'naïve universalism' – that is, to the assumption that events reported in the news carry their own meanings, and that the meanings embedded in news stories produced in one country can therefore be generalized to news stories told in other societies.

Our basic assumption, then, is that different societies tell themselves – on television and elsewhere – different stories, coherent narratives that serve particular purposes, and that particular cultural settings would account for this diversity. Note that the diversity of the stories told, even about the 'same' events, is our point of *departure*, rather than a *'finding'*. It is precisely the richness of the spectrum of narrative variation that we find fascinating. It is through this diversity and variation that the question of the production of meaning can be best addressed.

COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

For the purposes of our comparative analysis we identified in the materials we gathered (two weeks of evening/nightly broadcasts from eighteen services in twelve countries) those stories which dealt with the 'same' event and were broadcast on eight or more of the television services studied, typically on the same day. Stories dealing with the 'same' event could be of two kinds: first, they could be stories reported by special correspondents of the different news organizations, using their own visuals, filmed by their own crews; or, second, they could be based on visual materials taken, in part or in whole, from the news exchange system. These stories may be narrated by a reporter or an anchor/newsreader in the studio or by a correspondent in the field. We shall discuss two examples, one for each kind: first, a scene-setting story about the elections in Ireland in 1987, as told by three correspondents, for the BBC, Belgian television (RTBF) and the American network CBS; then, the coverages of Gorbachev's speech at the 'Peace Conference' convened in Moscow in June 1987.

Before we proceed to discuss these examples, let us briefly present two themes that emerged from our analysis, that is, the

ways we attempt to explain the commonalities and the differences in the stories. We labelled the first 'the domestication of the foreign', whereby we argue that 'foreign' news events are 'domesticated' and told in ways that render them more familiar, more comprehensible and more compatible for consumption by different national audiences. The second theme addresses 'the stability of narrative forms', that is, the ways in which accounts of news events are couched within the framework of 'stable' narratives, i.e. narratives that are already stored, as it were, in the collective memory of different societies and cultures.

Domesticating the foreign

One of the consequences of a highly developed news exchange system is the erosion of the 'traditional' priorities accorded by television news to 'domestic' and 'foreign' stories. Depending in part on the availability of 'dramatic' footage, news events of potentially global interest, e.g. a presidential election in the US, an earthquake in Armenia, a soccer tragedy in England or the rescue of three whales trapped underneath the Alaskan ice (Rose 1989), have become staples of television news services around the world. Thus, 'foreign' news stories are often accorded the airtime and prominence more commonly reserved to stories of domestic interest. In a picture-driven medium, the availability of dramatic pictures competes with, and often supersedes, other news considerations.

But the globalization of television news has not diminished the uniquely national character of news programs in different countries. In fact, one of the more salient impressions emerging from an examination of our materials has to do with the ways in which television news simultaneously maintains both global and culturally specific orientations. This is accomplished, first, by casting far-away events in frameworks that render these events comprehensible, appealing and 'relevant' to domestic audiences; and second, by constructing the meanings of these events in ways that are compatible with the culture and the 'dominant ideology' of the societies they serve. Thus, for example, US television coverage of recent events in Eastern Europe has been consistently couched in the terminology of the triumph of 'freedom' and 'democratization', thus conveying a sense of America's triumph in the cold war. (CBS's report from the Berlin Wall, showing pictures of East Berliners

returning home from their shopping spree in West Berlin carrying colorful plastic bags filled with their purchases, prompted CBS's anchor, Dan Rather, to describe the returning shoppers as carrying 'the fruits of freedom'. 'Freedom' has thus become the 'freedom to shop'.)

But the significance of the 'domestication' argument goes further. It serves to counter uncritical assumptions about the globalization of the media. Indeed, the tendency to 'domesticate' news stories may be regarded as a countervailing force to the pull of globalization. Thus, the convergence of different news services on the 'same' set of stories should not necessarily be viewed as leading to a 'homogenization' of news around the world. Indeed, if the 'same' events are told in divergent ways, geared to the social and political frameworks and sensibilities of diverse domestic audiences, the 'threat' of homogenization might have little basis.

