



# NEW WORLD VIEW

WHY PSBs HAVE A CRITICAL ROLE TO PLAY  
IN PROVIDING CITIZENS WITH RELIABLE  
AND ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE  
CHARLOTTE JENNER & JOHN McCARTHY    MARCH 2013



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## INTERVIEWEES

**Bengt Arwén** GD-Staff Executive Administrator, Sveriges Radio

**Peter Cavanagh** CEO & Editor-in-Chief, Radio New Zealand

**Ingrid Deltenre** Director-General, European Broadcasting Union

**Jamie Drummond** Executive Director & Co-founder, ONE

**Counsellor Cecília Ishitani** Head of the Brazilian Ambassador's Office,  
Brazilian Embassy, London

**Lord Digby Jones** British businessman and former UK Trade Minister  
(2007–8)

**Paula Kerger** President & CEO, PBS

**Liliane Landor** Controller of Language Services, BBC World Service

**Hubert T. Lacroix** President & CEO, CBC/Radio-Canada

**Tim Luckhurst** Professor of Journalism, University of Kent

**Lord Chris Patten** Chairman, BBC Trust

**Frank-Dieter Freiling** Senior Vice-President International Affairs, ZDF

**John Sarbah** Associate, African Foundation for Development (AFFORD)

**Toshiyuki Sato** Special Controller, General Broadcasting  
Administration, NHK

**Mark Scott** MD, ABC Australia

**Ahdaf Soueif** Novelist

**Charlotte Jenner** is a freelance writer and researcher with a background in politics, media and development. Her previous work has included commissions by organisations such as BBC Media Action, the Guardian, Internews, the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) and the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA). Charlotte is currently completing an MA in Communication for Development at Malmö University. Her main areas of academic interest are public service media, media coverage of developing countries, particularly through documentary film, and the role of interactivity in engaging audiences ([www.charlottejenner.com](http://www.charlottejenner.com)).

**John McCarthy** CBE is a writer and broadcaster. His first book *Some Other Rainbow* (co-written with Jill Morrell) was an account of his 1986 kidnap and incarceration for over five years by Lebanese militants. John's other five published titles include most recently an account of his journey through modern-day Palestine, *You Can't Hide the Sun: A Journey through Palestine*. John has worked as a broadcaster on television and radio for the BBC, ITV, Sky Arts and Al Jazeera, making programmes that reflect his knowledge of and interest in travel, religion and history. John has also worked as a presenter on various BBC radio series including, among others, *Excess Baggage* and *Saturday Live*. He is a Patron of Freedom From Torture and has been awarded an honorary DLitt from the University of Hull.

Cover image: Crowd watching the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on a large TV screen on the grounds of the Beijing Science and Technology University Gymnasium.  
© Ian Teh/Panos

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# PREFACE

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We may not recognise it but the saying ‘knowledge is power’ has never been more relevant than in today’s frenetic and constantly changing world. In the 12 years since we launched the CBA WorldView project the world has become increasingly globalised and interconnected. Over the same period the broadcasting industry has ‘gone digital’, becoming more fragmented and complex. But broadcasting, especially television, remains central in shaping people’s world view. In this report we take the argument that knowledge is power one step further, demonstrating that information about the rest of the world not only empowers but is also central to democracy.

Whoever we are, wherever we live, it is our world view that influences how we behave and the choices we make. It underpins which charities we support, what we buy, how we vote and how we react to our neighbours. In today’s interconnected world all these actions become ‘development issues’. Increasingly, our world view also shapes how we use or conserve the earth’s resources and how we understand and navigate a shifting world order in terms of power and changing commercial realities.

In the analogue era programme choices were limited, if a documentary about development or other parts of the world was broadcast, millions would have little choice but to watch. Now, in the digital age, audiences are free to choose their own niche media, often selecting programmes that echo and reinforce the views and opinions they already hold. For those of us involved in international media and development an increasingly relevant question is, how do we reach audiences with programme ‘knowledge’ about the rest of the world that will empower them to make informed democratic choices?

The aim of the CBA WorldView project has always been to support programmes that will increase understanding of the developing world, development issues and the need for the eradication of poverty. The project has seed-funded nearly 400 films, each one providing a different perspective, different insight, to other lives in other places. Few of these films would have been made without WorldView funding.

The success of WorldView has been that the films we have supported tell strong and engaging stories in innovative ways that cut through and reach substantial audiences. These are the stories that provide context to news and current affairs. They are the real stories of lives lived against the backdrop of poverty and war but also growth and opportunity. These are human stories that connect the audience with people in the wider world and reduce the sense of the ‘other’, highlighting our similarities not our differences.

Increasingly the project has enabled filmmakers everywhere, not just in the UK but also in the Global South, to tell their own development stories. As WorldView’s sister project, Your WorldView ([www.yourworldview.org.uk](http://www.yourworldview.org.uk)) continues to grow, we are aware that with new partners WorldView has itself become a global player, but this is only the beginning.

This new report helps to illustrate why projects like CBA WorldView and Your WorldView are now more relevant than ever – supporting the development of innovative content about the rest of the world and reducing the risk of funding international content for broadcasters and producers. The report also seeks to urge public broadcasters to continue to be relevant to the audiences they serve by ensuring their schedules include reliable, accurate and engaging international content. By making such international content integral to their schedules they will continue to be positioned as beacons of information and knowledge in an otherwise confusing and entertainment-driven media landscape.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sally-Ann Wilson'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Sally-Ann Wilson**  
Secretary-General, CBA

# 1 INTRODUCTION

When we last put pen to paper with our colleagues at the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) and CBA WorldView, it was to contribute to what continues to be a lively debate around the future of the BBC World Service. In our report, *Brave New World Service*, we assessed the value of the World Service, to the UK and beyond, highlighting the challenges it faced and identifying the ways in which its integration into the wider BBC could benefit domestic UK audiences. Since writing that report, we have continued to keep a keen eye on developments, as the World Service settles into its new home at Broadcasting House and as the 2014 deadline for it to come under full BBC financial control looms large.

We continue to hear positive assurances from BBC management as well as notes of concern from many World Service supporters. Yet in reality it is too soon to tell how the BBC's new financial and structural management of the World Service will affect the way they report on, and to, the rest of the world and in turn how UK audiences will be served by these changes. As we wait, with a hopeful yet watchful eye, it seems pertinent to look at a broader issue, which underpinned our inquiry into the future of the BBC World Service – and our staunch support for its healthy survival as a fully integrated part of the BBC. That is the importance of audiences having access to reliable, accurate and in-depth information about the rest of world, particularly those areas of the world that have historically been under-reported or negatively represented to UK audiences, such as Africa, the Middle East and the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

This report will take a closer look at that underlying argument, building the case for why we, as citizens of the United Kingdom and indeed the world, need to know about what is happening beyond our national borders and why the media, specifically Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs), should be the ones to provide that insight. Through interviews with PSBs, programme makers, producers, international commentators, diaspora groups and business people, we shall attempt to address the following key questions:

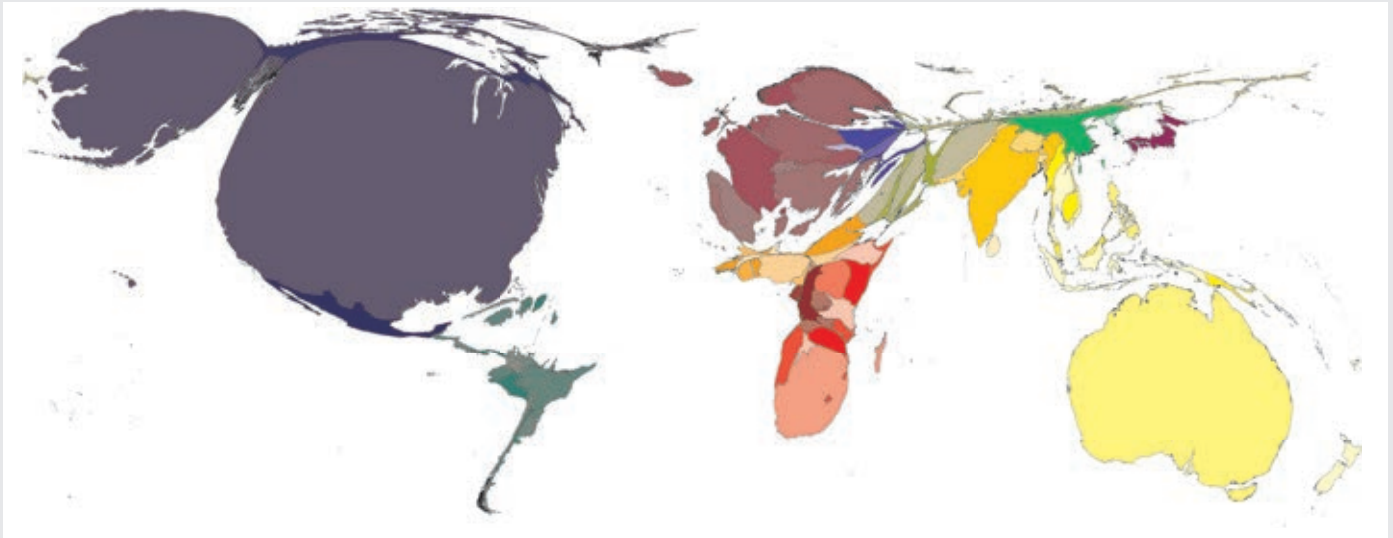
- Why is international coverage and access to trusted, in-depth information about the rest of the world important?
- What is the makeup and profile of the UK audience and what is a PSB's responsibility towards that audience?
- What is international coverage and what are the different ways in which broadcasters can approach it?

