

# BOX ON THE WORLD THE



**International Issues in News  
and Factual Programmes  
on UK television 1975-2003**

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2004

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# The World on the Box: changing trends in international factual coverage on British terrestrial television

By

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A report for the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project (3WE)  
funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

3WE is a coalition of international charities campaigning for high quality television coverage of 'matters of international significance or interest'. Its members include: ActionAid, Amnesty International, CAFOD, CIIR, Christian Aid, Comic Relief, ITDG, International Broadcasting Trust, One World Broadcasting Trust, OXFAM, Plan International, RSPB, Save the Children, Sightsavers International, Skillshare International, UNA-UK, UNICEF-UK, VSO, and the World Association for Christian Communication.

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# 1. Introduction

'Ofcom must ensure that both in news and general programming, terrestrial broadcasters include an international dimension'

Television is still a vital source of information about the world beyond Britain. Both through news bulletins and through factual programmes about or located in other countries, British viewers are exposed to cultures, landscapes and ethnic groups which can offer broader perspectives not available in everyday life. In a world where virtually every aspect of our lives has become more global – from the food we eat to our holiday destinations to concerns about immigration and threats to national security – an understanding of the world outside is more important than ever.

The importance of international programming has always been accepted as an integral part of the public service tradition of British broadcasting, and even in an age of deregulation and multi-channel television, the new Communications Act continues to acknowledge its importance in British cultural life. The regulator Ofcom is obliged to ensure that both in news and in their general programming output, terrestrial broadcasters include items or programmes of an international dimension.

## The study

The purpose of this study is to analyse to what extent, in the broadcasting environment of 2003, these public service obligations are being met and how the nature and pattern of international factual programming today compares with the last 14 years. This study is the latest in a longitudinal series conducted since 1989-90 by 3WE, the Third World and Environment Broadcasting Project, which aims to promote coverage of global affairs on British mainstream television. 3WE is a campaigning body, but the research was conducted by the Communications and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) at the University of Westminster.

Accordingly, this report seeks only to report the methods and results of our research, and what we believe this information tells us about current trends in international programming. As with all our research, we have tried to ensure that the methods are transparent so that our interpretations and conclusions can be properly interrogated in the policy debates on British broadcasting which we hope will follow its publication.

## Approach

A number of caveats need to be established about the methodology and findings of this study. First, as with any longitudinal series, it was important to adhere to the coding and analysis methods on which the preceding studies were based. Although these may ideally have required some refinement or amendment to cope with changes in the nature of international programming over the last 15 years, it was more important that the data were comparable over time. We have tried to ensure in the commentary that significant changes not captured by the analysis are fully explored.

Second, the report is in two halves because it consists effectively of two different studies: the continuation of the 3WE research on non-news factual international programming, and a reanalysis and updating of our own research on news bulletins dating back to 1975. This study, *From Callaghan to Kosovo*, included detailed information on international stories which were not fully explored or analysed in the original report. The funding from The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust gave us the opportunity to interrogate those data and, for the first time, present a picture of how coverage of global issues on British television news has changed over the last 25 years. As with the non-news study, we have maintained the original coding frame.

## Multi-channel?

Third, the overall picture is becoming increasingly complicated as more households turn to multi-channel television, fuelled both by the Freeview offer and by the growing publicity being generated about a switchover to digital television. This report is the first in the series to be published when the majority of homes have access to more than the five terrestrial channels. It is therefore arguable that to present a complete picture of factual international programming would require



inclusion of niche channels such as Discovery and the 24 hour news channels, since these represent additional viewing opportunities for the majority of viewers.

There are two arguments against this. First, the five free-to-air terrestrial channels still command three quarters of all viewing and therefore, for the moment, still represent the dominant form of television for most people. Second, the arguments about public service television, and specifically about access to knowledge and experience of the world outside Britain, apply explicitly to the mass audience free-to-air channels.

This is both because they require no additional financial outlay from the audience in subscription fees or hardware (beyond the cost of the licence fee), and because the channels reach a far wider audience than any niche channel. A "low rating" minority programme on BBC2 or Channel 4 can still command upwards of one million viewers, a huge audience by the standards of non-terrestrial channels and even broadsheet newspapers. This is not a paternalistic or elitist argument, but simply one of choice: in a world of fragmented channels and audiences, opportunities to learn more about the outside world for those who choose to take them should become more rather than less significant.

### BBC digital

Fourth, despite the caveats about including multi-channel options, we have included in this study an analysis of relevant factual programmes on BBC Three and BBC Four. Although only available to digital viewers (albeit at no annual fee), we felt it was important to be able to comment on the extent to which the BBC was meeting its own aspirations on those channels, and to monitor whether there has been any significant shift in programming in this area from the BBC's mainstream to its digital channels. Since our first priority was to monitor output on the mass audience channels, programmes first aired on one of the BBC's digital channels, but then repeated on BBC1 or BBC2, have been included in the terrestrial total.

### The long view

Fifth, we have tried throughout the report to take a long view of programme trends. It is always tempting to make immediate comparisons with the most recent set of data (in this case 2000-01), but this can conceal significant variations and fluctuations over time. Thus, while the overall volume of factual international programming is down on the last study but relatively healthy over time, the number of hours filmed in developing countries is at its lowest point on the terrestrial channels since the studies began.

The longer view also helps to iron out event-sensitive categories. For example, the increase in "conflict and disaster" themes in developing country coverage since the last study can be attributed mostly to the Iraq conflict. We have indicated where we believe the data may have been unduly influenced by contemporary events.

Finally, even the most refined of coding systems can conceal subtle variations which we have tried to identify where they are particularly relevant: for example, where increases in factual programmes on a particular channel may be attributed to the growing genre of "Brits abroad" travel or moving home stories; or where there are significant variations in peak versus off-peak scheduling which might distort the findings unless clarified in the report. These subtleties can sometimes be lost in the "headline" findings, and we would urge readers to take in the main body of this report as well as the executive summaries.

The new communications regulator Ofcom has set out its stall for "evidence based" decision-making in its approach to drawing up and monitoring performance guidelines for public service broadcasters. We hope that the data presented here and our interpretations will make a valuable contribution to analysis of whether and how well the British public are being served by our broadcasters in terms of access to news, information and experience of life outside the United Kingdom

## 2. Non-news factual programming: Executive Summary

'Each of the five channels broadcast its lowest level of developing country factual programming in the last 14 years'

So it's a consequence  
driven media celebrity  
does allow a way in?  
But this not enhanced by  
the celeb liaison officers.

This is the seventh in a series of monitoring research reports. Using comparative data from the earlier studies published by 3WE, it examines non-news factual international programming broadcast in 2003. Detailed findings are given in the next section, and more detailed information on earlier data can be found in previous 3WE reports.

The amount of **factual international programming** on the four largest terrestrial channels was 40% lower in 2003 than in 1989-90. With the inclusion of Five the reduction was 25%.

The decline began in the early 1990s and, although levels of total output have remained fairly consistent since then, the **type** of coverage offered to viewers has changed. Increasingly prominent within factual international programming are genres that reveal little about the realities of life for non-British people living outside this country: travel programmes; series following British adventurers; documentaries about 'Brits abroad' and reality game-shows in 'exotic' locations. These programmes foreground British subjects, albeit in foreign locations.

Not a problem of celeb per se. But celebrity national narcissism.

Factual programming about **developing countries** fell even more markedly. In 2003 it was 49% lower than in 1989-90 on all terrestrial TV, lower than at any other time recorded since 1989-90. This stark finding was only slightly mitigated by the fact that it disproportionately affected non-peak rather than peak times.

Longitudinal changes in both international factual programming and developing country factual programming were analysed by channel and programme genre.

### Contribution of individual channels

- Across BBC1, Channel 4 and Five, **factual international output** declined from the unusual peak levels of 2000-01 and returned to those recorded in 1998-99
- BBC2's factual international output declined to a new low level, which may be partly explained by the establishment of BBC4
- The only channel to show greater factual international output in 2003 than in 1998-99 and 2000-01 was ITV1. This increase is largely attributable to travel programming
- BBC2 and Channel 4 continue to show the greatest amount of factual international programming on terrestrial television
- In **developing country factual programming**, each of the five channels recorded its lowest level of output in the 14 years of the study
- ITV's output returned to the historic low of 1998-99, while BBC1 and Channel 4 fell slightly below 1998-99 levels
- BBC2 and Five both had their lowest output of developing country factual programming over the last three measurement periods.

### Programme types

In **factual international programming** in 2003, significant trends across the channels were:

- The continuing low proportion of 'harder' factual programmes: conflict & disaster; politics; development, environment & human rights
- A continuing drop in the amount of wildlife programming

- The dominance of travel programmes (more than a quarter of the total)
- A significant focus on 'Brits abroad'
- A rise in the amount of 'History' programming.

Within **developing country factual programming** the key trends were:

- The categories accounting for high totals in 2000-01 fell back to previous levels. In 2000-01, 79% of programmes were travel programmes (32%), wildlife programmes (28%), or RCA programmes (19%). These three categories comprised only 43% of the developing country factual programmes in 2003
- The decline in quantity of programming within these three categories accounts for the overall decline in developing country factual programming
- Programmes dealing with conflict and disaster were much more prominent in 2003 than in 2000-01 (55 programmes compared with 10 in 2000-01). This is largely attributable to the Iraq conflict, and is found on BBC2 and Channel 4
- As with overall factual international programming, there was a decline in hours of wildlife and a rise in hours of history
- Only 24 factual programmes dealt with issues of politics, development, environment and human rights in developing countries – a further fall of one quarter since 2000-01.

'Losing Reality' (3WE's previous report), identified a number of trends within factual international programming in 2000-01, compared to previous years. In 2000-01 factual international programming and developing country factual programming had risen compared to the historic lows of 1998-99

These rises were due to an expansion of holiday travel programmes, and the 'internationalisation' of entertainment programme formats that had previously been filmed domestically (ie, docu-soaps and reality game-shows such as Survivor). In 2003, the overall fall-off to levels similar to 1998-99 is directly related to the reduction in these formats, which had temporarily inflated the levels recorded in 2000-01.

