What global citizens and whose global moral order? Defining the global at BBC World News

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Abstract

This article provides a critical assessment of the popular notion that we are moving towards an increasingly global understanding of political community and citizenship. At the centre of this debate is a specific, although often implicit, account of media developments. Drawing on original research done on the global news network, BBC World News, this article makes the case that news practices are developing in a far more complex and contradictory way than is often implied in discourses on the global 'turn' in politics. Globality as understood and represented at BBC World News is a question of not only certain culturally and institutionally informed assumptions about what constitutes public interest, but also, increasingly, a question of resources and dominant political rhetoric from a few institutions of power. What is more, developments in news practices do not necessarily lead to new and challenging communicative contexts in our understanding of the world, but rather may entrench and reinforce existing power relations. These empirically informed assessments of media developments need to form a much bigger part of discussions on the 'global shift'.

Keywords

BBC, cosmopolitanism, global citizenship, media globalization, news production, satellite news networks

Introduction

The past two decades has seen the emergence of a central debate across different fields of inquiry on the changing nature of political space and scale in the contemporary system. No longer appropriately understood as simply an international order made up of

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nation-states, seemingly ubiquitous processes of globalization are changing the nature of democratization and governance that increasingly speak to a global 'space' of politics, not territorially defined or necessarily concerned with political representation as traditionally perceived. Rather, 'progressive' theories of contemporary politics have sought to find alternative understandings of political practice and legitimacy and, crucially, new definitions of political community and citizenship that encapsulate the 'global turn' (Chandler, 2009). These concerns are now being integrated into media and journalism studies in numerous ways by exploring not only the media's role in this spatial shift, but also how media practices are or should be changing in response to these developments (Berglez, 2008; Castells, 2009; Chouliaraki, 2008; Cottle, 2009, 2011; Flew, 2007; Hackett and Zhao, 2005; Hafez, 2007, 2011; Robertson, 2010; Thussu, 2007; Volkmer, 2003; Wu, 2007). Recently, some of these explorations have focused on the development of 'global journalism' (Berglez, 2008; Cottle, 2009, 2011; Hafez, 2011; Reese, 2008), which provides a privileged position for global news broadcasters in particular. They do so because global news broadcasters are seen to be not only central to the global turn in our understanding of political space by providing resources for common images and repertoires of shared memories, but also by somehow representing the manifestation of an emerging 'global moral order' that can bind us as 'global citizens'.

Although some of the literature has presented a strong critique of the global turn from a media perspective (see especially Hafez, 2007), the overwhelming account of media developments in globalization literature has been to accept and entrench notions of an emerging global space without substantially engaging with some of the issues within media studies that ought to form part of the debate on questions of global citizenship, democratization and governance. This article seeks to contribute to the debate in this regard by drawing from a study of news practices at BBC World News. Starting with an outline of the way in which the global shift is increasingly understood across disciplines, including media and journalism studies, this article will extrapolate key features of developments in journalistic practices at BBC World News based on interviews and content analysis that illustrate some key difficulties with theories of the global. It will highlight the extent to which the global comes to be constituted by key power relations that are amplified by current media developments and will also challenge the notion that the development of global news networks necessarily challenges or transcends existing nation-state-centred communicative contexts. As such, this article will make the case that representations of the shift of political activity towards 'global citizenship' are often based on a misleading account of media developments that may ultimately reveal the global as a caveat for the entrenchment of deeply undemocratic power structures.

The turn to global

In the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union, there has been an intellectual-political impulse to place emphasis upon the 'global' in our understanding of social and political activity, and this is manifesting itself to such an extent that it is increasingly seen as the most appropriate starting point for understanding contemporary developments. Drawing to a great extent on Kantian cosmopolitanism, there has been a growing literature that asserts that there is a new awareness in society at large of a common global

world framework, providing, especially in a non-government social sphere, an opportunity for global citizens to participate in a global civil society:

> In the global epoch, the world begins to be conceived practically as a single community. Globality is a political-spatial representation of the moral cosmopolitanism that was first conceived by Immanuel Kant at the beginning of the modern era, but was inevitably opposed to the empirical forms of an imperially divided world society. Global social science thus offers a new possibility of reunifying social science, just as global politics, and especially global civil society, offer the practical possibility of unifying the social world. (Shaw, 2003: 43)

The main components of this approach rely on the argument that processes of globalization necessitate a move away from 'methodological nationalism' towards the 'foundations of a *cosmopolitan* social and political science' (Beck, 2003: 46). Although these 'new cosmopolitanists' (Harvey, 2009) have several different variations in their approach – Vertovec and Cohen (2002) outline as many as six main conceptions of cosmopolitanism – the key aspect to consider in this context is the emphasis that this 'revised cosmopolitanism' (Keane, 2003), both as a condition and a philosophy, places upon the global space as analytically distinct from any national political space in the current system. For the purposes of this article, what is of key interest is that a central feature of this impulse has been developments in media and communication technologies that apparently increasingly allow us to understand the world 'as a whole', asserting some kind of 'global consciousness'.