It is important to point out that the case we make within this report is not simply about UK citizens' awareness of world events, although this is an important part of the argument. As well as being aware of what is happening in the rest of the world, we argue that audiences need to be able to understand and interpret world events and cultures and appreciate what they mean for UK citizens and the UK's position in the international community – be that as international donors, with a ring-fenced budget to provide funding for development programmes in the Global South, or as trading partners with countries we know little about.

Having had the privilege to spend time in some of the most interesting and complex corners of the globe, from the African continent to the Middle East and indeed Europe, we as authors have repeatedly been reminded of the need for understanding and openness to different cultures and political perspectives. In a world that is simultaneously interconnected and polarised, politically and culturally, understanding and insight have become increasingly valuable assets for those who wish to operate successfully within the global society, both in terms of safety and success. The UK simply cannot afford to be inward-looking any longer if our country's economy and citizenry are to thrive.

It is also important to be clear that the focus of our inquiry is on mainstream television and radio coverage provided by PSBs, although it is worth acknowledging that online media is of increasing importance and will also be discussed briefly. Due to the need to constrain the parameters of this report, we will only be looking at online offerings of international coverage that are directly connected to PSB coverage. Similarly, while we are focusing on Public Service Broadcasting we are by no means arguing that international coverage should be the remit of PSB alone – commercial broadcasters too should acknowledge and respond to their audiences' need for information about the rest of the world. Again to make the parameters of our report more defined, we have chosen to focus on the responsibility of the Public Service Broadcaster, as a publicly funded body, to equip citizens with a better understanding of the rest of the world and their place within it.

# The UK simply cannot afford to be inward-looking any longer if our country's economy and citizenry are to thrive



World map according to factual and non factual programming on UK television in 2010. Map credit: Benjamin David Hennig, Sasi Research Group, University of Sheffield

## International coverage in the UK

Why is it necessary to make the argument for international coverage? Looking at the UK broadcast media landscape, the answer is clear. Despite the fact that we now live in a more interconnected world than ever before, the amount of international media content, on UK television in particular, is at its lowest since the 1980s.

Domestic news bulletins are increasingly accused of being parochial, with international stories, particularly on events occurring outside the EU or United States, being given little or no consistent airtime. Foreign stories, when they do appear, bubble up without background or context, and disappear again just as quickly. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to get factual programming about the rest of the world commissioned by mainstream television channels – as one producer put it in the recent report, *ReViewing the World* (Scott, Jenner & Smith, 2012) 'There is not, in my view, a strong part of the culture of any of the UK broadcasters that says that a significant part of their job is to bring unknown stories about different parts of the world to the public.' Moreover, international documentary strands are disappearing as broadcasters cut budgets and reduce slots in their schedules for international programming. Others are pushing international programming onto their secondary channels, making it harder for audiences without a pre-held or specific interest to discover this content. At the same time, promotion and marketing of international content is taking a back seat to mainstream entertainment, meaning audiences may never know that it is even

available (Scott, Rodriguez-Rojas & Jenner, 2011). Indeed, while many UK broadcasters voice their support for international coverage, the research data tells a different story.

Research published by the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) in 2011 showed that in 2010 the amount of non-news programming about the rest of the world aired by the main UK terrestrial television channels was at the lowest it had been since 1989. International content that was aired tended to be travel or wildlife programming, while the countries that were covered were mainly our Northern neighbours, with North America and Europe accounting for 28 and 25 per cent of international programming respectively, whilst the Middle East and Africa received the least coverage – five and six per cent respectively (Scott, Rodriguez-Rojas & Jenner, 2011).

In light of the Arab Spring and political changes in North Africa and the Middle East, an even more telling finding was that Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Yemen were not the main focus of a single factual programme in 2010.

If we are to believe that the world as represented via UK television is a true representation, then our global perspective would be drastically warped. This is demonstrated in the above image, which illustrates what the world looks like according to factual and non factual programming on UK television in 2010.

# 2

## NO LONGER AN ISLAND

WHY IS INTERNATIONAL CONTENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD IMPORTANT FOR UK CITIZENS?

### GLOBAL CITIZENRY

In the 21st century, it is impossible to ignore the interconnectedness of our world. From the pervasive, connective power of the internet to the explosion of low-cost air travel, increased migration, globalised politics and trade, we are now more connected to those who live thousands of miles away from us than we might ever have thought possible.

Young or old, the world and how it works affects and involves us all. Issues that were once largely the concern of the nation state: politics, economics, media, environmental issues, military interventions and even cultural production have increasingly become global issues, meaning that what happens on the opposite side of the globe can directly affect us here in the UK. Our political, economic, cultural, media and even social landscape is becoming ever more global. As Liliane Landor, Controller of Language Services at the BBC World Service puts it:

*'In a very basic way we are all citizens of a global and quite small world. There's a saying that says if you catch a cold in Egypt you will be sneezing in Lebanon and that is so true in the world we are living in today, we are all connected.'*

As citizens of both the world and the UK, we need to understand what is going on beyond our national borders, in order to operate effectively within the global environment – be that as a responsible and safe traveller, or in business or the job market. Put simply, now more than ever, we need to understand how our global backyard works. How is it made up? What are the priorities and values of other nations? What are the differences and similarities within this global community? How does what is happening over there affect what is happening here?

As Jamie Drummond, Co-founder of advocacy organisation, ONE, argues:

*'I think the UK is peculiarly exposed to international globalising forces, through choices we've made not only in the last decade in our foreign policy but also because of our history, our language, our shared cultural links with other countries. I think this country can therefore benefit disproportionately from a more pro-active interest in the world beyond our borders... reminding UK citizens of our connections with the world so they can engage with the world and not be narrow-minded on things like immigration or aid is extremely important.'*

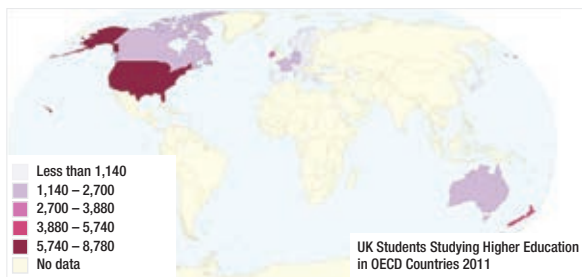
### TRAVEL, MIGRATION AND DIASPORA

The importance of knowing about the rest of the world is not only motivated by the outside world knocking at our door. National borders are becoming ever more porous, with UK citizens migrating across the globe and many different nationalities now making up the UK population. Indeed, 21st century UK citizens are travelling significantly further and wider than previous generations, and today we think nothing of travelling thousands of miles for a holiday or even to live. In 2011 some 7,000 Britons left the UK to live in the United Arab Emirates alone.

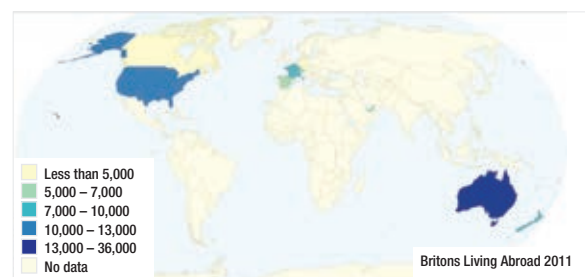
Worldwide in 2010, well over 200 million people were living away from their home countries; working, studying or seeking political asylum, and some three per cent of the world's population were international migrants. In Europe alone, migrants counted for one in ten of the population (the Guardian, 2013). So, wherever we may choose to live today, we are either a member of, or hosting, migrant communities with their own culture and history.

Social cohesion is central to an effective democracy and without knowledge of the culture or politics of the people and places we visit, or come to live alongside, we can unwittingly find ourselves having a damaging impact not only on local communities (both at home

UK students studying higher education in OECD countries, 2011



Visualisation of top ten foreign countries where Britons live, 2011



# ‘Without doubt, prejudice is born of ignorance and clear and neutral information is key to breaking down prejudice through abolishing ignorance’

Lord Digby Jones, UK businessman and former UK Trade Minister

and abroad) but also on our international reputation.

As John Sarbah, an associate of the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) and a young member of the diaspora community in the UK, puts it:

*‘Having a better understanding of the cultures that are in your country can only be a good thing. There’s a huge and diverse diaspora in this country and if you can understand a bit about where they come from, why they believe this or dress like that it can help hugely with social cohesion. If you think about the Paralympics and how that was put across in the media, it changed people’s perspectives on the disabled community and opened people’s minds to the lives of others. The same happens if you give people more information about other cultures, it increases understanding.’*

In a world that increasingly demands international cooperation and tolerance, if as UK citizens we are seen to be acting unfairly or in ignorance, opportunities for enhanced economic and cultural exchange, and indeed travel, could well decrease. Business tsar Lord Digby Jones agrees that information is the key to ensuring the UK is not held back by ignorance, insularity and prejudice:

*‘Without doubt, prejudice is born of ignorance and clear and neutral information is key to breaking down prejudice through abolishing ignorance. Now, the only way to do that is little and often, a constant drip, drip of information about the rest of the world. I just can’t tell you how important that is.’*

## TENSIONS

As different ‘worlds’, with different cultural traditions and value systems, are drawn ever closer by globalisation and once distant cultures become enmeshed, the potential dangers from cultural misunderstandings and international tensions have become increasingly pronounced.

