

**CAN EAST ASIA PRODUCE ITS OWN “AL-JAZEERA”?
ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF CHANNEL NEWSASIA
AS A GLOBAL MEDIA CONTRA-FLOW**

by

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, Western news organizations have been increasingly upstaged by satellite news services from the global South. New players like Al-Jazeera in Qatar and Telesur in Venezuela have emerged to challenge a monopoly long held by Western networks like CNN and BBC in the broadcasting of international news. This thesis examines the contributions of the fast-growing region of East Asia to the emergence of such media contra-flows, focusing on an increasingly prominent player, Channel NewsAsia, based in Singapore. By using Al-Jazeera as a point of reference, this thesis develops a fourfold working model of a contra-flow, against which other news organizations may be assessed. Through a content and discourse analysis that compares Channel NewsAsia's coverage with that of Western network BBC's, the author discovers that the Singapore-based station is not as uniquely Asian as it purports to be, due to numerous political-economic constraints that limit its contra-flow potential.

Keywords: Global media contra-flows; New World Information and Communication Order; Al-Jazeera; Channel NewsAsia; Singapore; Global South

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
1: Introduction	1
1.1 Theoretical framework: The Great Media Contra-Flow Debate	4
1.2 Contra-flows in context	13
1.2.1 A First and Third World Tussle: Call for a New World Information and Communication Order	13
1.2.2 Singapore’s Position in NWICO: Between the First and Third Worlds	17
1.2.3 Taking Sides?: Singapore’s Pullout from UNESCO.....	24
1.2.4 Contra-Flows from the Third World: After NWICO.....	27
2: Characterizing Contra-Flows	30
2.1 Al-Jazeera as a Prominent Global Media Contra-Flow	30
2.1.1 Reverses the Direction of Information Flow.....	33
2.1.2 Provides Counter-Hegemonic Perspectives in Content and Ideology.....	36
2.1.3 Covers a Diverse Set of Issues for Debate.....	44
2.1.4 Airs a Diversity of Voices	45
2.2 Channel NewsAsia as Another “Al-Jazeera”?: Establishing the Context	48
2.3 Comparative studies.....	60
2.3.1 Existing Contra-Flows: Extent of Influence	60
2.3.2 Comparing News Coverage: Global South vs the West	63
3: Unraveling Channel NewsAsia: The Analyses	72
3.1 Methodology.....	72
3.1.1 The Content Analysis	74
3.1.2 The Critical Discourse Analysis	75
3.2 Results	79
3.2.1 Content Analysis: A Broad Examination	79
3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: Providing Insights	85
3.3 How Channel NewsAsia Fits into the Working Model	108
4: Conclusion: Assessing the Contra-Flow Potential of Channel NewsAsia	112
Appendices	128
Appendix A: Coding Sheet.....	128
Appendix B: Code Book.....	130
Appendix C: Content Analysis Output.....	133

Appendix D: News Transcripts.....	135
Channel NewsAsia (North Korea).....	135
BBC (North Korea)	140
Channel NewsAsia (Sri Lanka).....	147
BBC (Sri Lanka)	148
Reference List.....	156

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Coverage of News Topics in Asian Stories	81
Table 2: Proportion of Total Stories with each Interviewee Type.....	83
Table 3: Proportion of Asian Stories with each Asian Interviewee Type.....	84
Table 4: Asian Stories Reported on Location.....	85

1: INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen news organizations from the West increasingly upstaged by satellite news services from the global South. While Western media organizations like Cable News Network (CNN) from the US and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) from the UK have traditionally held the monopoly in the global information order for the broadcasting of news to an international audience, new players like Al-Jazeera in Qatar, Telesur in Venezuela and Channel NewsAsia in Singapore have emerged to inject new voices and perspectives into the mix. In particular, Al-Jazeera has created waves in the Arab world and beyond for its critical reporting and provocative talkshows. Scholars have described it as “rivalling CNN as a recognized international source of information” (Bahry, 2001, p. 91) and “replacing a media monopoly with a screaming plurality of voices” (Miles, 2005, p. 426).

In this thesis, I will analyse the phenomenon of such emerging news networks using the theoretical framework of “global media contra-flows”. In particular, I will examine the contributions of the fast-growing region of East Asia to the emergence of such media contra-flows, focusing on an increasingly prominent player, Channel NewsAsia, and its potential to meet the contra-flow characteristics displayed by Al-Jazeera. Indeed, with the rise of economic powerhouses China and India, Asia as a geopolitical region in the global South has become a significant force to be reckoned with globally, be it in the political

or economic arenas. Despite still being categorized as a “developing region” (except Japan) by the United Nations (United Nations Statistics Division, 2009), Asia has been pinpointed as the region in the global South with the “greatest global diversity in patterns of social communication – from Australia to China, from North Korea to Singapore” and has demonstrated “continuous progress in terms of participation in [global] communication” (Pasquali, 2005, p. 297). The focus of this thesis, Channel NewsAsia, is a news station with one of the most extensive satellite footprints in the region. This network, which is fast gaining audiences within East Asia and beyond, has been described as being “particularly noteworthy”, having originated from an otherwise minor Asian player in the arena of news provision, Singapore (Rai and Cottle, 2007, p. 59).

To begin, I will lay out the theoretical foundation of my research by highlighting scholarly debate on the significance of global media contra-flows, and then synthesize the work of various scholars to come up with a broad working model of an alternative news flow. I will then go on to put the notion of global media contra-flows into context – that is, as it relates to the Third World’s call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1970s and ’80s. Here, I will bring Singapore into the narrative, as a country that occupies a unique position between the First and Third Worlds.

I will then delve into the emergence of specific global media contra-flows after the NWICO fiasco, and how these may be solutions to creating a more balanced global information order, or not. By looking at how Qatar’s Al-Jazeera embodies and operationalizes the key characteristics of an alternative news flow

and where it falls short, I will fine-tune the working model I have created so that the contra-flow characteristics that constitute it become more concrete and applicable in the real world. My point of reference here will be Al-Jazeera in Arabic, since the Arabic channel (and not its newly established English counterpart) was the form in which it was first conceived and the form it took when it first gained international recognition as a global media contra-flow. I will then shift my focus to the news organization of interest in my thesis – Channel NewsAsia. Here, I will detail the birth of Channel NewsAsia and the context within which it operates – this will set the stage for the final part of the thesis, that is, a content and discourse analysis that will compare the coverage of Channel NewsAsia with that of its established Western counterpart BBC's, whose best practices it seeks to emulate.

The aim of this primary research is to discover the extent to which the Singapore-based station is able to meet the contra-flow characteristics as laid out in my working model, or if it is unable to match up, to offer plausible reasons for this outcome. Much inspiration for this research has also come from my own experience working as a broadcast journalist with Channel NewsAsia and its radio counterpart in Singapore for the last three years – having experienced a number of political-economic constraints in the production of news content, I wanted to investigate the extent to which Channel NewsAsia was able to truly deliver as an authoritative Asian news source. Ultimately, my goal is to discover the potential of Channel NewsAsia to become an alternative news flow like Al-

Jazeera that will allow East Asia to gain a greater voice in the global media arena against dominant voices from the West.

1.1 Theoretical framework: The Great Media Contra-Flow Debate

The global media landscape has been in a state of flux since the start of the 21st century. While the West has been asserting its cultural dominance on the rest of the world through the media for decades, the debate has shifted in recent years to focus on efforts by the developing world to counter these dominant media flows from the West, thanks to the proliferation of satellite and cable television, digital technology, and the deregulation and privatisation of broadcasting and telecommunication networks (Thussu, 2007). These developments have prompted the growth of more private television networks that are profit-oriented and transnational in nature, reaching out to diasporic communities that crave for homeland media content, in a bid to grow their markets and advertising revenues (Sinclair et al., 1996; Thussu, 2000). Gradually, the notion of global media contra-flows has come into vogue, as these developments lead to the establishment of regional creative centres of cultural production based in the global South that target audiences within their own regions and in the developed West (Banerjee, 2002).

This has prompted some scholars to conclude that the global media environment is no longer susceptible to Western media domination, given the increasing plurality of media players and information flows. With countries like India, Brazil and Mexico producing and exporting their own media products worldwide, the traditional one-way flow of information from the West has been

increasingly undermined, calling into question the continued relevance of the media or cultural imperialism thesis (Tracy, 1988; Reeves, 1993; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000). Since the 1960s and 70s, proponents of the media imperialism thesis have maintained that this imbalance of cultural flows has extended the hegemony of Western cultures and expanded the reach of corporate capitalism, subordinating the indigenous cultures of developing countries and threatening their cultural sovereignty and identity (Schiller, 1992; Friedman, 1994; Richards and French, 2000; Banerjee, 2002). The rise of global media contra-flows, therefore, may signal a buck in this trend, marking the creation of a new media landscape capable of supporting a genuine “global public sphere” (Volkmer, 2003, p. 15).

This point of view, however, has been a contentious one. Scholars like Thusu (2007) warn of the tendency to celebrate the rise of non-Western media uncritically. He argues that it is often through such organizations that Western media continue to assert their ideological frameworks through the localization of largely American content to suit local languages and cultures. This process of “glocalization” co-opts the local into the dominant flows, creating cultural hybrids that are, to a large extent, still determined by and dependent on the West (Robertson, 1992; Martin-Barbero, 1993; Kraidy, 2005). An increased diversity in media flows does not necessarily signal greater democracy in choice and expression, according to Zhao and Schiller (2001). Often, it is still the interests of dominant groups that are served (Galtung, 1971). In fact, glocalization of the media, where global cultural forms are negotiated locally (Kavoori, 2007) may

also be seen as a form of media imperialism – with the circulation of cultural hybrids, global dominant flows may be becoming more powerful as these negotiated cultural products are legitimised by unsuspecting audiences as being a more “acceptable outcome of globalization”, even as they reproduce Western ideologies and genres (Thussu, 2007, p. 28). Nematt (2004) describes this as a double bluff – that a news organization may on the surface allow for the expression of anti-Western sentiments or create an impression that it is offering a product that refutes the West, while at the same time sustaining the status quo that privileges the West, undermining the cultural sovereignty of these countries and placing the region in a position of weakness.

Hence, presented with such strong contrasting arguments, it becomes crucial to clearly outline the definition of a global media contra-flow here. It would be erroneous to conclude that any media organization operating in the global South and distributing its cultural products overseas would qualify as an effective contra-flow capable of contributing to the plurality of voices in the global arena. A number of scholars have engaged with this concept and I will attempt to build on this theoretical foundation to develop a working model of a global media contra-flow for the purposes of this thesis.

At the outset, a contra-flow may refer simply to media content that reverses the direction of information exchanges that traditionally stem from the West (Kavoori, 2007; Sakr, 2007). Beyond this, a number of communication theories are relevant to the construction of a contra-flow in its full sense. Here, I will be examining the work of some theorists who have written on concepts that

may relate to or have an influence on the notion of contra-flows in the global context or alternative media in the national context. Just as Iskandar (2006) had examined the extent to which Al-Jazeera, a prominent global media contra-flow, fitted into the concept of an “alternative medium” by citing extensively from the work of Downing (2001) on radical alternative media, I feel that the notion of a contra-flow and that of alternative media overlap. Specific characteristics of a contra-flow, in my opinion, can be better illuminated when juxtaposed against characteristics of a medium that defies the mainstream, whether it be in the local or global context.

To begin, several works relating to alternative media and contra-flows would bring in the notion of counter-hegemony. Scholars speak of a “perceived counter-hegemonic agenda” that is characteristic of alternative media, through its offering of counter-information that gives voice to “news sources at the bottom of the news hierarchy over the traditional spokespeople taken from elite, professional groups in society” (Atton, 2003, p. 270). Sakr (2007) agrees that the potential of a contra-flow includes its ability to counter established hierarchies, stating that a contra-flow’s potential “remains unfulfilled if programming is inspired by imported models or is financed by regional hegemons... and thereby entrenches existing hierarchies” (p. 117). A contra-flow in its full sense, she says, should therefore mean that it is also counter-hegemonic (Sakr, 2001, p. 149-53). Similarly, in his analysis of radical alternative media, Downing (2001) notes that many such media seek to “challenge dominant ideological frameworks and supplant them with a radical alternative vision” (p. 15) – this is essential to help

provide credible alternatives in informed debates as well as to “counter the lies” of the ruling classes and capitalist state and “provide the truth” (p. 16), a model coined as the counter-information model (Herman, 1992; Jensen, 1997). Indeed, in Gramsci’s notion of countering hegemony, it is important to note that to create change and to challenge the dominance of the ruling classes, a “coherent and convincing alternative vision” on how society should run needs to be conveyed (Downing, 2001, p. 14). A counter-hegemonic medium would thus be able to develop a “questioning perspective on the hegemonic process” and to help the public feel more empowered to create constructive change (Downing, 2001, p. 16).

Going down to how counter-hegemony may be operationalized in the media, it is important to first recognize how dominant media perform their role to sustain hegemony in the first place. Indeed, the media has played a key role as an “institution of socialization”, inculcating in the public an uncritical view of the status quo and to introduce certain worldviews as “natural” and hence, right (Rachlin, 1988, p. 24). Hegemony can thus be seen as a worldview “in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all institutional and private manifestations... “ (Williams, 1960, p. 587). When this hegemonic order is successfully established, the view of the ruling elite as well as dissident voices are subsumed under the same ideological space which is seen as permanent and common-sensical (Couldry and Curran, 2003), even when it may be subject to frequent contestation. This allows the populace to be socialized to adopt a common

worldview, winning a consent that reduces the need for the ruling class to resort to force and coercion i.e. militant methods of control – this way, conflict in society is minimized and the social fabric of the society stays strong (Rachlin, 1988).

From existing research, a particular news medium may counter hegemony in two inter-related ways – in terms of ideology and content. First, a news medium may be counter-hegemonic if it challenges dominant ideological frameworks. Downing (1984) states that alternative media are commonly defined by their relationship to certain social movements. This means that it is not enough for an alternative medium to simply be an avenue for dissident voices; it should also be aligning itself with a certain ideology that stands in opposition to the larger hegemonic narrative – narratives such as market liberalism, consumerism, globalization, imperialism etc. McChesney and Miller (2000) state that within media systems, ideological narratives such as “consumerism, the market, class inequality, and individualism tend to be taken as natural and often benevolent, whereas political activity, civic values, and antimarket activities tend to be marginalized or denounced” (p. 110). Hence, a news medium may be labelled as counter-hegemonic if it, for example, challenges the worldwide hegemony of market liberalism by operating as an anti-capitalist institution that does not run with the purpose of attracting audiences and profits (Iskandar, 2006). Scholars like Atton (2003) recognize the immense difficulty for media organizations here though – he states that “journalism’s capacity to critically and substantively challenge the conditions of capitalism is severely curtailed by its very location within capitalism” (p. 268), an important point to consider when

examining the counter-hegemonic potential of news organizations in the real world.

A news medium's ideological alignment will in turn influence the news content that the medium puts out. A news source can be seen to support or counter the existing hegemonic order through its adoption of certain news values over others, its stylistic presentation of certain events, and the frames or contexts within which it presents these events – this is because, as Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) state, “the assumptions and consequential frames... originate not in organizational or professional concerns but instead within political culture, society's dominant worldview, the hegemonic order”. Rachlin (1988) adds that a press free from strict government control may still be “constrained by a narrow vision of the world that reproduces existing social relationships by inhibiting the possibility of realizing or even imagining alternative realities” (p. 4). Robinson (2002, p. 137) quotes Robert Entman (1993) in his definition of news frames: “The concept of framing offers us a way to understand how information contained within any given text is mediated so as to privilege a particular reading of that text”. Sakr (2007) gives the example of how the American press covered the build-up to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Major American networks like ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN, operating within the context of patriotism, had peppered their newscasts with pro-war official voices, so that support for the war might be garnered. A counter-hegemonic medium therefore, should be one that offers an alternative to dominant news frames or agendas put out by Western news networks (Sakr, 2007); alternatives which within the hegemonic order, would

have been seen to lack legitimacy and would not have warranted any examination at all (Rachlin, 1988). What is crucial here is how counter-hegemonic media use “differing sets of media practices, each with their own routines, rules and ideological codes, to socially construct reality” (Atton, 2002), referring in this case to how alternative media translate their media practices to actual news reports that adopt certain frames and contexts over others.

Insightful here is research on how alternative media sources have produced counter-hegemonic news content. Alternative media is said to take on a “counter-hegemonic role” by actively seeking out alternative sources and a “different cast of accessed ‘officials’ and other voices” in their coverage (Cottle, 2000, p. 434). In his book “Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements”, Downing (2001) points out more specifically the following characteristics of radical alternative media: 1) They should cover a range of topics beyond those featured in the mainstream media for reflection and discussion; 2) They should be more open to covering the views of the excluded groups in society than the mainstream media; and 3) They should not need to moderate its content to cater to those in power, whether they are the media owners, advertisers, or the state (p. 44). Agreeing is Atton (2002) who believes that alternative media should widen their access to the average citizen to “make their own news” and allow “activists, protestors and dissidents a platform to air their own voices” (p. 494). This means that news sources should also span a wide segment of society; voices from below are just as important as those that originate from the dominant, elite groups. Alternative media is also a platform for

“mobilizing information” (Stanfield and Lemert, 1987), that is, information that has the goal of engaging audiences to increase their social involvement in certain ideological social movements (Iskandar, 2006).

Hence, a synthesis of ideas from various scholars in the field of alternative media and contra-flows has revealed a number of characteristics that may pertain to the notion of a global media-contra-flow in its more holistic sense. Broadly speaking, a model of a global media contra-flow should include the following:

Global Media Contra-Flow	1) Reverses the direction of information flow
	2) Provides counter-hegemonic perspectives in terms of content and ideology
	3) Covers a diverse set of issues for debate
	4) Airs a diversity of voices

For the purposes of this thesis however, I will be attempting to fine-tune and operationalize these concepts by using a widely-recognized actually existing example of a prominent global media contra-flow as my benchmark for analysis, Al-Jazeera – not all of these contra-flow characteristics will eventually be used in their entirety in my refined working model. Also, it is Al-Jazeera Arabic (not English) that is of interest here, since this is the version which first took the world by storm as an alternative news flow – any reference made to Al-Jazeera in this thesis would therefore refer to the Arabic version, unless otherwise stated. It will be on the characteristics exemplified by Al-Jazeera Arabic as a media contra-

flow that I will be assessing the potential of Channel NewsAsia as a worthy challenger of dominant Western networks.

Before detailing the birth of Al-Jazeera, I find it essential to ground the theoretical foundation of my research in its larger socio-political context. The concern of Western media imperialism first stirred up massive international controversy in the 1970s and '80s, when the Third World, through the United Nations, articulated their call for a New World Information and Communication Order. It is against this backdrop of global tensions for cultural sovereignty and national autonomy, which I will be recounting in my next section, that global media contra-flows like Al-Jazeera become ever more significant. I will also be bringing Singapore into the narrative, since it is the country where Channel NewsAsia is based. Particularly notable is the position Singapore took within this First and Third World tussle that will provide insights into the country's current media policies and aspirations.

1.2 Contra-flows in context

1.2.1 A First and Third World Tussle: Call for a New World Information and Communication Order

To begin to look at the concept of global media contra-flows in context, it is first essential to understand how certain media flows have gained dominance in the international arena. It should come as no surprise that the US has figured strongly in the international system of power – especially after the Second World War and amidst high tensions during the Cold War, when the US attempted to assert its cultural dominance and anti-communist, pro-capitalist ideologies on the

rest of the world to expand its power and influence economically and culturally (Ikenberry, 2001). Key to the US foreign policy it enacted then was the doctrine of a free flow of information, which had three main objectives: 1) To influence the governments of new nations to adhere to the world-market system; 2) To protect and extend American media flows and products and the data flows of transnational corporations; and 3) To assert the message of anti-communism through every communication medium possible (Schiller, 1989, p. 287). By calling for an international free flow of information, the US ensured that no nation could justifiably interfere with the flow of messages worldwide and that any international codes or agreements that called for the information system to be socially accountable to any party could be rejected (Schiller, 1989, p. 288).

While there were obvious commercial benefits that would be reaped by US economic and media interests as the country's transnational corporations rode on this ideology to evade regulatory constraints (Schiller, 1976; Preston, 1989), the US was fervent in pushing its free flow ideology to the United Nations and the world on the grounds that it would promote peace. A free exchange of information, according to the US, would stop misunderstandings between countries and prevent war, since the news content would not be subjected to any government censorship or control (Preston, 1989). Schiller (1989) described this policy as "skillfully and seamlessly blending corporate advantage, media domination, and the yearnings of people everywhere for contact and full expression, at the same time that it confers an enormous propaganda advantage on its advocates" (p. 293).

For decades, media products from a few Western centres like the US and UK flooded the rest of the world, as the free flow doctrine was deemed vital to universal improvement and was hence left unquestioned. The Third World, while on the receiving end, had little say as it battled other issues like limitations in technology and stunted growth and development (Mattelart, 1994), following decades of “direct or indirect colonialist policies, imperatives of the Cold War and the pseudo-rationality of economic ‘globalization’” (Pasquali, 2005, p. 290). Given free rein to dominate global media flows, the US became the leading exporter of cultural products like television programmes and films, with the entertainment industry reaping in the bulk of its export earnings, according to UNESCO (2005). Over time, it became clear that the US was using its “soft power” through consumerist media messages to promote its own economic and political interests (Nye, 2004). For example, as early as 1912, Hollywood exporters were believed to have been aware of the ideological impact of the films they distributed and the ability of their films to generate demand for other US goods. By 1916, the US State Department had set up a motion-picture section to directly participate in the production and marketing of Hollywood films (Hays, 1927; Hearon, 1938). Indeed, through such media products, ideologies defined by the West such as market supremacy, liberal democracy and American nationalism were being filtered down gradually to the rest of the world (Martin-Barbero, 1993).

At the same time, US cultural hegemony was taking place at a deeper level – American media content was being localised to suit global markets (Thussu, 2007). This created what Stuart Hall (1991) called “a peculiar form of

homogenisation” that “recognizes and absorbs those differences within the larger, overarching framework of what is essentially an American conception of the world” (p. 28). The result was a cultural hybrid – one that adapted Western media genres and cultural formats to suit local languages and cultures (Robertson, 1992; Martin-Barbero, 1993; Kraidy, 2005), often without detection from unknowing audiences. A similar trend was happening with the UK, where alongside its US counterpart, the UK was gaining a major presence especially in news and current affairs, leading the world as an exporter of television formats (Clarke, 2005).

It was in the 1960s and 70s when amidst these dominant media flows, nations in the Third World were beginning to assert themselves more strongly in the world state system after having gained independence from their colonial masters. With the emergence of more than 100 new nations in Africa, Asia and the Latin America regions, the Non-Aligned Movement was established in 1961 by leaders of 25 of these new countries, in a bid to work together to reform the international economic and information orders (Schiller, 1989). UNESCO, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, became the forum through which the movement discussed and exchanged ideas. Beginning as a call for greater political and economic sovereignty, the Third World sought the establishment of a New International Economic Order, which would allow for a better distribution of global economic resources (Carlsson, 2003).