Held begins his construction of a cosmopolitan order based on the observation that with developments in media and culture, there are 'grounds for thinking that there is a growing disjuncture between the idea of the democratic state as an independent, accountable center of power bounded by fixed boundaries … and interlinked changes in the spheres of media and cultural exchange' (Held, 2000: 22). Although Held does not want to advocate the development of a single global media-led culture, he does want to emphasize the way in which new forms of communication media range in and across borders, linking nations and peoples in new ways and allowing for the (re)creation of new forms of identity (Held, 2000: 23). Keane is rather more precise in his account of the same idea:

> Global media linkages have helped to do something much more persuasively than the maps of Gerardus Mercator ever did: to deepen the visceral feelings among millions of people that our world is 'one world', and that humans share some responsibility for its fate. (Keane, 2003: 162)

Essentially, much of the literature on globalization and global citizenship is giving the media an important role through its capacity to distribute common 'pools of memories' to their audiences, echoing Benedict Anderson's analysis of the relationship between the media and the nation-state and the formation of 'imagined communities'. This is manifested in an understanding of media, and news media in particular, as the public construction of particular images of self, community and nation (Schudson, 2003: 69). As Szerszynski and Urry (2006: 118) have argued, visuality has played a number of important roles in the long and complex history of citizenship: 'Both the citizen, and the sense of a polity of which he or she is a member, have been brought to presence through

specific ways of seeing and being seen'. Indeed, for many globalization theorists, it is the development of *global* media that has been a precondition for global citizenship and the engendering of a sense of global community (Schudson, 2003; Urry, 1999). As Kaldor states,

> The development of new forms of communication, based on the revolution in information technology as well as the spread of television and radio has created quite new 'imagined communities'… Both symbolic politics and information politics depend on instant news and images, especially through television, which makes possible the consciousness of a global community. (Kaldor, 2003: 104)

As such, it is television in particular that has been foregrounded in this narrative of citizenship and political space. As Robertson (2010) outlines, 'cosmopolitanization', to use Beck's term, has overwhelmingly been understood to have a close link to television by helping us get our bearings in the world and maintain or negotiate a sense of belonging. Crucial to this, also, is the visibility of global risks and threats that engenders a sense of global duties and responsibilities – the enabling of people 'to view themselves as citizens of the globe, as opposed to, or at least as well as, citizens of a nation-state' (Urry, 1999: 319). Although it is important not to conflate cosmopolitanization and globalization, it should equally be recognized that it is this school of 'new cosmopolitanists' that have dominated the literature on the global turn in the social sciences. Indeed, this notion of global citizenship forms the backbone for a number of very sophisticated understandings within International Relations of how these developments may form part of a political project for a 'cosmopolitan democracy' (Held, 1995) or an institutionalized governance role for an emerging 'global civil society' (Kaldor, 2003).

Although such deliberations on political and social activity are to a large extent informed by developments in media, and especially television, there is actually surprisingly little substantive empirical work that concerns itself with precisely this spatial shift to the global within media studies. The debate has been dominated by the global public sphere theorists on the one hand, who embrace the notion of global citizenship, and political economists on the other, who see the global shift as a manifestation of the ideological dominance of the powerful. Both camps suffer from a lack of empirical investigation (Cottle and Rai, 2008).Volkmer bases her argument of newly constituted 'globally imagined communities' on the development of satellite networks such as CNN International, without substantial empirical investigation into its operations (Volkmer, 1999, 2003). Szerszynski and Urry's own study (2006) on globality in news media is based on just a 24-hour period of broadcast content from four UK-based channels and CNN, finding examples of global imagery to support their argument. Robertson's (2010) study on mediated cosmopolitanism is much more substantial in this regard and presents some interesting findings about international news coverage between different national broadcasters as well as global news networks that illustrate the cultural specificity of coverage in our discussion of cosmopolitanism. However, this analysis is mainly confined to content analysis and narrative without a comprehensive engagement with developments in news practices. At the other end of the spectrum, political economists such as Herman and McChesney (1997) have tended to mainly look at macro-structural issues

such as changing ownership patterns and cultural trade in their understanding of the global turn without connecting these developments to empirical investigations into everyday journalistic practices. There has, therefore, arguably been an overemphasis on media globalization in terms of global symbolism and/or deregulation and liberalization of the broadcasting sector without proper debate on how these developments have manifested themselves in the operations of global news production.