By taking the long view over the whole period of the survey, there would seem to be an **underlying trend of continued decline** in both factual international programmes and developing country factual programmes.

#### Current affairs: developing countries

Overall, current affairs coverage of developing countries was greater in 2003 (34.6 hours) than in 2000-01 (27.8 hours) and in 1998-99 (19.9 hours). Most of this programming was found on BBC2 and Channel 4. Channel 4's contribution rose significantly on 1998-99 and 2000-01. The Channel 4 rise is not explained by the Iraq conflict but by attention to other issues. BBC1's contribution also rose markedly compared to 1998-99 and 2000-01 – this was largely attributable to the Iraq conflict.



### 3. Methodology for Non-news Factual Programming

The same methodology as that used in all the preceding 3WE studies since 1989-90 has been followed in order to allow for comparisons with previous years and to identify trends over time.

#### Data

Included within the survey is all new factual programming:

- **broadcast on BBC1 and BBC2 (including programmes originally screened on BBC3 and BBC4), ITV1, Channel 4 and Five, and on BBC3 and BBC4 (but excluding programmes repeated on BBC2 which are counted as BBC2 output)**
- **between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2003**
- **where a significant proportion of programme time was devoted to footage filmed outside the British Isles.**

The data for 2003 was then compared with data from the earlier reports published by 3WE, covering the following periods: 1989-90, 1991-92, 1993-94, 1996-97, 1998-99 and 2000-01. For this study we decided to cover the calendar year because this coincides with the statements of programme policy issued annually by the commercial broadcasters under Ofcom's guidance.

#### Programme hours

Most sections of this report use 'programme hours' as the main indicators. The entire time of programmes that qualify within the methodology was counted. For programmes broadcast on commercial channels, 10% of programme time was deducted to allow for commercial breaks and trailers.

#### Definitions

Throughout this report the following definitions apply:

- **'Factual international programming'**  
Non-news-and-current-affairs factual programming filmed outside the British Isles (the UK and Ireland)
- **'Developing country factual programming'**  
Non-news-and-current-affairs factual programming filmed in developing countries
- **'Developing countries'**  
As categorised by the United Nations Development Programme in its most recent annual Human Development Report.  
NB 1: Palestine is categorised as a developing country, and where programmes dealt equally with 'Israel and Palestine' or 'Israel and the Occupied Territories' we counted them within the developing country category.  
NB 2: Programmes where the exact location was impossible to determine (such as generic ocean wildlife or generic disastrous weather programmes) were counted as 'international' but not 'developing country'.

#### Inclusions/exclusions

All non-news factual programming was listed and analysed. Open University, school programmes, the Learning Zone, and repeats and 'omnibus' collations were not counted.

Programmes consisting solely or mainly of archive material were excluded. However, the genre of programmes collating clips of real life footage from other countries, such as CCTV or police video, was counted.

Arts and culture programming was included, but programmes featuring celebrity subjects, where the culture of their home country was not examined, were excluded. Music shows recorded overseas but consisting of performance only were not included. Those which blended musical performance with other

material on the culture or society of the country concerned were included.

## Sources

The data was collected from publicly available listings sources, and was then subject to rigorous cross-checking with the broadcasters, who have co-operated closely with the research in order to verify the genres of programmes, the numbers of programmes in certain series, the location of filming, and the proportion of the programmes which was filmed overseas. Current affairs information was also checked to verify that listed subject matter was broadcast, since these programmes can be subject to late change.

## Peak time

Peak time was classified as between 6:30pm and 10:30pm since this is when audiences are substantially larger than at other times of the day. A programme is counted as peak when the majority of the programme minutes fall into that time span. Where the programme minutes were distributed exactly either side of peak, the programme was counted as peak. We have maintained these peak time definitions for consistency with previous research, although we acknowledge that some channels such as C4 and BBC2 now consider time slots up to midnight as attracting significant audiences.

## The issue categories

Programmes were categorised into the following broad issue bands:

- **Conflict and Disaster (C&D)**: international and civil war, global security, terrorism, crime and civil unrest within the past ten years, and both historical and contemporary natural and man-made catastrophes
- **Politics (Pol)**: elections and political change, political economics, and political analysis within the past 10 years
- **Development, Environment and Human Rights (DEH)** issues
- **Religions, Culture and Arts (RCA)**, including anthropology
- **History (Hist)**: stories which took place over ten years ago (in order to distinguish the 'History' category from 'Conflict and Disaster' in the case of war documentaries); archaeology; standard documentaries made up of archival footage and 'talking head' interviews if the historical subject matter was placed outside the British Isles
- **Wildlife (WL)** and natural history: shows mainly about animals. Purely reconstituted footage of animals was distinguished from animal programmes examining their environmental and human contexts, which would fall into the 'DEH' category
- **Travel (Trav)**: all variations on the travel/adventure/holiday programme – including reality game shows with observational footage of overseas locations (such as *I'm A Celebrity*, *Get Me Out of Here!*, ITV 2003)
- **Miscellaneous (Misc)**: comprising science, medicine, health, and lightweight human interest topics

In the 2000-01 survey the category of **Crime and Police** was added, as the rise in acquired US crime investigation programmes as well as use of international CCTV and police video compilations would otherwise have distorted the figures for 'Conflict and Disaster'. This category remained significant in the 2003 survey.



## 4. Non-news

factual

programming:

Detailed Findings

### 4.1. Total factual international programming

	BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, C4	Five	BBC3, BBC4	TERRESTRIAL TOTAL	TOTAL INCL BBC3 & 4
1989-90	1037			1037	
1991-92	627			627	
1993-94	586			586	
1996-97	721	69		790	
1998-99	600.8	127.8		728.6	
2000-01	786.3	240.2		1026.5	
2003	641.4	140.6	131.6	782	913.6

Chart 1: trends in factual international programme hours

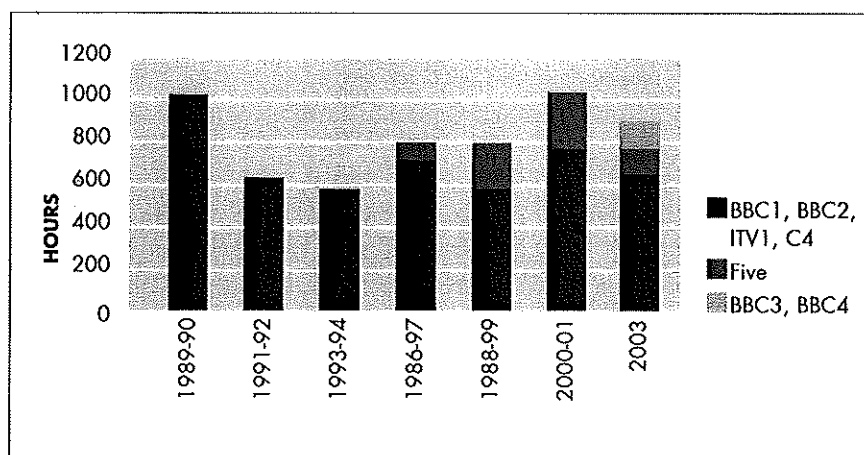


Chart 2: total factual international output 1989-2003

#### Key points

- i. The total number of hours of factual international programming in 2003 on TERRESTRIAL channels = 782. This level is a decline since 2000-01 (1026.5 hours), represents a slight increase from 1998-99 levels (728.6 hours), and is similar to the level in 1996-97.
- ii. Even with the addition of programming broadcast on BBC3 and BBC4, the total output is at a lower level than recorded in 2000-01.  
(Note: programmes broadcast on BBC4 and repeated on BBC2 are only counted once, as BBC2 programmes – see methodology section.)
- iii. However, this overall total of terrestrial plus BBC digital (913.6 hours) is a 25% increase from the 1998-99 total, before the addition of the extra BBC channels.
- iv. For a comparison across the last 14 years, the amount of factual international programming on the four main terrestrial channels (1-4) fell by 40% between 1989-90 and 2003. Adding Five's contribution, the fall was 25%.

'Factual international programming on the four main channels fell 40% between 1989-90 and 2003'

## 4.2 Factual international output, by channel

	2003	2000-01	%change
BBC1	99.4	133.4	-25.5
BBC2	178.4	214.3	-16.8
ITV1	141.3	135.5	4.3
Channel 4	222.3	302.1	-26.42
Five	140.6	240.2	-41.5
Terrestrial total	782	1026.5	-23.8
All BBC (incl. BBC3 & BBC4)	409.4	347.7	17.75

Chart 3: trends in factual international programme hours since last report

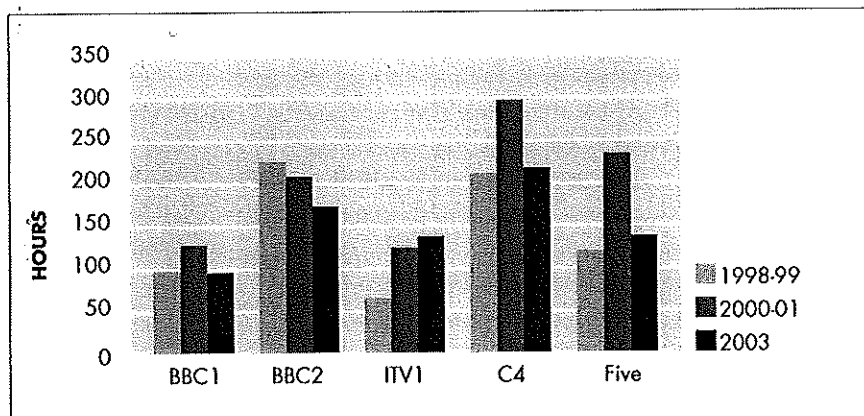


Chart 4: total factual international output channels 1-5 1998-2003

### Key points

- i. Compared with 2000-01, the terrestrial channels all reduced their output of factual international programmes, with the exception of ITV1. (However, ITV1 showed the greatest decline in developing country factual programming, see section 2.2).
- ii. Total factual international output on BBC1, Channel 4 and Five returned to levels slightly greater than, in 1998-99.
- iii. BBC2 is the only channel to have significantly decreased its hours of factual international programming since 1998-99 as well as 2000-01 (from 222.5 hours in 1998-9 to 178.4 hours in 2003).
- iv. Compared with 2000-01, BBC1's factual international output fell by 26% and BBC2's fell by 17%. The increase by 17.75% of the BBC's total factual international output from 2000-01 to 2003 was due entirely to the additional digital channels. BBC3 and BBC4 aired 131.6 hours of additional factual international programming in 2003.