At the same time, it became clear that economic independence for these countries would have to be accompanied by informational and cultural change for

substantive transformations to occur (Schiller, 1989). Much of the discussions on the global communications system centred around the fear that the West would leverage on its free flowing marketplace ideal to revive an era of cultural colonialism. Issues of national sovereignty came to the forefront as countries in the Third World fought aggressively to gain cultural autonomy (Preston, 1989; Mattelart, 1994). Developing countries were also unhappy about the way they were typically portrayed in Western media with “distorted representations of poor world leaders and their policies... cultivating dissatisfaction and instability in countries pursuing programmes unattractive to transnational interests” (Schiller, 1989, p. 295). Hence, arguing that the continued domination of the West in the area of mass communication would lead to “information dependence and exploitation” (Preston, 1989, p. 124), Third World governments called for more balanced news content and bi-directional information exchanges which would allow for their greater access and participation in global communications (Nordenstreng and Hannikainen, 1984; Preston, 1989; Pasquali, 2005).

1.2.2 Singapore’s Position in NWICO: Between the First and Third Worlds

Singapore occupied a unique position within this debate. Despite the United Nations still categorizing Singapore as a “developing state” (United Nations Statistics Division, 2009), Singapore’s position within the Third World has always been a contentious one. Hence, it becomes crucial here to take note of its stance on the issue of countering information flows from the West.

While Singapore had entered the Non-Aligned Movement in 1970 and had taken part in many of the Third World’s forums (Prashad, 2007), the evolution of

this city-state differed greatly from the rest of the debt-ridden Third World regimes that had emerged from long battles against colonialism. In fact, Singapore's colonial experiences with the British and then the Japanese benefited the development of the country as a player in global capitalism. It was seized by the British in 1819 to become a commercial base in the Malacca Straits between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and subsequently prospered as a duty-free port for opium and other goods (Mahizhnan, 1999; Prashad, 2007). This specialization in entrepot trade from the early days of British colonial rule meant that Singapore already had more than a century of experience in international trade by the time it became independent in 1965. When the British lost Singapore to the Japanese during the Second World War, the Japanese also contributed to Singapore's capitalist development by establishing strong state structures within the country during its Occupation – known as zaibatsus (or chaebols in Korean), these industrial giants took charge of the finances, production and distribution of goods while forming strong alliances with the state that squelched dissent among its workers (Prashad, 2007). Hence, by the time the Second World War ended, marking the end of its colonial era, Singapore had already seen the establishment of strong government-linked institutions that put the country at the heart of global capitalist development (Chua, 1998; Prashad, 2007).

After gaining independence in 1965, Singapore's rapid growth and development continued to set it apart from the rest of the Third World. At a time when multi-national companies (MNCs) were seen by many post-colonial Third World states as the “neo-colonisers and neo-exploiters” (Mahizhnan, 1999, p 14),

Singapore welcomed them with open arms in a bid to kickstart an industrialization programme that would help create a much-needed large-scale expansion of its job market, hence solving its massive unemployment problem while enhancing its process of capital accumulation. More than to establish its footing in the global capitalist system however, this move was undertaken largely for survival – Singapore’s regional entrepot trade was in decline, it could not turn inwards to a hinterland for economic salvation, and an “alternative economic course became imperative” to sustain the independent existence of the city-state (Leifer, 2000, p. 68); using foreign capital to finance its industrialization programme was simply a pragmatic move recommended by the government’s Dutch economic advisor then, Albert Winsemius (Haas, 1999, p. 19). Fortunately, this move in the early 1960s was perfectly timed – it corresponded with efforts by the developed nations themselves to seek out cheap production sites elsewhere in the world, and Singapore had the unemployed labour and cheap lands to cater to this (Chua, 1998). Close relations were established between Singapore and the developed West; Mahizhnan (1999) described this as a “marriage made in heaven” (p. 14). It was clear to the Singapore government that aligning itself with the West would bring significant economic benefits – Singapore was able to improve its potentially dire unemployment condition while using the MNCs as a bridge to the rest of the world and allowing the transfer of capital, technology and management know-how into the city-state (Chua, 1998; Mahizhnan, 1999).

Within the next 20 to 25 years after it gained independence, Singapore experienced tremendous economic growth with its industrialization programme. It

became known as one of the Four Tigers of Asia, alongside Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan. These four countries, together with Japan, achieved a “higher growth rate than most other countries or regions on the planet”, bringing in a 6.7 percent share in total world exports in 1990 from just 1.5 percent in 1960, and increasing its share of total exports from the Third World from just 6 percent to a high 34 percent (Prashad, 2007, p. 245). Singapore became the second most competitive economy in the world only after the US, according to the World Competitiveness Yearbook, which analyses how the environment of a country can create or sustain the competitiveness of its corporations based on over 300 criteria, such as government efficiency and infrastructure (Competition Commission Singapore, 2009). Its growth rates during the period of 1965 to 1990 surpassed that of its former colonial ruler, England, at an average of 6.5 percent per year (Prashad, 2007, p. 246). As the rest of the Third World struggled from stunted growth and development, the “East Asian Miracle” raged on, testament to the success of the capitalist movement. In a post-Cold War world, Singapore received a “mixed but grudging respect” from the West – its economic accomplishments had been borne out of an efficient political system that was also based on authoritarianism as opposed to civil society (Leifer, 2000, p. 41); the country’s economic policy was not laissez-faire but was directed largely by government bodies and public enterprises (Neher and Haas, 1999, p. 43) – but it always stayed a staunch believer of open capitalist economies.

Singapore’s stellar achievements prompted some to question its position in the Third World, as it embarked first on its industrialization programme after

independence, before promoting itself as an international business centre for high-tech industries and services in the late 1980s (Economic Committee Report, 1986, p. 12), and then a global city that united global economic, social and technological systems in the 1990s (Chua, 1998, Yeoh and Chang, 2001; Prashad, 2007). As such, Singapore was always integrated into the global system of capitalism, Chua (1998) writes, and it was thus “never a Third World location, culturally and economically isolated on the periphery of capitalism; rather, its very own historical trajectory has been inextricably tied to global capitalism” (p. 985). Similarly, founding father of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew (2000) wrote in his book “From Third World to First: The Singapore Story (1965 – 2000)” that Singapore had “left behind its Third World problems of poverty” (p. xv) and was acting as a “nodal point between the advanced and the developing countries” (p. 688).

It would not be surprising then that Singapore’s position in the developing world was gradually evolving even when the Third World nations were asserting themselves in UNESCO’s forums in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Influencing Singapore’s stance in the call for the New World Information and Communication Order was the country’s dependency on foreign investment and its emphasis on economic growth – this meant that the political decisions it made were often linked to its economic decisions. Together with the Asian Tigers, Singapore advocated at the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement that the economic and political reforms of the world order be treated as separate issues, so that it would not step on the toes of the powerful nations that contributed significantly to its

economy like the US and UK. The Tigers, in essence, “drove the Third World abandonment of the political critique of the economic order” (Prashad, 2007, p. 255). While the Tigers still attended the Third World forums, it became clear that the Tigers were acting to benefit themselves, refuting ideas of import substitution and cooperation against imperialism as advocated by the Third Worlds.

Despite this, disdain from the rest of the Third World countries culminated in a series of proposals to UNESCO by the Non-Aligned Movement known as the demand for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Schiller (1989) highlighted three principles of this new order – 1) that there be recognition of the national sovereignty of developing countries in the global information order and that each country should be able to determine the cultural products that enter their borders, 2) that information flows should not be one directional and 3) that all nations should have equal access and control over all sources of information and international transmission channels (p. 297). In essence, NWICO signalled the demand for more democratic international communications so that more media voices could be heard. These ideas were drafted in “The Declaration on Mass Media”, formally issued at the 1978 UNESCO General Assembly. Despite paranoia and suspicion by US media, the Mass Media Declaration was unanimously approved by all member states including the US at the meeting (Preston, 1989). For the agreement to succeed however, the US had to cooperate on several levels, that is, to provide aid to the developing countries, to accommodate the Third World’s interest in balance and

to have a media system and political administration that would accept the clauses of the declaration (Nordenstreng and Hannikainen, 1984).

Between the UNESCO General Assemblies of 1978 and 1980, tensions began to rise in the US as the US media industry felt increasingly threatened by the declaration, viewing it as a “doubtful if not dangerous instrument of regulation” (Preston, 1989). Besides viewing it as a threat to the free flow of information principle, the declaration was also a challenge to the monopoly power of US transnational media companies that would have to adhere to new rules and regulations administered by the Third World systems and structures (Schiller, 1989; Mattelart, 1994). The influence of these American transnational companies would drop as countries would have gained the authority to reject Western programming and developing nations would garner a larger piece of the global informational market.

The issuing of the MacBride Report by UNESCO’s International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems at the organization’s 1980 General Assembly in Belgrade became the straw that broke the camel’s back. The report recommended structural changes that would restrict information flow, angering anti-communist liberals and First Amendment supporters in the US (Pickard, 2007). At the same time, the Republican government of Ronald Regan in the US and the Margaret Thatcher administration in the UK, both proponents of the neoliberal ideal, sought aggressively to impose their free market principles on the rest of the world, undermining cooperation with the Third World countries (Preston, 1989). By the early 1980s, amidst raging anti-UNESCO campaigns in

the US spearheaded by right-wing groups like the Heritage Foundation, three countries pulled out of the UN organization – the US, UK, and most notably, Singapore.

1.2.3 Taking Sides?: Singapore's Pullout from UNESCO

It is important to note here the reasons for this drastic decision to pull out, especially since deciphering this move might provide insights on Singapore's position in standing up to the cultural dominance of the West. To begin, the US, as the first country to withdraw from UNESCO, cited three official reasons for its pullout that is: 1) UNESCO's programmes and activities were becoming increasingly politicised with Third World countries dominating UNESCO discussions and promoting their own interests against those of the US (Finn, 1986), 2) The poor management of the organization where four-fifths of UNESCO's budget was spent at its overstuffed headquarters in Paris instead of on its programmes worldwide (Finn, 1986), and 3) UNESCO's apparent hostility towards institutions that constituted a free society such as a free press and free market by advocating a New World Information and Communication Order (Haentzschel, 2004). The UK cited similar complaints for its withdrawal from the UN organization. Interestingly though, the reason for Singapore's pulling out still baffles scholars to this day. Haentzschel (2004) for example, wrote that Singapore, still a developing country in the 1980s, should logically have sided with the position of the Third World countries in the debate. Singapore, however, declared in official news reports then that the reason for the country's pullout was purely economical.

According to news stories from December 1984, the spokesperson from Singapore's Foreign Ministry and its then Ambassador to France, David Marshall, had stated that the decision to withdraw was solely due to the high cost of UNESCO's annual membership and was "totally independent" of the decision of the US to leave the organization (The Associated Press, Dec 27, 1984). In an official statement, he said that "We are a small country and we have got priority objectives for our limited resources. Being a small country, Singapore must practice economy in its international activities. Our decision is related to the UN scale of assessment system for determining contributions to the UN" (United Press International, Dec 16, 1985). Between 1965 and 1975, Singapore's contribution had doubled and then rose by more than 400 percent between 1976 and 1984. The country had paid \$88,747 to UNESCO in 1984 and \$159,328 in 1983. This, while contributions from the West and East bloc states had not changed. In fact, Marshall described UNESCO's system of assessing dues as "somewhat jaundiced", where the rates for small nations were raised while assessments on the bigger countries stayed the same or fell (United Press International, Dec 28, 1984).

Marshall said that the decision to pull out had been under consideration for some three years, way before the US decision was made. He said that Singapore had been "almost totally inactive in UNESCO and felt that the work of the organization was "of little relevance" to its needs (The Globe and Mail, Dec 29, 1984). Talking to the press, Marshall said that Singapore had been "more absent in the past few years than present [in the agency's meetings]" and that

they “did not find participation to be of any immediate interest to them” (The New York Times, Dec 28, 1984).

With this move, Singapore became the first developing country to quit UNESCO. While the loss of Singapore’s share of the budget was less than 0.1 percent and would have no great impact on the organization’s workings (the withdrawal of the US and UK resulted in a drop of a third of UNESCO’s budget), the move took on a more symbolic significance – Assistant Director General of UNESCO Henri Lopes said it was “a blow to the universality of the organization” (Xinhua General News Service, Dec 28, 1984).

Among observers, speculation on this matter has been rife. Because Singapore’s stake and monetary contribution to UNESCO was small, analysts have, interestingly, ruled out the possibility that Singapore had withdrawn purely due to economic reasons or the mismanagement of the organization. Instead, some believe that Singapore’s withdrawal could have been prompted by political pressure by the US and/or UK (Haentzschel, 2004). These assertions however remain pure speculation – no evidence has been found that can establish a direct connection between the decision of the US and UK, and Singapore.

Singapore returned to UNESCO in 2007 – this, after the UK rejoined the agency in 1997 and the US in 2002 with acknowledgements that UNESCO had reformed its finances, bureaucracy and political focus to become a more effective organization (The International Herald Tribune, Sept 14, 2002). As UNESCO’s 193rd Member State, Singapore had returned to the organization with a different mindset after its 22-year hiatus – it cited the official reason that it wanted to play

a bigger role in the multilateral institutional system. While it had saved S\$16 million in contributions during its absence, rejoining UNESCO meant more collaborative opportunities in international affairs, whether it be in research, expertise or business (The Straits Times, Oct 23, 2007).

Based on these reasons cited for the withdrawal and subsequent return of Singapore to UNESCO in official documents and interviews, it seems that the city-state had made these decisions solely for pragmatic, economic and political reasons. These had not been decisions that were sparked off by political allegiances, at least on the surface. Singapore had itself said that its withdrawal “was not intended to indicate any disagreement or disapproval or criticism” (The Associated Press, Dec 27, 1984), sending out a message that it was not siding with either the First World powerhouses or the Third World nations in the heated debates that had begun with NWICO.

1.2.4 Contra-Flows from the Third World: After NWICO

More than two decades on, issues addressed in the MacBride Report still remain unresolved – topics concerning communication policies, technology, cultural identity, human rights and international cooperation have been skirted by countries in major international conferences of the same nature following this fiasco. The “New Communication Strategy” suggested by UNESCO in its 1989 General Assembly touched on the free flow of information and freedom of expression principles but stopped at merely recommending the training of communication personnel and providing adequate facilities for a proper media education in developing countries (Mastrini and de Charras, 2005). Similarly in

the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003, the issue of US control on Internet governance was brought to the forefront, but talk on global power relations was kept off the table and discussions concluded with a focus on technical issues with no concrete suggestions to changing actual policy (Mastrini and de Charras, 2005; Pickard, 2007).

Today, the global South remains weak in the geopolitical balance of power. Nordenstreng describes the North-South divide as being in the “throes of neoliberal ‘solutions’” (Padovani and Nordenstreng, 2005, p. 267), subordinated largely by the US as a market for American high-tech products and services. These new information technologies, according to the US, will be capable of alleviating imbalances in information flows, overcome dependence on foreign cultural products and correct structural inequities in facilities for these developing countries (Schiller, 1989). Again, in a bid to convince the Third World that technology is key to helping these nations gain economic progress and national autonomy, the US has mentioned neither the economic benefits that may be reaped by its transnational corporations, nor its ability to better monitor global communications and maintain its hegemony in this global information system.

In fact, despite the impressive push for a balance in global communications in the 1980s, many countries in the Third World have been unable to elevate themselves to a better position in the global information sphere for reasons such as a lack of political will in implementing change and an unclear direction or stance in its management of communication issues (Pasquali, 2005, p. 298). Interestingly however, despite the failure of governments to reach a

consensus on a new global information order through open debate and negotiation, the balance of power in the global information system has in fact begun to shift – this time through the emergence of global information flows that stem from transnational networks based in the global South. Indeed, some countries in the developing world have been able to put themselves on the world map and exert regional to global influence in shaping worldviews thanks to the setting up of transnational media organizations within their borders, either aided by the government or driven by private corporate interests.

In the next section, I will be examining the establishment of one such network – Al-Jazeera, based in Qatar, labelled by many scholars as “effectively demonstrating [the notion of] contra-flow in action” (Sakr, 2007, p. 116). Here, it is my goal to understand the political-economic reasons behind the success of this Arabic station and to unravel how it has embodied the essence of a global media contra-flow as defined by the broad working model I have crafted at the start of this thesis. At the same time, areas where Al-Jazeera falls short as an alternative news flow will also be noted. The goal is to fine-tune and better operationalize the key constructs of my contra-flow model based on an actually existing example that is Al-Jazeera, so that more effective benchmarks can be created against which Singapore-based station Channel NewsAsia may be assessed.

2: CHARACTERIZING CONTRA-FLOWS

2.1 Al-Jazeera as a Prominent Global Media Contra-Flow

Launched in November 1996, Al-Jazeera was the brainchild of the emir of Qatar, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who came to power in June 1995 (Bahry, 2001). As an Arab leader open to the political and social ideas of the West, Sheikh Hamad's ascension saw major political, economic and social reforms to the country, including a crucial development that influenced the establishment of Al-Jazeera – that is, the abolition of media censorship in Qatar. The Ministry of Information responsible for media censorship was shut down in March 1998, giving the press and broadcast media in Qatar free rein in crafting their content (Bahry, 2001).

Motivations to set up Al-Jazeera were many, including the desire to modernize Qatari television, to compete with London's BBC broadcast in Arabic in the Middle East, and to project a new modern image of Qatar to the world (Bahry, 2001; Seib 2005). The political economic situation in the Middle East also helped set the stage for the right station, one that dared to be different, to stand out and make an impact in the global arena.

For one, media in the Middle East had always been strictly controlled by the state before the emergence of Al-Jazeera. The region was one of the most conservative in the world, with its media subject to stringent rules and regulations, especially in the portrayal of women. Amin (1996) noted that most

broadcasters in the Arab world were controlled directly by the government and were reliant on state funding for survival. Thus, it was no surprise that media broadcasts, according to Thussu (2000) were “largely about the exchange of government propaganda between Arab state-regulated broadcasters” (p. 209). With such iron-fisted controls on the media, frustrated audiences in the region grew increasingly hungry for a station that could stand up to authoritarian Arab governments and provide a platform for dissidence and resistance.

Second, Al-Jazeera was also primed for success because it was located in a geopolitical region that was all too familiar with crises, conflicts and wars over the last few decades (Zayani, 2005). This was a region that was always in the news – constant conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya have kept it in the public eye, and a broadcaster located within the area would be well-positioned to provide firsthand news reports and credible political analyses. The international impact of the political strife in the Middle East was also amplified many-fold because of the direct connection of these events to the world’s only superpower, the US. The US government has been directly or indirectly involved in many conflicts in the Middle East region, including the Israel-Palestine conflict, the September 11 bombings, the US’ call for the war on terror, and the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars (Lynch, 2006). These put Arab media in a unique position to directly counter assertions made by Western officials and news networks, and to present their side of the story from an opposing perspective. Being already under the spotlight for these events guaranteed a place for Arab

voices in the news stories of other international networks, enhancing the capability of any credible news network in the Arab world to spread its influence.

Al-Jazeera was able to leverage on all these factors to elevate its status as a news broadcaster. It got its big break during the US invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001, when it was given permission to stay behind in Taliban-controlled territory while journalists from major western networks were ordered to leave (Seib, 2005). The station shone in its live coverage of the aftermath of the US air strikes and its reporting of civilian casualties and reactions to the war. It generated greater buzz by broadcasting videotapes of Osama bin Laden. Western media organizations, unable to gain access to these footages were forced to turn to Al-Jazeera for help. Today, Al-Jazeera is a paid supplier of video footage to major US and UK networks from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine that would otherwise be unavailable (Schiller, 2007).

It is here that I will begin to unravel the ways in which Al-Jazeera has epitomized the contra-flow concept. In Chapter 1, I highlighted some key characteristics of an ideal contra-flow in my broad working model, that is, the station should: 1) Reverse the direction of information flow, 2) Provide counter-hegemonic perspectives in terms of content and ideology, 3) Cover a diverse set of issues for debate, and 4) Air a diversity of voices. In the paragraphs that follow, I aim to discover whether and to what extent Al-Jazeera operationalizes each of these concepts by synthesizing the work of various scholars, such that these constructs may be fine-tuned as benchmarks for analysis when applied to my examination of Channel NewsAsia. I will also take note of areas where Al-

Jazeera falls short as a global media contra-flow and to consider the extent to which I want to analyse these areas given the scope of this study.

2.1.1 Reverses the Direction of Information Flow

Al-Jazeera as a news organization that operates from the global South fits into the mould of a contra-flow insofar as it serves as an alternative source of information to the news offered by Western hegemons like CNN and BBC. Zayani (2005) notes that “for the first time, America finds itself without a monopoly of live coverage of the war” and that Al-Jazeera has now provided a “viable alternative” to coverage of the Middle East that is not misrepresented by the American news networks (p. 29). The Western networks are no longer the only ones that are considered credible and responsible. In the Iraq War for example, Azran (2004) noted that Al-Jazeera had aired a six-minute tape showing images of four dead US soldiers and interviews with five American prisoners of war on March 23, 2003, which would have been withheld by the American networks if they had access to it first since “US blood is rarely shown” in their war footage (p. 82). In this case, since Al-Jazeera was able to gain access to this footage first and broadcast it to the world, other news agencies worldwide were able to pick up on these images and judge for themselves if they wished to show them to audiences in their entirety. As such, Al-Jazeera was able to act as a source of exclusive news footages for other news agencies, without prior censorship by the Western news networks. Even as Al-Jazeera may choose to censor certain images on their part, they will still present other news organizations with an alternative viewpoint that they can refer to.

Where Al-Jazeera falls short, however, is the amount of influence it has on the news presented on Western news networks. Scholars like Wessler and Adolphsen (2008) and Azran (2004) have pointed this out, citing the limited impact of Al-Jazeera on Western news channels. Defining a contra-flow as being able to influence content in Western locations and to enable some form of interaction with dominant news flows (Sakr, 2007), Wessler and Adolphsen found that Al-Jazeera was lacking in its ability to become a “communication bridge” between the West and the Middle East – Western channels simply used it as a source of exclusive coverage and to show the existence of another perspective on the war, but “did not infuse Western coverage with this different perspective” nor allow it to “influence its interpretation of conflict” (p. 458). Revealing similarities in his study was Azran (2004), who discovered that Al-Jazeera faced resistance from US networks which repackaged their news items for broadcast and filtered out or censored certain graphic images aired on the Arab station, especially those images that related to civilian or Coalition troop casualties. While these studies have shown that the influence of Al-Jazeera on Western news coverage continues to be limited, it remains to be seen if Al-Jazeera in English will be able to impact Western networks to a greater extent, or whether its content will differ significantly from its Arabic counterpart to begin with – there has yet to be substantial research conducted in this area.

Similarly, Al-Jazeera’s reach on international audiences remains low compared to the established Western networks. Even as contra-flows are emerging from the global South to the North, global media flows are still

asymmetric. Thussu (2007) notes that the revenues of non-Western media organizations are still smaller than those of their Western counterparts, and their global impact is “restricted to “geocultural markets or at best to small pockets of regional transnational consumers”, not to a majority of global audiences (p. 27). This is while dominant media flows continue to get stronger due to the glocalization of their media content, deepening US hegemony in the long run (Thussu, 2007). Biltreyst and Meers (2000) agree that the contra-flow argument places too much emphasis on “marginal contra-movements so that the real power structures in global communication may be disguised” (p. 398).