Recently, there has been a call to address this gap in detailed empirical investigation of news practices by advocating for studies in 'global journalism' as contrasted with international journalism as traditionally understood (Berglez, 2008; Cottle, 2011). Berglez makes the case that there is lack of empirical studies on the globalization of news partly due to the lack of a proper definition of global journalism as a *news style* that breaks away from or works as a 'counterweight' to the methodological 'national container' of news media and journalism studies thus far – that is, a conceptualization of news which falls outside the traditional conceptual framework of domestic/foreign and pertains to a particular epistemology, defined as the global outlook:

> The national outlook puts the nation-state at the centre of things when framing social reality, while the global outlook instead seeks to understand and explain how economic, political, social and ecological practices, processes and problems in different parts of the world affect each other, are interlocked, or share commonalities. News information with a global outlook establishes knowledge of how our lives in Copenhagen, Cairo, Brisbane and Mexico City are intertwined, casually and dialectically speaking. The global outlook produces information of the intercontinental kind, potentially including both international relations (between nation-states) and transnational processes, such as ecological and pandemic threats, or unrestricted economic and social flows. (Berglez, 2008: 848)

Drawing on this, Cottle (2011) makes the case that global journalism is, in fact, the form of journalism that is needed in times of globalization by situating events in terms of their global interconnections, boundarylessness and mobility. Thus, there is an emerging acceptance within journalism studies that what Cottle is keen to understand as the prominence of 'global crises' – building on Beck's notion of global risks (Beck, 2006) and Virilio's assertion that we are now living in a time of global catastrophic accidents (Virilio, 2007) – necessitates an understanding of news practices both as representing a global outlook as well as performatively enacting it (Cottle, 2011). As such, not only can news practices be seen as an integral part of the global turn, they also ought to respond to this global turn in their journalistic representations. In this way, global journalism studies can be seen as submerging with the school of 'new cosmopolitanism', both as a condition and a philosophy.

The case of BBC World News

Although Berglez advocates for the expansion of global journalism as a concept and entry point into analysing contemporary news practices, he warns, in contrast to Reese (2008), that there is little empirical evidence to confirm that news journalism has actually become increasingly global in scope. Rather, he says, many studies point to the opposite development and, as such, 'global journalism should … be considered an existing but

still marginalized news style, operating sporadically in the margins of mainstream news media' (Berglez, 2008: 847). Hafez has forcefully argued a similar case, claiming that the driving forces behind media are often national, rather than global, in scope (Hafez, 2011). Often, the debate on the globality of news in this regard has emphasized empirical evidence showing the domestication of news within national outlets and the overall national character of media systems (Hafez, 2007; Hallin, 1994; Stanton, 2007). Where the global turn in journalism may have more currency is, of course, in what may be considered global news networks such as CNN International and BBC World News, which may be more likely to support and nurture this spatial shift towards global community and citizenship.

Although more research has been done on CNN in this regard, BBC World News may be more pertinent because, as outlined below, it strives to have a truly 'global news agenda'. What is more, Robertson (2010) makes the case that this is the broadcaster that offers the cosmopolitan viewer the best news diet. However, as Berglez (2008) has pointed out, we need to distinguish here between reporting news from different parts of the world and reporting that provides an understanding of the world as a single place or indeed a platform on which to legitimately base the emergence of global citizenship. There are, here, questions about the extent to which we can effectively speak of a 'nation-transcending communicative context' (Grimm, 1997) despite the recognition of 'global crises' and threats, as well as questions about the nature of the power relations that come to constitute the so-called 'global outlook'. This study of news practices at BBC World News will highlight a number of crucial points regarding the way in which global issues come to be understood and covered on BBC World News in an increasingly economically pressured environment that illustrates not only national bias and a North-Western elite perspective, but also a continued nation-state-centred ordering and categorizing of global news.

Methodology

This analysis draws on data from interviews with 20 news workers associated with BBC World News, conducted predominantly during the summer of 2009, either in person or over the telephone, and lasting on average approximately an hour. These interviews include actors ranging from top management to editor to producer to correspondent. The correspondents make up the largest group of people interviewed (nine out of 20). It was important to have a sample of actors across the organizational hierarchy in order to comprehensively understand news practices at different stages of the news production process as well as to get an insight into the overall organizational ethos. What is more, having testimonies from management as well as correspondents 'in the field' was considered important in order to highlight the discrepancies between the overall mission and vision of the organization and the everyday practices of news production. The study also includes a brief observation period in the BBC World News London newsroom in June 2009 and incorporates detailed analysis of news content over a period of six months. It builds on previous studies of news practices within the BBC (Aitken, 2007; Curran and Seaton, 2003; Seaton, 2005), but with a particular interest in the much less studied global and commercial arm of the BBC news operation.