The stability of narrative forms

Our analysis is also located firmly in the perspective of news as story-telling. This approach borrows its concepts and strategies from literary criticism, and proposes that specific news stories should be examined as related, in the same way as documented historical facts and incidents, to one or another myth or super-story or cultural theme, as these appear in different cultures. The meaning of a concrete news story is always produced in the public space of culture, and in the framework of a relevant family-of-stories, already familiar to the members of a given society. Indeed, it can be argued that for an event to be judged 'newsworthy' it must be anchored in narrative frameworks that are already familiar to and recognizable by newsmen as well as by audiences situated in particular cultures. The events are then narrated in ways which invoke these familiar, stable frameworks, thus also contributing to the stability of that culture. Moreover, not all human stories are, or must be, culture specific. Indeed, many themes are universal. Let us illustrate. A recently published book describing television's coverage of the 'rescue' of the three whales trapped under the Alaskan ice attributes the global reach of the story to the proximity of the event to a satellite dish. But the universal appeal of the story may also be explained through its basic, universal theme, which could be defined as 'the plight of the innocent'. Perhaps that is why television news editors everywhere

are so enamored of 'animal stories'. The universal appeal of these stories is immediately apparent.

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

Let us turn now to our two examples. First, a story from Dublin. On 16 February 1987, the day before a general election in Ireland, 'scene setting' stories about the election were broadcast on the BBC, CBS, RTBF (Belgian television) and TF1 (French television). Unlike the raw materials disseminated through the news exchange system, these stories did not come from the same source. Rather, they were produced and narrated by the broadcasting organizations' own correspondents in Dublin. Nevertheless, there are interesting similarities – and differences – between the BBC's and CBS's stories on the one hand, and the Belgian and French stories on the other.

Both the BBC and the CBS stories focus on Ireland's economic problems, and more specifically on the high rate of unemployment among Irish youths. Both correspondents describe attempts by these young unemployed to secure a better economic future outside Ireland – primarily in the United States. The similarities between the stories are, in fact, quite remarkable. Apart from the correspondents' accents and the occasional phrase (e.g. the reference by CBS reporters to the 'Irish sport of hurling – which looks like hockey played like baseball on a football field') there are hardly any differences between the stories. For American viewers, however, the story may evoke memories of the 'potato famine', thus invoking a recognizable theme in American culture.

On the other hand, the stories on French and Belgian television 'domesticate' the story by focusing on the role of the Catholic Church in Irish politics. Images of multi-children families, and of young mothers pushing baby-strollers, serve as a background for a discussion of the resistance of the Church to contraception and abortion, and more generally, the political powers of the Church. The choice of that issue by the correspondent suggests an attempt to present the Irish election story in ways that would resonate among the viewers at home, who might be similarly preoccupied with the issue of the relationship between church and state.

TF1 (French television) also focuses on the religious aspect, but

on a Catholicism that is 'different from ours'. The story exhibits an ambivalence toward the 'innocent' Irish, who are loved because of their wish to preserve their Catholicism, while paying a heavy price for it: youth unemployment and painful immigration, due to the restrictions on contraception and abortion. Amongst us, says the French reporter, even hard times do not result in immigration. The story implicitly contrasts the Irish and the French positions on limiting the size of families. Throughout, the story weaves pictures and text to produce a rhetorical contrast between the 'authenticity' of Irish society's preservation of traditional values (rural scenes; an old couple dressed in authentic village clothes, with an accordion playing in the background) and images of young unemployed struggling in a hopeless labor market.

The coverage of Gorbachev's speech at the 'Peace Conference' in Moscow raises different questions. Unlike the previous example, the visual materials here are either very similar or identical. By and large, the stories are narrated by the news organizations' own correspondents in Moscow, although some of the less affluent services are fully dependent on the news exchange for their visuals, and narrate the story from the studio, based, presumably, on wire services dispatches.

In spite of the near-identity of the visual materials, however, the event is presented differently to American and British audiences. This is not to say that the American and British versions are totally disparate. In fact quite the opposite. All the stories share the same five narrative elements: (1) the growing openness in Soviet society, as seen in Gorbachev's emphasis on human rights; (2) the presence of Andrei Sakharov in the audience; (3) the approval of Gorbachev by his celebrity audience; (4) Gorbachev's criticism of the arms race and the 'star wars' program; and (5) uncertainties about the release of the dissident Joseph Begun.