'BBC2 significantly decreased its hours of factual international programming over the last five years'

#### 4.3 Trends in factual international output

	Programme Units	Hours	Hours as % of total
C&D: Conflict & Disaster	61	50.1	6
DEH: Development, Environment & Human Rights	33	28.7	4
Politics	16	12.8	2
History	147	129.4	17
RCA: Religion, Culture & the Arts	91	65.7	8
Wildlife	117	82.3	11
Travel	437	232.9	29
Misc: Miscellaneous	148	117.2	15
Crime	73	62.9	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1123</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>100</b>

Chart 5: programme issues across the TERRESTRIAL channels

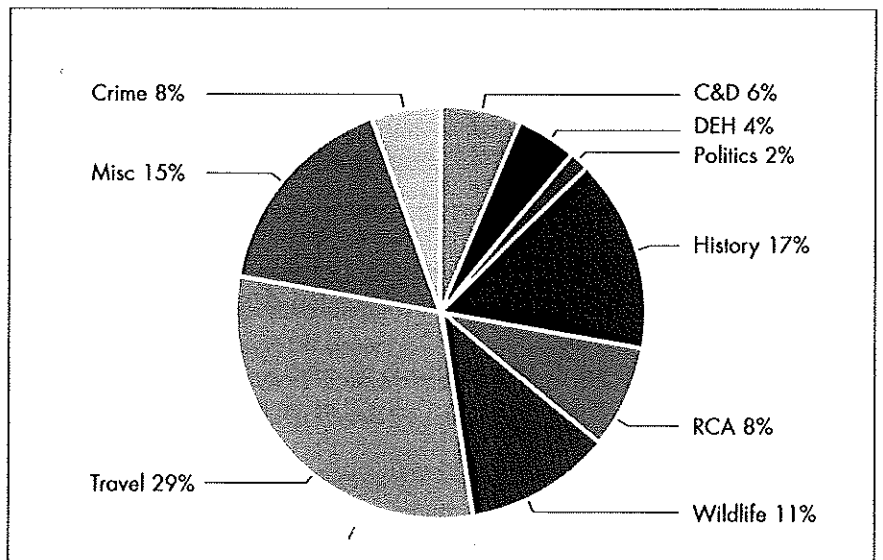


Chart 6: factual international programme issues by proportion of hours

#### Key points

- i. Significant trends across the channels are:
  - The continuing low proportion of 'harder' factual international programmes: conflict & disaster; politics; development, environment & human rights, accounting for 12% of the total
  - A continuing drop in the amount of wildlife programming (from 1998-99 levels)
  - The dominance of travel programmes (which comprise more than one quarter of the total hours)
  - A focus on 'Brits abroad' – particularly within the miscellaneous category.

#### 'Harder' programmes

ii. 12% of the total factual international programming on terrestrial channels was concerned with 'harder' topics: conflict & disaster; politics; development, environment & human rights. (For a break-down of programmes concerned with the war in Iraq, see section 2.3.)

iii. On BBC1, only 1 factual international programme dealing with conflict & disaster was broadcast, compared with 6 in 2000-01; the number of international politics programmes increased from 0 to 3; only 2 programmes dealing with development, environment & human rights were broadcast, compared with 16 in 2000-01.

'12% of the total factual international programming was concerned with 'harder', more serious topics'

iv. On ITV1, there were no international DEH or politics programmes broadcast in 2003, compared with 2 in each category in 2000-01. The number of conflict & disaster programmes was reduced greatly from 19 in 2000-01 to only 1 in 2003. This reflects the absence of 'extreme weather' programmes from the 2003 schedules.

v. BBC4 aired 18 programmes in the conflict and disaster category, 23 politics programmes and 8 programmes concerned with development, environment and human rights. Of the 42 hours of 'harder' programming aired by BBC4 in 2003, 13.5 hours was repeated on BBC2. Examples of such programmes are *Chavez: Inside the Coup*, *Holidays in Danger Zones* and profiles of politicians such as Donald Rumsfeld.

vi. 13.5 hours of international politics programming was shown exclusively on BBC4, compared with 12.8 hours on all of the terrestrial channels combined.

vii. BBC3 aired 3 C&D programmes (two of which were concerned with extreme weather, the other with relations between India and Pakistan). The new channel did not show any international politics or DEH programmes.

#### History

viii. History programmes constituted 25% of BBC2's total factual international programming in 2003 and 24% of Channel 4's. Beyond the continuing *Timewatch* strand, some prominent series were *Terry Jones' Hidden Histories*, *Secrets of Leadership* and *Lawrence of Arabia: the Battle for the Arab World*.

ix. The amount of history programming on Five continued to increase significantly from less than 3 hours in 1998-99, to 17 hours in 2000-01, to nearly 30 hours in 2003. Programmes broadcast included the series *World War One in Colour* and many one-off programmes such as *Cleopatra's Lost Cities* and *Secrets of the Desert Mummies*.

x. Only 1 international history programme was broadcast on ITV, compared with 6 in 2000-01. The programme, *Winston's Children*, was aired in off-peak time. BBC1 aired 2 such programmes (also in off-peak), compared with 1 in 2000-01.

xi. 37 international history programmes were aired on BBC4, of which 12 were repeated on BBC2. No international history programmes were shown on BBC3.

#### Religion, Culture & the Arts

xii. *Losing Reality* (2000-01) showed that 'harder' programme genres had partly been replaced by a new focus on cultural programming, especially on BBC2 and Channel 4. In 2003 this trend was still present, but RCA programmes had declined in number.

xiii. 57% of international RCA programming on terrestrial television was broadcast on BBC2 or Channel 4. Series included *Hajj - The Greatest Trip on Earth* (Channel 4), *Lost Highway: The Story of Country Music* (BBC2), *Stand Up America* (BBC2).

xiv. However, international 'cultural' programming on BBC2 declined from 74.7 hours in 2000-01 to 26.3 hours in 2003. This amount is still greater than in 1998-99 (11.7 hours).

xv. On Channel 4, the decline in cultural programming was also great - 11 hours in 2003, compared with 72.5 hours in 2000-01 and 18.5 hours in 1998-99.

xvi. 32.25 hours of RCA programming was shown exclusively on BBC4 and



BBC3. This represents 30% of the total international RCA output across the 7 channels surveyed. BBC4 programmes included the series *All The Russias*, as well as many single programmes. On BBC3, two series concerned with Japanese popular culture were prominent: *Japanorama* and *Adam and Joe Go Tokyo!*

#### Wildlife

**xvii.** In 2003, there were 82.3 hours of new international wildlife programming on terrestrial channels – a significant and continuing decline from 140.6 hours in 2000-01 and 189 hours in 1998-99. (Note: wildlife programming is one of the genres most likely to be repeated.)

**xviii.** This decline was seen across the channels (though to a lesser extent on BBC1). Channel 4's wildlife programming decreased from 25.5 hours in 1998-99, to 20.5 hours in 2000-01, to only 3.6 hours in 2003. Five's wildlife output declined from 94.8 hours in 1998-99, to 44.1 hours in 2000-01, to 15.5 hours in 2003.

**xix.** BBC3 did not show any wildlife programmes, whilst BBC4 aired 6 hours of international wildlife programming.

#### Travel

**xx.** By far the largest single category of factual international programmes was travel, accounting for 29% of the total.

**xxi.** 62.4% of the total hours of travel programmes were broadcast in off-peak, daytime hours. Daytime series included *Passport to the Sun* (BBC1), *Wish You Were Here Today* (ITV) and *A Place in the Sun* (Channel 4).

**xxii.** ITV1's travel programming constituted 64% of the channel's total factual international programmes in 2003.

#### Crime

**xxiii.** Of the 62.9 hours of crime programming broadcast in 2003, 50.1 hours (80%) was shown on Five. This accounted for over one third of Five's factual international programme hours. The majority of these are filmed in the United States – for example, *World's Wildest Police Videos* and *Crime and Punishment*.

**xxiv.** 8.5 hours of international crime programming was aired on BBC4. The series *Art Crime* looked at thefts of art works and accounted for 4 of those hours.

#### Miscellaneous

**xxv.** The miscellaneous category decreased from 181.8 hours in 2000-01 to 117.2 hours in 2003. This is partly due to the replacement of daytime docu-soaps filmed overseas (and prevalent in 2000-01) with travel programmes (see above). However, the miscellaneous programming broadcast in 2003 still represents a significant increase from the 86.8 hours broadcast in 1998-99.

**xxvi.** Documentary series about British people who have emigrated constitute a significant proportion (36%) of the 'miscellaneous' programming hours in 2003. The main series were: *Living the Dream* (BBC2), *Get A New Life* (BBC2), *No Going Back* (Channel 4), *French Leave* (Channel 4), *A New Life Down Under* (Channel 4) and *Costa Living* (ITV). All of the BBC2 and Channel 4 series were broadcast in peak hours.