Background of BBC World News

Essentially a public service broadcaster, through its commercial arm, the BBC launched BBC World Service Television in 1991 across Asia and the Middle East. It launched in its present form in 1995, broadcasting in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, and a year later in Latin America. BBC World changed its name to BBC World News in April 2008 and, today, as part of the BBC Global News Division, it broadcasts from a 24-hour newsroom based in London as well as in Washington, DC, where it broadcasts BBC World News America for two hours every day. It is resourced by advertising, subscriptions and from distribution revenues, which are rising as a source of revenue. Although BBC World News is funded commercially, for newsgathering, it relies almost entirely on the resources available through the licence-fee-funded BBC News and the government-aided BBC World Service. In 2004, the BBC's news operation was estimated to be made up of 41 bureaux across the world and about 600 staff, most of whom are journalists. It should be noted, however, that the presence of the BBC goes beyond these 41 bureaux, through its extension of language services and other affiliations. Apart from having separate staff on the business side of the organization, BBC World News also has some separate staff (roughly 100) working exclusively for it in the London and Washington newsrooms. These are mainly management, senior editors and producers, as well as some separate correspondents funded exclusively by BBC World News. Predominantly, however, correspondents work across both BBC domestic and global outputs. As will become clear, this set-up of the BBC plays a crucial part in understanding the nature of globality at BBC World News.

Currently, BBC World News is one of the biggest players in global news broadcasting and has a comprehensive stake in the global media market in terms of reach (285 million homes as of 2009) as well as audience (78 million viewers a week). Both reach and audience is predominantly located within Europe, with large stakes in the Middle East and Asia and a growing audience in America following the Iraq war of 2003. BBC World News defines its audience as predominantly affluent travelling Europeans, 'more likely to be in their 30s than in their 50s' (Dencik, 2011: 62).

Globality at BBC World News

Although there is a commitment amongst management to a 'global outlook' at BBC World News, understanding issues to be of relevance in terms of their 'global interconnections' and covering those issues from a 'global perspective' (A Senior Manager), it is crucial to examine how actual practices ground this vision. There are key factors to consider here. Immediately, the fact that the BBC World News newsroom is based in London is a crucial, although underplayed, factor in understanding the 'news culture' within which the global news agenda is set and the importance of institutional dependence in the shaping of this global news agenda. The geographical base of the broadcaster has a subtle, but significant, impact on the way in which news workers understand the news selection process, despite some correspondents and indeed most of management discounting it as a factor. Because BBC World News is an extension of and shares an integral relationship with the BBC as a British organization, the domestic political culture is from the

outset an essential component in how the staff understand their own work and role. By this is meant not only that BBC World News adheres to British media regulation and policies by being answerable to Ofcom, the British broadcasting regulator (although significant in the global translation of professional journalistic values as explored below), but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, the notion that BBC World News staff are very susceptible to public discourse within the United Kingdom, not least regarding the politics of the BBC itself as a public service broadcaster. As such, what is significant in this context is to note the extent to which news workers within global news broadcasters are responsive and considerate of domestic public discourse and political developments regarding the media. Regardless of what the terminology may signify, global news networks do not operate 'above' or 'beyond' national contexts, but are in many ways nationally rooted and respond to and consider the domestic political culture that prevails in the context in which they are based.

Such contemplations come to play a part in how news workers understand their own practice and the confidence and considerations with which they engage in agenda-setting and coverage in the news production process. An example of this may be domestic discourse regarding the (in)accessibility of news output, for instance, and the perceived need to make news programmes more entertaining and appealing, or it may be about a renewed emphasis on questions of offensive content. Although such considerations within the BBC are mainly confined to domestic output, the organizational debate that stems from such public discourse also comes to play a part in how global news output is defined. Indeed, the way in which the BBC's institutional culture shifts and evolves, as a whole, is fundamental to how employees in all sections of that institution come to understand their own practices. There is an organizational 'ethos' (Curran, 2002) that plays a significant part in what kind of news broadcaster the BBC is across its outlets, influencing not just managerial decisions, but also forming an integral part of the comprehensive institutional training most BBC staff receive. This means that without any necessarily direct influences from the top hierarchical levels in the organization, BBC news workers are aware of how news is understood and treated within the organization. As expressed by a correspondent,