But while the choice of story elements may be 'global' (i.e. shared by all), the American and British news stories present different, culturally specific themes, using the same elements. This is reflected initially in the order in which the different elements appear in the stories, as is seen in Table 4.

The differences in the order of the elements in the American and the British stories indicate that the 'production of meaning' in the news is a complicated and multidimensional process, with no two agencies agreeing completely with each other. However, underlying the differential ordering is a considerable thematic unity

Table 9.4 Story elements by selected national news services

Elements	ABC	CBS	NBC	ITN	BBC
Gorbachev's efforts	1	1	2	1	2
Arms reduction	2	4	4	2	1
Begun's release	3	2	5	3	-
Sakharov's presence	4	5	1	4	3
Impressed participants	5	3	3	5	4

within the American stories on the one hand, and the British stories on the other. Let's turn to the American stories first.

There are a number of related themes running through the American coverage of the event. The dominant leitmotif is skepticism, both about Gorbachev's motives and intentions and about the significance of the 'Peace Conference' as a whole. This is represented in a number of ways. CBS's story begins with a tabloid-like pun, suggesting that Gorbachev is combining an 'arms offensive' with a 'charm offensive', and pointing out immediately that 'his latest move to be taken seriously and sincerely by the west may have been blunted by his own KGB secret police'. His deceit is implicit in that while he is all smiles, 'his' secret police continue their dirty work. Begun is introduced early as the foil to Gorbachev. Following Dan Rather's introduction, CBS's Moscow correspondent Wyatt Andrews prefaces Gorbachev's statement on nuclear arms with a warning that this is an 'unusual speech, full of flowery language . . . as if he wanted to convince the world that he means it when he says he wants no nuclear weapons'. The dubious character of the speech, already established by Rather, is thus restated by correspondent Andrews. After the clip showing Gorbachev's speech, Andrews makes the transition from the intent of the conference (the Gorbachev ruse) to its effectiveness (the suckers in the audience). Gorbachev, he tells us, was speaking to a 'collection of one thousand of the world's most influential writers, businessmen and scientists' and 'If Gorbachev was working on impressing them, he succeeded.' In fact, Rather had set up the function of this audience with his very first words: 'A star-studded group of international movers and shakers was in Moscow today.'

After the intent of the conference is made clear, its authenticity is further questioned by inserting the story about Joseph Begun's continued imprisonment. 'Mr Gorbachev's speech concludes a week of contradiction,' Andrews tells us. While there have been releases of political dissidents, Begun is still not free. The implicit conclusion is that things have improved but not improved enough. As Andrews concludes, 'Gorbachev seemed to be fighting hard for the respect and understanding of his powerful audience. In short, trying to earn from one thousand influential private citizens what he has not earned from the Reagan administration.'

Evidence that the CBS story is driven by shared American narrative frameworks can be seen in its commonalities with the NBC and ABC stories. Like the CBS story, NBC and ABC are skeptical of Gorbachev's motives. NBC calls the conference a 'master stroke' by Gorbachev, raising images of motives not quite straight. It orients the viewer to one more example of American perceptions of Gorbachev as a trickster/magician who continuously pulls new rabbits out of his hat. While it incorporates the Begun story towards the end, the NBC story is heavily skewed in its content towards coverage of Andrei Sakharov. This, of course, is not incidental. It ties in with the function that Sakharov plays in the narrative. Sakharov is introduced by NBC's Moscow correspondent Stan Bernard with a great deal of dramatic import: 'In the *grand* Kremlin palace, the *presence* of this man *startled*. Andrei Sakharov, the Soviet Union's most famous dissident.' Throughout the NBC story Sakharov gets as much airtime as Gorbachev. The unique qualities of the conference shift from Gorbachev to Sakharov in a subtle way. Gorbachev is seen as a consummate politician who made the conference possible, but Sakharov implicitly is the superior of the two. Sakharov becomes the symbol not only of Gorbachev's achievements but, by personal contrast, of the differences between the two. Clearly, Gorbachev is no Sakharov.