The hostage crisis in Algeria in January 2013 offers a dramatic – and tragic – example of how politics, culture, faith and business can become intertwined at a moment’s notice. A truly international crisis, the Algerian hostage situation brought into sharp focus the level of interconnection between the different countries involved. The militant Islamist group responsible for the capture of the international hostages working at the remote In Amenas gas plant in the Algerian desert claimed to be responding to French military intervention against Islamist allies fighting a rebel campaign in neighbouring Mali. What is more, the plant they chose to target was run by a consortium of international companies: British Petroleum (BP); the Norwegian company, Statoil;

## Where are Britons living?

In 2010 the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published a report called *Global Brit*, which estimated that in 2008 there were 5.6 million British nationals living abroad, and a further half a million living abroad for a part of the year. In a report published in 2006, the IPPR estimated

that over the last few decades about “two of every three emigrants left the UK for work-related reasons”. They estimated that “this proportion increased to over 70 per cent around the turn of the millennium”.

## Top ten countries of last or next residence of migrants who are British citizens, 2011

### Country of last residence (Inflow)

Country	Estimate
1 Australia	12
2 Germany	8
3 Spain	7
4 France	5
5 USA	5
6 New Zealand	4
7 South Africa	4
8 Southern Cyprus	3
9 United Arab Emirates	2
10 Canada	2

### Country of next residence (Outflow)

Country	Estimate
1 Australia	36
2 USA	13
3 New Zealand	10
4 France	9
5 United Arab Emirates	7
6 Switzerland	6
7 Spain	6
8 Germany	5
9 Canada	5
10 Singapore	4

This table uses 95% confidence intervals (CI) to indicate the robustness of each estimate.  
Source: ONS Long-Term International Migration, 3 Series (calendar year), Table 3.20b

**UK goods and services trading partners, imports, 2011**

- Imports from the European Union accounted for 51% of total goods and services imports, with the Rest of the World accounting for the remaining 49%;
- Imports from the 17 eurozone countries accounted for 43% of UK imports;
- Germany was the UK's single largest source of imports accounting for 11.5% of all imports, followed by the US (9.4%), France (6.4%) and China (6.3%);
- Imports from the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) together accounted for 10% of all imports;
- Imports from the so-called PIGS countries (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain) accounted for 9% of UK imports; and
- EFTA countries (Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) accounted for 7% of all UK imports, with Norway and Switzerland accounting for 5.1% and 2% of UK imports respectively.

Country/Regions	£million	% UK World imports
<b>World</b>	516,609	-
<b>EU27</b>	261,378	50.6%
Germany	59,563	11.5%
France	33,170	6.4%
Netherlands	32,774	6.3%
Belgium	21,521	4.2%
Spain	21,435	4.1%
Italy	18,465	3.6%
Ireland	17,297	3.3%
Sweden	9,672	1.9%
Poland	8,610	1.7%
Denmark	7,394	1.4%
Czech Republic	4,694	0.9%
Austria	3,804	0.7%

and Algerian state-owned company, Sonotrach, and was the workplace of numerous foreign nationals. When the Algerian Government acted with force to end the siege at the plant, 37 hostages, including workers from Japan, the US, Norway, Britain and the Philippines, as well as Algerian military personnel and militants, lost their lives.

There was a clear need for information, not only about the immediate events, but also about the broader context of a conflict that is being played out across a broad swathe of the globe: the Sahel region, North Africa, the Middle East, all the way to Afghanistan and Pakistan. To understand why citizens of the UK and other nations would be targeted in this way, we need information on the international Islamist movement, we need information on the political landscape in which they operate and we need to be aware of how the policies of governments, (our own and others) in the region are perceived.

**A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY**

Our Government's actions – whether it is forming trade partnerships, offering disaster assistance, proffering political advice or threatening economic or military sanctions – can directly affect individual economic and personal security as well as the way we as individuals are perceived and received when we travel and do business abroad. It is therefore essential that as citizens we understand the issues, so that we can hold our politicians to account. In order to be genuinely informed citizens of any democracy, we need to be able to understand the international relevance of our Government's policies – we need to understand the implications of signing a particular treaty or withdrawing from a particular trade agreement. We should be able to interrogate what sending troops or withdrawing them from a region will really mean as well as what signals our support for one side or another in any given dispute send to the rest of the world. In a more domestic context, we need to understand issues such as what private foreign investment in UK utilities will really mean for us in the medium to longer term.

As Professor Tim Luckhurst, Professor of Journalism at the University of Kent, argues:

*'Why do I need to know about abroad? Well, because my Government is increasingly active abroad and as an informed citizen I ought to place myself in a position to give informed permission or informed consent, or*

*indeed to deny consent, on the basis of information when my Government is taking such choices.'*

Ahdaf Soueif, Egyptian novelist and political and cultural commentator, agrees that good, contextualised international coverage encourages a more responsive democracy, stating that the UK has a long way to go – certainly in terms of UK citizens' awareness regarding the Middle East:

*'People in the UK are largely not well informed about what is going on abroad and therefore their Government gets away with things that a truly informed electorate would not permit them to get away with.'*

She goes on to substantiate this:

*'The sad truth is that the unfairness that this results in has made people, especially young people, in Egypt and Palestine and indeed in the rest of the Arab world, have very serious doubts about the meaning of democracy in the West because of this lack of information and understanding.'*

UK citizens' access to thorough coverage of the world's political, social and cultural events is arguably a prerequisite for the UK to have a healthy, functioning modern democracy. Sadly, as Ahdaf Soueif points out, the amount and nature of coverage of the rest of the world, particularly the Middle East and Global South, within the UK is widely seen as lacking. ONE's Jamie Drummond agrees:

*'I think an informed global citizenry requires more creative explanation of the facts and reasoned debate about what is happening in the world and we have a public information deficit in that area.'*

He goes on to argue that what coverage there is, of Africa for example, largely focuses on bad news stories:

*'There is absurdly good news on AIDS, on malaria, on the decline in extreme poverty in Africa. I mean just stunning, but the public largely doesn't know about the positive news. It's not to say that there are not still huge problems, but if you don't know about the massive progress you wouldn't bother engaging with the remaining problems because you wouldn't think they were possible to solve.'*

With an international development budget that has been ring-fenced, it is important that UK citizens understand how



Country/Regions	£million	% UK World imports	Country/Regions	£million	% UK World imports
Hungary	3,586	0.7%	Rest of the World	255,231	49.4%
Portugal	3,556	0.7%	EFTA	37,357	7.2%
Finland	2,942	0.6%	US	48,639	9.4%
Luxembourg	2,747	0.5%	China	32,775	6.3%
Greece	2,694	0.5%	India	8,544	1.7%
Slovakia	1,633	0.3%	Russia	8,520	1.6%
Romania	1,536	0.3%	Brazil	3,106	0.6%
Cyprus	1,097	0.2%			
Lithuania	746	0.1%			
Bulgaria	577	0.1%			
Malta	557	0.1%			
Latvia	531	0.1%			
Slovenia	407	0.1%			
Estonia	266	0.1%			

Source: ONS *The Pink Book 2012*

and why that money is being spent, the impact it has on the countries supported and what that support means for the UK.

### COMPARISON

Another powerful argument for why international coverage is so vital for UK citizens is the issue of comparison. Our world is changing at a rapid pace, populations are expanding, global power is shifting and pressures such as climate change, overexploitation of natural resources and peak oil are posing an increasing threat to global security. The need for flexibility and openness to different approaches has never been more important. Professor Tim Luckhurst explains:

*‘One of the things that we are extraordinarily bad at in the democratic nations of the world is looking at plausible alternatives to the way we do things at home. You don’t identify best practice by looking inwards. You identify best practice by identifying comparable economies, societies in which similar problems have been confronted and asking whether you might learn lessons from them.’*

By looking out at the rest of the world and assessing the different approaches to the problems we are being confronted with globally, we could be much better placed to overcome the various challenges that we face in our future. A willingness to compare systems and approaches could also be beneficial to examining how best to weather the current economic storms that have wracked global financial markets.

### BUSINESS

To survive in the global marketplace in this rapidly changing landscape, an awareness of international business opportunities is vital. The ability to capitalise on business prospects through an understanding of the business culture in new market areas – as well as a sensitivity to the broader cultural and political norms – dramatically affects our competitive edge. As Lord Jones explains:

*‘If I am a small businessman in the UK somewhere, thinking, “my market at home in England is not there anymore, I must export.” Where am I going to go to? I’m going to go to where I feel comfortable. I’m going to go to what I know. So it’s going to be America, or maybe Western Europe, simply because they speak English and I watch programmes from and about them on my TV. Now, not knocking it, that has stood us in very good stead for a long, long time but when China wants your lunch and India wants your dinner and there’s 1.3 billion Chinese getting richer and a billion*

*Indians getting richer every day. When you’ve got 200 million Brazilians who are frankly growing like crazy – surely those markets would be more lucrative ones to explore?’*

### GLOBAL SHIFT

The world and the balance of global power have changed a great deal within a relatively short time. Established paradigms of power have shifted, and if we are to effectively navigate this change we need to adapt to and understand what this means for the UK and ensure that this is reflected in our mainstream media.