'Developing country factual programming was the lowest in 14 years of monitoring'

#### 4.4 Total factual programming filmed in developing countries

	BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, C4	Five	BBC3, BBC4	TERRESTRIAL TOTAL	TOTAL INCL BBC3 & 4
1989-90	387			387	
1991-92	243.5			243.5	
1993-94	239.5			239.5	
1996-97	293.5	40.6		334.1	
1998-99	194.9	53.3		248.2	
2000-01	256.2	41.2		297.4	
2003	167.8	29.5	60.9	197.3	258.2

Chart 7: developing country factual programming

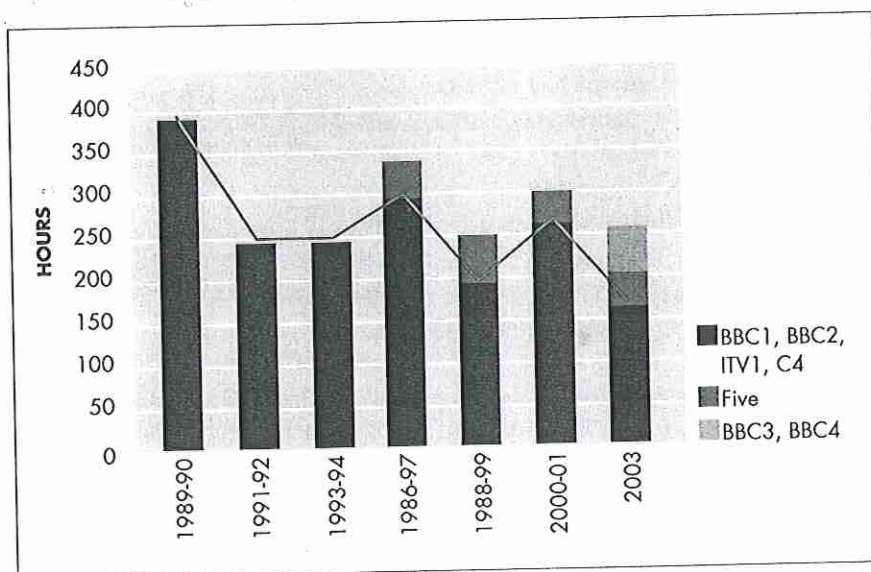


Chart 8: total factual international programming filmed in developing countries

#### Key points

- i. The total number of hours of developing country factual programming broadcast on TERRESTRIAL channels = 197.3. This is the lowest total recorded in the 14 years of monitoring.
- ii. The amount of developing country factual programming broadcast on the terrestrial channels has fallen by 49% since 1989-90, in spite of the addition of Five. Comparing the hours of such programming on the four main channels with their 1989-90 levels, the fall was 57% (see line on chart 8).
- iii. Only with the addition of BBC3 and BBC4 would the total be comparable with most of the 1990s, at 258.2 hours.
- iv. When including BBC3 and BBC4, the rise and fall of developing country factual programming follows a similar pattern to that of factual international programming overall. Total 2003 levels then become similar to 2000-01, an increase from 1998-99 levels and from 1991-1994 levels.

#### 4.5 Developing country factual output, by channel

	2003	2000-01	%change
BBC1	19.8	38.6	-48.7
BBC2	63.4	70.3	-9.8
ITV1	14.9	52	-71.4
Channel 4	70.6	95.3	-25.9
Five	29.5	41.2	-28.4
Terrestrial total	197.3	297.4	-33.6
All BBC Channels	144.1	108.9	32.3

Chart 9: developing country factual programme hours

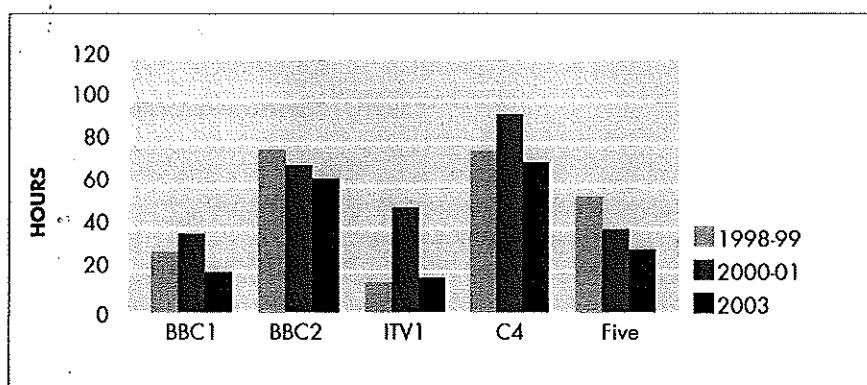


Chart 10: developing country factual programmes channels 1-5 1998-2003

#### Key points

- i. Without exception each of the five terrestrial channels broadcast its lowest ever level of developing country factual programmes in 2003.
- ii. ITV1 showed the most marked decrease from 2000-01, of 71%. This returned its output in this area to the 1998-9 levels of 14 hours.
- iii. ITV1 was the only terrestrial channel to increase its total factual international programming, while reducing its developing country factual programming.  
 Note: The increase in ITV1's developing country programming in 2000-01 was largely due to the reality game show series *Survivor*, which accounted for 22.4 of that period's 52 hours.
- iv. Both BBC1 and BBC2 showed less developing country factual programming than the two previous measurement periods. The decline on BBC1 was particularly steep, dropping 49% on the 2000-01 figure to 19.8 hours. BBC2 showed 63.4 hours, down 10% on 2000-01.
- v. When including the digital channels, however, BBC developing country factual programming increased. This is due largely to BBC4, which aired 60.9 hours of exclusive developing country factual programming in 2003 (compared with 4 hours on BBC3). This suggests there may be some displacement from terrestrial to digital channels.
- vi. Channel 4's 70.6 hours was just below 1998-99's 76.4 hours. (Note: The decline from 2000-01's output is partly attributable to the absence of reality shows such as *Shipwrecked* and *Temptation Island* that boosted the figures in that period.)
- vii. Five's drop in developing country factual programme hours continued the decline of such programming between 1998-99 and 2000-01.

#### 4.6 Trends in developing country factual programming

	Programme Units 2003	2000-01	Hours as % of total
C&D: Conflict & Disaster	55	10	22
DEH: Development, Environment & Human Rights	21	27	8
Politics	3	4	1
History	54	31	21
RCA: Religion, Culture & the Arts	19	93	8
Wildlife	50	131	20
Travel	38	158	15
Misc: Miscellaneous	8	17	3
Crime	5	5	2
TOTAL	253	476	100

Chart 11: developing country programme units, terrestrial channels

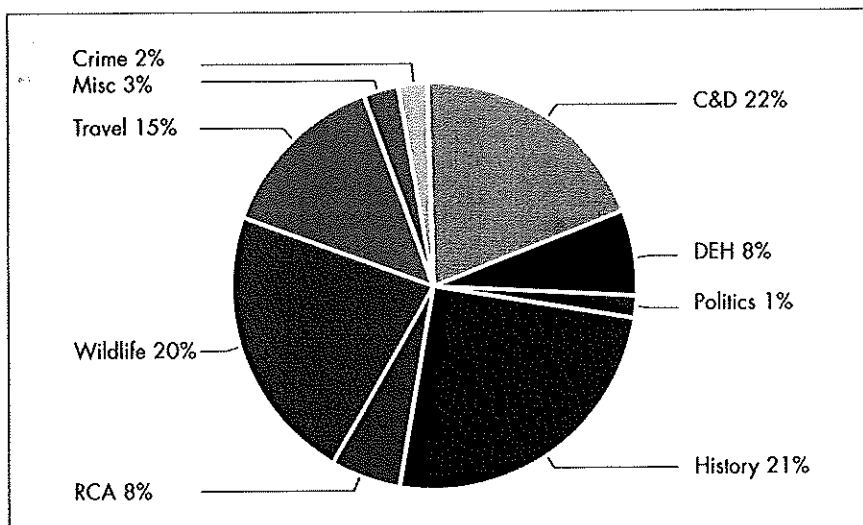


Chart 12: issues in developing country factual, by % of hours terrestrial channels

#### Key points

i. The *proportions* of different types of developing country factual programmes became more evenly spread in 2003, compared with 2000-01, although the relative *amounts* of DEH, politics, miscellaneous and crime programmes remained approximately the same.

ii. In 2000-01, 79% of all developing country factual programmes were travel programmes (32%), wildlife programmes (28%), or RCA programmes (19%). These three categories comprised only 43% of the developing country programmes in 2003.

iii. The decline in numbers of programmes within these three categories accounts for the overall decline in developing country factual programming, in spite of increases in the categories of conflict and disaster, and history.

#### 'Harder' programmes

iv. Developing country factual programmes dealing with conflict and disaster were much more prominent on the terrestrial channels in 2003 than in 2000-01 (20% of all developing country programmes, compared with 2%). They increased in numbers from 32 in 1998-99 and 10 in 2000-01 to 55 in 2003.



v. Many of these conflict and disaster programmes were concerned with the Iraq conflict and the majority were located on Channel 4 (which aired 32 of the 55 programmes) and on BBC2 (18 programmes). Examples of series are *Fighting the War* (BBC2) and *Battle Stations Iraq* (Channel 4).

vi. 13 programmes concerned with conflict and disaster in a developing country were aired exclusively on BBC4. The digital channel also contributed a further 9 developing country programmes focused on politics and 3 DEH programmes (in addition to those repeated on BBC2 which counted as terrestrial).

vii. In contrast, BBC3 contributed only 1 programme concerned with conflict and disaster, and none that looked at politics or DEH issues in developing countries.

#### History

viii. Developing country factual programmes concerned with historical topics were spread across BBC2, Channel 4 and Five. The number of history programmes increased from 31 in 2000-01 to 54 in 2003. A further 8 such programmes were aired exclusively on BBC4.