With the establishment of Al-Jazeera English in November 2006, it remains to be seen if this English station’s content will be significantly different from its Arabic counterpart’s, and the extent to which its reach and impact will expand over time. So far, Al-Jazeera English broadcasts via cable and satellite to over 140 million homes in more than 100 countries across six continents (I Want AJE, 2009), up from 80 million homes when it was first launched in 2006. Still, according to the New York Times (May 19, 2008), the station has “struggled in many places to make inroads against the likes of the BBC and CNN” while “competition has been growing from new channels like France 24 and BBC Arabic”. Despite this, Al-Jazeera English has managed to ink numerous distribution agreements since its inception, with countries as widely spread out as Portugal, Ukraine and Vietnam.

More notably, Al-Jazeera English has made significant headway into the North American market in 2009. Prior to that, the station was largely kept out of

the US due to the political stigma that was tied to its Arabic counterpart – only audiences in Burlington, Vermont, and Toledo, Ohio, could access the channel, thanks to their local cable operators; the rest of the American public could only access Al-Jazeera English through the Internet. In April 2009 however, the English language station was able to find a network provider in Washington DC, an educational non-profit broadcaster MHz Networks, allowing the station to be broadcast on cable television to some 18 million homes in the area (CTV News, April 30, 2009). The channel's programming was also made available to cable and broadcast viewers in 20 other cities in the months that followed, including Chicago, San Francisco, Denver and Miami (The Washington Post, April 29, 2009). With the former head of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Tony Burman, appointed as its managing director, Al-Jazeera English has also successfully applied for the right to broadcast in Canada through the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. In November 2009, the English station was granted "unconditional approval" for its signal to be distributed via cable and satellite in Canada, after more than 2,600 letters and emails were received from the public in support of the station, compared to the 40 that opposed it. Al-Jazeera English has also pledged to open a bureau in Canada in the near future (The National, November 29, 2009).

2.1.2 Provides Counter-Hegemonic Perspectives in Content and Ideology

Al-Jazeera's reputation as a counter-hegemonic news source has always been highly contentious. Sakr (2007) puts it well: "...the original Al-Jazeera channel in Arabic was not primarily conceived as a source of counter-hegemonic

contra-flow. It was based on a widely accepted model of pluralistic reporting espoused by, among others, the BBC” (p. 129). Indeed, Al-Jazeera has not been counter-hegemonic in all senses of the word. In terms of ideology, Al-Jazeera has not been seen to align itself with any particular social movement, and certainly not that of anti-capitalism, since it remains an institutionalised media organization that operates with the goal of attracting audiences and improving its bottom-line to become financially independent, much like other mainstream news organizations (Iskandar, 2006). To attract higher viewership, its news reports seek to reflect the culture and expectations of its audiences, feeding the desire of the Arab public to support the underdog (Conte, 2007) – for example, Al-Jazeera highlighted the US losses in the Iraq War to meet the expectations of those Arab audiences who saw the war as unjust and gained satisfaction from seeing the weaker Iraqis resist the US invasion (Iskandar and El-Nawawy, 2004, p. 326). Al-Jazeera’s self-declaration of alterity can be viewed from two perspectives – like other counter-hegemonic news sources, it may have a genuine desire to fill a void for an alternative voice; or it may simply be a marketing strategy to attract more audiences with a stronger corporate brand name (Downing, 1984; Atton, 2002). Iskandar (2006) agrees that by categorizing the Arab identity as an “other” to sell its unique news perspectives, Al-Jazeera may be rooting itself further within the dominant hegemonic order, since it is emphasizing its distinction from its mainstream competitors within the system of global capitalism.

Al-Jazeera’s ideological stance has also been labelled as “anti-American” and “anti-Western”. To US officials, the station reeks of anti-American sentiments

– it gives excessive airtime to anti-American activists and Islamic fundamentalists who demonise the West, favour the underdog and incite anger against the Americans; it has also been criticized for acting as a mouthpiece for Al-Qaeda by giving Osama bin Laden an avenue to disseminate his messages (Miles, 2005; Zayani, 2005). US officials claim that it has not just been reporting on the war but “stirring it up”, acting as a “propaganda tool for the Iraqi regime” (Iskandar and El-Nawawy, 2004, p. 325). As for scholars and media experts, some have gone to the extreme of labelling Al-Jazeera as anti-Western based on its “vocal rejection of Western cultural values” – a move possibly driven by its resentment towards “what is perceived as the US’ anti-Muslim, anti-Arab foreign policy” (Zayani, 2005, p. 28). It is interesting then, that Sakr (2007) should bring up the opposite viewpoint in her work – that the station may in fact be “serving a Western agenda in Arab states”, that is, by seeming to provide an avenue through which an onslaught of anti-American sentiments can be aired, while it is in fact reinforcing the image of the Arab nations as the underdog, thereby maintaining the status quo of Western superiority (p. 124). Allowing angsty Arabs to vent their frustrations through such therapeutic discourse also helps to “contain the hostility” towards US hegemony and distract from the deeply entrenched structures of political repression already established in certain Arab nations – hence allowing for US hegemony to be sustained “through the preservation of corrupt and inert Arab dictatorships that depend on US military backing for their survival” (Sakr, 2007, p. 123). Qatar’s close relations with the US seems to substantiate this point of view – Qatar’s defence agreement with the US which

allows the superpower to set up an airbase in Qatar and to use its territory for the prepositioning of US military equipment (Indyk, 2004) suggests that Qatar-based Al-Jazeera may not be as counter-hegemonic as it claims, where ideology and political economy are concerned.

Researchers however, agree that Al-Jazeera comes closest to being counter-hegemonic in its news content and editorial policy, that is, through its incorporation of dissident narratives and alternative discourses into its news reports (Iskandar, 2006). Lynch (2006) asserts that “Al-Jazeera prides itself on breaking the Western hegemony on news coverage... Its reporting begins from an Arab and Islamic worldview, covering the issues that matter to Arabs and Muslims in a language that speaks to – and over time shapes and reinforces – their norms and beliefs” (p. 57). The reason why the Arab station merely comes close to being counter-hegemonic in this respect, however, is because the station continues to adhere to journalistic practices and news values that had originated from the West. For one, CNN had been a key influence in the setting up of Arab satellite stations after its exclusive coverage of the second Gulf War in 1991 (Thussu, 2000; Zayani, 2005). At that time, CNN had been the prime source of information on the war, updated 24 hours a day with live images and reporting. When Al-Jazeera was set up, it adopted CNN’s format of broadcasting news around-the-clock, as well as certain journalistic practices and broadcasting standards such as providing live coverage of the US bombing of Iraq in Operation Desert Fox (p. 30). Iskandar (2006) also points out that many of Al-Jazeera’s staff are trained and educated in the West. In fact, Al-Jazeera’s first

120 journalists, broadcasters and administrative personnel had been hired when the BBC Arab Television station based in Saudi Arabia had to close down due to a dispute with the Saudi royal family, leaving hundreds of BBC-trained and professional Arab journalists without a job (Bahry, 2001; Sakr, 2007). Al-Jazeera was thus founded on a news model that had been defined by its Western counterparts CNN and BBC – its criteria for newsworthiness and the news frames and contexts it adopts still reflect the social realities as defined by the existing hegemonic order, putting dissident viewpoints aired on the station at risk of being diluted (Atton, 2002) and “losing their ideological, counter-hegemonic purpose (Iskandar, 2006). Hence it is with caution that I use the term “counter-hegemonic” to describe Al-Jazeera, even where content is concerned. What is certain is Al-Jazeera’s attempt at presenting alternative perspectives to dominant Western news frames and agendas due to its editorial policy of “The opinion and the other opinion” (Miles, 2005) – this means that it aims to always present all sides of a story to the viewer so that audiences can be better informed, even when this means challenging the official news lines and agendas of more powerful Western news networks and governments. It is here that I will step away from using the contentious term of “counter-hegemonic” to describe Al-Jazeera but focus instead on its key feature of alterity.

Indeed, Al-Jazeera’s efforts at airing a diversity of opinions, including dissident or radical narratives from opposition or subordinate groups, have been lauded by many. According to Miles (2005), Al-Jazeera sees itself as operating independent of all groups and countries and that the news values of

newsworthiness, accuracy and objectivity govern all the stories it reports. The station does not hesitate to broadcast a tape from Osama bin Laden, for example, even if it faces potential backlash from the US for projecting allegedly anti-American sentiments. Neither does it stop at broadcasting images of injured Coalition troops as war victims, a taboo in American news reporting, just so audiences can witness the full impact of the war (Sakr, 2005).

In their analysis of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Iraq War, El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2004) examined Al-Jazeera's efforts at covering multiple sides of the story and lauded the station's attempts at communicating with the "enemy", that is, those that stood on the opposite side of the conflict, despite the fact that it is during times of war when "the context within which a reporter operates makes communication with the 'enemy' unacceptable" (p. 320). Hence, while the American media and policymakers chose to negatively portray the voices that opposed the Iraq war during the build-up to the conflict, Al-Jazeera chose to do the exact opposite, by presenting the voices of dissent that refuted the official pro-war stance taken by the major US networks (Sakr, 2007, p. 117). During the war itself, Al-Jazeera's journalists who were not embedded with the Coalition troops went on the ground to investigate the American and British assertions about the war and openly questioned the American official line that the military campaign was going according to plan (El-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2004, p. 323). Indeed, Senior editor for Al-Jazeera's website, Faisal Bodi (2003) has himself said that Al-Jazeera's role is to act as "a corrective" to the points of view advocated in the Western media when they "report propaganda as fact", such as

in their initial coverage of the Iraq War. This serves to counter the dominant viewpoints of the war as asserted by the US and lessen the influence of the US networks on world opinion (Seib, 2005). In fact, Al-Jazeera has been able to offer views that question the Western narratives and provide a different spin to the stories played on the American networks (Zayani, 2005). In an interview with lecturer and consultant on Arab media, John Zogby, Hugh Miles (2005) writes that a growing number of people are turning away from American satellite news, describing CNN as “cheerleaders” for the Iraq war for example (p. 423).

It is noteworthy to point out here that while El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2004, p. 331) admit that Al-Jazeera’s coverage is not completely devoid of context since networks cannot operate entirely without perspectives, the authors believe that the station has been able to find a balance between audience appeal and “objective coverage” by allowing “truth” to emerge for its viewers through the juxtaposition of multiple opinions and realities into their stories. Similarly, Hugh Miles (2005) believes that Al-Jazeera inevitably produces news content with a certain skew, because of the deep cultural sensitivities of the people making the station’s editorial choices, but does make the effort to be less biased. Yes, Al-Jazeera’s pool of staff consists of Arab journalists, broadcasters and staff who look to cater to the informational needs of its Arab audiences and to present an outlook they can identify with (Bahry, 2001; El-Nawawy and Iskandar, 2002; Seib, 2005), but the station’s editorial processes are still as stringent as its Western counterparts’. In fact, Miles (2005) describes Al-Jazeera as being “probably less biased” than any of the mainstream American news networks

because “knowing it is scrutinized more rigorously than any other news station, Al-Jazeera is fastidious in presenting both sides of the story” (p. 359). Hence, the broadcast of any tape from Osama bin Laden will always be followed by comments from US officials – a practice Al-Jazeera claims they religiously follow to maintain balance (Sakr, 2004).

Therefore, an examination of the counter-hegemonic features embodied by Al-Jazeera here reveals that “counter-hegemony” is a contra-flow characteristic that the Arab station is still unable to fulfil in its entirety, whether in terms of ideology or content. What is certain is its provision of alternative perspectives and voices to those presented on Western news networks. This begs the question of how the contra-flow working model should be tweaked to act as a suitable benchmark to assess the contra-flow potential of Channel NewsAsia in this study, since the station, like Al-Jazeera, operates with the purpose of expanding its market reach and profit margins and as a commercial broadcaster, has not aligned itself with any ideological movements. It might make sense then, in a bid to limit the scope of this thesis, to focus not on the concept of “counter-hegemony” as it relates to ideology and content, but rather on Channel NewsAsia’s presentation of alternative perspectives instead – that is, alternative perspectives to Western news frames and agendas, much like Al-Jazeera has been studied to present all sides of a story rather than the one that is faithful to the dominant narrative adopted by Western networks. This aspect can then be empirically tested in a content and/ or discourse analysis.

2.1.3 Covers a Diverse Set of Issues for Debate

In the Arab media world where state-sponsored news is the norm and news media act as compliant mouthpieces for the government (Bahry, 2001; Ayish, 2002; Seib, 2005), Al-Jazeera stands out in its insistence on fostering debate about sensitive political, social, economic and even religious topics including inter-Arab conflicts, competence of governments, sanctions on Iraq, terrorism, and political scandals. In fact, it has been touted as the only satellite television service in the Arab world that covers issues related to corruption and polygamy (Hafez, 1999). Its two most famous programmes are “The Opposite Direction”, a controversial political talkshow, and “Religion and Life”, a talkshow that deals with religion and politics.

Issues covered on Al-Jazeera have received their fair share of critics though. Al-Jazeera has been accused of overly sensationalising its coverage – whether it is provoking their talkshow participants such that debates end up as shouting matches (Bahry, 2001), or in the way they present issues as more dramatic than they actually are (Iskandar and El-Nawaway, 2004). During the Iraq war for example, Al-Jazeera was thought to have presented what was most “climatic” or “Hollywoodesque”, featuring graphic and gruesome images of the dead and injured to incite debate and controversy (Iskandar and El-Nawawy, 2004, p.325). Still, these criticisms do not detract from the station’s contribution of tackling a wide range of political, social, economic and religious issues regularly on its talkshows and news reports.

The only area that may limit Al-Jazeera's potential as a contra-flow has been its apparent hesitation in being critical about its own Qatari regime (Bahry, 2001; Miles, 2005; Sakr, 2007). Because the station is still financially and politically dependent on the Qatari government, critics of Al-Jazeera have noticed that negative or critical news on Qatar have been played down on the network (Bahry, 2001; Miles, 2005). As of now, it is hard for Al-Jazeera to gain financial independence through advertising because the governments of neighbouring countries, angered by the station's critique of their regimes, have discouraged their people from advertising on the station (Bahry, 2001). In addition, because of Al-Jazeera's shaky relations with countries in the region, the station is heavily reliant on the leadership of the current Emir to stay viable – any serious political change in Qatar might have adverse effects on its operations (Bahry, 2001). Despite close ties with the government, Al-Jazeera's officials have maintained that the station is in fact critical of Qatari officials and policies in its news reports. It had, for example, reported on jailed Qatari dissidents who had accused the government of torture (Miles, 2005, p. 60).

2.1.4 Airs a Diversity of Voices

In its bid to gather a plurality of opinions in its stories, Al-Jazeera has also succeeded in bringing to the global arena a plethora of Arab voices. In the Iraq War for example, the station reported on the protests led by Arabs angry at the US decision to wage war on Iraq while at the same time airing interviews with those who opposed Saddam's regime and supported the war. Chief of Al-Jazeera's Washington bureau, Hafez al-Mirazi told Hugh Miles (2005) that he

believes Al-Jazeera should bring to Americans Arab voices – he says that “In America, people already know these voices, but they are missing some other people in the debate. And we would make sure those other people would have their place.” (p. 413) Indeed, guests on Al-Jazeera’s talkshows range from Arab politicians and opposition members to communists and Islamic fundamentalists. A large proportion of its live shows also take calls, emails and faxes from audiences to encourage open debate on issues (Bahry, 2001; Miles, 2005). Because they are aired live, there is little room for censorship or preview editing and audiences are able to exchange ideas in an open dialogue. While this might result in heated discussions, Al-Jazeera remains an effective platform where different segments of Arab society can speak and be heard (Miles, 2005, p. 335).

In summary, Al-Jazeera has met the concept of a contra-flow in several ways. Its ability to provide alternatives to dominant Western narratives, incite debate and critical reflection on issues, and project a wide variety of Arab voices and perspectives into the global arena have prompted scholars to label Al-Jazeera as a formidable global media contra-flow in the provision of international news (Cassara and Lengel, 2004; Miles, 2005). The station’s willingness to push the boundaries has won it some 50 million viewers from all over the world, including the Middle East, Europe and the US. Its audience members include heads of state to Arab intellectuals to anyone who can afford cable or satellite television. The station’s coverage of the Iraq War since 2003 has also made it the most watched news channel in the Arab world (Schiller, 2007).

Indeed, using Al-Jazeera as a case study for analysis provides valuable insights into ways in which other news organizations may be analysed for their contra-flow potential. By noting where Al-Jazeera thrives as a global media contra-flow as shown by the model and where it falls short – that is, in its 1) limited ability to influence the news presented on Western news networks and to reach global audiences, 2) continued adherence to news values and journalistic practices of Western news networks, and submission to certain ideological frameworks defined by the West, all of which influence its news content, and 3) apparent hesitation in being critical about its own Qatari government which reduces the diversity of regional issues raised in its news reports – certain choices have been made to focus on the four key characteristics of a contra-flow most clearly encompassed by Al-Jazeera based on existing research, as benchmarks for analysis in the revised working model. Notably, the notion of counter-hegemony in this revised model has been operationalized as a less contentious construct – that is, one that simply involves the provision of alternative perspectives to Western news frames and agendas – in order to limit the scope of this study.

Global Media Contra-Flow	1) Reverses the direction of information flow to the West and the rest of the world in terms of influencing Western news content and audience reach
	2) Provides alternative perspectives to dominant Western news frames and agendas
	3) Covers a diverse set of regional issues for debate
	4) Airs a diversity of regional voices

In the next section, I will focus my attention on the news organization of interest in my thesis – Channel NewsAsia. Before assessing the extent to which Channel NewsAsia exhibits characteristics of a global media contra-flow like Al-Jazeera however, it is essential to first understand its beginnings and operations within the Singapore media context and the political-economic environment of Asia within which the organization operates. This section will help lay the foundation to explain the findings that may result from a content and discourse analysis of the station’s news coverage later on in the thesis.

2.2 Channel NewsAsia as Another “Al-Jazeera”?: Establishing the Context

Set up in March 1999, Channel NewsAsia became one of the latest developments in the region to provide English-language news coverage from Asia to an international audience. This television station is currently housed under Singapore’s largest commercial broadcaster and only one of two major media organizations in the country, the Media Corporation of Singapore, or Mediacorp, which turned in an annual profit of about S\$16 million in the year 2008/09 (Mediacorp, 2009), rooting it firmly in the existing system of capitalism. While there are plans to get this corporation publicly listed in the Singapore stock exchange (Natarajan and Hao, 2003), it is currently fully owned by Temasek Holdings, the investment arm of the Singapore government. Decisions on the editorial content and finances of the organization are made by the News Division

of Mediacorp, and the organization is answerable to a board of directors who have a say in the governance of the business and its well-being (Han, 2008).

Since the launch of its international satellite feed in September 2000, Channel NewsAsia has been spreading its reach to more than 20 territories across Asia, from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia to the Middle East and Australia (Channel NewsAsia, 2008). While there are plans to extend its market reach globally and expand its satellite signal to the Middle East, Europe and North America in the near future (Han, 2008), Channel NewsAsia still remains a predominantly regional initiative at this moment and is not as “global” in reach as the handful of dominant Western players like CNN, BBC, CNBC and Bloomberg TV (Rai and Cottle, 2007). Still, the station aims to become an international voice of authority from within Asia – its organizational tagline “Providing Asian Perspectives” puts forth its mission, that is, to present its news from an Asian perspective to the rest of the world (Channel NewsAsia, 2000a).

Currently, the Managing Director of Channel NewsAsia runs the business and general editorial direction of the channel while daily editorial decisions come under the purview of Channel NewsAsia’s Chief Editor. Channel NewsAsia has some 500 staff, of whom about 150 are journalists directly producing news content for the station (Han, 2008). Of these, Channel NewsAsia has correspondents based in more than a dozen countries including China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka. The station also works with stringers or freelance journalists in the Middle East to provide a well-rounded perspective of Asia as a region.

In defining what constitutes an “Asian perspective”, the station’s top management has been cited as having difficulties defining what that is, except that it is a perspective that comes from “knowing Asia intimately” (Channel NewsAsia, 2000b). Given the heterogeneity of the region and the diversity of the media systems present within it (Tay and George, 1996), it is hard, even among Asian countries, to reach a consensus on what this “Asian perspective” might be. Almost a decade since its establishment, Channel NewsAsia spokesperson Han Chuan Quee (2008) attempts to sum up the definition of this concept, pointing out that Channel NewsAsia has been able to provide “Asian points of view to global developments” by featuring, for example, the responses of different Asian countries to the US presidential elections in its newscasts. Aided by “one of the biggest networks of correspondents in Asia among television outfits”, Han (2008) states that Channel NewsAsia ultimately seeks to provide news that is “authoritative and relevant” to its Asian audiences.

Viewers that the English station tries to reach out to fall in the category of professionals, managers, executives and businessmen (Han, 2008), or more broadly, adult decision-makers or anyone who wishes to live and work in Asia. These are the individuals most likely to benefit from the news, information and lifestyle programmes that Channel NewsAsia has to offer that show off “the many facets of the Asian region”, according to Han (2008).

Notably, what has captured the interest of researchers on global media flows is the fact that Channel NewsAsia operates out of Singapore – a country newly independent from British colonial rule in 1965 that has been described as

practising an “authoritarian regime” (Rodan, 2003, p. 519) and is said to be home to a “draconian coercive and authoritarian state power” (Harvey, 2005, p. 86).

Like many post-colonial countries, the Singapore government saw as its key task after independence the need to create strong bonds between the different ethnic and cultural communities that made up its populace. Singapore was an immigrant society made up primarily of Chinese, followed by Malays, Indians and Eurasians. This racial diversity was supplemented by linguistic and religious diversity, with each community speaking their own mother tongues and adopting a wide range of religious faiths such as Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism (Banerjee, 2002). Singapore was also placed in a vulnerable position after independence – it had no natural resources and was a secular state set within the largely Muslim Malay Archipelago – relations with its neighbouring state of Malaysia was shaky and plagued by racial conflicts. As such, the government had to take steps to mould a “symbolic collective identity” and ultimately, to “produce and construct a nation” (Banerjee, 2002, p. 525). Singapore’s first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, called on Singaporeans to unite in support of a “comprehensive survival strategy”, one which would give its ruling People’s Action Party, or PAP, “a sweeping mandate for strong and decisive rule”, setting the foundations for a legitimate authoritarian rule of the newly independent country (Means, 1996, p. 105).

This nation-building project became the rationale to establish tight controls on the country’s media system. The Western press model, which defined the media as a watchdog of the government and the “Fourth Estate”, was replaced

by a development journalism model which favoured a cooperative press that could help the government achieve social stability and economic growth (Latif, 1996; Richstad, 2000; Bokhorst-Heng, 2002). The mass media became what Sinclair et al. (1996) described as the “cultural arm” of nation-building, where common references, agendas and images could be derived and disseminated across a diverse population. According to Bokhorst-Heng (2002), the Singapore government was explicit in declaring that the freedom of the news media came only second to the “definition and integrity of the nation and to the purpose of the elected government”, according to its first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, and that its key role was to “contribute to nation building” according to its current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. In an interesting revelation, Birch (1993) has stated that this may be a “legitimizing strategy for keeping PAP in power”, where the media complies to “staging the myths, generated by government, in order to manipulate and control social consciousness” (p. 74). What makes Singapore different is that it actually admits to what it is doing. Similarly, De Bary (1998) has also described this strategy as helping the government to “preserve and increase its centralized political authority... to guide the nation-building process through close social control” (p. 2).