Perhaps the most significant shift has been the rise of the East Asian economies, most notably China, which has seen steady growth while the Northern powers have struggled with repeated economic crises. According to the United States National Intelligence Council’s report, *Global Trends 2030*, Asia will wield more global power than the US and Europe combined by 2030 and within two decades China will overtake the US as the world’s largest economy. Of course China is not alone, with the other BRIC nations also taking a strengthened position on the world stage. The African continent too is throwing off its pessimistic mantle of the ‘Hopeless Continent’ (The Economist, 2000), to become home to six of the world’s ten fastest-growing economies and boasts an annual growth rate over the past decade of more than five per cent. Indeed, by 2035 the continental African labour force is projected to be bigger than that of China, which currently accounts for around 25 per cent of the world’s workforce (The Economist, 2011).

It is essential for the citizens of the UK to understand how the world is changing in order to better understand how to operate within it. Gone are the familiar days when America dictated how the world operated; it is now the emerging powers whose policies, investments and actions affect us most. When the global financial crisis hit in 2008, it was sovereign and state wealth funds in the Global South that stepped in to prop up Wall Street’s failing banks (Pieterse, 2009:204). But do UK citizens understand this modern day reality?

Lord Chris Patten, Chairman of the BBC Trust, agrees that the way the world is reflected on UK television and radio must begin to take into account the new balance of power:

*‘In my view the selection of Xi Jinping in China is going to have much more of an impact on your life and my life, than the election of President Obama.’*

Lord Patten's comment applies equally to India, Russia or Brazil, but his specific point about the importance of keeping abreast of events in China, comes into sharper focus when we consider that in the past decade Chinese investment in Britain – alongside its investment into other countries – has grown enormously. In the past year Chinese investment funds have taken significant stakes in London's airports, housing developments and utilities such as Thames Water. Commentators are predicting that Chinese money will also go into new, expensive UK infrastructure projects, such as telecommunications, high-speed rail and nuclear power generation. Concerns have been raised about allowing a state that we know relatively little about to take up stakes in key economic areas. Should investment from a country whose establishment has significantly different attitudes to the UK's on issues such as human rights be welcomed without deeper questioning? While the UK Government should play a role in fostering the development of economic ties, it must also ensure that the accepted social values of UK society are effectively communicated.

Public broadcasters play a vital role in offering the UK audience the broadest possible understanding of the political, social and economic landscapes of the countries we are doing more and more business with. A well-informed public will call on its government to promote economic cooperation, but will also call for such cooperation to run in parallel with

the promotion of liberal and humanitarian attitudes.

While the Chinese are likely to continue their investments into UK infrastructure and utilities, there are, of course, enormous opportunities for UK business in China, a market of 1.3 billion people. Yet exports to China are running at only half those of our nearest neighbour, Ireland, with its population of just over 4 million. For new market business ambitions, particularly in China, to be successfully achieved there needs to be not only a greater understanding of Chinese business, but also, as Lord Patten highlights, an awareness of China's wider political and cultural character.

#### WHY IS IT THE ROLE OF PSBs TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE AND HOW CAN IT BEST BE DONE?

In this chapter we have highlighted the importance of international understanding and emphasised the need for citizens to have access to credible and intelligent information about the rest of the world. But our report goes beyond this basic argument, highlighting more specifically the need for international coverage to be made available via UK television and radio, especially those channels provided by Public Service Broadcasters. In this next section we will explain why PSBs should provide international context and insight.

Lord Jones sees a vital role for PSBs in encouraging UK business to look to new markets:

Below: Visualisation of Facebook connections around the world. © Facebook



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# ‘There is a powerful obligation on PSBs to make their listeners and viewers aware of why the international agenda matters to them’

Professor Tim Luckhurst, University of Kent

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*‘How do you get that small businessman in Netherwollop to think of a different market? You get him to feel more comfortable, you get him to feel that he understands it a bit better and you get him to understand that they are not all funny people who worship god in a different way and don’t speak English. You get them to understand that they are getting richer, good people who want what he wants. Now, on that basis, how do you do it? Well one of the ways is surely through the Public Service Broadcaster, providing programmes about small business in, I don’t know, Bangalore. One of the ways is a programme about how to run cars on ethanol... and if there’s a bloke making a widget in the UK somewhere who actually thinks I could put that into an engine making ethanol, well they’ll be opened up to a whole host of opportunities.’*

One reason that PSBs are ideally placed to encourage a wider outlook on the world is their reach. According to Ofcom’s 2012 report into UK audience attitudes towards the broadcast media, TV was the main source of news about what is going on in the UK and around the world (76 per cent). It is interesting to note that the same report showed that 74 per cent of its respondents listened to the radio either every day or several times a week. While of course some within the UK are turning to the internet for information – those aged 16-34 were the group most likely to say the internet was their main source of UK and world news – television and radio remain, at least for now, the most popular ways of accessing information about the rest of the world.

If television and radio are still the media that the UK public turn to, to learn about what is happening in the wider world, there is arguably an implicit duty for all broadcasters, commercial or those with a public service remit, to provide complete and high-quality information about the wider world. That said, there is a more explicit duty for PSBs to provide this sort of content. First, most broadly, as a publicly funded organisation, a PSB has a duty to serve the needs of the tax and licence fee-paying audience. For all the reasons we have outlined above, there is a very clear argument that there is a significant need among UK audiences to not only know about but gain an in-depth understanding of the rest of the world. In the UK, the BBC has an explicit duty to ‘bring the world to the UK’, which is spelled out in its charter. Similarly Channel 4 has a legal obligation to ‘support and stimulate well-informed debate on a wide range of issues, including by providing access to information and views from around the world’. Moreover, the Reithian adage that underpins the

creation of the BBC, to ‘educate, inform, entertain’, placed in the modern day context cannot conceivably exclude the international. In order to be an informed and educated global citizen we must understand the world and our place in it.

Amid the many debates over the role and purpose of a PSB, a primary objective of any PSB is to address market failure, providing content that others do not. As commercial broadcasters increasingly focus their energies in terms of resources and airtime on the latest celebrity reality show, it could be argued that the role of the PSB is to provide what the audience needs, rather than trying to keep up with the entertainment rollercoaster. As Paula Kerger, CEO of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the United States, argues:

*‘This is a critical role for public media because although there is an awful lot of air to fill, commercial channels are not really investing in the kind of journalism that allows the public to get a perspective on the world. I spend a lot of time looking at what everyone else is doing and where things are not being done and what others are not covering is where I put our energy because I think that we were created to address market failure.’*

Further still, in a saturated and crowded media market, where audiences are overwhelmed by content, it is arguably becoming ever more difficult for audiences to stumble across new or previously unknown information and programming. Overwhelmed by choice, audiences are finding themselves stuck in an information rut where the media they consume is only what they are comfortable with and already know. Widely referred to as the ‘echo chamber’ effect, new media technology enables us to immerse ourselves in media content that simply reflects the views we already hold. As it becomes ever more difficult to ‘happen across’ content that breaks out of that comfort zone, audiences need to be actively led to stories that go beyond the backyard. Professor Luckhurst argues that directing audiences to this information is a role that PSBs should play:

*‘There is a powerful obligation on PSBs to make their listeners and viewers aware of why the international agenda matters to them and one way of doing that is explicitly saying, “this is relevant to your life”. It is not just people somewhere else who speak a different language to you doing something on screen that sounds interesting. This is about ideas that they have generated that might be relevant to your life.’*

## The UK in focus

Throughout this report we have repeatedly made reference to the UK 'audience' and UK 'citizens'. For broadcasters, the audience is central. What that audience wants and chooses is what underpins almost every decision-making process in the broadcasting industry.

But who makes up the audience and citizenry of the UK?

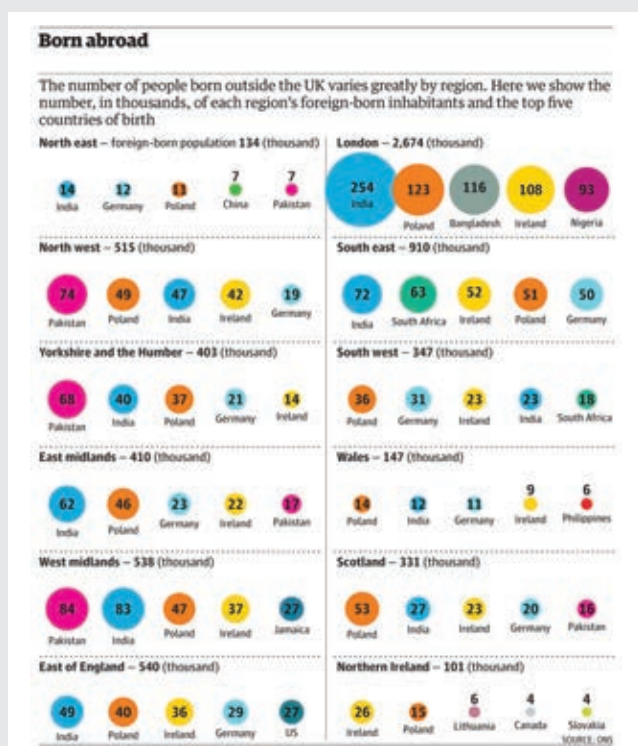
According to the 2011 census, of the 63.2 million UK population 31 million were men and 32.2 million were women. The population of the UK aged 65 and over was 10.4 million (16 per cent of the total UK population) and the median age of the population in England and Wales was 39. For men, the median age was 38 and for women it was 40. There were 3.5 million children under five in England and Wales.