> They would never say you must do it this way, but there is an ongoing debate, and if you are outside the mainstream consensus on some things you would feel it pretty much. So the BBC does speak with one collective voice, but it's not like it's forced in any way. (A Correspondent)

As such, the impact of the organizational ethos may endure over time, but adopt strategies relevant to changing circumstances, and is only really felt by news workers in moments when there is a potential conflict with the practices that this ethos encourages. That is, the way in which the BBC as an institution and organizational culture helps define what constitutes global news is a complex, often unobservable process, but it is significant in understanding how news workers are able to collectively, albeit sometimes contentiously, define a news agenda catering to a supposed 'global public interest'. Here, it is also important to consider organizational culture in a broader sense to include a specific understanding of journalistic practice and newsworthiness. That is, the British base

of BBC World News shapes the values, credibility and relevance of the story-selection process. In other words, by being news consumers themselves of predominantly UK news outlets (along with major competitors), news editors and producers based in the BBC World News newsroom engage in practices that are set within a specific cultural context, deciding what is important to a global audience on the basis of a narrow parameter of news consumption that is to some extent dictated by the dominant news outlets that newsroom staff consume. As one correspondent remarked,

> [T]here is stuff we don't cover that we should and I think we don't cover it sometimes because people that sit in London may not have a sense for its importance and it is hard to persuade them when money is tight. (A Correspondent)

Moreover, the notion of what constitutes an event or a story and, by the same token, what does not constitute an event or a story is based on already ingrained criteria that have developed within a certain value-system. The fact is that while global broadcasters are engaging in practices that pertain to or are shaped by global public interest, the understanding of this interest, global or otherwise, is rooted in an understanding of news and newsworthiness that has developed within a specific political, institutional and journalistic culture and these values continue to be reproduced in a global context. The way in which global news stories are covered will, to some extent, follow a predetermined framework that journalists within the culture of the BBC can immediately make sense of. This is further reinforced by BBC World News' dependence on the newsgathering operation that has BBC domestic as its primary focus.

Indeed, BBC World News does not, as yet, directly fund any part of the newsgathering service. Rather, it has a contractual agreement with the head of BBC News to get the material it needs and wants for its output, and provides funds in order to get this material, but, according to management staff, BBC World News is not a consideration in the structuring and organization of newsgathering beyond its own dedicated office in America. The organization of newsgathering and the localization of news bureaux is a complex, 'evolutionary, not revolutionary, process' (Manager). A large part is historic and follows patterns of long-term geopolitical significance. There is also, crucially, a historic link that ties in with British interests – such as colonial legacy – which plays into the structuring of newsgathering as well as more recent considerations of British interests, such as places of conflict that may involve Britain directly or indirectly:

> We would say Afghanistan and Pakistan is a key area for us and is going to be so for the coming years, so we have put more resources into that area over the last months, and quite a bit of infrastructure has gone in, there's been a big spend, so you are committed then to at least sort of a five-year period. We don't do that on the basis of today's story. We do that on the basis of where the story is going over the course of longer time. It's about the fact that we have British troops there, that there's a war going on there, that this is a post-9/11 world, it's very important in the so-called war on terror. So that's what we base our resources on. (A Manager)

This reasoning highlights a number of key issues that help understand the way in which globality is understood and defined at BBC World News. Geopolitical significance and so-called British interests come to be inevitably reflected in the output on BBC

World News (see Figures 1 and 2) and, what is more, they do so in the context of a wider rhetoric regarding the newsworthiness of conflict and violence. As one experienced news worker noted with regard to the Middle East, 'it's quite hard to get the Middle East on air if there is no blood involved' (A Correspondent). Furthermore, places of war and conflict that are primarily worthy of global media attention are decided to a considerable extent by not only perceived national interests, but also, crucially, by the dominant political discourse of the prevailing institutions of power ('war on terror'). In other words, the organization of news does not necessarily challenge already existing dominant political rhetoric regarding what areas and issues should be of global concern, but, rather, necessarily often follows and reiterates such dominant political rhetoric within the process of story-selection and reporting.