#### Religion, Culture and the Arts

ix. 11 out of 19 of the RCA developing country factual programmes on terrestrial channels were on Channel 4. This represents a substantial drop from 20 such programmes on Channel 4 in 1998-99 and 59 programmes in 2000-01. This pattern is seen in the channel's international cultural programming as a whole (see 1.3xv). The inflation of output in 2000-01 was largely due to a few multi-part series such as *Ambient India* and *Kumbh Mela*. In 2003 the equivalent series *The Hajj* counted partly as 'international', rather than 'developing country' programming due to programme locations.

x. The greatest contributor of developing country factual programmes concerned with religion, culture and the arts in 2003 was BBC4 (which aired 17 programmes – excluding 2 repeated on BBC2).

#### Wildlife

xi. In 1998-99 and 2000-01, wildlife programmes accounted for 38% and 28%, respectively, of all developing country factual programmes. This figure dropped to 20% in 2003.

xii. Out of the 117 wildlife programmes broadcast on terrestrial channels in 2003, only 50 focused on developing countries. A significant proportion of series in 2003 were shot in Australia. Examples were *Wild Down Under* (BBC2) and *The Crocodile Hunter Diaries* (ITV1) (6 and 26 episodes, respectively).

#### Travel

xiii. Travel made up 15% of developing country factual programmes in 2003, compared with 32% in 2000-01. Only 38 of the 437 international travel programmes in 2003 were filmed in developing countries. Daytime travel shows such as *I Want That House* (ITV1) and *Escape to the Sun* (BBC1), emphasised places where British people buy holiday homes: Spain, France, Florida, etc.

xiv. In 2000-01, reality tv series had boosted the amount of 'travel' programming in developing countries. ITV's 2003 reality series *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!* (ITV1) was filmed in Australia and so counted as 'international' rather than 'developing country'.

#### Miscellaneous

xv. A large proportion of factual international programmes in the 'miscellaneous' category were concerned with British people living abroad (see 1.3 xxiv). None of these programmes were shot in developing countries.

'2% of all the peak time hours on the seven channels surveyed were developing country factual programmes'

#### 4.7 Developing country factual programming in peak time

	2003	2000-01	%change
BBC1	17.7	24.9	-28.9
BBC2	43.8	42.5	3.1
ITV1	3.6	29.9	-88
Channel 4	57.2	40.4	41.6
Five	22.5	32.3	-30.3
Terrestrial Total	144.8	170	-14.8
all BBC channels	122.3	67.4	81.5

Chart 13: developing country factual programming hours in peak time

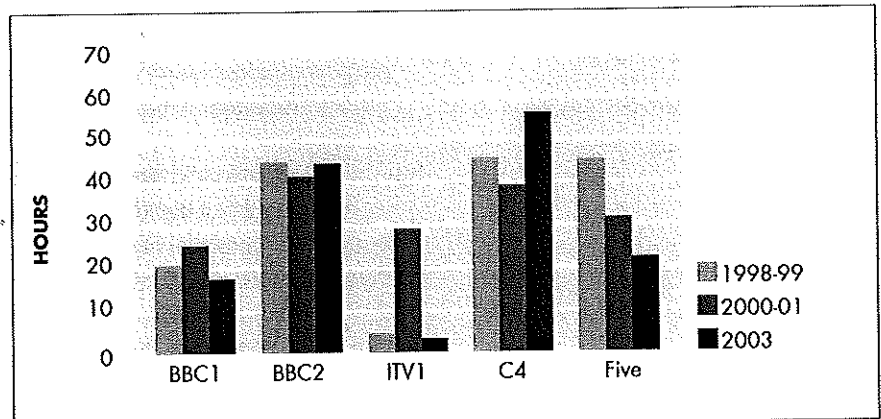


Chart 14: channels' peak time output 1998-2003

#### Key points

- i. Out of a total of 10,220 available peak time hours across the 7 channels surveyed, 205.6 hours (2%) were devoted to factual programmes filmed in developing countries in 2003.
- ii. Overall, the amount of developing country factual programmes in peak time decreased by 14.8% on the terrestrial channels, although BBC2 showed a very slight increase and Channel 4's output increased significantly.
- iii. The BBC's overall 81.5% increase in such programming, as compared with 2000-01, is largely due to the addition of BBC4 (which aired 56.8 hours of developing country factual programming in peak time).
- iv. Whilst Channel 4's overall developing country factual programming fell from the level achieved in 2000-01 (see chart 9), the amount of this programming shown in peak time increased. Of the channel's 82 peak time developing country factual programmes, 29 were concerned with conflict and disaster, 18 with history. The Iraq conflict was partly responsible for this increase.
- v. The amount of developing country factual programming on ITV1 in peak time was boosted in 2000-01 by 18.5 hours of the reality series *Survivor*. With the absence of such a show in 2003, its peak time output was the same as in 1998-99 (3.6 hours).
- vi. Just over half of BBC1's developing country peak time programmes (11 out of 20) were wildlife programmes in series such as *Jungle* and *Life of Mammals*.
- vii. More than half of BBC2's developing country peak time programmes (48 in total) were concerned with conflict and disaster (12 programmes) or history (14).

viii. 54% of Five's peak time developing country programmes were history programmes. The channel's decline in hours of peak time, developing country factual programming could be attributed, as in 2000-01, to a decline in the channel's wildlife output.

#### 4.8 Developing country factual programming in off-peak

	2003	2000-01	%change
BBC1	2.1	12.7	-83.5
BBC2	19.6	27.5	-28.7
ITV1	11.3	22.1	-48.9
Channel 4	12.5	54.9	-77.2
Five	7	8.9	-21.4
terrestrial Total	52.5	126.1	-58.4
all BBC channels	33.7	40.2	-16

Chart 15: developing country factual programming off-peak

#### Key points

- i. In 2003 there was a 34% fall in developing country factual programming across the terrestrial channels, compared with 2000-01. That decline was disproportionately reflected in off-peak output (-58% change).
- ii. This represents a reversal of the change from 1998-99 to 2000-01, when off-peak developing country factual programming increased by 43%.
- iii. Both BBC2 and Channel 4's fall in developing country factual programming are entirely accounted for by off-peak hours.
- iv. 12.75 hours of the BBC4 factual programmes repeated on BBC2 were concerned with developing countries. All were shown in off-peak hours on the terrestrial channel.

#### 4.9 Current affairs coverage of developing countries

Note 1: In 2003 the main programme strands for current affairs were: *Panorama* (BBC1), *Correspondent* and *The Money Programme* (BBC2), *Tonight With Trevor MacDonald* (ITV), *Dispatches* and *Unreported World* (Channel 4).

Note 2: Channel 4 and Five count as 'current affairs' other programmes that have been commissioned by their Current Affairs Departments. They are one-off programmes and series that have been counted within the factual categories surveyed in earlier sections and so are not counted here.

	2003	2000-01	1998-99
BBC1	8	2.8	2.5
BBC2	13.8	14.7	15.5
ITV	3.2	5.8	1.4
Channel 4	9.6	3.6	0.5
Five	0	0.9	0
TOTAL	34.6	27.8	19.9

Chart 16: hours of current affairs coverage of developing countries

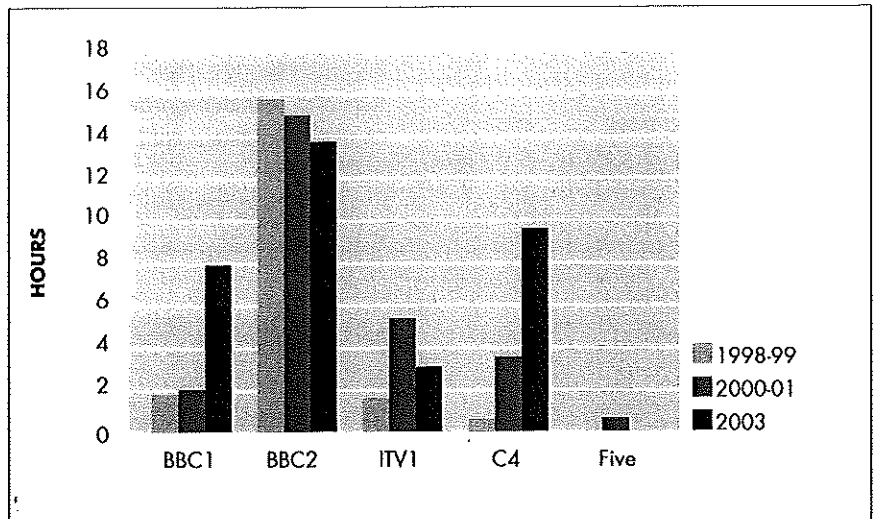


Chart 17: current affairs coverage of developing countries, terrestrial channels 1998-99 to 2003

### Key points

- i. Current affairs coverage of developing countries on terrestrial channels increased from 27.8 hours in 2000-01 (and 19.9 hours in 1998-99) to 34.6 hours in 2003.
- ii. BBC1's output increased significantly. This was largely due to the coverage of the Iraq conflict within the *Panorama* strand (in off-peak hours).
- iii. The small decline in BBC2's output continued. However, the channel was still the most significant contributor of developing country current affairs, through its strand *Correspondent*. All except one programme was broadcast in peak hours and countries looked at included Turkey, Albania, India, Russia and China.
- iv. In spite of the Iraq conflict, ITV's coverage of developing country current affairs decreased from 2000-01 levels. *Tonight With Trevor MacDonald* was predominantly concerned with domestic stories. In 2000-01, the daytime series *Back to the Front* had increased the channel's output by 3.6 hours.
- v. All except one of Channel 4's current affairs programmes about developing countries were broadcast in peak hours. Only 2 out of 13 programmes were concerned with Iraq; other countries looked at included El Salvador, Haiti, Uganda and Thailand.
- vi. All of the programmes commissioned by Five's Current Affairs and Factual Department were counted in sections 1-3 (see note above). There were no current affairs strands that offered programmes about developing countries.
- vii. The BBC3 current affairs strand *Third Degree* provided 3 hours of coverage of developing countries, all in peak hours. Topics addressed included young people living in Palestine, Al-Qaeda, prostitution in Russia, and the search for Saddam Hussein. BBC4 does not air a current affairs strand.