There were approximately 7.5 million people living in the UK who were born abroad, which was equal to around 12.2 per cent of the UK population. There were approximately 4.8 million people living in the UK who were nationals of other

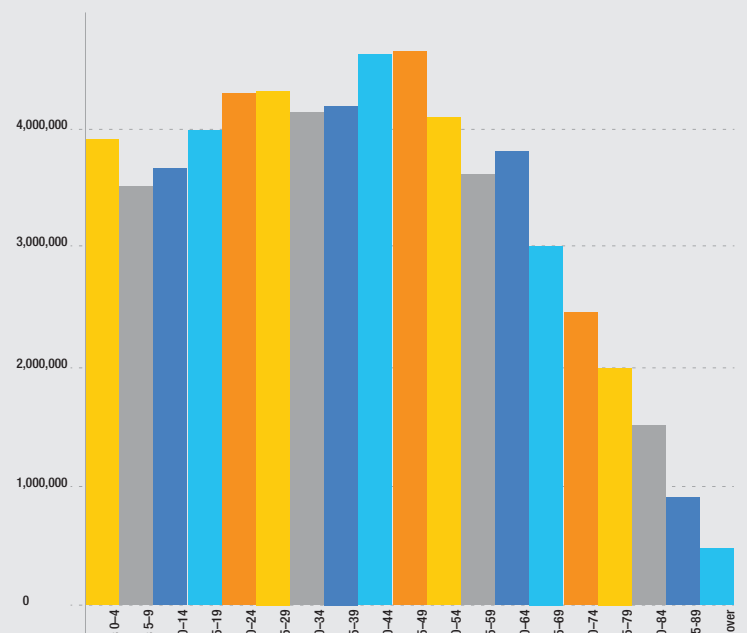
countries, equal to around 7.7 per cent of the UK population.

As these statistics and tables show, the UK is an extraordinarily diverse place. But is this diversity being reflected by broadcasters? Are we seeing the range of cultures and perspectives to which the UK is a home reflected in UK programming?

Below: visualisation of UK Facebook users' international friendships © Facebook



Above: © Guardian Datablog/Simon Rogers



Above: UK population by age group 2011, ONS census 2011.

Below: Country of birth in the 2011 census, England and Wales

<b>All usual residents</b>	<b>56,075,912</b>		
<b>Europe</b>	<b>51,319,357</b>		
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>48,570,902</b>		
England	44,882,858		
Northern Ireland	214,988		
Scotland	733,218		
Wales	2,732,624		
Great Britain not otherwise specified	2,103		
United Kingdom not otherwise specified	5,111		
Guernsey	6,377		
Jersey	9,259		
Channel Islands not otherwise specified	1,677		
Isle of Man	8,738		
Ireland	407,357		
<b>Other Europe</b>	<b>2,315,047</b>		
EU Countries	2,035,619		
Member countries in March 2001	921,251		
France	129,804		
Germany	273,564		
Italy	134,619		
Portugal	88,161		
Spain (including Canary Islands)	79,184		
Other member countries in March 2001	215,919		
Accession countries April 2001 to March 2011	1,114,368		
Lithuania	97,083		
Poland	579,121		
Romania	79,687		
Other EU accession countries	358,477		
Rest of Europe	279,428		
Turkey	91,115		
Other Europe	188,313		
<b>Africa</b>	<b>1,312,617</b>		
North Africa	113,363		
Central and Western Africa	397,068		
Ghana	93,846		
Nigeria	191,183		
Other Central and Western Africa	112,039		
South and Eastern Africa	786,216		
Kenya	137,492		
Somalia	101,370		
South Africa	191,023		
Zimbabwe	118,348		
Other South and Eastern Africa	237,983		
Africa not otherwise specified	15,970		
		<b>Middle East and Asia</b>	<b>2,587,066</b>
		Middle East	295,075
		Iran	81,680
		Other Middle East	213,395
		Eastern Asia	321,140
		China	152,498
		Hong Kong	102,241
		(Special Administrative Region of China)	
		Other Eastern Asia	66,401
		Southern Asia	1,628,037
		Bangladesh	211,500
		India	694,148
		Pakistan	482,137
		Sri Lanka	127,242
		Other Southern Asia	113,010
		South-East Asia	333,657
		Philippines	122,625
		Other South-East Asia	211,032
		Middle East and Asia: Central Asia	9,157
		<b>The Americas and the Caribbean</b>	<b>673,401</b>
		North America	250,023
		United States	177,185
		Other North America	72,838
		Central America	14,345
		South America	144,908
		The Caribbean	264,125
		Jamaica	160,095
		Other Caribbean	104,030
		<b>Antarctica and Oceania</b>	<b>183,373</b>
		Antarctica	51
		Australasia	174,718
		Australia	116,287
		Other Australasia	58,431
		Other Oceania	8,604
		Other	98

# 3 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE?

Having set out the case for why it is important for UK citizens to understand the rest of the world and our place in it, as well as why it is particularly important that this international coverage is provided by Public Service Broadcasters, it would be useful to look more closely at what we mean by the term 'international coverage'.

The most common understanding of 'international coverage' places it within the remit of news, with the extension sometimes being made to include documentaries and current affairs. These are important formats that have traditionally delivered information about the rest of the world to UK audiences. However, international coverage can, and indeed should, extend far beyond news, current affairs and documentaries, which are often accused of being limited in the level of information they impart (news) or of being 'dry' or too 'worthy' (current affairs and documentaries) to ignite interest among audiences.

In this chapter we will argue the importance of not only providing coverage of events from around the world in our news bulletins, although international news and how it is produced remains incredibly important, but also of providing historical and cultural insights and perspectives from other people and places through different formats – from travel to youth programming, fiction and sports.

As a key element of this report, we interviewed a number of heads of global broadcasting about their strategies for providing international coverage. Many of these, such as Mark Scott, Managing Director of ABC, Australia, argue that international coverage is today central to their ambitions as PSBs:

*'It's not only hard news, but it's also about great storytellers who play well with the domestic environment. Part of the broadcaster's challenge is, how do you tell the story of modern China? How do you tell the story of modern India, or Indonesia, in an interesting and engaging way?'*

In this section we review different examples of international coverage and the ways such differing approaches can engage audiences in international issues.

## HOW WE COVER THE WORLD

A common criticism of international coverage is that there is a lack of consistency and what is being covered, whether by news or other strands/formats is being 'dumbed down'

or oversimplified to the point where audiences are fed cultural stereotypes that serve to alienate or distance them from their foreign counterparts rather than deepening international understanding. Ahdaf Soueif laments that the programming available to audiences in the UK, about the people of the Middle East for example, is extremely limited:

*'If you were a man from Mars and you were listening to the news and programmes here, about the Israel-Palestine conflict for example, it would be hard often to know who is occupying whom or what happened last year even. Every act is represented as though it is something that is coming out of the blue, with no historical or cultural context whatsoever and that is extremely damaging... What it leads to is the thought that "those people over there" are irrational because their actions are not explicable in terms of the world in which people over here live. But when you actually sit down and give a little context, then everything becomes a lot clearer and easier to understand.'*

This highlights the importance of not just making accurate information about the rest of the world available to audiences, but also ensuring that that information is delivered in an engaging way and is contextualised and consistent.

## BUT ARE UK CITIZENS INTERESTED?

Of course, in an increasingly entertainment-driven media landscape there are claims that audiences are simply not interested in programming about the rest of the world. It has been argued that international programming is too distant and unconnected to the day-to-day lives of the UK



Bengali Detective © Native Voice Films

# ‘We shouldn’t be driven by what we assume audiences are most interested in. If you are a Public Service Broadcaster you have to simply do it’

Lord Patten, Chairman, BBC Trust

public to maintain or inspire audience interest. We have already outlined the powerful argument for why international coverage is increasingly and inextricably linked to the daily lives of UK citizens. While it is of course important to be responsive to audience needs and interests, PSBs have an inherent responsibility to provide audiences with information that they are not perhaps even aware that they want or need. As Lord Patten argues:

*‘We shouldn’t necessarily be driven by what we assume or even know from polling is what audiences are most interested in. If you are a Public Service Broadcaster you have to simply do it. We need to be there first. I just deplore the way we get seemingly taken unawares when actually we really knew what was likely to happen, we just didn’t do anything about it.’*

In fact, research has shown that audiences are interested in programming about the rest of the world when it is presented in an innovative and interesting way. The IBT report, *World in Focus*, found that many of their research participants agreed with the view that ‘coverage of developing countries is all picturesque safari and doom and gloom’ (Scott, 2009). However, once exposed to international programming which didn’t fit the ‘worthy’ or ‘difficult viewing’ category, participants were found to express a strong desire to see more content about people’s everyday lives in the wider world (ibid). This research supports the argument that audiences cannot be expected to express an interest in content that they have not been given the opportunity to see in the first place. Liliane Landor, Controller of Language

Services at the BBC World Service also points out:

*‘If you do news or international programming in a very dry, geopolitical way then no one, involved or not, will be interested, but if you do it in a way that involves people not just as the object but also as the subject of that query, then you are doing your job as a journalist.’*

By making use of different approaches, such as youth programming, reality formats, sports, drama and travel, broadcasters have the opportunity to not only bring broader audiences to content about the rest of the world, but to deepen people’s understandings.