   The dependence on political rhetoric from dominant political powers is deeply rooted in the domestic journalistic culture of BBC news workers that, in producing simultaneously across BBC news outlets, is translated onto a global canvas. That is to say, 'globality' comes to be representative of a specific understanding of legitimacy and credibility that is embodied within a specific cultural context of news production. Faced with the need to fill 24/7 rolling news cycles, these professional practices are further entrenched within the context of BBC World News. Thus, story selection and news coverage is prone to be shaped by the most immediate and accessible sources, lending 'credibility' to specific national elites, rather than some supranational global forces which operate above, or below, national governments. When asked about the difference in covering a story for a domestic outlet versus a global outlet, the vast majority of those interviewed did not consider there to be a major difference between the two and said that any changes to news reports are merely cosmetic, such as adding 'British' in front of a reference to the Prime Minister. It does not demand a different approach in broader terms. Part of the reasoning for this is, firstly, the idea that Britain is 'a cosmopolitan society' (A Correspondent), where news has always needed to be covered with a global outlook, regardless of the domesticity of the outlet. Secondly, because foreign news coverage for a domestic British audience, by its very nature, has to be accessible and cater for an audience unfamiliar with the local context in question, assumptions of knowledge are seen to be removed. In more general terms, there is a certain 'status' attached to foreign news reporting that does not cater to domestic interests.

   However, these arguments are problematic in practice. Firstly, it is easier to get a story broadcast in the first place if indeed it does have a British angle, as it will therefore be picked up by domestics, rather than having to be commissioned separately by BBC World News. It will, therefore, also guarantee better quality. It is thus an important consideration in the initial approach of a story, as domestic news 'is the department that's got all the money' (A Correspondent). Moreover, the straight transfer of news from domestic to global news outlets is problematic also in the general categorization and representation of information, for example, the naming of groups and actors. The notion that the British audience is the primary focus of the story prioritizes a certain set of discursive categories of how global media events should be ordered and understood. That is, it assumes a certain kind of knowledge, not just with regard to the background or context of a particular news story, but in more abstract terms with regard to how social orders are

culturally categorized. This again speaks to the crucial question of how news values and credibility come to be practised and entrenched within the news production process. What is more, it speaks to the need for familiarity with the subject matter in order for it to 'make sense' and make it onto the global news agenda. For example, one news worker highlighted that a story about Somalia might need initial framing around familiar topics among Western audiences such as drought or conflict in order for the more challenging or unfamiliar nuances of a story to be incorporated. Or, indeed, the story may not make the news agenda in the first place if it lacks this initial familiarity for audiences, including BBC World News staff, within the UK.

These issues of familiarity and 'making sense' also apply to standard journalistic professional values such as 'impartiality' and 'balance'. There is an accepted view among BBC World News staff that such values are easily transferred from domestic to global outlets. However, impartiality and balance as news values do not operate in a political or cultural vacuum. What is at stake here is a fundamental question of categories of knowledge embedded within particular understandings of impartiality belonging to a particular journalistic culture. In a political culture where there are established opposing organizations of viewpoints already accredited within society, such as political parties, for example, this understanding of impartiality may seem uncomplicated. However, impartiality in this sense can only operate to replicate already established powerful discourses that frame debates. What is more, understanding impartiality in often binary terms not only actively narrows the terms of debate, it also seeks to simplify and reduce issues to clear-cut opposing sides. To an audience located in a liberal democracy where political debates are often framed in such terms, employing impartiality in this way reproduces the logic of the prevalent political system. Therefore, when transferred to a global canvas, such an understanding of impartiality imposes a certain political and cultural framework to the terms of the debate of global issues. It is not only a question of the extent to which these practices exclude voices in global news broadcasting, but also the extent to which such practices rely on already existing knowledge – that is, the extent to which these news practices are inherently conservative and incapable of fundamentally challenging ingrained communicative contexts.