## 5. News programming: Executive Summary

The news survey reanalysed and extended an earlier study produced by the University of Westminster: *From Callaghan to Kosovo*. With the addition of new data from 2003, the original data set was used to analyse in detail the international news stories covered.

The detailed findings (see page 23) cover the differences between the bulletins, and the types of news stories covered in greater detail. Highlighted here are overall, longitudinal trends in international coverage and in developing country coverage.

### 5.1 Percentages of foreign news in main bulletins

The channels and bulletins are compared in terms of percentage of news time given to foreign stories. This is necessary because of the different bulletin lengths (for example, Channel 4's weekday 50 minute news programme, compared with ITV's 25 minute Early Evening News).

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
BBC 6pm News	22	31	29	34	22	27	31
BBC 9/10pm News	24	44	33	39	30	43	50
ITV Evening News	24	29	24	26	19	26	30
ITV Nightly News	30	35	29	36	26	28	32
Channel 4 News	-	-	40	41	39	38	39
Five News (7pm)	-	-	-	-	-	24	28

Chart 18: foreign news coverage, as a percentage of total news coverage

- Although the bulletins vary in the proportion of foreign news coverage they contain, similar patterns of increase and decrease are seen across them all, over the years surveyed. This suggests news events, rather than editorial policies, are the primary determinate of the amount of foreign coverage
- The early evening bulletins on BBC1 and ITV1 show relatively less foreign news and similar proportions to each other (with the exception of relatively high foreign coverage on BBC 6pm News in 1990)
- The late evening BBC news and the Nightly News on ITV are also comparable, although discrepancies become significantly more marked in the two most recent survey years. It is notable that in the last two survey years (1999 and 2003) the BBC1 Ten O'Clock News has provided the largest proportion of international news coverage – higher even than Channel 4 News
- Channel 4 shows the most consistency in its proportion of foreign news coverage
- Five's news, although only surveyed in 1999 and 2003, shows similar figures to those of the ITV Evening News throughout this study (see also other sections).

'News events, rather than editorial policies, primarily determine the amount of foreign news coverage'

## 5.2 Proportions of foreign news filmed in developing countries

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
BBC 6pm News	37	28	24	24	12	18	47
BBC 9/10pm News	39	31	30	23	10	23	49
ITV Evening News	37	19	21	20	5	8	61
ITV Nightly News	25	25	26	19	7	18	48
Channel 4 News			23	15	11	18	50
Five News (7pm)						13	67

Chart 19: developing country news coverage, as a percentage of total foreign news

- Fluctuations over the years in relative coverage of developing country stories are, again, attributable to the news events of the years sampled. In 1995, for example, the conflict in Bosnia and American events such as the Oklahoma bombing meant that a greater proportion of foreign coverage was devoted to non-developing countries (ie, Europe and the United States)
- The increase in developing country coverage in 2003, to levels unprecedented in this series of studies, is largely due to the Iraq conflict (although there was also coverage of other developing country stories such as SARS in China, terrorist attacks in Turkey and political developments in Afghanistan and North Korea)
- Stories related to the Iraq conflict that focused on international relations (for example, development of a UN Resolution), were not categorised as 'developing country' stories. This meant that developing country stories were still prominent within foreign news on the ITV Evening News and Five News in 2003, even though their stories were not generally concerned with the wider global context of the Iraq conflict. In order to examine the difference between the bulletins further, it is necessary to consider the types of stories covered.

## 5.3 Issue coverage in developing country news

Stories concerned with developing countries were coded using the same 31 categories in the coding frame from the original study (see page 21).

- Across all of the bulletins and years sampled, between 75% and 100% of stories fell into a narrow range of categories: politics; foreign affairs; conflict; war; natural disaster
- The relative weighting of each category across the years relates, firstly, to the prominent news events in each year sampled. In 2003, conflict and war stories combined constituted 80-100% of developing country news on each bulletin
- Channel 4 News is notable for showing a different pattern of story coverage to the other channels. It tends to cover more political events and a smaller proportion of its total coverage of developing countries derives from natural disasters.

'In 2003, 80-100% of developing country news stories were of conflict and war'

## 6. Methodology for News programming

We followed the precise methodology employed for the previous study.

### i. Sampling

Our priority in the original study was to ensure that we had an even spread of years over a 25 year period. The years selected were: 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 1999, and updated for this study to include 2003.

Within each year, we selected 5 periods of 5 weeks to ensure a proper spread of days throughout the year: February, April, June, September and November. The untypical periods of Christmas and summer holidays were therefore avoided.

Within each 5 week period, we randomly selected one weekday per week. This ensured that a) each day of the week was selected once only and b) results were not distorted by a single story dominating one week's news. The selection of weekdays was repeated identically in each year.

Our study embraced all daily evening bulletins on terrestrial television. We therefore analysed the BBC 6 o'clock and 9/10 o'clock news; ITN's Early Evening News and News at Ten (subsequently ITV Evening News and Nightly News); Channel Four News at 7pm; and Channel Five News.

Once the individual bulletins had been identified, for coding purposes we used the microfilm transcripts held in the BBC for every year except 1999 and 2003, for which we were able to use the new computer system. For ITN, we used microfilm transcripts for 1975, 1980 and 1985, archive recordings of bulletins for 1990, 1995 and 1999, and the computer system for 2003.

### ii. Coding

Each story was coded for content and format. The content coding frame was piloted, refined and expanded to 31 categories. The coding categories are:

1. Politics/Economic policy
2. Industry/Business/City/Finance/Economic indicators
3. Crime/Police
4. Social affairs: to include drugs, alcohol, prostitution, immigration, Home Affairs (excluding category 3)
5. Legal affairs
6. Consumer issues
7. Foreign affairs involving Britain, or Britain within the EU (including diplomacy)/ diplomatic or political activity and relations between states, trade negotiations
8. European Union issues
9. Civil unrest, internal disorder/Civil war/demonstrations/threats or acts of terrorism or violence/state-sponsored murder
10. War/tensions between states
11. Northern Ireland
12. Health/Medicine/The medical profession
13. Education
14. Employment/industrial relations/trade union issues
15. Environment/Ecology/Energy/Planning and Development
16. Natural disasters/'acts of God'
17. Human tragedy/disaster
18. Weather (general)
19. Science/Technology/IT
20. Transport issues
21. Religion
22. Sport
23. Culture, Media and the Arts

24. Royalty
25. Showbiz/Entertainment
26. Moral/Ethical issues
27. Human interest
28. Humour/Quirky stories
29. Expedition/Adventure
30. Military/Espionage/National security
31. Other

Non-British news stories were also coded by the following regions: USA; Europe; Third World; Rest of the World; International (for stories involving combinations or international organisations like UN, UNESCO etc – excluding stories with categories 7 & 8 above).

#### **iv. Qualifications**

As ever in content analysis, some stories were difficult to categorise. We rejected any double coding, so borderline stories were given a single content code based on focus and context. Coding was concerned only with content, and no account could be taken of differences in treatment either between channels or over time. This is an area of study which is certainly worth pursuing on international coverage, where treatment of the story can sometimes differ widely between channels in terms of the background history and culture of the country being reported.



## 7. News

### programming: Detailed Findings

#### 7.1 Foreign v Domestic news coverage 1975-2003

General trend across the bulletins:

Although the bulletins vary in the proportion of foreign news coverage they contain, similar patterns of increase and decrease are seen across them all, over the years surveyed. This suggests news events, rather than editorial policies, are the primary determinate of the relative changes in the amount of foreign coverage.

BBC 6pm	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
% domestic news	78	69	71	66	78	73	69
% foreign news	22	31	29	34	22	27	31

BBC 9pm	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
domestic news	76	56	67	61	70	57	50
foreign news	24	44	33	39	30	43	50

ITV Evening News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
domestic news	76	71	76	74	81	74	70
foreign news	24	29	24	26	19	26	30

ITV Nightly News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
domestic news	70	65	71	64	74	72	68
foreign news	30	35	29	36	26	28	32

Channel 4 News	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
domestic news	60	59	61	62	61
foreign news	40	41	39	38	39

Five News	1999	2003
domestic news	76	72
foreign news	24	28

Chart 20: proportions of domestic vs foreign news

#### Key points

- Of the years surveyed, foreign news coverage was greatest in 1980 and 200.
- The *early evening bulletins* on BBC1 and ITV1 show relatively less foreign news and similar proportions to each other (with the exception of relatively high foreign coverage on BBC 6pm News in 1990). Given the substantial divergence of the two main channels' late bulletins over the last five years (see below), it is significant that over the same period their early evening bulletins are almost identical in having around a 70:30 ratio of domestic to foreign news
- The *late evening bulletins* on the two main channels also had similar ratios of foreign to domestic news up to 1995 (excepting 1980). The last two measurement periods, however, show a major divergence. While ITV returned to previous levels of around 30% foreign news, the BBC's proportion rose to 43% in 1999 and 50% last year. This is a significant achievement, and suggests that the BBC's late evening bulletin is now very distinct from its main terrestrial rival
- Channel 4 shows the most consistency in its foreign news coverage, averaging at or just under 40% of all bulletins since 1985
- Five's news, although only surveyed in 1999 and 2003, shows similar figures to those of the ITV Evening News throughout this study (see also other sections).

'BBC1's late evening news is now very distinct from its main rival on ITV1'

## 7.2 Location of foreign news coverage by bulletin

### General trend across the bulletins:

Similar patterns are seen across the bulletins, over the years as the same foreign news events tend to be covered. Foreign news generally constitutes about one third of all news stories and the focus is primarily on 'big' stories that receive universal coverage. For example, there was a high proportion of European stories in 1999 with extensive coverage of the Kosovo conflict; in 2003, there was a high proportion of developing country stories due to the Iraq conflict.