Local media content has therefore been made to reflect this element of nation-building – the ruling party is positively presented in news broadcasts while the opposition is often demonised (Means, 1996). News presented in the mainstream media during the General Elections for example, are deemed even by Singaporeans, as having low credibility and skewed heavily towards the ruling

party (Kuo, Holaday and Peck, 1993). Research studies have also demonstrated an emphasis on the notion of “Asian values” in the media, that is, the reassertion of “traditional values in the face of growing Western influence in Asia” (Natarajan and Hao, 2003), such as a respect for authority and keeping silent for the greater good of social harmony (Hukill, 2000). This concept, yet to be clearly defined in a consensus among Asian countries, was brought forward by Singapore’s first Prime Minister himself in the 1970s (Natarajan and Hao, 2003), and has resulted in the journalistic norm in Singapore of “reporting with sensitivity” (Massey and Chang, 2002, p. 989) and the avoidance of conflict elements in stories where words or information may provoke certain groups in society (Bayuni, 1996; Nasution, 1996; Xu, 1998). Indeed, the Singapore media has been depoliticised, according to Mauzy and Milne (2002) – while taking on a primary role of informing, educating and entertaining the populace with the intention of constructing a singular national identity, it is made to steer clear of sensitive political topics (Tan, 1990; Birch, 1993). The Western approach of media as the Fourth Estate, offering checks and balances on the government, has been frowned upon by Singapore politicians like Lee Kuan Yew, who said in 1971, that “politics are only for professional politicians, and no person or group of persons, organizations or associations may comment on national policies without first joining or forming a political party” (Seow, 1998, p. 27). Even as such positions adopted by the Singapore government on democracy have received criticism from the Carter administration in the US, and the government’s stance on press freedom has been critiqued by the Reagan and Bush administrations, Lee (2000)

has not wavered, stating that: “We were not following [the American] pattern for development and progress, that as a country developed its free market economy and enjoyed prosperity, it should become more like America, democratic and free, with no restrictions on the press. Because we do not comply with their norms, American liberals will not accept that our government can be good... In Eastern societies, the main objective is to have a well-ordered society so that everyone can enjoy freedom to the maximum... America should not foist its system indiscriminately on other societies where it would not work” (p. 491/2).

Indeed, any deviation from a pro-government perspective in the media may be met with severe consequences. The government has the right to restrict the circulation of any local or foreign publication found guilty of “distorted reporting” (Means, 1996, p. 108). Laws are in place to ensure this – the Newspapers and Printing Press Act and the Undesirable Publications Ordinance, for example, give the government the authority to refuse the renewal of licenses of media companies and to censor or ban publications that may cause misunderstandings between the government and the people of Singapore (Borkhurst-Heng, 2002). Foreign publications found to interfere with domestic politics may also have their circulations restricted; publications that have been subject to restrictions or bans include *The Economist*, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Asiaweek* (Lee, 2005). The country’s Internal Security Act is another that gives authorities the power to “restrict publications that incite violence, arouse racial or religious tension, or threaten national interests, national security, or public order” (Freedom House, 2006). At

the same time, critics of Singapore politics may face the possibility of libel suits, where the courts have often ruled in favour of plaintiffs from the ruling party while forcing the defendants into bankruptcy or destitution (Means, 1996). Limits within which the press can critique the government, however, are not clearly defined – once these invisible “out of bounds” markers are crossed though, journalists will have to face the consequences (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002). It is no surprise then that self-censorship is prevalent among news workers in Singapore – there is little to no criticism of government actions or policies and government speeches are often simply reprinted in the press, with the media acting as the government’s mouthpiece (Lent, 1989; Bokhorst-Heng, 2002).

Government regulation of the Singapore media is made easier by the structure of the media system. Singapore’s mainstream media scene is largely a duopoly between two media organizations, the Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) and the Media Corporation of Singapore (Mediacorp), both of which are regulated by the Singapore government’s Ministry of Communication, Information and the Arts. These two organizations dominate the free to air television and radio channels as well as the mainstream newspapers and magazines of the country (Lee, 2005). SPH monopolizes the print media in Singapore, producing the English-language national daily *The Straits Times* and has stakes in the telecommunications and cable television sector of Singapore. Mediacorp operates the free-to-air television channels in the country including Channel 5, which plays in English, Channel 8 which plays in Mandarin, TV12 which plays programmes in Malay and Tamil, and Channel NewsAsia. Mediacorp also

manages the majority of the radio stations in the country and produces a free narrow-sheet newspaper, Today. While a large number of foreign channels are available to Singaporeans via cable television operator Singapore Cable Vision (SCV), programming is only available in the form of “censored rebroadcasts over tightly controlled cable television networks” (Chan, 1994). At the same time, the private ownership of satellite dishes is banned in Singapore, for the reason that these might bring in “unregulated socially and culturally detrimental programming” (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000, p. 421).

So far, the Internet is the first medium in Singapore where citizens are allowed to disseminate ideas to the masses without having to secure a government license first. Hence, unlike other media forms such as television, radio and print which are subject to strict licensing regulations, the Singapore government has declared that it will not place similar restraints on content that is posted for the masses on the Internet (George, 2005). Notably however, the government has not renounced punishment post-publication – publishers on the Internet are not immune to prosecution if they break the law in cyberspace (George, 2005). Prohibited material as defined in the Singapore’s Internet Code of Practice introduced by the government includes that which is “objectionable on the ground of public interest, public morality, public order, public security, national harmony, or is otherwise prohibited by applicable Singapore laws” (Singapore Broadcasting Authority, 1997). These include material that feature nudity, explicit sex, advocates homosexuality, extreme violence or endorses ethnic, racial or religious intolerance. Material that may incite “hatred or

contempt” for the government and “excites disaffection” is also an offence under the Sedition Act, also applicable on the Internet (Rodan, 2003, p. 511). To enforce these rulings, the government is able to monitor Internet traffic relatively easily because Singapore’s Internet Service Providers operate in a self-contained system where traffic is not routed via the United States (Rodan, 1998) – all Internet connections are routed through government proxy servers that filter out “objectionable material” (Rodan, 2003, p. 512).

Indeed, Singapore has never been ranked high in indices that measure media freedom – in 2008, the Worldwide Press Freedom Index by Reporters sans Frontieres ranked it 144 out of 173 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2008) while the Freedom House Index ranked it 155 out of 195 countries (Freedom House, 2008). In 2009, Freedom House ranked it 151 out of 195 countries, again far behind other cosmopolitan nations in Western Europe, Scandinavia and North America (Freedom House, 2009).

Interestingly, even as the Singapore government exercises considerable control over its media system, the state has sought to position the country as a “vibrant global media city” and “Asian media marketplace”, with the Media Development Authority set up to attract the world’s most prominent media companies in broadcasting, publishing, cinema, music and digital media to establish bases in the city-state (Media Development Authority Singapore, 2003). In what has been described as a “vigorous promotion of Singapore as an infocommunication hub for the Asian region” (Rodan, 2003, p. 504), the government has worked to attract international broadcasters and producers to

set up their regional programming and production facilities in the country. Interestingly, this move has been met with considerable success. Leading media and information technology companies like BBC and Discovery Networks Asia have been undeterred by the country's strict media controls and have chosen Singapore as the base for their regional headquarters, drawn by the country's strategic location, outstanding infrastructure and cost advantages of the move (Rodan, 2003).

With the success of Al-Jazeera possibly signalling the start of an international media movement towards greater diversity and representation, it becomes appropriate to examine the role of Channel NewsAsia in this renewed global order. The organization itself sits in a region that is not a stranger to conflict and strife. Indeed, Asia has seen its fair share of political struggles – North and South Korea, Tibet and China, Taiwan and China, East Timor and Indonesia, and India and Pakistan. There have been Communist uprisings in Malaysia and Thailand, military takeovers in Myanmar and Thailand, massacres that shook the world in Cambodia, a tsunamis that killed thousands in Asia on Boxing Day 2004, and massive conflicts like the Pacific War, Korean War and Vietnam War in the region (Richstad, 2000). Terrorist attacks continue to plague parts of Southern Thailand, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, and governments continue to face uncertainty between authoritarian and democratic systems in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines. In addition, according to the United Nation's conception of what constitutes "Asia" (United Nations Statistics Division, 2009), the conflict-ridden Middle East is also included, expanding the region of "Asia"

from which Channel NewsAsia may report on to gain a competitive edge (although due to the presence of Al-Jazeera, CNN and BBC in the Middle East, Channel NewsAsia has over time, taken to focus more on East and South Asia to stand out from the competition).

Asia is also a region with immense economic potential especially after World War 2, due not to an abundance of natural resources like oil in the Arab world, but rather from the economic development policies adopted by governments in the region (Richstad, 2000). In particular, the rapidly developing region of Asia has found its edge in providing cheap and plentiful labour for multinational companies where large scale manufacturing firms help to generate much-needed employment like in China, India and a handful of Southeast Asian countries (Chua, 1998). Electronic industries have been the most important contributor to this, beginning with low-end consumer products and semi-conductors (Chiu et al., 1997). Other states like Singapore and Hong Kong have been able to attract investors by leveraging on the demands of the knowledge economy to provide important intellectual skill sets for potential employers, moving themselves closer to the economic standings of Japan and the Western world (Friedman, 1995; Richstad, 2000). Indeed, this unique “state-directed brand of capitalism” has ensured East Asia’s rapid growth and development (Ozawa et al., 2001), cementing its position in the global capitalist system.

With a fast-growing and politically and culturally diverse region such as this, it seems Channel NewsAsia has much to draw on as a potential contra-flow in the global information order. To what extent then, does the current Channel

NewsAsia, operating within the Singapore media environment, exhibit characteristics of a global media contra-flow like Al-Jazeera? Is the station able to represent its region effectively by demonstrating an ability to provide alternative perspectives to news frames and agendas as defined by the West, and to present a diversity of regional issues and voices in its news coverage? To answer these questions, I aim to compare the news coverage of Channel NewsAsia with that of an established Western news network, that is, through a content analysis of their news bulletins followed by a critical discourse analysis of their most salient news stories. To guide this part of my analysis and to determine my Western network of choice, I will first look at existing research in the field, in particular, comparative studies that have been conducted between news networks in the global South and the developed West, and studies that pertain specifically to Singapore's existing media system. My aim is to use these studies as a reference to develop suitable hypotheses for my own comparative analysis as well as to determine a suitable Western news station for analysis.

2.3 Comparative studies

2.3.1 Existing Contra-Flows: Extent of Influence

The explosion of 24-hour satellite news stations worldwide has captured the attention of many communication scholars. On one hand, scholars like Banerjee (2002) have noted that these news stations bring to the market their own local perspectives and programming to better cater to local audiences. They not only perform well in their domestic markets but have also excelled as exporters of cultural content, tapping on regional and international diasporic

markets that share similar geolinguistic affinities (Chadha and Kavoori, 2000; Banerjee, 2002). In fact, cross-cultural studies have shown that audiences, when given the choice, actively choose to watch national or regional programming rather than imported content, since the former is more relevant to their own contexts and cultures (Tracey, 1988; Sinclair et al., 1996; Chadha and Kavoori, 2000). Indeed, this strategy has helped media organizations gain a competitive edge as broadcasting systems become increasingly deregulated. Citing Singapore and Malaysia as examples, Banerjee (2002) acknowledges that “such geolinguistic markets and production centres... are gradually succeeding in combating Western producers and broadcasters for a share of the large Asian television market” (p. 532).

Referring to Channel NewsAsia in particular, academics have described it as an effort to provide news with a “genuine Asian flavour” (Seneviratne, 1998) and “created for Asians by Asians” (Channel NewsAsia, 2006). Such stations choose to focus on smaller audiences with more localized content, in a bid to be different from their more “global” Western counterparts (Rai and Cottle, 2007). This has led to a greater emphasis on national and regional identities, increasing the potential for a plurality of voices and perspectives to surface in the global public sphere.

However, scholars like Rai and Cottle (2007) remain skeptical about the possibility of a more balanced international flow of information, adopting instead the view that major Western corporations continue to reign supreme in the global media landscape (p. 60). In a systematic mapping of all 24/7 news stations

broadcast in the world today, their findings revealed that non-Western news networks continue to face “considerable structural inequalities in their access to Western markets”, hindering the flow of information from the developing regions of the world back to the developed West (p. 72). Despite an increase in the total number of such satellite news channels worldwide, Rai and Cottle (2007) found that only a handful could be defined as being truly “global” in reach and these players were still Western networks like CNN, BBC, CNBC and Bloomberg TV. Most of the other news networks surveyed faced restrictions in Western markets and operated primarily within their own regions or countries (p. 58). Other types of television programming also face the same problem – Biltereyst and Meers (2000) found that telenovelas or soap operas from Latin America, for example, may be distributed to markets in North America and Europe, but they are relegated to marginality on Western networks and are usually played just to fill expanding broadcasting slots.

Similarly, other studies have demonstrated that current contra-flows in the global South continue to have limited influence. In a study of Al-Jazeera’s influence on the actual news content of Western networks, Wessler and Adolphsen (2008) found that Western networks like CNN and BBC rarely used coverage from the Arab station during the Iraq War (only 6.4% of prime time newscasts), and even then, the Western perspective on the war remained unchanged. Western networks also attempted to distance themselves from Al-Jazeera’s images when they did utilize them – Al-Jazeera’s coverage was usually accompanied by comments on the Western networks, either to

acknowledge the Arab station as a source or to critique it (Wessler and Adolphsen, 2008). In another study, Azran (2004) noted similar findings – Western networks chose to broadcast only images from Al-Jazeera that were not controversial and images that did not meet this criterion were either censored or downplayed.

As for news content, while news networks in the global South have news programming that differ from those of their Western counterparts to better suit local audiences, for example, less repetitive programming with timelines that cater to their regions and more discussion-based feature programmes over the coverage of events “live”, differences in the levels to which they have adapted the 24-hour news genre still exist – Channel News Asia for example “retains a closer affinity to the major Western players” in terms of news formats and models of practice (Rai and Cottle, 2007, p. 71). Vice-President of Corporate Services at Channel NewsAsia, Han (2008), has acknowledged that the station seeks to emulate the best practices of Western networks like ABC and CBS in the US, BBC in the UK, TV2 in Denmark and Channels 7, 9 and 10 in Australia. Therefore, to discover the extent to which such satellite news channels have pluralized information flow, it becomes essential to discover how news issues of global concern are specifically represented in such news sources (Rai and Cottle, 2007, p. 73).

2.3.2 Comparing News Coverage: Global South vs the West

Several scholars have taken on the task of examining specific content on satellite news stations through comparative content and/ or discourse analyses.

Research comparing the coverage of Al-Jazeera to Western news networks like CNN and BBC has been particularly extensive, especially concerning the coverage of the Iraq War. In his analysis of CNN and Al-Jazeera, Jang (2008) found that Al-Jazeera was more critical of the public relations efforts of the US government than CNN, that is, the Qatari network extended its criticism beyond tactical aspects to question the fundamental soundness of such propagandistic efforts (p. 18). Similarly, Saraj (2006) found that CNN's key news sources during the war were official ones like the Coalition military, while Al-Jazeera worked at giving equal airtime to anti-war voices and independent analysts. These demonstrate the willingness of Al-Jazeera to question the news agendas and viewpoints asserted by the West in their news coverage, a key feature of what constitutes a media contra-flow in its full sense. Researchers also found evidence to support the claim that Al-Jazeera took pains to give the Middle East a greater voice in the global media arena by presenting Arab perspectives in its stories. Iskandar and El-Nawawy (2004), in their analysis of the 12 weeks of Al-Jazeera's coverage during the post-Iraq War period, noted the station's "open and frank" interviews with key Iraqi figures including leader of the largest Shi'ite Iraqi group, Sheikh Mohammed Baqir Al-Hakim, and with US political strategists working for the think tanks in Washington DC, such as Jon Alterman of the Center for International and Strategic Studies (p. 329).

Similarly, in their analysis of the television coverage of the Iraq War, Aday, Livingstone and Hebert (2005) analysed close to 2,000 stories on five American networks and Al-Jazeera to assess the level of objectivity in their news reports.

They found that none of the American networks devoted “more than scant attention” to views that opposed the war in the US and abroad, with 0 to 3% of their stories revolving around war protests (p. 11). Al-Jazeera however devoted 6.7% of its stories to covering these voices of dissent, countering the news agendas of the Western media. All the American networks also refrained from showing images of Coalition, Iraqi military or civilian casualties, choosing instead to depict a bloodless war to audiences, while Al-Jazeera included visuals of civilian casualties in its coverage, often adopting a critical tone to its stories (p. 12). At the same time, Barkho (2006) also found that Al-Jazeera always prioritised topics that were of concern to the Arab world, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict and the situation in Iraq, giving prominent coverage to the Middle East in its news bulletins. It also paid more attention to regional sensitivities than the Western networks, such as respecting Islamic worshipping activities and Muslim leaders.

Research on other emerging news stations in the global South however, have revealed significantly greater similarities between the news coverage of these networks compared to their Western counterparts, possibly indicating their increased level of cooptation into dominant Western news flows. These works provide interesting insights into the areas that could be examined in this study’s comparative analysis involving Channel NewsAsia and a Western news network. These areas could be categorized into: 1) News values, 2) News formats, and 3) Content.

First, in terms of news values, Ogan (1987) discovered that the type of issues given priority in the news stations of the developing countries and in the West were similar – that is, they were all political in nature. Jamieson and Campbell (1992) showed that the media in both the developed and developing worlds would look for the same qualities to define an event as newsworthy, such as its novelty, credibility, visual appeal and its ability to be packaged. Negative stories were also given priority in the news networks of both the First and Third Worlds, with stations located in developing countries relying heavily on the stories of foreign news agencies to the extent of painting a negative picture of their own regions (Richstad, 1988) – this was despite the fact that the Third World countries themselves had voiced their unhappiness about how they were negatively portrayed in the Western media during the NWICO debate.

In another study by Massey and Chang (2002), an investigation of whether news media in 10 Asian countries including Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, India, and Pakistan displayed unique “Asian values”, such as harmony and supportiveness for nation-building, revealed little difference between Asian and Western news coverage. Findings showed that Asian journalists, like their Western counterparts, were “as conflict-oriented and critical” when it came to reporting foreign news, but reported local news more positively (p. 1000). They concluded that these journalists could be following a set of “universal news values that have evolved out of the global professionalization of journalism”, such as the tendency to display cultural superiority over the “other”,

or that the elements of conflict were already present in the news event (Massey and Chang, 2002, p. 1000).

Second, in terms of existing research on news formats, Richstad (2000) offered further evidence of the cooptation of Asian media to dominant Western media flows by noting a “colonial carryover” of Western news formats, writing styles, and norms in today’s Asian media (p. 276). Even as such practices were localized to a certain extent, the West was still revered as a region of modernity, development and prosperity and was looked up to by its Asian counterparts as knowing the “right way to do things” (p. 276). For example, Channel NewsAsia was found to adopt a news format very similar to that of BBC World News’, where news bulletins were played “on the hour” and a “prime time” period was created where bulletins that were more oriented towards local news were aired (Rai and Cottle, 2007, p. 71). This British influence is not surprising, since Channel NewsAsia is located in Singapore, a former British colony.

Third, in terms of the news content of media organizations based in the global South, studies have shown that Asian newspaper editors are still relying heavily on international news agencies based in the West for their supply of news on other developing countries in Asia and beyond (Schramm and Atwood, 1981; Scheller, 1983; Szende, 1986) – this reliance has dropped since the 1980s however, thanks to technology. New technologies like the Internet and satellite television have allowed greater access to a wide range of news sources, and obstacles to newsgathering and distribution such as distance, cost and time have been overcome with such technological advancements (Richstad, 2000).

Despite this, Haentzschel and Marksches (2007) note that editors and media journalists in Singapore, in particular, might still be greatly influenced by news produced by foreign sources because it is such an “industrialized information society and importer of news... [where] the inflow of news is much larger than the outflow” (p. 225). To cater to a wider audience, the reporting of foreign news is considerably heavy on its radio and television stations, including Channel NewsAsia, where almost 80% of its foreign news content come from Western news agencies such as London’s Reuters and New York’s Associated Press (Haentzschel and Marksches, 2007). This calls into question the extent to which a news organization like Channel NewsAsia might be able to act as a contra-flow to dominant news flows from the West. This concern is magnified considering the country’s strict media controls, media monopolies, close press-state relationship and the continued self-censorship of journalists and editors that may limit the level of critique in its news coverage.

Here, with an awareness of the three areas that have been examined by scholars conducting comparative global news analysis – that is, news values, news formats and content – it becomes interesting to note the studies that specifically involve Channel NewsAsia. In a comprehensive content analysis that compared the news coverage of Channel NewsAsia with CNN, Natarajan and Hao (2003) discovered several insights related to these three areas of analysis. In comparing the Asian news bulletins of both the stations, the authors discovered that content-wise, there were no significant differences between the two stations in their focus on conflicts in Asia, with priority given to stories on

politics, war, business, disasters and crimes (p. 307). In fact, Channel NewsAsia led its news bulletins with more negative stories than CNN, which chose to lead off with stories that had a more neutral orientation. While there were more positive stories about Singapore on Channel NewsAsia, there were no significant differences between the way Asia as a whole was covered by the two stations, that is, Channel NewsAsia did not cover Asia in a more positive light than CNN (p. 308), indicating the adherence of both stations to the news value that negative stories are more newsworthy. Neither did Channel NewsAsia report more stories from their Asian locations than CNN or have more soundbites from Asian sources (p. 309). In essence, the research did not show any significant differences between Channel NewsAsia and CNN in their coverage of Asia, contrary to the popular belief that Channel NewsAsia might have contributed more significantly to the injection of diverse Asian voices into the global news arena.

Indeed, in light of existing research, two observations can be made. First, there seems to be two distinct camps on whether global media contra-flows add to the plurality of voices in the global arena – one side agrees that they give a significant voice to their regions in the global public sphere, while the other side argues that they have very limited influence. Second, when looking at specific news content, only Al-Jazeera seems to stand out as having stark differences when compared to Western news networks; other news organizations in the global South seem to be churning out more of the same.

This sets the stage for an interesting investigation. In applying this information to my study on Channel NewsAsia, it would be appropriate to examine whether Channel NewsAsia's content is different from that of Western networks and whether the differences, when juxtaposed against the characteristics of global media contra-flows as defined in my working model, significantly influence the station's contributions as an alternative news flow. This will build on Natarajan and Hao's research on Channel NewsAsia in 2003, with some key differences. That study had focused purely on discovering differences between the station's coverage and CNN's in a bid to define Asian journalism against Western journalism; this study will go a step further to outline Channel NewsAsia's contributions specifically as a contra-flow, based on the contra-flow characteristics defined in my working prototype established earlier. Also, instead of using CNN, I will be selecting BBC as the Western news network for comparison, since Singapore as a former British colony would have adopted numerous journalistic best practices as part of their colonial experience. Notably, Channel NewsAsia's spokesperson has also left out CNN as a station they are modelling themselves after (Han, 2008), since the latter has been described by many as promoting American interests at the expense of generating more balanced news content, especially during the Iraq War (Miles, 2005, p. 422). In addition, BBC World News is the news channel with the highest audience numbers worldwide, reaching out to 292 million homes compared to CNN International's 249 million (BBC World News, 2009; CNN Asia Pacific, 2009), securing its top position as a prominent Western news network.