Crucially, these conservative practices that come to entrench the existing social order through national, institutional and professional prisms operate in an increasingly competitive media market that further reinforces the news production in this regard – and such definitions of globality. Of course, in some regards, BBC World News holds an advantage in a competitive, fragmented market by attracting an advertiser-friendly, affluent audience, but its interest in maintaining this audience plays a crucial role. For example, one senior manager noted the prevalence of business news on the broadcaster, which not only caters to the perception of audience interests, but also nurtures and enhances this section of its audience. The implication, therefore, that business and financial activities lend themselves better to the definition of 'global news' than, say, health care, needs to be critically considered in debates on globality. Similarly, the understanding of what geographical areas are in the 'global public interest' also needs to be assessed in light of this, with resource-poor Africa and Latin America continuing to occupy comparatively little of the global news agenda (Figures 1 and 2).
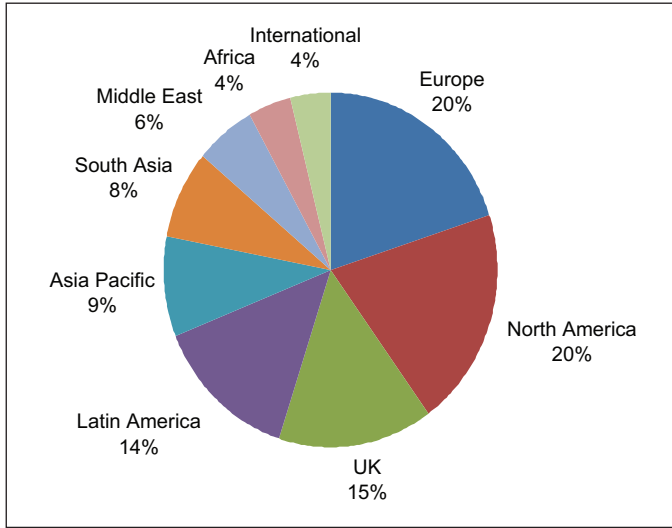
Figure 1. Geographical distribution of lead stories on BBC World News during January–June 2010.
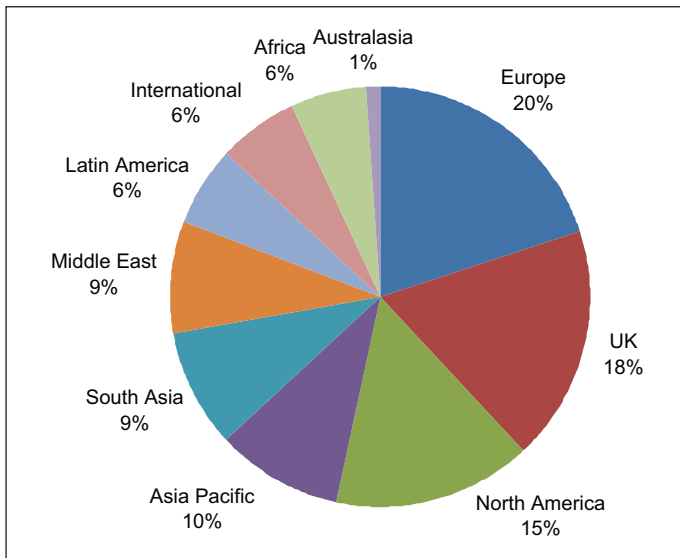*Sample size*: 100 programmes.

Figure 2. Areas referenced in news coverage on BBC World News based on 100 programmes watched during the period January–June 2010.

Figure 1 illustrates how the lead stories on BBC World News were distributed during the period between January 2010 and June 2010 based on a sample of 100 programmes shown at different times of the day (these different times of the day are important as
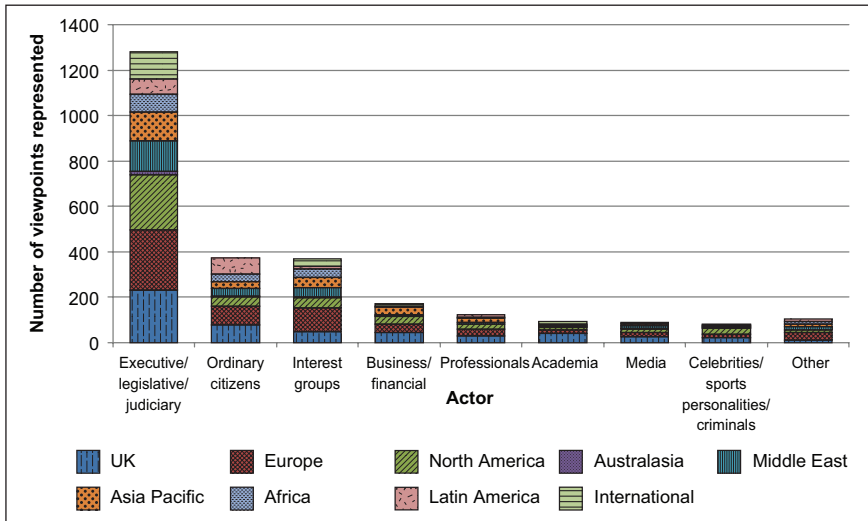
Figure 3. Viewpoints referenced on BBC World News based on 100 programmes watched during the period January–June 2010.

editors outlined that the coverage caters to certain audiences in certain geographical regions at different times of the day). The stories were categorized according to the country that represented the dominant actor in the headline of the story. This shows that in 55 per cent of its news programmes, BBC World News would lead with a story concerning North America or Europe. In as many as 15 per cent of its programmes, this lead story would concern the United Kingdom. Outlining the geographical distribution of lead stories is important as headline stories imply a sense of importance in the hierarchy of the overall news bulletin. The actors referenced within the entire news programmes are illustrated by Figures 2 and 3. These programmes were predominantly all 30 minutes long (a few programmes were shorter during the weekend and a few were longer depending on the time of day at which they were being broadcast). Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of viewpoints referenced, whereas Figure 3 illustrates the kind of actor referenced.