Figures indicate percentage of all foreign news for the bulletin devoted to news from a particular region

BBC 6 O'clock News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
USA	7.3	13.9	17	13	16.3	13	9.5
EUROPE	31.5	15.1	14	29.7	36	46	14
THIRD WORLD	36.7	27.9	24	23.9	11.5	18	46.8
REST OF WORLD	9.2	13.6	23	11.7	15.2	3	2.8
INTERNATIONAL	0.5	3.8	11	2.7	3.6	7	20.2
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	13.2	25.4	11	17	13.4	3	5.7
EU	1.6	0.3	0	1.8	4	10	1

BBC 9/10 O'clock News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
USA	15.3	13.6	19	6.6	14.9	9	13.8
EUROPE	25.7	21.4	13	30.9	41	55	7.3
THIRD WORLD	38.6	31.5	30	23.3	9.8	22.9	49.2
REST OF WORLD	7.4	14.3	25	12.7	14.6	2.5	2
INTERNATIONAL	0	0.8	5	3.3	1.3	3.3	14.9
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	8.5	16.3	8	22.2	12.5	5.5	9.7
EU	4.5	2.1	0	1	5.9	1.8	3.1

ITV Evening News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
USA	13.3	26	14.6	6.5	44.3	13.7	12.2
EUROPE	24.4	22	12.4	20.3	23.8	50.7	5.7
THIRD WORLD	37.2	19	20.6	20.3	4.5	8.3	61
REST OF WORLD	8.4	9	18.7	26.3	17.3	4.4	2.5
INTERNATIONAL	0	3	15.1	3	8.3	10.2	10.6
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	13.1	20	16.8	23.6	1.8	8.8	8
EU	3.6	1	1.8	0	0	3.9	0

ITV Nightly News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
USA	13.3	26.2	19	7.1	26.1	11.5	17.4
EUROPE	31	17	10	37.3	33.8	44.7	9.1
THIRD WORLD	25	24.9	26	19.1	6.7	17.1	48
REST OF WORLD	9.6	7.7	18	11.5	22.2	9.1	1.5
INTERNATIONAL	0	1.2	12	5.1	3.6	6.2	12.7
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	17.1	21.8	15	19.3	1.5	5.2	11.3
EU	4	1.2	0	0.6	6.1	5.3	0

**'In 2003, foreign news across the bulletins highlighted Third World and international stories, largely at the expense of Europe'**

Channel 4 News	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
USA	24	10.3	20.3	15.1	16.3
EUROPE	18	44.6	38.2	47	10.4
THIRD WORLD	23	15.4	10.8	18.2	50
REST OF WORLD	14	8.5	12.2	1.9	2.9
INTERNATIONAL	7	3.1	4.6	6.4	7.3
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	14	17.7	6.6	10.4	13.1
EU	0	0.4	7.3	1	0

1999 Five	1999	2003
USA	27	12
EUROPE	33	3
THIRD WORLD	13	67
REST OF WORLD	15	2
INTERNATIONAL	7	8
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	5	8
EU	0	0

Chart 21: percentage of all foreign news by region

**Key points**

- The BBC bulletins have generally shown a smaller proportion of American stories than the bulletins on ITV, Channel 4 and Five (all of which are produced by ITN). This is particularly marked in 1995 when American events were the focus of 43% of the ITV Evening News's foreign coverage, compared with 12% of foreign news on the BBC 6 O'clock News. Prominent American stories in that year were the Oklahoma bombing and the OJ Simpson trial
- In 1999, Five was the only bulletin to place almost as much emphasis on American stories as on European ones. On the ITV Early Evening News, for example, 11% of foreign news focused on American issues, 50% on European ones, whilst on Five news, the equivalent figures were 27% and 33%
- In 2003, similar proportions of story locations were seen across the BBC bulletins, the ITV Nightly News and Channel 4 News, although the latter had a greater proportion of stories focused on international relations ('foreign affairs')
- In 2003, the proportions of stories from different locations were similar on Five News and on ITV Evening News
- In 2003, foreign news across the bulletins highlighted Third World and International stories, largely at the expense of Europe.

### 7.3 Developing country news coverage, 1975-2003

Total coverage of developing countries, by year

1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
32.6	27	24.8	19.7	9.7	18	52

Chart 22: developing country news as a % of total foreign news

General trend:

- The increase in developing country coverage in 2003, to the highest level recorded, is largely due to the Iraq conflict (although there was also coverage of other developing country stories such as SARS in China, terrorist attacks in Turkey and political developments in Afghanistan and North Korea).

The dominant developing country stories in the years surveyed were:

- 1975: Cambodia civil war/Laos; US withdrawal from Vietnam; Middle East peace negotiations; Mozambique independence; conflict in the Lebanon
- 1980: Rhodesian independence; Russian invasion of Afghanistan; Iran-Iraq war; Uganda famine
- 1985: War in Lebanon, politics in Vietnam, volcanic eruption in Columbia
- 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait
- 1995: Rwandan refugees
- 1999: International Kurdish demonstrations against Turkey; Indonesian elections (unrest in East Timor)
- 2003: Iraq conflict; Israel/Palestine conflict; terrorist attacks in Turkey.

### 7.4 Developing country news coverage, by bulletin

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
BBC 6pm News	37	28	24	24	12	18	47
BBC 9/10pm News	39	31	30	23	10	23	49
ITV Evening News	37	19	21	20	5	8	61
ITV Nightly News	25	25	26	19	7	18	48
Channel 4 News	-	-	23	15	11	18	50
Five News (7pm)	-	-	-	-	-	13	67

Chart 23: developing country news as a % of total foreign news

Key points

- Fluctuations over the years in relative coverage of developing country stories are, again, attributable to the news events of the particular years sampled. In 1995, for example, the conflict in Bosnia and American events such as the Oklahoma bombing meant that a greater proportion of foreign coverage was devoted to non-developing countries (ie, Europe and the United States)
- Between 1980 and 1999, inclusive, the proportion of developing country coverage has tended to be lowest on the ITV Evening News
- As stated above, stories related to the Iraq conflict that focused on international relations were not categorised as 'developing country' stories. This meant that those bulletins which did not examine the wider context of the Iraq conflict – in particular the ITV Evening News and Five News – still featured developing country stories prominently. As before, an analysis of the types of stories covered allows us to differentiate the bulletins further.

## 7.5 Issue coverage in developing country news, 1975-2003

General trend across the bulletins:

Across all of the bulletins and years sampled, between 75% and 100% of developing country news stories fell into a narrow range of categories: politics; foreign affairs; conflict; war; natural disaster.

BBC 6 O'clock News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
politics	14	32	18	19	0	29	0
foreign affairs	12	1	0	9	0	0	8
conflict	39	0	8	20	81	51	75
war	33	31	39	46	0	0	16
natural disaster	0	19	33	0	19	9	0
other	2	17	2	6	0	11	1

BBC 9 O'clock News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
politics	21	44	11	13	3	27	3
foreign affairs	3	8	1	10	18	0	3
conflict	18	9	23	32	61	44	70
war	56	21	28	25	0	5	18
natural disaster	0	13	33	12	18	19	0
other	2	5	4	8	0	5	6

ITV Evening News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
politics	23	18	5	10	0	60	4
foreign affairs	2	3	0	11	0	24	0
conflict	42	9	18	38	100	0	77
war	31	67	30	35	0	0	17
natural disaster	0	0	44	0	0	16	0
other	2	3	3	6	0	0	2

ITV Nightly News	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
politics	32	13	9	15	3	38	4
foreign affairs	2	15	0	4	0	0	0
conflict	34	13	24	34	76	54	86
war	32	49	18	22	0	0	8
natural disaster	0	0	28	12	3	2	0
other	0	10	11	13	18	6	2

Channel 4 News	1985	1990	1995	1999	2003
politics	36	44	47	29	1
foreign affairs	14	15	0	0	4
conflict	33	19	50	38	67
war	8	12	3	4	13
natural disaster	4	7	0	4	0
other	5	3	0	25	15



**'Channel 4 News covers political aspects of developing countries more, and disasters less than other bulletins'**

1999 Five	1999	2003
politics	18	0
foreign affairs	0	0
conflict	32	80
war	2	20
environment	36	0
natural disaster	0	0
other	12	0

Chart 24: issue coverage in developing country news, by bulletin

**Key points:**

- The relative weighting of each category across the years relates, firstly, to the prominent news events in each year sampled. In 2003, conflict and war stories combined constitute 80-100% of developing country news on each bulletin
- Channel 4 News is notable for showing a different pattern of story coverage to the other channels. It tends to cover more political events and a smaller proportion of its total coverage of developing countries derives from natural disasters
- On Five News in 1999 an unusually high proportion of developing country news was concerned with environmental issues (due to a special report on global warming in the Arctic, a long news story concerning British environmentalists and the Ecuador rainforest, and another long story about protests at whaling in Iceland).

## 8. Conclusions

As we said in the Introduction, we still believe it is appropriate to focus on the delivery of factual international programming by the main terrestrial channels despite the steady increase in multi-channel homes. This is still the means by which the vast majority of viewers are exposed to information and experience outside the UK, and is also directly relevant to the public service obligations laid upon these channels.

### 8.1 Factual International programming conclusions

For non-news factual programming, a picture is now emerging of trends over the last 14 years which are disturbing in terms of the balance of content. On the one hand, the total volume of factual international output on terrestrial channels is – on the whole – fairly stable. In retrospect, the baseline year of 1989-90 appears to be untypically high, as does the last measurement period in 2000-01 (see page 7). The 782 hours of terrestrial output in 2003 is slightly up on most previous periods, and the addition of the two BBC digital channels raises total output in digital homes by 17%.

The performance of individual channels shows that changes are not consistent across the schedule. BBC1, Channel 4 and Five all showed a decline on 2000-1, but have returned to the level they were previously showing. ITV1 is the only channel whose factual international programming has increased over the last three periods, but it has not increased its output filmed in developing countries. BBC2, disappointingly, is the only channel to decline over the last three periods, despite benefiting from programmes first aired on BBC4.