Another key element of this study that differs from Natarajan and Hao's research in 2003 is its focus on analysing the World News bulletin, as opposed to the Asian News bulletin. This makes good sense because while the literature review has revealed numerous studies that seek to discover simply the differences in the Asian news coverage across different networks, Channel NewsAsia prides itself for providing the "Asian perspective to global developments" (Han, 2008). This is reason enough to believe that Channel NewsAsia's coverage should differ from those of its Western counterparts for both its Asian news and non-Asian news, giving Asian voices more room to speak up regardless of the story's place of origin.

With all that in mind, I will go on to detail the design of my study which will be split into two parts – the content analysis and the critical discourse analysis.

3: UNRAVELING CHANNEL NEWSASIA: THE ANALYSES

3.1 Methodology

Relating to existing research on this topic, I chose to conduct a two-part comparative study of the news coverage on Channel NewsAsia and BBC, that is, through a content analysis and a critical discourse analysis. The content analysis was used to spot broad patterns in coverage while the discourse analysis helped to provide specific examples to substantiate those findings. Ultimately, the goal of my two-part study was to discover the extent to which Channel NewsAsia displayed characteristics of a contra-flow, as defined in the working model that was revised following my analysis of Al-Jazeera in the real world. To recap, the contra-flow characteristics included the station's ability to: 1) Reverse the direction of information flow to the West and the rest of the world in terms of influencing Western news content and audience reach, 2) Provide alternative perspectives to dominant Western news frames and agendas, 3) Cover a diverse set of regional issues for debate, and 4) Air a diversity of regional voices.

While four characteristics of a contra-flow were listed in the working model, I chose to not examine the first characteristic as part of this thesis. This is because to discover if Channel NewsAsia reversed the flow of information by influencing the content of Western news networks would warrant a whole separate study altogether, involving an analysis of the coverage on different Western stations. Unfortunately, there is no current study in the field that can be

cited that analyzes this aspect of Channel NewsAsia. There is also no specific study on the station’s global audience reach – while it is known that the station currently broadcasts to audiences in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, the Middle East and Australia (Channel NewsAsia, 2008), and scholars like Banerjee (2002) believe that many Asian regional broadcasters “seek out the largest possible markets for their local material by tapping into regional as well as international Asian diasporic markets” (p. 533), it would be worthy for future researchers to discover the actual audience access and reception to Channel NewsAsia globally, as well as the station’s influence on Western news content. For the purposes of this particular study however, focus was placed on analysing the news coverage of Channel NewsAsia against that of BBC’s per se, and whether its coverage met the next three criteria of a contra-flow as spelt out in the working model (i.e. characteristics 2, 3 and 4). Four broad research questions were developed to explore each of these characteristics, namely:

RQ1 [char. 2]	Does Channel NewsAsia provide alternative perspectives to the news frames or agendas presented by BBC?
RQ2 [char. 3]	Does Channel NewsAsia cover a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC?
RQ3 [char. 4]	Does Channel NewsAsia air a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC?
RQ4 [char. 4]	Does Channel NewsAsia have more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC?

The first part of this two-step study involved a comparative content analysis of a random sample of news stories broadcast in the half-hour World

News bulletins of the two stations over two constructed weeks; the second part of the study involved a critical discourse analysis of the most salient stories covered on both networks during this period. The content analysis would be useful in providing insights to RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4, while RQ1 would be better addressed in the subsequent discourse analysis.

3.1.1 The Content Analysis

The comparative content analysis was used to bring out the key differences that existed between the coverage of Channel NewsAsia and BBC, while addressing RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4, that is, whether Channel NewsAsia covered a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC, whether it aired a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC, and whether it had more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC. “Diversity” was operationalized here in terms of range and distribution – that is, I was interested in investigating if there were differences in the types of story topics and voices aired on the two stations (i.e. the range of story topics and voices covered), and how the news stories were distributed within each range.

For this part of the analysis, I examined the World News bulletins of Channel NewsAsia and BBC on weekday evenings over two constructed weeks from January 19, 2009 to March 27, 2009. A total of 255 television news stories were collected, of which 152 were from Channel NewsAsia and 103 from BBC. Differences in story numbers were linked to the format of the two stations. While Channel NewsAsia routinely ran between 14 to 17 stories per bulletin, including a segment on sports at the end of every broadcast, BBC had the tendency to

dedicate larger amounts of time to breaking news or live press conferences – this meant that a breaking news story might take up 10 minutes to an entire 30 minute bulletin, therefore reducing the number of stories played on BBC over the same time period.

The basic unit of analysis used for the content analysis was the individual news item, with stories classified into “Asian” and “Non-Asian” categories. Variables on the coding sheet (see Appendices 1 and 2) were adapted from Natarajan and Hao’s 2003 study. These variables included the number of Asian/non-Asian stories, the placement of these stories, the issues covered, their conflict orientation, whether the journalist reports on location, the presence of Asian voices in the broadcasts and the types of interviewees used. A pilot study was conducted on a small sample of news stories to decide on the reliability and face validity of the variables used. Coding was performed by a single individual, and both Asian and non-Asian stories were analysed in this segment to provide insights into RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4 as shown earlier.

3.1.2 The Critical Discourse Analysis

As for the second part of my research, I chose to do a critical discourse analysis of the more salient stories featured on both Channel NewsAsia and BBC. This method of analysis is commonly adopted by researchers who wish to better understand specific news content across different media channels – that is, by studying news discourse through the examination of elements such as the framing of the story, the language used and the ideologies and assumptions embedded in the text. This method was adopted by a significant number of

research studies referenced in this thesis – Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005) used it for their comparative study of Al-Jazeera and five American networks in their coverage of the Iraq War; Ayish (2002) used it in his comparative study of the political patterns reflected in the news stories of three Arab news stations; and Clausen (2004) used it in her examination of the “domestication processes” involved in international news production by comparing the news bulletins of Japanese and Danish networks.

For my own study, I set out to select the most salient stories featured on Channel NewsAsia and BBC by looking for news items that were featured prominently and frequently on both stations – that is, these stories had to be played near the top of their bulletins and covered in more than one bulletin. Such stories usually had the benefit of having greater depth and context for analysis. In addition, only stories covered by both stations on the same day were considered so that direct comparisons in news content could be made.

For my framework of analysis, I adapted from the work of Norman Fairclough, a leading scholar in the field of critical discourse studies. His critical discourse analytical framework consists of three dimensions (Fairclough, 1992) – 1) A textual analysis which examines the schematic structure and framing of the story, the language used, the rhetorical tactics adopted such as repetition, exaggeration and disclaimers, and the ways in which key actors of the story are introduced and quoted from; 2) An intertextual analysis which considers how this text draws from other sources or voices and communities; and 3) A contextual analysis which places the textual and intertextual findings within their socio-

cultural and socio-political contexts and examines the presence of certain ideological standpoints embedded in the story (p. 73). According to Fairclough (1995) however, it is not necessary to analyse a story at all levels of the framework, but rather at any levels that might aid one's understanding of the text (p. 62).

Hence, to suit my research purposes, I chose to examine in greater depth particular elements of the news discourse in question. Specifically, I was guided by the first research question RQ1 that I had established earlier, that is, on whether Channel NewsAsia offered alternative perspectives to the news frames or agendas presented by BBC. Here, "alternative" was simply operationalized as a difference in perspectives between the two stations.

In particular, I noted if Channel NewsAsia and BBC used different frames for the story or offered different viewpoints or angles on the event. I also looked at the framing of causality in the news coverage, that is, if the situation in the story was defined as a problem and who was responsible for the problem, and whether the voices that asserted this were implicitly supporting dominant perspectives or certain social groups. If the story was a critical one, was the level of criticism in the story superficial or in-depth and what was it critical of? If opposing viewpoints were present within the story itself, I studied from whom these voices belonged to, how much time they were given in the newscast and in which part of the story they were placed. I also scrutinized the language used in the text, to see if the journalist was highlighting particular perspectives on issues over others and from which sources these perspectives could have stemmed

from, through the journalist's use of subtle rhetorical tactics in the story such as exaggeration, dramatic contrast, emotional intensity and repetition.

At the same time, I also attempted to gain greater insight into RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4, examined previously in my content analysis segment, to find out if Channel NewsAsia covered a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC, whether it aired a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC, and whether it had more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC. While the content analysis would have helped to reveal broad trends with regards to these three research questions, an in-depth discourse analysis would be able to reveal actual examples that could complement the quantitative findings. In particular, I looked for the presence of oppositional viewpoints that might be presenting more than one side of the story to the audience, and whether the information given was concrete or complete enough to facilitate informed debate among its viewers. I also looked at the specific voices represented in the stories and noted the sectors of society from which these voices had originated. I then examined if these voices had been selectively included to support a dominant frame or promote certain ideologies or stereotypes, and whether the actors involved were given equal weight in the coverage – that is, whether their voices were impactful or simply diluted, decontextualized, misrepresented or tokenised.

Throughout my critical discourse analysis, I essentially sought to form linkages between ideas and themes, and to identify an axis of key concepts for analysis based on my four research questions. At the same time, I took note of what had been excluded from the news coverage of one station compared to the

other, and to question why certain information had been left out. Ultimately, my aim was to compare and contrast the news discourse of Channel NewsAsia and BBC so that meaningful examples could be drawn to complement my quantitative analysis results, and to discover the extent to which Channel NewsAsia was able to meet the key criteria of a contra-flow as set out in my working model.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Content Analysis: A Broad Examination

For this part of the analysis, emphasis was placed on finding key differences between the coverage of Channel NewsAsia and BBC during their half-hour World News bulletins on weekday evenings while addressing the three research questions:

RQ2	Does Channel NewsAsia cover a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC?
RQ3	Does Channel NewsAsia air a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC?
RQ4	Does Channel NewsAsia have more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC?

Interestingly, many of the results ran contrary to one's expectations of the key differences that would exist between these two stations. To begin, Channel NewsAsia featured more Asian stories on its bulletins at 59.2% but this was just about 10% more than the percentage of Asian stories played on BBC, at 48.5% and was not statistically significant ($\chi^2=2.821$, $df=1$, $p=0.093$). Unexpectedly,

Channel NewsAsia did not lead off with more Asian stories than BBC in its bulletins. When comparing the top three stories of each bulletin, Channel NewsAsia led off with Asian stories only 23.3% of the time while BBC led off with Asian stories 38% of the time – 19 out of its 50 Asian news stories made the headlines, compared to 21 out of 90 Asian stories on Channel NewsAsia – a notable finding considering that it is the Western network that dedicates more of its top slots to stories of Asian origin than the Asian network.

When examining if Channel NewsAsia covered a more diverse set of Asian issues compared to BBC in its Asian stories, the result was a yes. The following table shows an exhaustive list of Asian story topics covered by the two stations during the period of analysis. Channel NewsAsia covered two areas more than BBC as shown in the table – that is, stories on “Race/ Religion/ Culture” and “Sports”. What was more noteworthy here was the difference concerning race/ religion/ culture, since the segment on sports was really a part of Channel NewsAsia’s news format while sports was often left to after the half-hour news bulletin on BBC. According to this study however, Channel NewsAsia’s edge on covering race/ religion/ culture was not significant compared to BBC. Of its 90 Asian stories, only four were based on this topic, most of which were broadcast during the Lunar New Year period. The most common story topics covered on both Channel NewsAsia and BBC were the same – “Politics” and “War/ Terrorism”.

Table 1: Coverage of News Topics in Asian Stories

Story Topic	CNA (n=90)	BBC (n=50)
Politics (%)	32.2	26.0
<u>War/ Terrorism (%)</u>	<u>12.2</u>	<u>38.0</u>
<u>Oddities/ Human Interest (%)</u>	<u>12.2</u>	<u>2.0</u>
Accidents/ Natural Disasters (%)	8.9	8.0
Business/ Economics (%)	8.9	6.0
Crime/ Criminal Justice (%)	4.4	6.0
<u>Race/ Religion/ Culture (%)</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>0.0</u>
<u>Sports (%)</u>	<u>4.4</u>	<u>0.0</u>
Health Care (%)	3.3	4.0
Military/ National Defence (%)	3.3	2.0
Ecology/ Environment (%)	3.3	2.0
Entertainment (%)	1.1	4.0
Social Problems/ Services (%)	1.1	2.0

There were two findings that were notable here though. Firstly, 12.2% of Channel NewsAsia’s Asian stories fell into the category of “Oddities/ Human Interest” (compared to BBC’s mere 2%) – this was a percentage that was equivalent to that of the war/ terrorism stories the station broadcast. The stories covered here were mostly out-of-the-ordinary, intriguing human interest events based in Asia – a positive sign, if taken from the view that Channel NewsAsia was leveraging on its Asian expertise to broadcast a rarely-seen picture of Asia and its people; or conversely, it might have a negative self-orientalizing effect because it plays on the stereotypes of Asia and creates a sense of “otherness” with the rest of the world. Secondly, Channel NewsAsia appeared less conflict-

oriented in its framing of Asian stories compared to BBC. While BBC had 38% of its Asian stories based on war/ terrorism, only 12.2% of Channel NewsAsia's fell into that category. This is reflective of the literature review, which states that while negative stories may be given priority in the news networks of both developing and developed countries (Richstad, 1988), Asian journalists still tend to report local or regional news in a more positive light, even when they may be conflict-oriented and critical when they report foreign news (Massey and Chang, 2002).

This observation was again made when the stories were analysed for elements of conflict, a variable defined in the study by Natarajan and Hao (2003) as including both opposing viewpoints and/ or physical conflict. When looking at just the Asian stories, Channel NewsAsia did meet the expectations of reporting on the Asian region more positively than BBC – only 45.6% of its Asian stories had an element of conflict compared to BBC's 64%. Overall, both stations had the tendency to report negative stories regardless of whether the story was Asian-based or not, with BBC displaying a higher percentage at 50.5% and Channel NewsAsia at 36.8%

In another finding, an examination of the voices found in the broadcasts of both stations was also revealing. On the whole, the types of interviewees used by both stations fell into three key categories. The most commonly used voice on both networks was the "Official Source". 28.9% of Channel NewsAsia's total number of stories used soundbites from official sources, compared to 31.1% on BBC, as shown in the table below. The next most common interviewee type

across Asian and non-Asian stories featured on the two stations was the “Member of Public” (11.9% of total stories on Channel NewsAsia and 19.4% on BBC used these) followed by the “Expert” (5.9% of total stories on Channel NewsAsia and 11.7% on BBC used these). Each story could feature more than one interviewee type, hence the percentages were not expected to add up to 100%.

Table 2: Proportion of Total Stories with each Interviewee Type

Interviewee Type	CNA (n=152)	BBC (n=103)
Official Source (%)	28.9	31.1
Member of Public (%)	11.9	19.4
Expert (%)	5.9	11.7

Interestingly however, when considering just the Asian stories broadcast on both stations, Channel NewsAsia did not insert Asian voices into a greater portion of its Asian news stories than BBC. In fact, BBC had a greater percentage of Asian stories that featured Asian voices than Channel NewsAsia for all three categories of interviewee types, namely “Member of Public”, “Official Source” and “Expert”, as shown in the table below. Each figure in the table refers to the percentage of Asian stories featuring a certain interviewee type. Again, each story could feature more than one interviewee type, hence the percentages were not expected to add up to 100%.

Table 3: Proportion of Asian Stories with each Asian Interviewee Type

Interviewee Type	CNA (n=90)	BBC (n=50)
Official Source (%)	20.0	34.0
Member of Public (%)	16.7	18.0
Expert (%)	5.6	6.0

Similarly, in investigating whether Channel NewsAsia inserted more Asian voices into its non-Asian stories than BBC, since the former asserts that it provides “Asian points of view to global developments” (Han, 2008), the results obtained were surprising. Channel NewsAsia used only one Asian voice within the 62 non-Asian stories it broadcast. This belonged to an official source. While BBC also used only one Asian voice in the 53 non-Asian stories it played, Channel NewsAsia’s inability to inject the Asian perspective to global events was a greater cause for concern, especially since it went against what the station stated that it stood for.

Lastly, an investigation into whether Channel NewsAsia reported more of its Asian stories on location than BBC yielded some very surprising results. While it might seem logical that Channel NewsAsia, in its bid to “Provide Asian Perspectives” and to bring out its uniquely Asian advantage, might have more journalists and correspondents reporting on the scene of news stories based in Asia, this study revealed the contrary – that is, BBC actually had journalists reporting on location from Asia more so than Channel NewsAsia. Only 27.8% of Channel NewsAsia’s Asian stories had journalists reporting on location, compared to a high 54% on BBC. Even in absolute numbers, BBC’s figures

exceeded Channel NewsAsia’s – it had 27 out of 50 of its Asian stories reported on location in Asia, compared to Channel NewsAsia’s mere 25 out of 90 stories. This seems to suggest that the Asian station is doing little to leverage on its potential competitive edge here.

Table 4: Asian Stories Reported on Location

Story Location	CNA (n=90)	BBC (n=50)
On Location (%)	27.8	54.0
Not on Location (%)	72.2	46.0

Information gleaned from the content analysis was subsequently used to aid in the story selection process for the critical discourse analysis, as detailed in the next section.

3.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis: Providing Insights

To determine which were the most salient stories featured in the half-hour World News bulletins of both the stations from January to March, I referred to my notes from the content analysis. During the time period in question, I picked out the stories that were featured on both stations on the same day, their positions in the bulletins and the frequency that these stories were repeated in subsequent news broadcasts. While several stories overlapped between the two stations, two stood out in terms of their prominence within the bulletins and their frequency of broadcast – they were coverage on 1) North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, and 2) Sri Lanka’s war against the Tamil Tiger rebels. The issue of North Korea’s

imminent ballistic missile launch was covered on both Channel NewsAsia and BBC on three separate days in the sample, while the story on Sri Lanka’s attempt to defeat the Tamil Tiger rebels was broadcast on two. These two sets of stories were chosen for this study’s critical discourse analysis. Guiding my analysis were the following research questions, with an emphasis on RQ1 that had not yet been tested in the content analysis segment:

RQ1	Does Channel NewsAsia provide alternative perspectives to the news frames or agendas presented by BBC?
RQ2	Does Channel NewsAsia cover a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC?
RQ3	Does Channel NewsAsia air a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC?
RQ4	Does Channel NewsAsia have more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC?

In accordance with the four research questions, four broad areas were examined in the discourse analysis, namely: 1) Story frames, 2) Issues raised, 3) Voices injected, and 4) Journalist locations.

3.2.2.1 North Korea’s Nuclear Ambitions

North Korea’s plans to launch a ballistic long-range missile were covered in the news bulletins of both Channel NewsAsia and BBC on three dates during the period of analysis, namely 4 February, 20 February and 27 March.

The story frames adopted by both Channel NewsAsia and BBC on 4 February were similar, expressing concerns raised by the US about North

Korea's plan to conduct a missile launch. Channel NewsAsia led off by with a call from the US for North Korea to "stop raising tensions on the peninsula" and that "both the US and Seoul are prepared for any provocation" while BBC led off with US' "concern that North Korea could be about to carry out another missile test" and that "the [US] state department says any such move would be unhelpful and provocative". How the two stations proceeded with the story, however, revealed interesting differences.

Channel NewsAsia moved on to feature a soundbite of the US State Department's Deputy Spokesman, Robert Wood, in an official press conference, saying that "North Korea's missile activities are a concern to the region... a ballistic missile launch would be unhelpful and frankly, provocative". The story then continued with the anchor giving information on North Korea's impending missile launch by referring to various media and official sources, such as "South Korean media say the North may be preparing to use the site of its previous ballistic missile launches to fire one possibly towards Japan", "reports say US and domestic intelligence agencies have spotted a train in North Korea carrying a long cylindrical object" and "a Japanese newspaper also reported that spy satellites have detected a large container capable of housing a missile...". All these point towards Channel NewsAsia's penchant for gathering information from other sources as opposed to conducting primary research or first-hand interviews on the story – a key limitation of the station considering that it is based in Asia and is well-positioned to collect new data first-hand. Images used were also mainly library images showing North Korea's previous missile launch, military

parades that showed off the North's missiles and artillery, and government buildings that flew the North Korean flag. Channel NewsAsia ended its story by giving background information on North Korea's hostilities with South Korea due to its nuclear weapons programme. Evidently then, in this story, Channel NewsAsia tended to use secondary information and official sources, a strategy that differed significantly from BBC's coverage of the same event.

BBC's package was filed on location in South Korea's capital of Seoul by its correspondent. It began by featuring an anti-North protest that was taking place in Seoul and interviewing a well-dressed protestor who gave his take on the North's nuclear ambitions: "Kim Jong Il is not satisfied with simply making threats. Now he is totally ignoring international agreements and preparing a long-range missile!" The story then switched to the correspondent giving background information on North Korea's missile technology and the country's relations with the South. Here, like Channel NewsAsia, BBC used library images of North Korea's last missile launch and military parades in the country. BBC also stated that South Korean and Japanese news agencies had quoted "unnamed government sources saying that satellite spy photos show a large object being moved from a factory...". However, BBC widened the scope of its coverage by including a recent development of an American media delegation heading to Pyongyang, amidst speculation that they were representatives of the new US administration. Images of the delegation arriving at the airport were shown, with a delegate giving a short soundbite that said, "no, we're not carrying any messages".

The correspondent ended the package by including quotes from analysts on these developments, pointing out that “analysts believe that North Korea’s increasingly angry rhetoric is designed to test the new government in Washington” and that “experts say a long-range missile launch would take another month to prepare”. Hence, BBC’s coverage went above and beyond what Channel NewsAsia had to offer in its broadcast, with interviews conducted on the ground, new images from recent developments and quotes from analysts, all of which were lacking in Channel NewsAsia’s straight-report on this story, even though it was based in Asia and occupied a top position in its bulletin.

This trend was similarly reflected in the second story on North Korea that was played on both Channel NewsAsia and BBC on 20 February. While both stories adopted the story frame of the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s visit to Asia and her concerns on North Korea, Channel NewsAsia focused purely on Mrs Clinton’s trip to South Korea and the issues that she raised there, while BBC featured updates from her visit to South Korea in a packaged story and the next leg of her visit, to China, filed by a correspondent from Beijing.