As can be seen from these figures, the viewpoints represented on BBC World News come from Europe more than any other region, with well over a third of all viewpoints referenced (38%) from there. Interestingly also, viewpoints from actors within the UK made up almost a fifth of the total viewpoints referenced (18%). In terms of lead stories, stories based on actors from Europe and North America make up 53 per cent of the output. The distribution of the rest of the viewpoints is spread more or less evenly across the other regions, with viewpoints coming from the Middle East and South Asia each making up 9 per cent of the total, Asia Pacific, 10 per cent, and Latin America, Africa and Australasia making up the smallest share of the viewpoints referenced. If the data had involved dedicated sport and business segments, the figure for North America and Europe would arguably have been considerably higher. It is interesting to note also that although 14 per cent of the lead stories concerned Latin America, these mainly referred to natural disasters (especially the earthquake in Haiti, immediately followed by one in

Chile) and, in the actual coverage of stories, Latin American actors make up only a marginal part (6%).

What is more, as Figure 3 illustrates, the global news agenda on BBC World News is predominantly centred around the viewpoints of political elites and state authorities. In fact, state actors are referenced and used as sources in the news coverage almost as many times (1401) as all other groups of actors put together (1558), making up 47 per cent of the total. These actors also tend to be from Europe or North America (739 times). The second most-referenced group of actors are ordinary citizens (435 times), often used simply as 'vox-pops' to provide reactions to events or as a single group paraphrased in the coverage without any extensive or specific statements. This is not to say that state actors in any way provide harmonious viewpoints or sustain a consensus. Indeed, there are many conflicting viewpoints within this group. However, what it does imply is that despite BBC World News management's vision of having a news agenda that highlights 'global connections' (A Senior Manager), this figure highlights the extent to which the global continues to be defined in terms of inter-*state* relations with state actors who are dominant definers of global issues, arguably even more so than for domestic news outlets (cf. Dencik, 2011).

Conclusion: What global citizens and whose global moral order?

As such, the definition of global at BBC World News is shaped by a specific journalistic and political culture that presents globality based on a set of geopolitical concerns, primarily debated in terms dictated by political elites within certain nation-states. Crucially, this is reinforced by market developments and economic pressures, and not challenged by media developments, as seems to be implied in some accounts of the global turn. What comes to be considered global news is shaped by specific journalistic practices that are essentially manifestations of a certain set of power relations. The categorization of knowledge, the naming of groups and the credibility of sources speaks to an understanding of news that adheres to a social order as dictated by the most dominant institutions of power. As such, the global turn must consider the conditions in which players such as global news networks may be understood to be shifting the political community – that is, there must be substantial consideration for the terms upon which globality is manifested in citizenship and norms, especially with such prominence given to media developments in this regard. This may seem an obvious point, but it is consistently neglected in much of the literature as it demands much more interdisciplinary and empirical engagement. What is more, as Berglez (2008) points out, we must distinguish between the reporting of news from all parts of the world and explaining and understanding the world as a single place. What evidence from BBC World News illustrates is the extent to which journalistic practices are, in fact, steeped in a nation-state world order, and that media developments are not necessarily shifting this in any way, but may in fact be entrenching these practices as speed and resources come to play a greater and more prominent role. For some scholars, the very development of global satellite news networks is an indication of a spatial shift, but this assertion neglects any fundamental empirical evidence which illustrates that news coverage has actually fundamentally changed its representation of global issues. Indeed, much evidence shows not only that domestication of news

continues to be prevalent in both global and national news outlets alike, but also that the reporting of global news may in fact be decreasing, rather than increasing, in the current news environment (Dencik, 2011; Hafez, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2008).

Thus, asking globalization scholars *whose* global moral order is binding us and which of us are part of the global citizenry is not just a question of imperialism, it is a fundamental question regarding the very power structures that come to define our world and the political space within it. Ignoring such questions, or asserting globality based on an understanding of media developments without proper empirical investigations, allows the notion of 'global' to become a caveat for existing (illegitimate) institutions of power to make claims to further legitimacy. Here, in fact, comes a challenge also to those who posit that the only progressive response to globalization processes is the necessary spatial expansion towards the global in not only politics, but also in journalism. The notion that the abstract global space becomes manifested in the (deeply undemocratic) power relations of the global political economy raises questions regarding the often implicit normative dimensions of the global turn. It is, perhaps, worth questioning whether 'global journalism' is the 'progressive' response we need and whether journalistic practices will actually serve their democratic function by adhering to a 'global outlook', representing the world as a 'global space' (Berglez, 2008), in a context in which this space seems to lack the kind of collectivity and accountability we traditionally demand from a political community (Chandler, 2009).

Funding

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