These broad trends conceal some significant differences in approaches to content across and within the channels, and reminds us that it can be misleading to group together all kinds of "factual" programming. Easily the largest single category, for example, is travel programmes, comprising over a quarter of the total factual international output. Added to this is a further 5% of the total featuring British people settling abroad (e.g. *Get a New Life*, *Costa Living*). While such programmes may offer some insights into the way of life and geography of other countries, their contribution to an understanding of different cultures is not in the same league as the "harder" issues around, for example, development, environment, politics and conflict.

These comprised 12% of all factual international programming, although we should be careful about confusing this with a "tabloidisation" argument. Both history and wildlife topics (respectively 17% and 11% of the total) play an important role in exposing audiences to knowledge about cultures, landscapes and habitats around the world. It is less easy to include crime programmes such as *World's Wildest Police Videos* as contributing to a better understanding of global culture.

The contribution of BBC4 to factual international programming was significant, and around a third of it was subsequently repeated on BBC2.

The rise of history as a popular television genre is reflected in international programming, particularly on BBC2, Channel 4 and Five: the latter, in particular, showing a continuing upward curve from less than 3 hours five years ago to nearly 30 hours last year. Five's contribution in this area is particularly interesting given that ITV could manage only 1 international history programme and BBC1 only 2, all of them in off-peak.

'Trends over the last 14 years in the content of factual international programmes are disturbing'

## 8.2 Developing country factual programming conclusions

The most disturbing feature of the data is the downward trend in developing country factual programming on terrestrial channels, now at its lowest point in the series and at 197 hours nearly half the baseline total of 1989-90. This is contrary to the trend in news programming, and given the events in Iraq is counter-intuitive. It suggests that mainstream factual programming is less prepared to follow the changing international agendas and to make time available for programmes which help to understand some of the political, social, cultural and religious issues involved in the shift in world events since September 11th 2001. The one notable exception has been peak time coverage of developing countries on Channel 4 in direct response to the Iraq conflict.

Otherwise, the downward trend was reflected across all the main channels, although ITV's particularly steep drop was exacerbated by the *Survivor* series in 2000-2001. The BBC's increase of a third on the last measurement period is entirely attributable to the new digital channels, which suggests that less of the digital output for developing country factual programming is making it to the main schedules.

While the Iraq crisis did not impact on the overall *volume* of developing country factual programming, it did skew the *content* of those programmes that were aired. It meant that last year, over a fifth of such programmes were devoted to conflict and disaster themes, while fewer than half were devoted to travel, wildlife or religion, arts and culture. By contrast, those three categories accounted for nearly four fifths of these programmes in 2000-01. It is significant that the two minority channels accounted for nearly all the 55 programmes on Iraq – 32 on Channel 4 and 18 on BBC2. Channel 4's performance in this area, given its dependence wholly on commercial funding, is a significant measure of its continuing commitment to its statutory public service remit in the face of fragmenting audiences.

In addition, Channel 4 was also responsible for over half the developing country programmes on religion, culture and the arts (11 out of a total of 19). This is down on C4's output in this area on previous years, and suggests that some of these programmes may have been displaced by those on Iraq. BBC4 was the most prolific contributor in this area (17 programmes) with a further 13 on conflict and disaster and 9 on politics. This excludes those subsequently aired on BBC2, which suggests that it would not be difficult for the BBC to devote more terrestrial time to developing country programmes at virtually no extra cost.

There are two mitigating factors in the decline of developing country factual programmes. First, is the halving of the travel category from 32% to 15% of the total. This is because the three main reality series of 2000-1, *Survivor* on ITV and *Temptation Island* and *Shipwrecked* on Channel 4 boosted the total for that year. It is debatable whether these location programmes make a significant contribution to a knowledge and understanding of developing countries. Second, the overall decline was disproportionately reflected in off-peak programming, particularly on BBC2 and Channel 4.

Channel 4's commitment in this area is further demonstrated by its increased output in peak time. It is the only terrestrial channel to show a significant increase (although BBC2's went up slightly), while BBC4's contribution in this area nearly doubled the total BBC peak time output. It is unfortunate that the BBC2 repeats of BBC4 programmes were all shown outside peak time.



### 8.3 News conclusions

In contrast to factual programming, news coverage of international events demonstrates a clear pattern of following news agendas. This may not be surprising, given the unfolding events in Iraq but it demonstrates with even more clarity the inability of non-news factual programming to follow the changing agenda. To some extent, the broadcasters can argue that news programmes today are more likely to contain the kind of analysis and context that might normally feature in longer factual programmes, and this is particularly true for Channel 4 News and Newsnight. Even such contextual analyses – which by definition do not match the length and depth of a full programme – cannot compensate for the clear fall-off in factual programmes on developing countries, in spite of the Iraq war and subsequent events.

Three conclusions stand out from the overall trends in foreign news on British television. First, Channel 4 News has been astonishingly consistent over the years, with around 40% of its news coverage devoted to foreign issues. This suggests that its bulletins are less driven by the immediate news agenda than other channels, and that there is a more reflective editorial policy to focus on international events even when they are not the subject of immediately breaking stories.

Second, there has traditionally been a conscious policy on both the main channels to concentrate more on foreign news in the late evening bulletins than in the early evening. This continues – and indeed has accelerated – on the BBC, but there are now clear signs of divergence over the last five years with ITV's late bulletin. After 40 years of competitive editorial approaches, it appears that the BBC's late evening editorial policy is now very distinct from ITV's. Despite events in Iraq, ITV's foreign coverage on its late bulletin was little more than in 1999 and at about the same level as previous years.

Third, it is worth pointing to Five's commitment to foreign news. Despite its reputation as developing a more tabloid or populist approach, it still devoted around a quarter of its bulletins to international news in 1999, rising to 28% last year. While lower than other bulletins, this would still compare favourably to entirely commercial channels elsewhere.

The domination of Third World stories as a proportion of foreign news coverage during 2003 is unsurprising given the events in Iraq and was fairly consistent across bulletins. Of greater interest is the progressive decline in Third World coverage in preceding years to 1995, with a slight increase in 1999. It is not clear whether this is due to unfolding events in Europe and the collapse of communism, or whether there have been conscious editorial decisions to reduce Third World coverage. It is certainly remarkable how similar the different bulletins have been over the years in the way their foreign coverage is distributed amongst the regions of the world. Once again, this demonstrates the news-led nature of the coverage rather than distinct editorial policies being dictated by the location of foreign bureaux or correspondents.

The one distinctive feature between the bulletins was, again, Channel 4 News' emphasis on the political context for developing countries. While the emphasis last year was, as with the other channels, on the Iraq conflict, Channel 4 News has been notable over the years for concentrating on a more political flavour to its Third World coverage than any other bulletin.

*Political or commercial choice*

#### 8.4 Overall Channel performance

Overall, given the unstable situation in Iraq and heightened awareness of how global issues impact on domestic policy and people's everyday lives, it is disappointing that our public service television framework is delivering a lower volume of programming about developing countries – even including entertainment formats – than ever before.

Our analysis demonstrates that, of all the channels, Channel 4 appears to be the best performer and should be acknowledged in both its news and factual programming output as abiding by its public service remit. It is a telling reminder that commercial funding can, within the right regulatory framework, deliver the kinds of programmes that can attract audiences as well as widen their horizons.

The BBC's performance is more disappointing, especially in light of the additional resources being made available to the digital channels. There is a real and tangible difference being made by BBC4, but terrestrial analogue viewers are not getting the kind of benefits from the international programmes first being aired on BBC4 that might be expected – either in terms of the number of hours being rebroadcast or the scheduling. Given the growing significance of the BBC's public service remit in a multi-channel world, it might be expected to exploit its digital investment rather more effectively.

As the Ofcom consultation on public service broadcasting has made clear, there is still a role for the two wholly commercial channels, ITV and Five, in public service provision. We see no reason why this should not include the area of factual international programming, particularly in an age where these issues are becoming more rather than less important.

It may be that Ofcom will need to take account of the growing significance of international affairs in their assessment of what contribution should be made by each of the public service channels. It will also need to keep a watchful eye on the way in which programmes defined as international really do contribute to audiences' knowledge of the world beyond Britain: celebrity-based or relocation programmes have some relevance, but should not be a substitute for programmes with more substance which tackle real cultural, religious, social and political issues affecting other countries, but also affecting our own lives in the UK. In an unstable age, we ought to be looking for more rather than fewer such programmes.



## The World on the Box

This is the seventh and most comprehensive in a series of TV monitoring reports published by 3WE, a coalition of international charities working for development, the environment and human rights.

Looking at the calendar year 2003, this research, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and carried out by the renowned Communication and Media Research Institute at the University of Westminster, examines both news and non-news factual programming on international issues generally, and developing countries specifically.

In doing so, it updates two sets of longitudinal data: the University's content study of news bulletins on the terrestrial TV channels since 1975, and 3WE's study of non-news-and-current-affairs factual international programming since 1989-90.

For the first time, the new BBC digital TV channels are also included, in order to inform the government-commissioned review taking place during 2004.

The findings will bring both comfort and concern to all those concerned with the capacity of public service television to inform and educate citizens about the wider world. High levels of international and developing country news coverage on the main channels testify to the continued commitment of UK TV news to follow global agendas – but the content is dominated by conflict and war.

For a broader, deeper, contextual view of the wider world we should be able to look to general factual programming, but here we find the amount of factual programmes dealing with developing countries was the lowest ever in 14 years of monitoring, a trend followed on each of the main channels.

This research comes after the Communications Act 2003 included requirements for the regulators to ensure that both in news and in general programming, the UK public service TV channels include an international dimension. It is published in the context of significant reviews of public service television, by Ofcom and through the BBC Charter review process.

The report will therefore be of interest to government, parliamentarians, regulators, broadcasters, programmes makers, university departments of media and communications studies and development studies – and to all who care about the need for high quality TV coverage of the world on the box.



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