Again, Channel NewsAsia took the angle of the official source, speaking on Mrs Clinton’s warning that “North Korea’s relations with the United States will not improve until it engages in dialogue with South Korea and ends its nuclear ambitions”, and that it was “important to get the six-party nuclear talks... back on track”. Also in the lead-in was Mrs Clinton’s announcement that the former Ambassador to South Korea, Steven Bosworth, would be her new special envoy to North Korea. Images used throughout this segment include library images of

North Korea's last missile launch and military parades, and new images from Mrs Clinton's news conference in Seoul. After an overview of the story, the anchor went on to speak to Channel NewsAsia's Korean Bureau Chief, based in Seoul, for her assessment on the news conference involving Mrs Clinton and the South Korean foreign minister. The anchor's first question was a surprisingly unfocused one, literally asking, "What did both of them [Mrs Clinton and the South Korean Foreign Minister] say?" The correspondent gave more details on what was already mentioned in the lead-in though much of it was paraphrased material from the story's introduction: "Her [Mrs Clinton] main message was that she was emphasizing that North Korea is not going to get a different relationship with the United States while insulting and refusing dialogue with South Korea", and that "the North Korean missile would harm the six-party talks and she urged North Korea to return to the negotiating table...". While some other issues like South Korea's involvement in Afghanistan and its Free Trade Agreements with Washington were also brought up, the correspondent reiterated that the news conference was still "mainly focused on North Korea".

The anchor's next question was more detailed and insightful, asking for details about an issue raised many times during the news conference by journalists, that is, North Korea's "looming leadership change". To this, the correspondent was able to give out lesser known details, stating that Mrs Clinton had actually made the comment on North Korea's currently "unclear" leadership before she arrived in South Korea, noting that whoever took over Kim Jong-Il as

its leader would have to be taken into account, though it was North Korea's current government that "the US would have to deal with".

BBC adopted a slightly different story frame, leading off with Mrs Clinton's arrival in Beijing on the final stage of her Asian tour, as opposed to her news conference in Seoul, with the anchor stating that "the Chinese leg... is seen as the most critical and Beijing is playing an increasingly important role in diplomatic efforts to encourage North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programme". The story then moved on to a reporter's pre-packaged piece on Mrs Clinton's recently concluded visit to South Korea. The reporter chose to lead off with images of an anti-North protest held in Seoul, giving an insight into the South Korean public's point of view as images showed North Korean banners being burnt in the protest and pro-American banners with images of Mrs Clinton and President Barack Obama being held up. This image was accompanied by the reporter's words on the people of South Korea demanding "a tougher line with the North to end its nuclear weapons programme, reflecting the view of the government" before cutting to soundbites of the South Korean Foreign Minister and Mrs Clinton at the news conference held in Seoul. Again, BBC was able to weave into its story the view of the South Korean public and to collect new images from the ground, even as the story was based on news released as part of an official event.

The story then saw both the leaders asserting the dominant government perspective for North Korea to cease its nuclear programme – the South Korean Minister called for a push towards "complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament in the North" while Mrs Clinton highlighted the "tyranny and poverty" in the North

and their issuance of “provocative and unhelpful statements and actions”. Here, the story evidently took the side of the official source, presenting the view of the South Korean and American governments against the source of the “problem”, that is, North Korea. Interestingly, the reporter ended the package with results from a television poll that reflected the views of the South Korean people – “70 percent of South Koreans believe that a military confrontation might now break out” – before giving information on Mrs Clinton’s appointment of a special envoy for the crisis, Steven Bosworth, who had just arrived in Beijing after visiting North Korea.

This created a smooth lead-in to the next section of the story, which focused on Mrs Clinton’s agenda in Beijing, China. Up till this point, it was evident that BBC was making an attempt to not just simply be the government’s mouthpiece in this matter, opting instead to also include the voices of the people on the ground. The next segment on Mrs Clinton’s visit to China saw the anchor talking to BBC’s Beijing correspondent, with questions on how the US and China might be working to alleviate the global economic crisis and Mrs Clinton’s attitude towards North Korea. Here, the Beijing correspondent was able to offer some insightful background on China’s stance towards North Korea, stating that “China, over the last year and a half or so, has hardened its language; it’s been an indication that the leadership is losing patience somewhat with Pyongyang”, an insight that could not have been gleaned from a news conference itself.

Thus, while Channel NewsAsia adopted a relatively straight report on Mrs Clinton’s news conference in South Korea, citing the official news line and

images from the conference, BBC produced a more holistic report that went beyond official soundbites to include images and information on South Korea's public opinion on the North, as well as more up-to-date information of Mrs Clinton's arrival in China via its Beijing correspondent.

In the last story on North Korea that was played on both stations on 27 March, focus was placed on Japan's deployment of missile interceptors that would be able to destroy any parts of North Korea's missile should it land on its territory. While focus on both stations was on Japan, interestingly, Channel NewsAsia used an American soundbite given by White House Spokesperson Robert Gibbs, while BBC used an Asian soundbite given by Japan's defence minister – a difference made even more conspicuous by the fact that Channel NewsAsia had opted to use a non-Asian soundbite even when the story was focused on Asia.

Channel NewsAsia had begun its story by stating how Japan was readying itself for North Korea's missile launch: "Japan has ordered its military to prepare to intercept a North Korean missile..." and "the US also deployed warships to the sea of Japan in readiness for the launch". Background was then given on Pyongyang's plans on the launch date and on the emergence of new satellite images that show the presence of a rocket on North Korea's east coast. Channel NewsAsia then led in to the American soundbite with "Washington maintains that the best solution to curb the threat from North Korea is to de-nuclearize it". Here, White House Spokesperson Robert Gibbs reiterated that "such a launch would be provocative" and that the US "maintains the goal of a

de-nuclearized North Korea and look to working with their allies to ensure that happens”. A smooth transition followed with the anchor stating that senior US, Japanese and South Korean officials would meet in Washington to discuss measures that should be taken if the North chose to go ahead with its missile launch. While it seemed logical that an American soundbite be used in this story to allow for a smooth lead-in to the latest meeting set to take place in Washington, it was baffling that Channel NewsAsia did not use an Asian soundbite for the story at all, since the piece revolved largely around the response of Asian countries like South Korea and Japan to North Korea’s nuclear ambitions.

This coverage differed significantly from BBC’s. BBC began its story with Russia first, stating that it “had joined the international cause for North Korea to abandon a planned rocket launch...” before stating Japan’s plan to deploy missile interceptors to destroy any parts of the North Korean rocket that might land in its country. The focus then shifted to Japan entirely, with a BBC’s correspondent filing a packaged piece straight from Tokyo. Here, he gave an update on new satellite images showing progress on North Korea’s imminent launch before using a soundbite from the Japanese defence minister stating that he had “issued an order... to prepare to destroy any object that might fall on Japan as a result of an accident involving a flying object from North Korea”. Notably, this soundbite was worded in a non-confrontational or provocative manner, with words such as “an accident” i.e. it would not be North Korea’s intention to attack Japan, and “a flying object” i.e. no assumptions were made

that North Korea would be firing a missile, rather than a satellite as they had earlier claimed. The use of this soundbite was important to provide insights into Japan's stance on this matter – that it was not seeking to intimidate or challenge North Korea's impending launch but rather, it wanted to protect itself and its people if something went wrong, a point that would not have been gleaned from a paraphrased version of the quote.

The correspondent ended his story with more details on Japan's plans to take action “only if the rocket or fragments of it threaten to land in its territory”, and background information on the stance of other countries on the rocket launch, with a sentence interestingly worded as “Japan, South Korea and the United States are convinced that North Korea will actually test a ballistic missile”, putting questions in the minds of audiences that North Korea's plans to launch a missile had not been truly verified by any of these countries. The correspondent then gave insights into the situation in Japan itself, citing that the “Japanese government is urging people here to remain calm, saying that it is unlikely that the North Korean rocket would land on its country” and that “despite the reassurance, some doubts remain, at least whether any attempt to shoot down debris would even succeed, given the difficulty of tracking its trajectory”.

Such important nuances like that present in the soundbite by the Japanese defence minister, and insightful information on the situation in Japan filed by a correspondent on location, allowed BBC to offer audiences a more holistic picture of the situation. This was unlike Channel NewsAsia's coverage of the event, which again displayed a lack of Asian voices and insights, providing

instead a straight report of the story from the official point of view as painted by Western powers like the US.

3.2.2.2 Sri Lanka's War against the Tamil Tigers

Coverage on Sri Lanka's attempt at defeating the Tamil Tiger rebels was broadcast on two days, 27 January and 4 February. While the stories were less than a minute long on both stations on 27 January, the story played on BBC on 4 February was considerably longer and in greater depth than Channel NewsAsia's.

On 27 January, both stations adopted the same story frame of the United Nation's mounting concern for the lives of civilians in Sri Lanka as the war raged on. Both stations led off by stating that the United Nations had "expressed (deep) concern over the fate of civilians". Channel NewsAsia added more details into its story, noting that "10 (civilians) were killed in the declared safety zone", while BBC simply mentioned that "dozens are dead or injured". However, despite this critical tone adopted at the start of both stories, Channel NewsAsia and BBC's critique of the situation was a relatively superficial one. Neither station elaborated further on the Sri Lankan government's inability to protect the Tamil civilians, but instead shifted the angle of the story quickly to focus on the Sri Lankan troops' near-victory against the Tamil Tiger rebels.

For Channel NewsAsia, phrases used to describe the situation included "the Sri Lankan Army Chief says 95 percent of the work is done and the Tamil Tigers are about to be completely defeated", that "50,000 (Sri Lankan) troops are now fighting fewer than 2,000 Tiger fighters" and "the Tigers are relegated to a

handful of bases scattered over 300 square kilometres of jungle, down from 15,000 square kilometres”. While no soundbites that outwardly supported the Sri Lankan army were used, words such as “completely defeated” and “relegated” suggested that Channel NewsAsia took the side of the Sri Lankan government as the dominant point of reference. No soundbites were used in this story despite it being a top story with an Asian focus, and images used on Channel NewsAsia were considerably more conflict-oriented than BBC’s coverage on the same day, focusing on soldiers firing machine guns from trenches, helicopters firing missiles and explosions on land.

BBC seemed to adopt a more neutral stance to this story. While it also ended its short story by citing the near-victory of the Sri Lankan government troops, it used fewer loaded phrases, stating simply that “Sri Lanka’s army pushed the rebels to their last major base on Sunday”. BBC also used images that did not involve actual physical conflict – Sri Lankan soldiers were shown standing at a vacated building that once belonged to the Tamil Tigers (evident from the paintings of the rebels’ flags and Tiger emblems on the walls) while words at the bottom of the screen read “Sri Lanka fighting: Pressure on both sides to protect civilians”. BBC did not include any soundbites in its story, placing this broadcast in its “news in brief” segment.

Analysis of the story broadcast on 4 February revealed several more differences between the coverage of Channel NewsAsia and BBC on the Sri Lankan conflict. While Channel NewsAsia used less than a minute for the story in its half-hour bulletin, BBC took almost 10 minutes for this story, placing it in the

top slot of its half-hour bulletin – a noteworthy point, considering that the Western station was putting more emphasis on an Asian conflict than the Asia-based network.

The stations also adopted different story frames. Channel NewsAsia led in with a call from the Western powerhouses, the US and the UK, for the fighting to stop: “The United States and Britain are urging a temporary ceasefire between the government troops and Tamil Tiger separatists in Sri Lanka... to allow an evacuation of civilians and the wounded and the delivery of aid into the warzone”. Channel NewsAsia continued to report from the point of the view of the official sources, the US and UK, by highlighting their call for the Tamil Tigers to “surrender or risk more deaths”. Again, no soundbites were used in this story while images shown were similar to those used in the story on 27 January, depicting soldiers firing guns, loading missiles and throwing grenades.

While BBC’s story also noted the role of the US and UK as peacemakers in this conflict, this point was not raised in the introduction to its piece. Instead, BBC led off with the bigger picture: “25 years of on-off civil war in Sri Lanka could be over in a matter of days”, as suggested by the Sri Lankan President “who says the army is on the verge of defeating the Tamil Tiger rebels”. This introduction by the anchor was followed by a reporter’s pre-packaged story on the conflict, which included a soundbite from the Sri Lankan President on his confidence of defeating the Tamil Tigers. This was the only official source or mention of an official source used in the reporter’s package. This story took an interesting shift thereafter to focus on a call from Sri Lankans living in India for

the Indian government to help their countrymen. Shops in India's Chennai were shown to be all closed in opposition to the fighting in neighbouring Sri Lanka and lawyers were staging a demonstration to urge the Indian authorities to intervene. A well-dressed lawyer in the protest was interviewed as saying "We request that the state government... take immediate steps to stop the genocide by the Sri Lankan government, especially by the Sri Lankan army against the Tamil people", giving voice here to people on the ground.

The reporter then ended the package by stirring up more questions in the minds of audiences about the care that the Sri Lankan government was taking to not harm innocent Tamil civilians in the war. The language used in this part of the story suggested that audiences needed to be more critical of any assertions made by the Sri Lankan officials, with the sentence "...the President insisted that the battle was being waged with great care so as not to cause harassment to innocent Tamils but the latest report from UN of casualties and the use of cluster bombs, though it is not clear by whom, will do nothing to allay the growing international concern". Hence, while no party was blamed specifically for the plight of the Tamil civilians, this BBC story did question the dominant viewpoint asserted by the ruling group i.e. the Sri Lankan government. Unlike Channel NewsAsia's straightforward coverage that acted as a mouthpiece for powerful players in the West, BBC went down to the ground and showed a rarely-seen side of the conflict, gave the local people a voice, provided insights into elements beyond the actual conflict, and asked tough questions that would prompt further reflection and debate among audiences.

Going one step further, BBC continued its coverage of the Sri Lankan conflict by giving audiences in-depth background information on the tensions between Sri Lanka's Tamil people and the country's Sinhalese majority that had been "simmering for centuries", starting from the 19th century to the present. With this information in tow, BBC then presented audiences with a critical debate on the responsibility of the Sri Lankan state towards Tamil civilians, that is, by presenting two completely opposing viewpoints on who was to blame for the increasing number of civilian casualties in Sri Lanka.

First to be interviewed in this segment was the Permanent Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Palitha Kohanna. Through a long-distance camera interview, Dr Kohanna made the point several times that the battle of the Sri Lankan government was not against the Tamil civilians but the Tamil Tiger rebels. This assertion took the form of phrases such as "...we have asked all the civilians to assemble in the no-fire zone and this is not the area into which we are firing", "... the Tamil civilians have been herded into this by the Tamil Tigers to be used as a human shield... we have asked the people to move out of this area into areas controlled by the government where the government can look after them, but they have been held there against their will", and "...we have had statements calling on the Tamil Tigers to let the people go but they have not heeded that call". The anchor then proceeded to ask more specific questions such as whether the government was responsible for the recent bombing of a civilian hospital and in the use of cluster bombs. To the former, Dr Kohanna responded with phrases such as "You'll have to remember that this hospital is a

government-run hospital... Why on earth would the government shell the hospital at this stage, when the prize is almost ready to fall into our hands? I do not think there is any logic behind it.” To the latter question on the use of cluster bombs, Dr Kohanna again kept to his line of argument that the Sri Lankan is not responsible for the increasing death toll of Tamil civilians: “I have checked with our procurement authorities... they have not procured cluster bombs, they do not have cluster bombs, and if they do not have them, they cannot use them.”

Evidently through this interview, the BBC had allowed a voice that supported the dominant group to assert itself strongly here on who was to blame in this situation. A high-level official from the Sri Lankan foreign ministry was able to bring his point across through repetition and emotional intensity that the government was not responsible for the many civilian deaths.

However, BBC followed up this interview with one that presented the opposing viewpoint, that the Sri Lankan government was telling a “blatant lie”. This opinion was voiced by Amuthu Arasan, from the British Association of Tamil Schools. Speaking in the studio to the anchor, Mr Arasan pointed out that the Sri Lankan government, in 1995, had caused a mass displacement of civilians from their homes because they opened fire within the Jaffna peninsula. He added that “people never wanted to move out of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam] controlled area because they felt purely very safe there”.

At this point however, Mr Arasan’s points became confusing. He told the anchor that he had a home in the LTTE-controlled Northern peninsula and after 13 years, he “still cannot enter because they still have it as a high security zone”,

that “even though they say it’s called liberated places, you can’t even enter your own houses”, and that “there are people living here, so the people do not want to move out because they don’t feel safe”. Here, Mr Arasan did not make clear which side he was on – while starting out by laying blame on the Sri Lankan government, he proceeded to seemingly blame the Tamil Tigers for not allowing him to enter his own home. His answers continued to be confusing when the anchor asked him if it was true that the Tamil Tigers were themselves brutalizing their local populations. Mr Arasan responded by saying there “is no sign of any sort of brutality [that the Tamil Tigers were harming their own Tamil civilians], no evidence whatsoever” and that “it is a blatant lie [that the Sri Lankan government is using] just to cover up, kind of to divert the attention of the international community”. Mr Arasan was not clear either in his delivery of the answer, leaving out several key connecting phrases – the points in brackets in the quotes above were not included in his actual interview and had to be inferred from the transcript.

Compared to the interview conducted with the Sri Lankan Foreign Permanent Secretary which led off this segment, this interview with Mr Arasan that contested the dominant perspective seemed notably weaker. While attempts had been made to reiterate the important point that the Sri Lankan government was “blatantly lying” and “covering up” the truth, Mr Arasan’s assertions were not as strong and well-articulated. Interestingly, the anchor also fell short in his introduction of Mr Arasan. While Dr Kohanna was introduced as “Doctor Palitha Kohanna, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry”, Mr Arasan was

simply introduced as “Amuthu Arasan”, with no mention of his title or designation. His association with the “British Association of Tamil Schools” was flashed on the screen when he first started speaking but there was no mention of his position within this association or any indication as to why he might be credible enough to speak on this topic.

Hence, while it might seem at first glance that BBC had been balanced in its presentation of differing viewpoints, this did not seem to be the case on careful examination of its coverage. Compared to the assertion of the dominant perspective by an official source, i.e. in the interview with Dr Kohanna, the critique of this perspective through Mr Arasan’s interview was more superficial, given less time and belonged to a voice that was given less credibility. However, whether this skew in favour of the dominant group was intentional or unintentional, BBC’s coverage was laudable for its attempt at painting for its audiences the bigger picture – that is, by giving out extensive background information on the Sri Lankan conflict, and by looking beyond what was provided by the official sources to present perspectives from the ground, sparking off important questions for debate.

This was a far cry from Channel NewsAsia’s coverage of the same story on the same day, which was basically a straight report of the viewpoints of official sources such as the US, UK, European Union, and the Sri Lankan President, on the need to stop the conflict to prevent more civilian deaths. There was no reporter on location, no Asian soundbite used and no analyst employed to give an Asian perspective or an opposing viewpoint to this Asia-based event. This

was surprising, since this was a top story of the day, it was based in Asia, and Channel NewsAsia had stated that it always sought to bring Asian voices and perspectives to important regional and global developments.

In summary, an analysis of the discourses used in the coverage of North Korea and Sri Lanka on Channel NewsAsia and BBC was able to reveal some interesting points for consideration. Four research questions had been used to guide the discourse analysis, as shown below:

RQ1	Does Channel NewsAsia provide alternative perspectives to the news frames or agendas presented by BBC?
RQ2	Does Channel NewsAsia cover a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues than BBC?
RQ3	Does Channel NewsAsia air a greater diversity of Asian voices than BBC?
RQ4	Does Channel NewsAsia have more correspondents reporting on location in Asia than BBC?

Looking first at RQ1, it could be noted that both Channel NewsAsia and BBC had the tendency to base their coverage on official events or developments such as updates from the Sri Lankan government on the progress of the battle against the Tamil Tigers or the US' calls for North Korea to cease its nuclear programme. However, Channel NewsAsia appeared more rigid than BBC in presenting its news as straight reports of uncontentious events or issues, as laid out by official sources such as the government or well-known international organizations. If anything, Channel NewsAsia coverage differed from that of

BBC's because it consistently played on the safe side, rather than because it had attempted to challenge the dominant Western perspective. Channel NewsAsia also demonstrated its penchant for relying on official sources in developing its news lines, hence acting simply as a mouthpiece for these newsmakers or as an information source for its audiences, doing little to be critical or to incite debate with its coverage.

This finding could relate to RQ2 here – issues covered on Channel NewsAsia were found to be lacking in breadth and depth compared to BBC's because the Asian channel constantly tried not to overstep the invisible line as set out by the authorities. Fewer issues were brought into the fold for discussion, with the station steering clear of those that had not been set out within the official parameters e.g. it did not cast doubts on whether the US might be wrong in asserting that North Korea was firing a ballistic missile rather than the communications satellite that it had claimed, and it did not challenge the Sri Lankan government's assertions that it was not targeting Tamil civilians. This also implied that the depth of issues was seldom explored because of Channel NewsAsia's attempts at churning out safe and uncontentious reports that did little to generate informed debate in Singapore. This was very unlike BBC, which did not simply accept the official news line as the whole truth. Instead, it often laid out as much of the big picture as possible to the audiences by giving them background information on its news, and depicting scenes and issues that stemmed not just from the top-down but also from the bottom-up, spelling out what the people themselves were concerned about. Because more issues were

laid out on the table, audiences were able to become more politically aware and better informed to generate their own questions and conclusions.

Finally, with regards to RQ3 and RQ4, this discourse analysis was able to reveal some surprising findings that went against popular belief, complementing results of the content analysis in the first part of this study. Unlike what Channel NewsAsia had claimed, the Asian station did not stand out in its provision of the Asian perspective in its stories, at least not based on the examination of the two most salient Asia-based stories covered in its news bulletins. Despite priding itself for its extensive network of correspondents in Asia who are able to report events on location and provide unique insights, Channel NewsAsia did not live up to its name in its coverage of North Korea and Sri Lanka during the period from January to March 2009. Of the two sets of coverage, Channel NewsAsia reported on location only once, conducting a rather general phone interview with its correspondent based in Seoul. This was compared to BBC who had correspondents reporting from Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing! Even for its coverage on Sri Lanka where no correspondent was used, BBC was able to conduct lengthy interviews with Asian experts on the issue to provide insightful details on the situation. BBC pitted opposing opinions against each other, giving its coverage more depth and perspectives for debate. Channel NewsAsia did not do the same – unique Asian viewpoints were hardly injected into its stories, making them more superficial and less impactful.

Another important point to note was the level of dedication of Channel NewsAsia and BBC at presenting a diversity of voices in its broadcasts. BBC was

impressive in its attempts at presenting voices from the ground – interviewing the locals, revealing polls on public opinion, and showing images of local demonstrations and scenes from the street. It was consistent in its collection of new and first-hand information and images on the latest developments, rather than relying on library images and official press releases. It tended to include a plethora of voices in its stories, from the average citizen, to the officials and the analysts. Channel NewsAsia however, did not shine in this respect. In fact, it was disappointing in its coverage of the two Asian top stories analysed in this segment because it featured little to no non-official Asian voices in its broadcasts. The only soundbites used were those that stemmed from the official newsmakers and even then, it was shocking that Asian official voices were not given priority over Western ones e.g. in its story on Japan's plan to intercept a possible failed missile from North Korea. In addition, despite having correspondents in Japan and South Korea who had the ability to conduct first-hand interviews on the ground and gather new images from the country, Channel NewsAsia did not assign them this task. Opportunities to interview locals e.g. on the sentiments of South Koreans to the North's nuclear threat, were hence lost.