In addition to being a foil to Gorbachev, the focus on Sakharov is crucial in how it mediates the story. Like Begun, Sakharov functions as an instrument of the narrative's aim of distrusting Gorbachev's intentions. Both Sakharov and Begun play the same narrative function. They are thematically equivalent. They serve to invoke another staple of American narratives of the Soviet Union, namely, the representation of opposition to communism and to the Soviet government by a heroic and creative person, to whom is attributed the essentially American notion of the commitment to

freedom and democracy. At an even more fundamental level it might be argued that Sakharov also represents the fundamental American empowerment of the individual, who single-handedly, heroically, fights oppression and big government.

The ABC story is briefer than the two other American stories, but thematically it echoed their concerns. Sakharov and Begun are presented midway through the narrative, immediately after Gorbachev has said his piece. The story ends by attesting that the 'public figures attending . . . were impressed by the new Soviet thinking, but there were skeptics'. The story does not make clear, however, who those skeptics were.

We turn now to the two British stories. Unlike their US counterparts, both British stories are essentially appreciative of Gorbachev's policies and of his leadership, and critical of the American response. According to ABC, Gorbachev 'renewed a plea for an end to the arms race'. In contrast, the BBC begins its story with the statement: 'Mr Gorbachev has accused the United States of making a secret move at the Geneva arms talks which, if true, breaks a promise made to both the American congress and the NATO alliance.' The reference to the scrapping of the ABM treaty is framed in bold, accusatory terms against the United States. In the American stories the ABM accusations were given little or no play.

The focus on America's role in the arms race serves as the lead-in for the two intertwined themes in the narrative of the British stories. Gorbachev's efforts – the dominant element in the story – are portrayed approvingly, in contrast to the skepticism and distrust in the American stories. The other theme – criticism of the Reagan administration – does not even feature in the American stories. The treatment of the issue of arms control and 'star wars' encapsulates both themes. In the BBC story, Gorbachev's initial accusation against the US is legitimated by a British general, present at the Moscow conference, who says that 'nuclear arms were no use as weapons'. The story also ends on Gorbachev's call for the need to dispose of all nuclear weapons. While the Soviet Union is 'willing to renounce its nuclear power status and reduce all other armaments to a bare essential', America's secret moves over the ABM treaty, and continued efforts on the 'star wars' project are seen as endangering the Soviet initiatives.

Throughout the narrative of the British stories Gorbachev appears to be the determinative presence. The role he plays

is essentially a *creative one*, while in the American stories it is primarily *manipulative*. This is manifested, for example, in the lead sentence of the ITN story: 'Even by the standards Mr Gorbachev has himself set, this was a most extraordinary event', and in the characterization of the event:

Five years ago, with Lenin's statue looking on, the idea of Leonid Brezhnev turning up for the same event as Gregory Peck, Kris Kristofferson and Andrei Sakharov would have been unthinkable. Yet that precisely is what Mikhail Gorbachev chose to do.

The American, and especially President Reagan's presence through the narratives is framed as passive, inept and retreatist. On the question of arms control, the Soviet proposals are met not only by continued American resistance but also by ignorance. Reagan's poor performance at Reykjavik is emphasized. The American negotiators are portrayed as clearly out of their depth in dealing with the magnitude of the Soviet proposals. The story goes on to illustrate the American incompetence in other examples of the performance of the US administration: disclosures about the Iran–Contra affair; the continued meddling of Nancy Reagan; Donald Regan's exposures, all add to the negative picture. The story winds up by saying that the only reason 'Reagan wants to talk to the Russians is to deflect attention from the Iran–Contra affair'. Gorbachev, however, has always wanted to talk and, in fact, in the whole superpower debate, he 'continues to make the running'.