## NEWS

Domestic news programming is one of the most popular ways for UK citizens to access information about the rest of the world and news is widely viewed as the main outlet for international coverage. However, news bulletins are naturally limited in the amount of time they have available to dedicate to international news. There are also often budget restrictions in terms of which international stories can be allocated time and resources. In addition, broadcasters are often given feedback through audience polling that suggests that audiences are less interested in international news than domestic news. As Liliane Landor puts it:

*‘The running argument is that domestic audiences are not that keen on international stories unless they are stories of crises, death, destruction or entertainment. My argument in response to this is any story is interesting as long as you make it so. That means that people like us working in international news need to look at these stories from a number of angles and work hard to get them to resonate.’*

These various constraints have arguably led to a situation in the UK where international stories on domestic news programming are often condensed, neglecting the context and background information that is often so crucial to gaining a sound understanding of the issues. Professor Luckhurst explains:

*‘We are seeing rather less serious international news, serious analysis, being done by some of our domestic Public Service Broadcasters and I think that we need to look back at what we set out to do, which was to make the complex and important comprehensible. We didn’t set out to abandon the complex and important*



Arghyan Star

*because it's hard to explain. It's a huge challenge but we need to remember how important it is to cover the complex, difficult stuff and cover it entertainingly.'*

If PSBs are to adequately serve their audiences with domestic news, then they must also ensure that they provide sufficient context and consistency in the international news they deliver. It is time for UK broadcasting to acknowledge that for many citizens, the global is now both local and relevant.

In terms of news coverage, the BBC has a unique opportunity to provide this context and understanding. The BBC World Service, which is now housed in Broadcasting House alongside the domestic news teams, has a great wealth of expertise and in-depth knowledge of international culture, history and politics. It is an incredible resource that, used effectively by domestic services, could indeed help to improve the depth of coverage and understanding conveyed in domestic reporting on foreign affairs. Lilliane Landor explains that the move from Bush House to Broadcasting House has led to an increase in this kind of use of the World Service by domestic services:

*'We now have duty editors from the language services who sit downstairs in the newsroom and will take all the calls from global correspondents and filter them through to the various services. With situations like that in Mali and the Sahel, the call on the World Service reporters, correspondents, analysts and experts, has been huge, to such an extent that we had the head of our French for Africa service on Newsnight, which is unusual, but*

*is getting more and more usual. And so this for us is a way of bringing the World Service and its added value to a British audience, through domestic channels.'*

What is more, the BBC has also begun a programme of training for international bilingual journalists who are filing reports for both the global arm of the BBC (World Service and BBC World) and the domestic audiences, meaning that the depth of understanding and reporting on international issues that is synonymous with the World Service has an opportunity to permeate into the domestic BBC. As Lilliane Landor continues:

*'Our programme of training for bilingual journalists and bilingual producers, which is now in its second year, aims to give our reporters the tools to enable them to work in two languages, on four platforms, for more than one audience. So someone on Arabic TV will do a package in a certain way for their Arabic audience, and will acquire the skills and knowledge to also be able to do that story in a way for a global English-speaking audience and a domestic audience. The trainees, who should already be excellent journalists, are trained then farmed out to various departments in BBC news, so they'd spend for instance two weeks with newsgathering, two weeks in domestic radio, digital or TV programmes, some time in the newsroom etc, over six months. They are also mentored by correspondents from BBC News, so George Alagiah, Jeremy Bowen, Lyse Doucet, Bridget Kendall all offered to mentor our bilingual journalists, who slowly start working for the whole of the BBC. Now, the BBC's correspondent in Baghdad [who went through the bilingual training] files for the whole of BBC News, in English and Arabic, on a number of platforms for a number of programmes. Others in Africa, Brazil, Libya, Lebanon, do the same.'*

## DOCUMENTARIES

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, along with news, documentaries are often seen as the traditional format for delivering information about the rest of the world to UK audiences. At the same time, international documentaries have typically been seen as relatively unpopular with UK audiences as traditional long-form documentary formats are considered 'dry' or 'boring'.

However this does not have to be the case, and if producers and broadcasters are innovative in the way they present information about the rest of the world, being



Mark Ortonio



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‘We didn’t set out to abandon the complex and important because it’s hard to explain. It’s a huge challenge but we need to remember how important it is to cover the complex, difficult stuff and cover it entertainingly’

Professor Tim Luckhurst, University of Kent

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mindful not to oversimplify complex issues for the sake of ‘entertainment’, they can bring impressive audiences to this content. This has been illustrated by the CBA WorldView project, which has supported innovative documentary programming about the developing world over the past 11 years and has seen many of the documentaries it has supported achieve impressive audiences.

Among the many innovative formats supported by WorldView, they have seed-funded an interactive web documentary project ([www.awraamba.com](http://www.awraamba.com), Write This Down Productions). This interactive documentary allows viewers to take a 360-degree, interactive tour of a small weaving community in northern Ethiopia, where they are able to navigate their own path and interact directly with the community, through a diverse range of multimedia content. The WorldView project also seed-funded *War Oratorio*, a hard-hitting documentary-opera which follows musicians in three war zones in Afghanistan, Uganda and Kashmir. It was screened in 2007 on More4, a secondary channel of Channel 4, which also has public service responsibilities in the UK. More recently feature documentaries development-funded by WorldView such as *Bengali Detective*, *Out of the Ashes* and *5 Broken Cameras* have captured wide UK as well as global audiences and won many international awards, with *5 Broken Cameras* nominated in 2013 for an Oscar.

## YOUTH

It is often assumed that young people are simply not interested in watching programming about the rest of

the world. As one BBC Radio 1 producer we spoke to claimed:

*‘There isn’t an appetite amongst the youth audience for international news. It’s not an audience that is interested instinctively in international news in the way that, say, a Radio 4 audience might be.’*

He went on to explain:

*‘One of the interesting things about young audiences, which we’ve picked up through research, is it is very local. Their first focus is “my area”, their estate, where they live, maybe their town or their town centre and then beyond that not much. Then there’s a leap to Hollywood and American TV and film. That’s their focus. They kind of go from the park bench where they grew up and where all their experiences were from their first bottle of cider to their first snog, to their town centre, where they shop and then Hollywood and that’s abroad. We will do a lot on Sepp Blatter and FIFA because there’s an international story if you like that they can relate to because it’s football. But if it’s an election in a faraway place, it doesn’t really work.’*

This, surprisingly widely held, argument seems not only patronising but is also, perhaps, inaccurate. Research published by IBT in their report *Global Generation* (2010) revealed that there are groups of young people who are engaged and interested in issues affecting the rest of the world.

Indeed, it is arguably young people who are at the frontline



Blood, Sweat and T-shirts



5 Broken Cameras

of global exchange and communication, as aficionados in the use of social and new media technologies. Jamie Drummond of ONE agrees:

*'Research on "Millennials" (teens and twenty-somethings) about the degree to which they aspire to be what you could call global citizens is really interesting. More than my generation, or those before, there is a very strong sense in which they would love to engage in the world more than they do. But they don't know how to and they are not sure who to trust. And that is both encouraging but perhaps also distressing that they don't know who to trust. But they want to do good in the world and they want to engage.'*

It could be argued that it is the *assumption* that the younger generation is uninterested that is actually the problem that is fuelling the audience polling results, rather than any genuine lack of interest from young people themselves.

Indeed, when international programming that is specifically aimed at youth audiences is made available it tends to be very popular. For example the BBC Three *Blood, Sweat and Takeaways* and *Blood, Sweat and T-shirts* series' which resulted in the spin-off *Stacey Dooley Investigates* series, have attracted significant youth audiences. Delivered in an accessible and youth-friendly way, these programmes, dealing with complex international issues such as child labour, sex trafficking, child soldiers, the impact of tourism and the global financial crisis around the world, prove that it is possible to engage younger audiences in international issues. If the next generation in the UK is to thrive in an increasingly competitive

global market, then we owe it to them to ensure that they are provided with the information and understanding that they need to operate in the world beyond UK borders.

## SPORT

The summer of 2012 saw athletes and their supporters from all over the globe descend upon Britain for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the biggest UK gathering of people from different regions, cultures and nations in most UK citizens' memory. But the impact of the Olympics and indeed other sporting events such as the World Cup, goes beyond the sporting events themselves. As well as stirring national pride among UK citizens, the London Olympics provided an important opportunity for broadcasters to capitalise on a wave of international awareness. As Liliane Landor points out:

*'What the Olympics did was very much to put Britain at the centre of the world but with British people being citizens of the world. London and the whole of the UK opened its door to people from different countries and different backgrounds and for that period of time, diversity became the norm and that for us at the World Service meant that things that would have probably been a little more difficult before became easy sells.'*

Frank-Dieter Freiling, Senior Vice-President of International Affairs at German PSB, ZDF, also views major international sporting events, like the Olympic Games and the World Cup, as a catalyst for covering a region in depth:

*'In the run up to the Beijing Olympics we did 85 projects on, with and about China, from movies to documentaries on historic topics to news reporting to current affairs documentaries. Also the World Cup caused an intensified look at southern Africa and Africa. So, for me, these sorts of big, popular sporting events create the welcome excuse to do more detailed programming on the region.'*

## CULTURE

As we outlined in the last chapter, gaining an in-depth understanding of the rest of the world and our place within it does not come from news alone. Audiences also need cultural, political and historical context to help explain seemingly complex issues. Peter Cavanagh, Chief Executive and Editor-in-Chief of Radio New Zealand agrees:

*'International news is far more complex today than perhaps it ever has been before. During the Cold War there was a line down the middle between the "goodies" and the*



Stacey Dooley Investigates

# ‘Having an idea of what is happening culturally for other people is important as it serves to flesh out those people, so that they are not just stick figures acting in ways that are inexplicable’

Ahdaf Soueif, Novelist

*“baddies” but that’s no longer the case. An example at the moment is the Arab Spring. Can people really work out what is happening there, between the former regimes and the new regimes? They are actually very complex issues that require a lot of analysis, background information, cultural, political and historical context, and my concern is that people aren’t getting that exposure.’*

Moreover, if tensions between different world cultures and politics are to be eased and understanding of what is happening in politically sensitive areas of the globe increased, it is important for us to see those who live in the world around us as ‘people’ rather than far-flung and anonymous characters of news stories or movies. As Ahdaf Soueif points out, giving a cultural perspective can go a long way:

*‘Having an idea of what is happening culturally for other people is really important, as it actually serves to flesh out those people, so that they are not just stick figures who are acting in ways that are inexplicable to the audience. They are not simply objects for observation, it makes them into real life people for the audience.’*

Programming on international culture is one of the least covered genres in the UK, particularly on television. However, programmes such as BBC Radio 4’s collaboration with the British Museum, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* and the BBC World Service’s *My London* series – which focused on London’s cultural diversity and saw World Service reporters visiting various areas of London that reflected their own home culture – are out there and do provide

an albeit limited level of insight into different cultures.