Thus, with reference to the four research questions, Channel NewsAsia seemed to have under-performed considerably. It tended to report possibly contentious stories only from the safe zone, using news lines developed by official sources and soundbites from official newsmakers. It avoided presenting viewpoints, whether in the form of voices from the ground or from its analysts and correspondents, that could be critical of governments and powerful players in

society, hence solidifying its role simply as a mouthpiece for dominant groups. In summary, Channel NewsAsia significantly fell short of its promise to deliver the “unique Asian perspective to global developments” – a point made even more disappointing because a Western-based network like BBC was able to outshine it within its own territory.

3.3 How Channel NewsAsia Fits into the Working Model

Based on the content and discourse analyses of Channel NewsAsia and BBC’s world news coverage from January to March 2009, a number of conclusions can be drawn, particularly with regards to the extent to which Channel NewsAsia has displayed three key characteristics of a contra-flow as spelt out by the working model established in this study, that is, with regards to the station’s ability to: 1) Provide alternative perspectives to dominant Western news frames and agendas, 2) Cover a more diverse set of regional (i.e. Asian) issues for debate, and 3) Air a greater diversity of regional voices than Western news networks. Results of the analyses on Channel NewsAsia’s contra-flow potential, when juxtaposed against these three contra-flow characteristics, can be summarized as follows:

1) Provides alternative perspectives

When considering if Channel NewsAsia provided perspectives that differed from those presented in the news reports of a Western network like BBC, results showed that Channel NewsAsia and BBC shared the same story frames

that were prompted by official events or developments but Channel NewsAsia consistently played within the boundaries set by the official newsmakers more so than BBC, opting for straight instead of critical reporting even when the stories were based in its home territory, Asia, and occupied top positions in its bulletins.

2) Covers a diverse set of regional issues

For a start, Channel NewsAsia covered about 10% more Asian stories in its bulletins at 59.2% but unexpectedly, did not lead off with more Asian stories than BBC, according to this study. In fact, BBC gave more of its top three slots to Asian stories at 38% than Channel NewsAsia did, at 23.3%. As for the topics covered in its Asian stories, Channel NewsAsia covered two more areas than BBC – “Race/ Religion/ Culture” and “Sports” – but the difference was not significant, since Channel NewsAsia played just four cultural stories during the Lunar New Year period and sports news was a mainstay of its evening bulletins anyway. Channel NewsAsia and BBC had the same two story topics covered most frequently – “Politics” and “War/ Terrorism”. What was interesting was Channel NewsAsia covering the same number of Asian stories that fell into the category of “Oddities/ Human Interest” as it did on the stories that related to war/ terrorism. This meant that 12.2% of Channel NewsAsia’s stories were dedicated to showing a rarely-seen human interest side of Asia and its people than BBC’s mere 2%. Channel NewsAsia also showed a more positive side of Asia by having just 12.2% of its Asian stories related to war/ terrorism than BBC’s 38%. When examining if individual stories contained elements of conflict such as opposing

viewpoints or physical conflicts, Channel NewsAsia tended to report fewer conflict-oriented stories on Asia than BBC, just 45.6% compared to BBC's 64%.

From an examination of the top two salient stories on North Korea and Sri Lanka in the discourse analysis, it could be concluded that Channel NewsAsia's stories on Asia lacked the breadth and depth of BBC's – only issues that had been spelt out by the official newsmakers made it to the broadcast, and news reports remained safe, uncontentious and uncritical. Concerns that might have been raised for debate, either from voices on the ground or analysts, were kept off the table. This was unlike BBC's strategy of providing audiences with a more holistic bigger picture, where as much information on the issue was doled out to audiences as possible, be it in the form of background details on the issue or exploring the topic from different points of view beyond that of the dominant group's.

3) Airs a diversity of regional voices

While both Channel NewsAsia and BBC used "Official Sources" for soundbites most frequently (28.9% on Channel NewsAsia and 31.1% on BBC), what was insightful was BBC's greater use of "Members of the Public" (11.9% on Channel NewsAsia and 19.4% on BBC) and "Experts" (5.9% on Channel NewsAsia and 11.7% on BBC) in both its Asian and non-Asian compared to Channel NewsAsia. This trend was reflected in the discourse analysis – BBC made more attempts to go down to the ground and give the local people a voice,

be it in the form of interviews or polls, and provided analysts with the chance to express their critical opinions on the situation more so than Channel NewsAsia.

Surprisingly, contrary to its station tagline of “Providing Asian Perspectives”, Channel NewsAsia did not insert Asian voices into a greater proportion of its Asian or non-Asian stories than BBC. In fact, BBC had a greater percentage of total stories that featured Asian voices than Channel NewsAsia, with these voices spanning across all three categories of interviewee types, namely “Member of Public”, “Official Source” and “Expert”. This trend was reflected again in the discourse analysis, where Channel NewsAsia tended to use only Asian soundbites from official sources in its stories. No airtime, unfortunately, was given to Asian members of the public or analysts in the two most salient stories analysed.

In another surprising finding, BBC actually had more journalists reporting on location in Asia than Channel NewsAsia did. In the stories examined, only 27.8% of Channel NewsAsia’s Asian stories had correspondents reporting on location, while BBC had a high 54%. Again, this result was complemented in the discourse analysis of the two stations’ coverage on North Korea and Sri Lanka. In the three North Korean stories analysed, Channel NewsAsia spoke to its correspondent in Seoul for just one of its stories while BBC mobilized its correspondents based in Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing for its reports!

4: CONCLUSION: ASSESSING THE CONTRA-FLOW POTENTIAL OF CHANNEL NEWSASIA

Since the 1980s, when the Third World governments were fighting hard for a greater balance in the global information order, significant power shifts have taken place in the information landscape with the emergence of media contra-flows that originate from the developing regions of the world. While bringing with them renewed hope that these regions may be better represented in the global arena, their actual contributions in enhancing democracy in expression have remained questionable, signalling the need to assess the ability of individual news players to inject alternative perspectives into the mix. To that end, this thesis has developed a working model of a contra-flow, using characteristics clearly displayed by prominent news player Al-Jazeera Arabic as a point of reference. This fourfold working model was then used to assess the contra-flow potential of an increasingly prominent news organization based in the East Asian region, Channel NewsAsia – a station that proudly states that it “provides Asian perspectives” to global developments, highlighting its strength in asserting the voices and concerns of the peoples in its region.

The results of this study however proved otherwise. Channel NewsAsia was unable to meet the majority of the contra-flow characteristics spelt out in the working model. Given its current political-economic environment, some of the most surprising findings of this study that compared Channel NewsAsia’s

coverage with that of prominent Western network BBC's indicated that Channel NewsAsia 1) Tended to opt for straight reports that followed official news lines rather than to produce critical reports, even if the stories were based in Asia and occupied top positions within its bulletins, 2) Did not cover a significantly greater number of Asian stories than BBC, neither did it lead off with more Asian stories, 3) Did not cover a significantly different set of Asian story topics than BBC, 4) Had fewer journalists reporting from Asia than BBC, 5) Featured fewer types of Asian voices than BBC, opting to interview mostly official sources in its stories, and 6) Did not inject Asian voices into more of its total stories than BBC.

Amidst such surprising results, it becomes important then to consider why, despite its promise to deliver the unique "Asian perspective" to global developments, that Channel NewsAsia has fallen short by such a huge margin and underperformed so significantly as a potential global media contra-flow.

To begin, it might be insightful to first take note of the factors that have allowed Al-Jazeera to stand out as a media contra-flow, and how these same factors might be missing in the case of Channel NewsAsia.

Indeed, it has been a perfect combination of factors that has propelled Al-Jazeera to its current international standing – it was a refreshing change for a region that was used to authoritarian governments and where the media was commonly used as propaganda tools; it had a rather antagonistic relationship with the US, due to numerous conflicts between the US and some regimes in the Middle East, which made perspectives that stemmed from the Arab world all the more sought after; and it got its big break when it was able to offer exclusive

coverage where Western networks were denied access, increasing the demand for its news stories and images. These elements have been missing in the historical trajectory of Channel NewsAsia and I will be elaborating on each of these elements in turn.

For a start, Al-Jazeera was able to stand out from other networks in its region because Qatar made an effort to embrace democratic reform, at least where its media system was concerned, while the media in its neighbouring countries remained as compliant mouthpieces for relatively authoritarian governments (Rugh, 2004; Zayani and Ayish, 2006). As of now, Channel NewsAsia is still trapped under the purview of a largely authoritarian Singapore government, which expects its media to cooperate with it for the greater good of the nation. This state of affairs is reminiscent of the Arab world before Al-Jazeera's emergence, where the media was simply an extension of state power with the purpose of informing the populace on state policies and squelching dissent – the idea of a media form being government funded, yet editorially autonomous was unprecedented in the Arab region before Al-Jazeera (Zayani, 2005).

This is what Channel NewsAsia lacks – editorial independence from the government. Even while the Singapore population has been calling for more relaxed controls on the media in recent years, these efforts have been lacklustre. Lee (2002) describes the Singapore population as being “politically apathetic” and more inclined to being “silent and docile” (p. 103). With increasing affluence and better education however, the middle class may seem to be placing more

demands on the government for fewer controls in social life, but the state continues to have a strong hold on the populace because of its ability to ensure social and economic prosperity for the country (Rodan, 2003, p. 505). Coupled with this dependence on the government is the risk of persecution that accompanies any defiance to the state, resulting in a deep-seated culture of self-censorship and the inability of Singapore's civil society to effect substantial political outcomes, that is, beyond using online spaces to critique the government anonymously (Rodan, 2003; Lee, 2005).

As such, as long as the media continues to follow the developmental journalism model with the duty to procure Singaporean acquiescence to the government's political rhetoric (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002), it will be difficult for Channel NewsAsia to become a global media contra-flow that embodies the key characteristics set out by the working model in this thesis. As evident from the content and discourse analyses conducted in this study, Channel NewsAsia has been extremely cautious in its news reports, choosing to play within the markers set by official, often governmental sources, and adopting a straight reporting style to convey messages from the top-down. Stories on Asia are also reported more favourably with fewer elements of conflict that may taint the image of the region, and are in turn less critical of dominant groups in power. More specifically, the need for the media to fulfil its obligation to help the government achieve social stability and economic growth (Richstad, 2000; Bokhorst-Heng, 2002) has a direct impact on Channel NewsAsia's ability to fulfil two of the contra-flow criteria, as detailed below.

First, the need to ensure social stability will prevent Channel NewsAsia from generating debate on a wide range of issues, especially on topics like race and religion. Heated discussions on such “sensitive” matters may be viewed as detrimental to the Singapore government’s nation-building project. In fact, the government justifies the need for censorship by reiterating that “in a multiracial and multireligious society, the unimpeded flow of ideas, instead of leading to enlightenment, may sometimes have negative effects” (Censorship Review Committee Report, 1992). Authorities have blamed the press for racial riots in the past for “uninhibited reporting” and “inciting racial and ethnic violence” (Ang and Nadarajan, 1996, p. 73). Despite making clear its disdain for news reports that spark debate on sensitive issues, the government has not explicitly spelt out the boundaries for reporting on such matters (Bokhorst-Heng, 2002). The fear of overstepping these invisible “out of bounds” markers ensure that journalists and editors continue to self-censor their news content so as not to invoke the wrath of the authorities. It is no surprise therefore, that Channel NewsAsia’s reports, as evidenced from the content and discourse analyses, steer clear of broadcasting contentious issues and oppositional viewpoints whether they are a part of international or domestic news, lest heated debates be sparked off between different groups within its multicultural, multireligious society that might break the social fabric of the nation.

Second, the government’s desire for economic growth and its deep faith in global capitalism as a means to achieve it also hinders Channel NewsAsia’s ability to provide perspectives that may challenge dominant Western narratives.

To maintain its standing within the global capitalist system, it is likely that the city-state will continue to align itself with Western interests, reaping the benefits of cooperating with the developed world while acting as the middle man between the developed and developing nations. Therefore, it is unlikely that countering Western perspectives in its news media would be its top priority, if a priority at all. Instead, news media in Singapore may be willingly co-opted into dominant news flows of the West to demonstrate the country's allegiance to its developed counterparts. From the content and discourse analyses for instance, one can see that Channel NewsAsia voluntarily acts as a conduit between Western powers/government agencies and the people, be it in the form of the US' call for North Korea to disarm its nuclear programme or the United Nations' call for a ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tiger rebels. Seldom does it question the Western official point of view, opting instead to lay out the issues as the official news line dictates.

On whether the increasing deregulation of broadcasting systems worldwide will be able to give Channel NewsAsia greater autonomy to incite debate and counter Western hegemonic perspectives in the near future, the answer for now seems like a bleak one. While media systems are increasingly commercialised in the global South as the neoliberal ideal becomes widely celebrated, it is unlikely that the Singapore media will be able to break free of its fetters anytime soon, as long as the authoritarian government is adamant on the developmental role that the media has to play. Instead, what might occur in the Singapore media context is a "tactical deregulation" of the media that is still

highly controlled by the state. That is, as Banerjee (2002) notes in his observation of the broadcasting systems in Singapore and Malaysia: “One could say that these governments have tactically employed some form of deregulation and liberalization to benefit from the large commercial potential of the broadcasting industry... Governments have become the shareholders of a commercial broadcasting environment and while they continue to safeguard their political interests through ownership and regulation, they have systematically used the potential of broadcasting to rake in higher profits.” (p. 529). Like media ownership patterns in the Arab world, governments are attempting to strike a balance between commercialising the media while still conceiving it as a public service that should be regulated by the state (Zayani, 2005, p. 15). Until the day such media systems can gain autonomy from their governments, media forms within them will always be tainted by government aspirations and will be unable to realize their full potentials as media contra-flows.

The next question then is whether increasing globalization will pressure the Singapore government to loosen its authoritarian control of the country and its media system. On one hand, some scholars see this as a likely development. They claim that while the authoritarian system is one that has worked for Singapore in the past – Castells (1988) described it as a “dynamic combination of a nation-based state and an internationally oriented market economy that emerges as the basic formula for achieving development in our world” (p. 39) – it has also become more evident that it is a success story that has come with “a significant measure of political repression”, including the ruling party’s “routine

hounding” of political opponents, its setting up of various “draconian” laws like the Internal Security Act, and its cooptation of civil groups into its nation-building project (Preston, 1994, p. 186). Peebles and Wilson (2002) say it well: “Developed country status is the logical outcome of Singapore’s positive responses to globalization... Yet the globalization of Singapore is being pursued along with a determination to make all aspects of economic, social and political life run like an efficient Town Council or City Hall” (p. 269). As a result, there seems to be a widespread belief among observers – within the population’s more vocal middle class, the academic community, and liberal supporters in the West – that the global market will force Singapore to liberalize in the same way that liberal democracy and capitalism have thrived side by side in the West, and that the Singapore government will need to create a different system that is more “globally savvy”, in which a more extensive private sphere free from state control can develop so that a stronger network of private, civil and political organizations can be created. In this sphere, individuals would be able to develop themselves and engage in meaningful and open debate (Tan, 2007, p. 258), citizens could have a greater say in government policy-making (Ang, 2007, p. 23) and a free press could emerge as a logical next step from the country’s deep faith in global capitalism (Zhao, 2008, p. 144; Lee, 2000, p. 492).

However, given Singapore’s current political-economic climate and the government’s insistence on an economically competitive and well-ordered society, it seems unlikely, in my opinion, that increased globalization will be a substantial impetus to push Singapore towards greater democratization anytime

soon. This is because inherent in capitalist power, according to some scholars, is authoritarianism. Wood (1995, p. 108) reminds us that from the 1960s to the mid 1980s, market reforms in parts of Asia and Latin America, in countries like Brazil, Chile and Argentina, were introduced and sustained by military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. An authoritarian state is best able to “define and condition the fundamental issues of power, social structure and international relations” (Wood, 1995, p. 109), creating the necessary institutional framework for capitalist development. Hence, democracy within a capitalist system should not be taken as a given – it is a plausible political framework only to the extent that it helps to sustain the property rights and relations of the capitalist class and the power of the bourgeois state (Wood, 1995; Zhao, 2008). In fact, there is a high likelihood that the capitalist class and hegemonic authority might back an authoritarian regime if they feel that their positions of power in a democratic system have been threatened.

Looking at Singapore’s historical trajectory, the Singapore state has never prioritized liberal democracy within its model for progress. Democratic freedoms have always remained secondary to its desire for a well-ordered society and a prosperous capitalist economy, as Singapore’s first Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew pointed out in his published memoirs (Lee, 2000) – “Freedom can only exist in an orderly state, not when there is continuous contention or anarchy...” (p. 491); “We cannot always follow [the American] formula... Singapore is a densely populated, tiny island in a turbulent region, and it cannot be governed like America,” he said (p. 497). This version of reality has in turn been accepted by

Singaporeans as the ruling party succeeds in acting as a hegemonic force, exercising control on media content and crafting government projects to shape public discourse (Sim, 2008). Going forward, even with a more globalized economy, it seems unlikely that the Singapore government will allow its regime of power to be undermined. Work from Zhao (2008) on her analysis of the Chinese market is insightful here. While the Chinese market has opened its doors increasingly to global capitalism, the Chinese leadership “shows no sign of abandoning the socialist rhetoric”, insisting on a “socialist market alternative to capitalist global integration” (p. 146). This has forced transnational companies who wish to penetrate the lucrative Chinese market to work with the Chinese authorities, on the latter’s terms, if they do not want to lose out on a share of the pie. This is what the liberal democratization framework has failed to acknowledge, according to Zhao (2008) – the ability of an authoritarian state to negotiate with transnational corporations on the “rules of the game” without having to compromise on their political stronghold, if the market is an attractive one.

A similar situation seems to be playing out in the Singapore context. Singapore’s current success at attracting prominent media companies to set up their bases in the country, in its bid to become a global media hub, seems to already suggest that Western transnationals and capitalists will not condemn a country simply because of its authoritarian regime. If anything, while liberal scholars assert that it will be an open media environment and less stringent regulations that would attract these transnational corporations (Ang, 2007; Tan,

2007), it is evident that other factors may prove to be a greater pull in this case – such as Singapore’s strategic location within the profitable Asian market. As long there are benefits to the bottom line, it is unlikely that transnational companies will be very much at odds with the issues of democracy that governments like the US are concerned about. In fact, as Zhao (2008) asserts, it is often the political and social stability that can be assured by an authoritarian government that will attract transnational capital into a country. Haas (1999) describes Singaporean society as being “overseen by authoritarian and incorruptible leaders of an interventionist state” that remain committed to supporting entrepreneurial activity and drawing foreign investment into the country (p. 42). Singapore’s low corruption levels, outstanding infrastructure, high standard of living, and political stability are key reasons why Singapore has remained a popular option for investors (p. 44). Sim (2008) describes Singapore’s “unparalleled success” at blending global market capitalism and authoritarianism as a perfect example that “neoliberalism may best be administered by authoritarian states” (p. 77). It seems unlikely that the Singapore government will let up on its interventionist policies at this point, and risk tainting its image as a global city where successful companies from developed countries can set up their businesses (Lee, 2000).

Relating it back to the country’s media system, it is hard to imagine that the Singapore government will loosen its grip on the media in the near future. This then begs the question of whether there is nothing more that a media station like Channel NewsAsia can do to become a more representative voice of the region, given Singapore’s current political-economic environment. To this

question, this study clearly demonstrates that Channel NewsAsia can do more to push the envelope. For one, there does seem to be more room for the airing of Asian perspectives in its stories that Channel NewsAsia has not yet fully capitalized on.

Noting the success factors of Al-Jazeera, the Arab station had managed to nudge its way onto the world stage by offering exclusive reports and alternative non-Western perspectives and voices that stemmed directly from the Arab region, on major conflicts like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the American War on Terror (Zayani, 2005; Lynch, 2006; Sakr, 2007). Similarly, Channel NewsAsia's mere presence in East Asia means that it has access to more local voices and the capabilities to be the first ones on the scene of any such developments or conflicts happening in the region. Asian journalists and editors hired will also tend to have a keener sense of the sentiments on the ground and have a better grasp of local sensitivities and concerns.

All these advantages have not been effectively capitalized on by Channel NewsAsia, as this study reveals. Despite having correspondents in all the major cities in East Asia, stories examined in this study were seldom filed on location, even less so than BBC, a Western network. Except for human interest and apolitical stories like those on the Lunar New Year and pieces related to oddities/human interest events in Asia, Channel NewsAsia's correspondents were not fully utilized to give insights to issues of critical concern such as tensions between North and South Korea, or to gather new images and opinions from people on the ground. There was an over-reliance on official sources, even when

correspondents were present in a city to give information beyond those doled out by the authorities. Hence, even while major events with worldwide implications might present themselves, like the SARS outbreak in 2003 and the Boxing Day tsunamis in 2004, it is uncertain if Channel NewsAsia will be able to leverage on these to gain international recognition for insightful and in-depth reporting. If there is one contra-flow criterion that can be most easily accomplished even in Channel NewsAsia's current political-economic environment, it would be its ability to air a rich diversity of local voices and perspectives – this should not be a point that is taken lightly by the station, especially when it purports to “provide Asian perspectives” to global developments.

In this respect, there is the possibility for Channel NewsAsia to take this a step further and do as Al-Jazeera does, that is, to broadcast a myriad of voices on air on critical issues. There still remain stories in the region that are of great concern to the US and international community, like North Korea's nuclear projects or the presence of Al-Qaeda networks in Southeast Asia. Going by Al-Jazeera's practice of getting both sides of the story, Channel NewsAsia, at an extreme, may consider conducting interviews from the “enemy” front, with Islamic fundamentalists, communists and the like, to increase its international prominence. However, this is a huge gamble that the Singapore government would be most unlikely to undertake. Al-Jazeera suffered immense backlash from the US for its station policy (Zayani, 2005; Miles, 2005) and choosing to do the same for Channel NewsAsia might be detrimental towards the Singapore government's goal to maintain good diplomatic relations for economic growth. At

the same time, touching on sensitive religious topics such as Islamic fundamentalism in the media would also run counter to the government's plans to steer clear of such issues for the sake of social stability and racial harmony in the country. Hence, having gone through such pains to control media content in these two respects, it is unlikely that the Singapore government would be willing to take the risk that might come with adopting a controversial station policy for Channel NewsAsia, considering that it may sour relations with the developed West, its neighbouring Muslim-majority countries and even within its own population.

Therefore, to answer the question posed in this thesis of whether Channel NewsAsia may have the potential to become a prominent global media contra-flow requires several layers of analysis. The content and discourse analyses in this thesis have shown that as it is, Channel NewsAsia has not been able to sufficiently meet the three key characteristics of a contra-flow as spelt out in the working model: It has not been shown to 1) provide alternative perspectives to dominant Western news frames or agendas, 2) cover a significantly more diverse set of regional issues than Western networks like BBC, and 3) air a greater diversity of regional voices than BBC. This makes it no more uniquely "Asian" than other global news networks based in the West like BBC.