The British stories also make different use of Begun and Sakharov. Sakharov's presentation in the stories is largely neutral and referential. He is not made the focus of the story. Both the ITN and BBC stories point out that he sat a few feet away from Gorbachev. This proximity emphasizes Sakharov's approval of Gorbachev, as in ITN's statement: 'the freed dissident, Andrei Sakharov, was there to applaud him.' Like Sakharov, the American actor Kris Kristofferson also represents an approving presence. His approval is seen as significant because, as ITN reminds its viewers, Kristofferson starred in 'what even America regards as the most vigorously anti-Soviet TV serial ever made', a serial (*Amerika*) that represents (like Reagan and the arms talks) the United States' continued reluctance to participate in the peace process.

European acceptance of Gorbachev's sincerity may not have come easily, but when it did it was reinforced by the long-standing irritation at the United States' apparent reluctance to budge from its cold war mentality. It is the framework of American-European relationships on the one hand, and European-Soviet relations on the other, that constitutes the narrative framework of the British stories.

CONCLUSION

What, then, are the implications of this analysis for the issue with which we began – namely, the contribution of the globalizing of television news to the emergence of a 'global citizenship'? At least two potentially major consequences of instant global communication could be hypothesized here. First, it seems plausible to assume that the opportunity afforded to television viewers around the world to become witnesses to major events in far-away places, often 'live', as these events unfold, is likely to have major shaping influences on the cognitive maps of the world that these viewers carry in their heads. While at this point in time we can only speculate what 'scratches' (Isaacs 1958) were left on the minds of viewers around the world as a result of the recent flood of images from, say, the Berlin Wall or from Wenceslas Square, it is tempting to hypothesize that these images, and some of their meanings, have become parts of a *shared* view of the world, and thus constitute a contribution to a *shared* global citizenship. Second, we should also consider the extent to which the eventual success or failure of large-scale social and political movements ought to be credited to the global publicity accorded to them by a global television news system. A revolution seen on 'live' television constitutes the global audience as participants, albeit distant and passive, in the social process unfolding on the screen, transforming it from a 'domestic' into a global event.

Whether or not these hypothesized consequences approximate 'real life' circumstances must, at this point, remain an open question. If anything, our analysis suggests a negative answer. Global events, we found, are shaped and reshaped by television news reporters and producers in ways that make them comprehensible and palatable for domestic audiences. Thus, while the images may have global currency, the meanings given to them may not necessarily be shared globally. Television news in different

countries, feeding on an increasingly similar global diet, facilitated by a global system of distribution and exchange of news materials, still speak in many different voices. The Global Newsroom is still confronted by a Tower of Babel.

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NOTES

- 1 No inter-coder reliability measures will be provided on the data reported here, because so many different coders, speaking so many different languages, and living in two geographically distant locations, were involved. However, given the nature of the coding scheme, we believe that the coding produced a highly reliable data-set.
- 2 From the official EBU usage reports, it is clear that coverage by the US networks, the BBC, ITN and occasionally other services of the biggest story of the day rarely included news tape provided by the Eurovision News Exchange. However, since the issue under discussion here is similarity of coverage, reports by these 'wealthier' national services on topics covered in EVN-fed stories are included in the totals presented.

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Chapter 10

A tyranny of intimacy? Women, femininity and television news

Liesbet van Zoonen

In this chapter I shall explore feminist perspectives on journalism and the public sphere. A basic feminist requirement of news is that it should enable women (and men) to make sense of their own social and political circumstances in such a way that they feel empowered to criticize and change them. One might argue that news never enabled anyone, woman or man, to understand their own circumstances:

How often does it occur that information provided to you on morning radio or television, or in the morning newspaper, causes you to alter your plans for the day, or to take some action you would not otherwise have taken, or provides insight into some problem you are required to solve?

(Postman 1984: 68)

However, the customary feminist critique postulates that news has always been more alien to the socio-political concerns of most women than to those of most men. That critique is rapidly overtaken by changes in the subjects and styles of TV news, current affairs programmes and other forms of journalism, including among other things a growing attention to human interest subjects, an intimate and personal mode of address and the treatment of political behaviour and issues as though they are matters of personality. The label 'intimization' provides a convenient reference to these trends.

I hope to incite a reconsideration of feminist perspectives on journalism by analysing a seemingly marginal phenomenon: the predominance of women newsreaders in Dutch television news. Although their exact number may change with regularly occurring changes in personnel, women invariably occupy at least half of