## FICTION

One successful and innovative way of providing international coverage is through fiction and drama, which can allow broadcasters to bring UK audiences an international perspective in an interesting and entertaining way.

In the past couple of years, Scandinavian drama, acquired by the BBC, has gained unprecedented popularity among UK audiences. Two series, *Borgen* and *The Killing*, from Denmark’s PSB, DR, have been aired on BBC Four and have both received cult followings despite the fact they are subtitled foreign programming. This arguably challenges the long held assertion that this kind of content is unpopular with UK audiences. This demonstrates that UK audiences do appreciate high-quality original drama, regardless of whether it is ‘foreign’ and has subtitles, and are willing to watch programmes that may put them outside their comfort zone, when such content is offered to them.

Drama has also been used to deal with quite complex international issues, with great success. For example, Peter Kosminsky’s four-part serial drama, *The Promise*, gave an interesting and engaging insight into the historical context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Shown on Channel 4, the series was well received by audiences, gaining viewing figures of 1.65 million as the first episode aired. The drama was also linked to an impressive online presence, which encouraged viewers to comment and follow online content outside of the programme itself.



Burma VJ



Borgen

## ONLINE

It is impossible to ignore the impact and relevance of online content in today's frenetic and increasingly online-driven media environment. While online content should by no means replace television and radio programming, the internet provides a fantastic platform that can be used to improve the depth of international coverage that a broadcaster can provide. Paula Kerger of PBS explains the value of connecting television and radio content with an online offering:

*'At PBS, our Frontline strand views their TV documentaries as the executive summaries of their work and they put a wealth of background material and extra information online. So if you are an engaged citizen and want to know more you can go to the website and look at some of the original interviews and that allows you to follow the story in a much deeper way.'*

Similarly, ONE's Jamie Drummond suggests that PSBs like the BBC should be doing more to deliver innovative online content, in the style of organisations such as TED.com:

*'I'm involved a lot with TED.com which is an interesting way of sharing quite a lot of thoughtfulness in relatively short formats. PSBs should be destroying that market, why has TED got a hold of it? It's highbrow but delivered in a way that is surprisingly compelling and it's just people talking. If you coupled that with the use of infographics it would be even more compelling. There's such a lot that could be done better and more creatively to engage people in the world.'*

Professor Luckhurst also makes the point that in order to better engage the tech-savvy youth audience there is a need for PSBs to get a better grip on how social media and online resources are being used by this audience:

*'There's this nonsense around the younger generation not wanting to read anything complicated, that they just read Facebook and Twitter. No, they use Facebook and Twitter to alert each other about the information that is out there. Just as they don't only want to listen to ten seconds of the song that they are tweeting about, they want to find the link to where they can download the whole thing. They are perfectly happy to read the whole news report, to watch the film, to listen to the radio programme, if they get the social recommendation from their peers. So, you know, work with them, use the current media to attract their attention. They'll follow the link, if they are alerted to it in the right way.'*

## TRAVEL

The opportunity to travel to new places, explore them and connect with local people has become possible for many more people thanks to low-cost air travel. Travel is rarely dull; experiencing the sights and sounds in different locations, learning how other people live their lives and relate to their environments, perceive their history and their place in the world, is exciting and brings a broadened perspective. Programming that allows the audience to share that excitement and perspective has always been very popular, from the earliest forays of David Attenborough, albeit with his focus on wildlife rather than human life, through to the world-circling journeys of Michael Palin.



The Promise



Joanna Lumley's Nile

# 'I'm involved a lot with TED.com which is an interesting way of sharing quite a lot of thoughtfulness in relatively short formats. PSBs should be destroying that market, why has TED got a hold of it?'

Jamie Drummond, ONE

The BBC's travel programming has a strong reputation. Series such as Simon Reeve's *Tropic of Cancer*, *Equator*, and *Tropic of Capricorn*, for example, have managed to take him – and his audience – far beyond the confines of the holiday destination report, to get beneath the skin of areas and cultures that even with modern and relatively cheap transport, are beyond most people's likely itineraries.

An engaging presenter with an obvious respect for the people they meet and a keen interest to learn about and from them, can offer a great deal of context about regions and situations that otherwise only cross our paths when they hit the headlines.

The importance of travel programmes was noted by Counsellor Cecilia Ishitani at Brazil's embassy in London. She sees Michael Palin's recent series on Brazil as 'a good indication of our rising profile', and a reflection of broader and better coverage of her country. However, she goes on to sound a note of caution:

*'Sometimes it seems that slightly hackneyed images – football, samba and beach culture spring to mind – are given too high a profile and might create a slightly misleading picture of daily life in the country. However, we feel Brazil is reasonably well represented in the UK broadcast media.'*

TED talks

The screenshot shows a TED talk page for Jamie Drummond's talk, "Let's crowdsource the world's goals". The page features a video player with a thumbnail of Jamie Drummond, a title bar, and a description. The description mentions that in 2000, the UN laid out 8 goals to make the world better by reducing poverty and disease – with a deadline of 2015. As that deadline approaches, Jamie Drummond of ONE.org turns down the surprising successes of the 8 Millennium Development Goals, and suggests a crowdsourced reboot for the next 15 years. The page also includes a "STAY UPDATED" section with a "Subscribe" button and a "RELATED PLAYLISTS" section with a "View More" link.

# 4 PERSPECTIVES & APPROACHES OF PSBs OUTSIDE THE UK

In this chapter of the report we look at Public Service Broadcasting outside the UK, in order to see how international coverage is viewed and undertaken elsewhere in the world. Drawing on interviews with Director-Generals and CEOs of Public Service Broadcasters from around the world, we investigate the perceived challenges, different approaches and lessons that can be learnt in terms of international coverage.

It was encouraging to find that all of the PSBs that we spoke to viewed international coverage as a crucial part of their output, with all interviewees agreeing that international coverage should be a defining element of being a PSB. As Paula Kerger, CEO of PBS argued:

*'If Americans are going to succeed in the world then they have to understand the world. At PBS, we look at our role as enabling everyone to be an engaged, informed citizen. You can't achieve that if you don't have an understanding beyond your backyard.'*

They also agreed that good, in-depth international coverage is what sets PSBs apart from their commercial competition. Frank-Dieter Freiling of ZDR in Germany made a particularly strong case for this:

*'International coverage is one of the easiest and clearest distinctions we can make between Public Service Broadcasters and private networks. If we go with the mainstream and have another Let's Dance or another X Factor then if you do it really well you may get a few percentage points but that is unlikely because of cost... you cannot be better than them at those formats. You have to offer something that is different, where you have what I call "the lighthouse effect". We have to shine with something that others don't have.'*

Yet, the majority of our interviewees were also clear that international coverage, particularly through news, is expensive. In times of economic austerity this has been a difficult area to negotiate, often being the first to face cuts. Hubert T. Lacroix, President and CEO of Canada's CBC, explains:

*'We still have 22 correspondents in 12 offices, but that's down from many more in more offices a few years ago. We've kept most of the international correspondents from the offices that we've closed down, but they*

*sometimes have to fly in on a moment's notice instead of being in those countries. It is simply a cost factor.'*

However others reported an increase in the numbers of foreign correspondents. As Bengt Arwén of Sveriges Radio in Sweden explains:

*'Our current Director-General, Cilla Benkö, has increased the number of foreign correspondents from 13 to 17 because she had five focus areas and international coverage was one of them.'*

While the cost of international coverage was an issue spoken about by all interviewees, some innovative cost-cutting solutions were also mentioned. For example, Paula Kerger suggested that better use of new technology is beginning to make it easier than it once was to capture stories in foreign lands:

*'Yes, it is expensive to send people around the world but the reality is that with flip-cams and a laptop, which is how PBS NewsHour is doing a lot of reporting, you don't have to send a big crew, which cuts down the cost. Our colleagues at NPR [National Public Radio] have also experimented with this a little bit with radio correspondents, giving them the technology so they can file video. Now I wouldn't expect that every radio journalist would end up being able to make the transition onto video but actually some are quite good. So I think it's expensive but technology allows you to be much more flexible with how you are handling international coverage.'*

A further suggestion to increase the depth of international coverage and decrease costs was the formation of partnerships. Paula Kerger explained how PBS has worked with other news organisations, such as NPR and American Public Media – and even the non-profit online newsroom, ProPublica, which was the first online news source to win a Pulitzer Prize in 2010 – in order to cut costs and increase the quality of international programming they are able to produce:

*'We are trying to figure out how we can make better use of what journalistic presence we have, but we are also working with other organisations whose priorities are similar to ours. So for example we are doing documentaries in partnership with NPR and ProPublica. With the current economics, it has forced organisations*

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# ‘Swedish people have always thought it was very important to know what is happening internationally because it affects us’

Bengt Arwén, Sveriges Radio

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*to look at partnerships, which I think frankly is a good thing because I do believe if you try to pull together the journalistic expertise from different organisations you can actually create something much better.’*

Similarly, Frank-Dieter Freiling of ZDF discussed the use of news exchanges and content-sharing partnerships to reduce the cost of international coverage:

*‘We have some 40 strategic alliances from Al Jazeera to France Television to CCTV [China] and others in between, where we have a clear news exchange set-up that is complementary, so we erased the costs and said partners can take our footage and we can take theirs, in a certain frame [a certain number of minutes per year] so we make it as easy as possible to get footage from partners and share international footage. That works very well for us. It is basically the idea of the news exchange but on a bilateral basis.’*

Another common issue for our interviewees was that of perceived audience interest in international coverage, although perspectives on the issue differed. According to Toshiyuki Sato, Special Controller of the General Broadcasting Administration at NHK in Japan, there are sometimes difficulties balancing issues of audience interest and the duty to provide international coverage:

*‘We gather information from overseas and bring the stories to the Japanese audience so that they can be properly informed. But it is sometimes the case that the news editors prioritise ratings and they don’t want to use difficult or complicated stories, foreign news can sometimes be a victim.’*

He goes on to explain that this difficulty is perceived to be of particular relevance among the Japanese youth audience:

*‘The number of students who study abroad has drastically decreased in the last decade in Japan. It is unfortunate that the younger generation feels more comfortable sticking to the status quo. My generation thought the traditional Japanese way of thinking had some problems and we thought that we had to change it; that made our attitude more international.’*

Conversely, Bengt Arwén identified a significant

interest among Swedish audiences, particularly young people, in stories about the rest of the world:

*‘We have a great tradition in Sweden, in Swedish television as well, of looking outwards toward the rest of the world and working internationally. We are reliant on other countries, we are a small country so we have to know. Swedish people have always been very interested and we’ve always thought it was very important to know what is happening internationally because it affects us.’*

For the most part, our interviewees focused their attention and resources in terms of international coverage on news rather than other formats, such as fiction or cultural programming. Hubert T. Lacroix explains:

*‘We do less pure international cultural programming. Because we have in our strategic plan a requirement that we do Canadian programming in prime time, that will be our focus and so you won’t see cultural content from another country in those time periods. We might do something in a doc somewhere but mostly our international coverage is delivered through our news offering or extensions of it.’*

However, Bengt Arwén explained that international cultural programming is something that Sveriges Radio has felt the need to increase:

*‘We had to increase the international cultural reporting because we had a lack of that and we needed to do it better. We have a lot of people coming to Sweden as well from other countries and it’s important for that as well, to get Swedish society to understand its multicultural nature and for us to be reporting for other countries as well.’*

While the majority of our interviewees approached their international coverage in similar ways, focusing mainly on news delivered by foreign correspondents posted in different bureaux around the world – albeit with varying levels of dedicated airtime and different regional focuses – one interviewee revealed a particularly innovative approach. Bengt Arwén discussed how Sveriges Radio, as well as having their foreign correspondents based in various bureaux, has appointed specialist correspondents:

*‘There are also three special international correspondents. One is for culture, that is an international culture correspondent who travels all around the world and does*

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*interesting culture pieces. Second we have an international economic correspondent who travelled to Greece a lot this last year and south Europe but also to Japan and the United States and travels all around the world – but just covering economic issues. Third we have what we call a youth correspondent, again international, who is covering youth issues all over the world. And often the youth correspondent will take his lead on stories from audience suggestions coming in from social media. Recently he was in the States reporting from the Presidential election for a young audience and he also reported for the older audience, together with the other correspondents. And it has worked out really well having these. Before that the other correspondents had culture or economics in mind as well, but now we have the special correspondents we can make our coverage deeper.'*



# 5

## CONCLUSION

Based on the arguments and evidence we have outlined in this report, there is little doubt that audience access to information about the world is of vital importance in today's globalised and interconnected world. In terms of business, security, culture and community cohesion, an in-depth understanding of how lives are led, beliefs are held and business is conducted in other places can directly benefit everyone in the UK.

The lines between the domestic and international have been irrevocably blurred. The international is today just as relevant, if not more so, to UK citizens as the domestic and if current trends continue this is likely to become increasingly the case. Public Service Broadcasters must lead the way by not simply acknowledging this fact but also by reflecting it in all of their content, equipping audiences with a sound understanding of the rest of the world and their place within it.

It was extremely encouraging to hear from the vast majority of those we interviewed for this report that the duty to provide stimulating international content to audiences is not only recognised but seen as a valued part of Public Service Broadcasting. However, supportive words from management do not always translate into programming in the television and radio schedules. Research indicates that opportunities for the broadcasting of international content is continuing to diminish, with international programming often being pushed to the fringes of schedules in favour of entertainment in prime time slots.

Within this report we have identified the following barriers to better international coverage by PSBs in the UK and elsewhere:

- **Cost** – It is evident that with the current global financial crisis many public broadcasters are facing severe budget cuts. When public funding for health and education is under threat, broadcasting can seem a 'nice to have' rather than a 'need to have'. Even in countries where PSBs are funded by direct licence fee income, the economic crisis is undoubtedly having an impact on programming budgets. The cost of sending production teams overseas is an expensive business that many argue can no longer be justified. In news, foreign bureaux are being closed and the number of foreign correspondents is being cut. Similarly commissioners of documentaries and travel programmes are becoming increasingly hesitant to invest in programmes that are shot in other, more distant, parts of the world.

- **Fear of losing audiences and support** – Bolstered by outdated ideas that international coverage is dull and worthy, many broadcasters seem reluctant to commission international content, claiming that audiences are simply not interested.
- **'Risk averse' culture** – The task of maintaining audience popularity has become increasingly difficult in a fragmented digital landscape. PSBs have always needed to balance audience 'wants' and audience 'needs' as they need public support to maintain public funding and often choose to support popular mainstream programming to keep audiences 'on-side'. But PSBs also need to provide less popular content in order to fulfil public service remits and provide audiences with information that may be less popular. As a result, taking risks and giving audiences something they don't necessarily even know they want is being substituted for playing it safe and following audience polling data.
- **Scheduling** – Fitting programming about the rest of the world into schedules, among entertainment and domestic programming, appears to be a more difficult task with the popular belief that audiences want 'local' and 'domestic' over international content. Even if content about the rest of the world is commissioned by a public broadcaster it will often end up aired in a remote and unpopular corner of the schedule where audiences will simply not have the opportunity to see it. Lacking confidence in international coverage, broadcasters are also less likely to invest in promoting or trailing this content, thereby creating an unwinnable cycle in terms of leading the audience to new content.

### WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

- As a number of our interviewees pointed out, the use of low-cost media technology, smaller production teams and increased partnerships all serve to bring down the cost of international programming. Many public broadcasters are also increasing their networks and investing in partnerships to share content development and production. Through content development and sharing mechanisms such as the CBA WorldView and Your WorldView projects, innovative and engaging coverage of the rest of the world can be nurtured and developed. These projects provide an innovative way of reducing the cost and risk to PSBs while providing engaging international content. The world is now more accessible than ever, if we cannot afford to find innovative ways to reflect this now, then will we ever?

- The argument that international coverage is of limited audience appeal or tends to be worthy and unexciting is no longer credible. As we argued in this report, knowledge is only boring if it is poorly presented. It is the role of PSBs to instigate, nurture and maintain an interest in the rest of the world for all citizens. Through the innovative use of different and engaging formats, PSBs are in a unique position to inform and engage their audiences about the rest of the world and should do everything they can to fulfil that remit.
- PSBs should be encouraged by recent evidence that risk is not always a bad thing. The global success of Danish drama *Borgen* is just one example of how breaking down perceived barriers to international content, for example the idea that UK audiences don't watch drama with subtitles, can benefit audiences and place a PSB at the cutting edge of programming.

The many and various debates surrounding Public Service Broadcasting today can be brought down to the simple fact that PSBs must either adapt to the very different and often challenging modern media landscape and thrive, or fail to keep up with world realities and die out. By positioning themselves as leaders in providing insight and understanding of the rest of the world for their audiences, explaining the complexities of the globalised landscape in engaging and interesting ways, PSBs have a unique opportunity to become an invaluable resource for audiences. Where others are failing their audiences by ignoring the changing international landscape and focusing on parochial or entertainment-driven content, PSBs can become, as Frank-Dieter Freiling puts it, 'a lighthouse' for global citizens, helping them to successfully navigate their way through this complex but fascinating world.

‘There is a powerful obligation on PSBs to make their listeners and viewers aware of why the international agenda matters to them’

Professor Tim Luckhurst, University of Kent