Linking these findings to the broader political-economic framework of Singapore, it can be deduced that Channel NewsAsia is likely to experience more massive obstacles in achieving two of the contra-flow characteristics as expressed in the working model, due to the country's government policies. The

state's desire to sustain high economic growth as a key player in the global capitalist system and to maintain social stability among its populace places significant limitations on the station's ability to counter Western narratives and news agendas, as well as to encourage wide-ranging debate on sensitive issues pertaining to the region. It seems then that perhaps Channel NewsAsia may not be the best player in the region to take on the role of challenging official or Western perspectives, and that other less heavily regulated platforms or alternative media sources may be better suited for the job. Notably however, Channel NewsAsia may still win out in its ability to air a greater diversity of voices and to better reflect concerns and issues from the grassroots in the East Asian region than global broadcasters based abroad. The fact that Channel NewsAsia broadcasts in English, unlike Al-Jazeera which broadcasts in the language of its region, Arabic, should not be a hindrance to the station fulfilling this contra-flow criterion, since its foreign correspondents would have the linguistic abilities to obtain voices from the ground.

As such, as a regional broadcaster targeting its geolinguistic communities worldwide, Channel NewsAsia has the potential to shine because of its ability to offer news from an "Asian perspective" as its station motto purports, as long as it is able to properly leverage on its competitive edge. However, as a global media contra-flow, Channel NewsAsia still has a long way to go. State control of the media places severe limitations on what is allowed to be broadcast on the station and until there are changes in the government's media policies (which might require a considerable mindset change in the current regime), Channel

NewsAsia is going to continue playing on the safe side and is unlikely to stand out as a contra-flow that occupies the same league as Al-Jazeera.

There is, however, much future research that can be done in this area to build on this initial assessment of Channel NewsAsia. For one, a bigger sample may be used and comparisons made between Channel NewsAsia and the other three biggest global news organizations based in the West, namely CNN, CNBC and Bloomberg TV. Research can also be conducted on the influence the Singapore-based station has on the news content of Western news networks as well as the access and reception of global audiences to its news reports, to discover if it fulfils the first contra-flow characteristic in the working model, that is, the ability of Channel NewsAsia to reverse information flow from the global South to the North. Based on the working model proposed in this thesis, research can be done as well on whether other emerging news organizations in East Asia can take on the task of becoming contra-flows capable of representing the region in the global arena, such that an “Al-Jazeera” may finally emerge in this part of the world.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Coded date:

- 1) Story (Unit):
- 2) Network: CNA [] BBC []
- 3) Date of newscast:
- 4) News bulletin:
- 5) Placement of story (in news bulletin):
- 6) Type of story: Asian [] Non-Asian []

- 7) Key Themes:
 - a) Primary theme/ topic (in your own words before using code below to categorize):
 - b) Secondary theme/ topic:

List of Topical Categories:

1. Accidents/ Natural Disasters	
2. Agriculture	
3. Business/ Economics	
4. Crime/ Criminal Justice	
5. Ecology/ Environment	
6. Education	
7. Health Care	
8. Military/ National Defence	
9. Politics	
10. Race/ Religion/ Culture	
11. Social Problems/ Services	
12. Sports	
13. Technology	
14. War/ Terrorism	
15. Entertainment	
16. Oddities/ Human Interest	

- 8) Element of conflict/ aggression: Yes [] No []
 - a) Opposing viewpoints []

b) Physical conflict/ aggression []

9) Country/ region reported on:

10) Reporter/ correspondent reports on location: Yes [] No []

11) Number of interviewees:

12) Type of interviewees:

Members of public	Asian	Non-Asian
Official sources	Asian	Non-Asian
Experts	Asian	Non-Asian

Appendix B: Code Book

Item #1: Story (Unit) number

CNA and BBC will have different running numbers. Start with 1 and continue from there i.e. C1, C2, C3 for CNA's stories and B1, B2, B3 for BBC's stories.

Item #2: Network

Indicate the network from which the news story comes from, CNA or BBC.

Item #3: Date of newscast

Indicate the date the story was broadcast.

Item #4: News bulletin

Indicate the bulletin from which the news story originates e.g. CNA World Today or BBC World News.

Item #5: Placement of story

Identify where in the news bulletin the coded story is placed. If it is the first story in the bulletin, indicate #1, the second story is #2 and so on. The top three stories of each bulletin will be recoded into a separate variable "Top Stories" in the analytical process.

Item #6: Type of story

Indicate if the story is primarily reporting on Asia or areas outside of Asia. The definition of Asia is derived from the United Nation's Statistics Division that lists countries by geographical region (refer to <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>).

Asia can be broadly classified into Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, South-eastern Asia, and Western Asia. These countries extend to Kyrgystan, Afghanistan, and Iraq and do not include Australia and New Zealand.

Item #7: Key themes

News story topics and their definitions are defined below. Coding judgments are made at the end of every story based on what is clear and obvious in the content, and definitions are taken at face value. Indicate only the topic that is most central to the news story.

Topic	Definition/ Examples
1. Accidents/ Natural Disasters	Use obvious definitions e.g. plane or vehicle collisions, building collapses or fires, floods, earthquakes, droughts or haze.
2. Agriculture	Use obvious definitions e.g. agricultural policies, land ownership issues, assistance to farmers, output etc.
3. Business/ Economics	Any story about business of any size or economic performance or governmental decisions/ policies related to business and the economy.
4. Crime/ Criminal Justice	Any story about crimes being committed or criminal suspects being apprehended, crime prevention campaigns, criminal prosecution or sentencing by criminal courts.
5. Ecology/ Environment	“Ecology” refers to human or animal habitats, and how humans and animals relate to their habitats. Use the obvious definition for “environment” e.g. pollution, air/ water quality, urbanization, land degradation, marine issues, conservation efforts etc.
6. Education	Any story about education or educational issues at any grade, including university.
7. Health Care	Any story relating to human health or healthcare e.g. hospitals, doctors, medical treatments, policies on the healthcare system etc.
8. Military/ National Defence	Excludes war.
9. Politics	Excludes Agriculture, Business/ Economics, Education, Healthcare, Military/ Defence, Race/ Religion, and Social Problems/ Services.
10. Race/ Religion/ Culture	Any story about race/ inter-religion/ intercultural relations, festivals/ celebrations related to specific races/ religions/ cultures, and governmental decisions and policies related to race/ religion/ culture.
11. Social Problems/ Services	Any story about social problems and governmental/ non-governmental social services.
12. Sports	Any story about sporting events, sports personalities, policies on sports.
13. Technology	Any story about technology e.g. technological innovations, media products and solutions etc.
14. War/ Terrorism	Any story about armed conflict or the immediate possibility of armed conflict e.g. military interventions, humanitarian crises, armed revolutions, acts of terrorism etc.
15. Entertainment	Any story involving celebrities or any element of

	pop culture e.g. TV shows, movies, songs, award shows etc.
16. Oddities/ Human Interest	Any out-of-the-ordinary, human interest story e.g. breaking Guinness Records, daring performances.

Item #8: Element of conflict/ aggression

Conflict/ aggression is defined here as “disagreements, hostilities or violent action between or among parties”. These can be the form of verbal disagreements such as opposing viewpoints presented by parties in a story, or physical conflict that involves a display of violent physical action or the mention of such action. The presence of conflict/ aggression in a story should be obvious and clear from a casual reading and should be a substantial and central element of the story. Conflict/ aggression could be between individuals, countries or world regions.

Item #9: Country/ region reported on

Identify the country where the story took place, as much as possible. If the story involves whole regions e.g. stories on the European Union, identify the region in question instead.

Item #10: Reporter/ correspondent reports on location

Identify if the reporter was reporting from the city where the story took place. This includes journalists affiliated with the station reporting the story on location e.g. “This is X, reporting from Dubai” or if the station’s foreign correspondent based in that city appears in the story, either to report it or to answer questions posed by the news anchor e.g. “joining us now from Mexico City is X”.

Item #11: Number of interviewees

Indicate the number of individuals seen giving soundbites in the story. These may include actual interviews or snippets from press conferences or parliamentary sittings. Soundbites given by the station’s journalist or correspondent should not be considered here.

Item #12: Type of interviewees

If interviews are conducted within the story, identify the categories the interviewees fall under i.e. “Member of public”, “Official sources” or “Expert”. Broadly speaking, newsmakers are considered “Official sources” and “Experts” may include other journalists. Then identify if the interviewee is of Asian origin or not (refer to <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>). This is linked to the nationality or ethnicity of the interviewee, whichever is evident from the news story. More than one category may be circled here.

Appendix C: Content Analysis Output

#	Variable	CNA	BBC
1	Type of Story - Asian - Non-Asian	90 (59.2%) 62 (40.8%)	50 (48.5%) 53 (51.5%)
2	Asian Story Placements - Top Stories - Non-top stories	21 (23.3%) 69 (76.7%)	19 (38%) 31 (62%)
3	Asian Story Topics - Accidents/ Natural Disasters - Business/ Economics - Crime/ Criminal Justice - Ecology/ Environment - Health Care - Military/ National Defence - Politics - Race/ Religion/ Culture - Social Problems/ Services - Sports - War/ Terrorism - Entertainment - Oddities/ Human Interest	8 (8.9%) 8 (8.9%) 4 (4.4%) 3 (3.3%) 3 (3.3%) 3 (3.3%) 29 (32.2%) 4 (4.4%) 1 (1.1%) 4 (4.4%) 11 (12.2%) 1 (1.1%) 11 (12.2%)	4 (8%) 3 (6%) 3 (6%) 1 (2%) 2 (4%) 1 (2%) 13 (26%) 0 (0%) 1 (2%) 0 (0%) 19 (38%) 2 (4%) 1 (2%)
4	Element of Conflict in All Stories - No, no conflict - Yes, opposing viewpoints - Yes, physical conflict	96 (63.2%) 36 (23.7%) 20 (13.2%)	51 (49.5%) 17 (16.5%) 35 (34%)
5	Element of Conflict in Asian Stories - No, no conflict - Yes, opposing viewpoints - Yes, physical conflict	49 (54.4%) 25 (27.8%) 16 (17.8%)	18 (36%) 9 (18%) 23 (46%)
6	Asian Stories on Location - Yes - No	25 (27.8%) 65 (72.2%)	27 (54%) 23 (46%)

7	Interviewee Type in Asian Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No member of public - Member of public, Asian - Member of public, non-Asian - Member of public, Asian+non-Asian - No official source - Official source, Asian - Official source, non-Asian - Official source, Asian+non-Asian - No expert voice - Expert voice, Asian - Expert voice, non-Asian - Expert voice, Asian+non-Asian 	75 (83.3%) 15 (16.7%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%) 65 (72.2%) 17 (18.9%) 7 (7.8%) 0 (0%) 84 (93.3%) 5 (5.6%) 1 (1.1%) 0 (0%)	40 (80%) 9 (18%) 1 (2%) 0 (0%) 30 (60%) 13 (26%) 3 (6%) 0 (0%) 44 (88%) 3 (6%) 3 (6%) 0 (0%)
8	Interviewee Type in Non-Asian Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No member of public - Member of public, Asian - Member of public, non-Asian - Member of public, Asian+non-Asian - No official source - Official source, Asian - Official source, non-Asian - Official source, Asian+Non-Asian - No expert voice - Expert voice, Asian - Expert voice, non-Asian - Expert voice, Asian+non-Asian 	59 (95.2%) 0 (0%) 3 (4.8) 0 (0%) 43 (69.4%) 0 (0%) 18 (29%) 1 (1.6%) 59 (95.2%) 0 (0%) 3 (4.8%) 0 (0%)	43 (81.1%) 0 (0%) 10 (18.9%) 0 (0%) 41 (77.4%) 0 (0%) 12 (22.6%) 0 (0%) 47 (88.7%) 1 (1.9%) 5 (9.4%) 0 (0%)
9	Interviewee Type in All Stories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No member of public - Member of public, Asian - Member of public, non-Asian - Member of public, Asian+non-Asian - No official source - Official source, Asian - Official source, non-Asian - Official source, Asian+Non-Asian - No expert voice - Expert voice, Asian - Expert voice, non-Asian - Expert voice, Asian+non-Asian 	134 (88.2%) 15 (9.9%) 3 (2.0%) 0 (0%) 108 (71.1%) 17 (11.2%) 25 (16.4%) 2 (1.3%) 143 (94.1%) 5 (3.3%) 4 (2.6%) 0 (0%)	83 (80.6%) 9 (8.7%) 11 (10.7%) 0 (0%) 71 (68.9%) 13 (12.6%) 15 (14.6%) 4 (3.9%) 91 (88.3%) 4 (3.9%) 8 (7.8%) 0 (0%)

Appendix D: News Transcripts

Channel NewsAsia (North Korea)

Date	Transcript	Image
<p>04/02/09</p> <p>(6.03 – 7.28 min)</p>	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“The US military chief in South Korea urges the North to stop raising tensions on the peninsula. General Walter Sharps says both the US and Seoul are prepared for any provocation. These comments come as the US warns North Korea against conducting a missile test. Pyongyang appears to be getting ready to testfire its longest range missile.”</p>	<p>Image of anchor cuts to Robert Wood, US State Department Deputy Spokesman giving a soundbite in front of two American flags, in an official US press conference room</p>
	<p>Wood:</p> <p>“North Korea’s missile activities and its missile programmes are a concern to the region. It’s no secret there. A ballistic missile launch by North Korea would be unhelpful and frankly, provocative.”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“South Korean media say the North may be preparing to use the site of its previous ballistic missile launches to fire one possibly towards Japan. Reports say US and domestic intelligence agencies have spotted a train in North Korea carrying a long cylindrical object. It’s believed to be a taepedong 2 missile which is theoretically capable of hitting the US. A Japanese newspaper also reported that spy satellites have detected a large container capable of housing a missile bring delivered to the site of the North Korean border with China.</p>	<p>Image of Wood cuts to images of a rocket/ missile launch and a North Korean parade square where numerous missiles are paraded on tanks with soldiers Images of North Korean soldiers in huge numbers marching in sync in a sea of green uniforms and white/ red flags. Images are repeated before cutting to a government building at a square in North Korea with a picture of the president and the North Korean flag displayed on the building. Another similar government building with a big flag and a Korean slogan on it is shown. Image of two Korean women in</p>

	<p>But it's not clear if or when Pyongyang would carry out the testfiring. North Korea declared last week that it was abandoning pacts designed to prevent hostilities with the South. US President Barack Obama and his South Korean counterpart Ee Myong Bak have vowed to work closely towards ending North Korea's nuclear weapons programmes."</p>	<p>uniform are shown talking to each other by the roadside. Broadcast ends with an image of a flying North Korean flag atop a building.</p>
<p>20/02/09 (2.33 – 6.04 min)</p>	<p>Anchor: "Hillary Clinton has warned that North Korea's relations with the United States will not improve until it engages in dialogue with South Korea and ends its nuclear ambitions. The US Secretary of State was speaking in the South Korean capital of Seoul during her first overseas trip as America's top diplomat. Mrs Clinton also announced that Steven Bosworth will be her new special envoy to North Korea. Mr Bosworth was US Ambassador to South Korea from 1997 to 2000 will act as America's envoy to 6 party talks on curbing North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Reports suggest that North Korea may be about to testfire a long range missile and according to Mrs Clinton, Pyongyang should follow through on its commitment to get rid of its nuclear programme. She added that it's important to get the 6 party nuclear talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear ambitions back on track."</p>	<p>Image of Hillary Clinton coming to the podium with a South Korean minister at the press conference and looking solemn as she listens to the translation, nodding her head. A packed conference room is shown and different shots are taken at the press conference with both Clinton and the Korean minister speaking. Image then cuts to the launch of a rocket on a grainy film, and a North Korean parade featuring a band of missiles sitting atop tanks moving down the road amidst soldiers standing in blocks.</p>
	<p>Anchor: "And for much more on our top story, our Korean bureau chief Lim Yung Suk joins me on the line right now. Yun Suk, you were at the news conference with Mrs Clinton and</p>	<p>Image cuts to one with a photo of the Korean bureau Chief and a peaceful image of Seoul. Also included the same images of Hillary Clinton at the press</p>

	<p>South Korea’s foreign minister, what did both of them have to say?”</p> <p>Korean Corr:</p> <p>“There were several issues that came up at the press conference but her main message was that she was emphasizing that North Korea is not going to get a different re’ship with the United States while insulting and refusing dialogue with South Korea. And she said Washington is still united in their stance towards North Korea, calling South Korea a longtime ally of the United States. There were other issues including regarding Afghanistan where she thanked South Korea and Japan for their participation in Afghanistan and she also said the Free Trade Agreements with Washington is very important. But it was mainly focused on North Korea and the basic message being that the North Korean missile would harm the 6 party talks and she urged North Korea to return to negotiating table and she also called on Pyongyang to halt its threat.</p> <p>Now South Korea’s foreign minister XX also told the press that any launch of a rocket by North Korea will violate the UN Resolution 1718 which prohibits the North from any ballistic missile activity. Now this after north Korea claims it has the right to launch the rocket and pursue space activity. And so a lot of issues did come up but it was really focused on North Korea.”</p>	<p>conference used earlier. Hillary is seen as smiling as she’s making the speech and very happy shaking the hand of the South Korean foreign minister.</p>
	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Yun Suk, Mrs Clinton did say that a looming leadership change in North Korea might have stalled its nuclear</p>	<p>Image still with a photo of the correspondent but side image showed Kim Jong Il saluting at a North Korean parade</p>

	<p>disarmament progress. Now this issue is apparently raised several times during the QnA session. Tell us more about this.”</p> <p>Korean Corr:</p> <p>“Yes that came up because on her flight to Seoul, Mrs Clinton was cited as saying that if there is any succession in North Korea, even if it’s peaceful, that will create more uncertainty and right now she’s saying that the whole leadership in North Korea is somewhat unclear. That remark apparently came up before she arrived here and there were reporters asking her what she really meant by the whole thing and she said today that several, or she’s saying that those comments were not due to any new intelligence reports, she just said that the issue of who takes over the current leader Kim Jong Il is going to be one of many issues that have to be taken into account for. But she did emphasize several times that for now, the US will have to deal with a government that exists in North Korea now.”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Our Korean Bureau Chief Lim Yun Suk with that update out of Seoul.”</p>	<p>and army vehicles and tanks being paraded down the street surrounded by neat battalions at soldiers. Kim Jong Il is shown standing sternly amongst his military generals looking at the parade and speaking passionately into a long row of mics before image flashes to one of the entire parade square with several squares of soldiers. Images then moved back to those taken at the news conference used earlier, including the launch of a rocket on grainy film at the end.</p>
<p>27/03/09 (0.56 – 3.11 min)</p>	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Japan has ordered its military to prepare to intercept a North Korean missile if it appears the planned launch by Pyongyang goes wrong. Specifically, Tokyo will move ground based patriot advanced capability missiles to the country’s north and deploy two ages equipped destroyers</p>	<p>Image of a map featuring geographical positions of North, South Korea and Japan before showing images of warships with missiles flying overhead and then zooming in to detailed shots of the warships. Image then</p>

	<p>off the coast. The US on Thursday also deployed ages equipped warships to the sea of Japan in readiness for the launch. The rocket which North Korea claims will carry a satellite into space is expected to fly over Northern Japan. Pyongyang had said it plans to launch the satellite between April 4th and 8th and the US XX however believe the launch is actually a disguised test of the taepodong 2 long range ballistic missile. The latest development comes after North Korea warns that any challenges to its plans to launch the missile will lead to the collapse of the 6 party talks to de-nuclearize the North.”</p>	<p>cuts to a rocket/ missile being shot into the sky and shots of missiles being paraded at a North Korean parade with North Korean flags, crowds of soldiers and Kim Jong Il and his military heads enjoying the parade from the stands.</p>
	<p>Anchor: “It also comes after satellite images show a rocket on the launchpad of North Korea’s east coast, suggesting a launch is imminent. Washington maintains that the best solution to curb the threat from North Korea would be to de-nuclearize it.”</p> <p>Gibbs: “I don’t want to get into the motivations except to say that we believe that such a launch would be provocative and that such a launch would be in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. We continue to maintain the goal of a de-nuclearized North Korea and look to working with their allies to ensure that happens.”</p>	<p>A satellite image is shown taken from high above and is grainy and grey before it zooms in to show the image of a rocket positioned for take-off. Image cuts to White House spokesman Robert Gibbs speaking at an official White House press conference.</p>
	<p>Anchor: “Amid the rising tensions, Senior US, Japanese and South Korean officials will meet in Washington today to</p>	<p>Image cuts to running texts on the screen detailing what the anchor is saying.</p>

	<p>discuss the latest development. The US policy director for North Korea, Steven Bosworth, and the US special envoy to the 6 party talks, Song Kim, will meet with South Korea's Chief Negotiator Ee Song Nak and Japan's Foreign Ministry Director General Akitaka Saiki. The parties will focus on measures to take should the North go ahead and launch the missile."</p>	
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BBC (North Korea)

Date	Transcript	Image
<p>04/02/09</p> <p>(18.16 – 20.12min)</p>	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>"The United States says it's concerned by reports that North Korea could be about to carry out another missile test. The State Department says any such move would be unhelpful and provocative. From the South Korean capital Seoul, here's our correspondent John Subworth."</p> <p>Corr:</p> <p>"The news reports about a possible missile test brought these anti-North Korean protestors onto the streets of the South Korean capital."</p>	<p>Image of anchor switches to shots of a protest in South Korea with pictures of Kim Jong Il being crossed out and burnings.</p>
	<p>Protestor (translated by reporter):</p> <p>"Kim Jong Il is not satisfied with simply making threats. Now he is totally ignoring international agreements and preparing a long range missile, this man says."</p>	<p>Image of well-suited protestor in front of crowds and smoke.</p>
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>"This is the site of North Korea's last</p>	<p>Image of a rocket/ missile launch and then a radar screen showing</p>

	<p>long range test carried out in 2006. Now South Korean and Japanese news agencies, quoting unnamed government sources say that satellite spy photos show a large object being moved from a factory, possibly another missile being prepared for launch. North Korea's long range ballistic technology is believed to have a potential range of more than 6000 km."</p>	<p>the trajectory of the missile.</p>
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>"North Korea has been raising the tension in recent weeks with an announcement that it is scrapping key agreements with South Korea because it considers relations to have reached the brink of war. Amid this rising tension, an American delegation left Beijing en route to Pyongyang. The team of former diplomats insist that they are not representatives of the new US administration."</p> <p>Delegate:</p> <p>"No, we're not carrying any messages."</p>	<p>Image of a parade of tanks and missiles in a North Korean square amidst patriotic music. Then image switches to one at an airport and the arrival of the US delegation. Image of a delegate giving a quick response.</p>
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>"Whatever the purpose of their visit, many analysts believe that North Korea's increasingly angry rhetoric is designed to test the new government in Washington. Plans for a long range missile launch may be part of the same strategy although experts say such a test would take at least another month to prepare. John Subworth, BBC news, Seoul."</p>	<p>Image back to parade square with tanks/ missiles being paraded with huge crowds lining the streets and hundreds more soldiers in big blocks in the square waving red flags in unison.</p>
20/02/09	<p>Anchor:</p>	<p>Image of Clinton coming down from a plane and</p>

<p>(10.08 – 15.30min)</p>	<p>“The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has arrived in Beijing on the final stage of her Asian tour. The Chinese leg of her mission is seen as the most critical and Beijing is playing an increasingly important role, in the diplomatic efforts to encourage North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programme.</p> <p>Mrs Clinton flew in from Seoul where she warned Pyongyang against anymore provocative action.”</p>	<p>being greeted by Chinese officials.</p>
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“Whether intentional or not, Hillary Clinton’s visit to South Korea conjured up the spectre of the new Pacific War. South Korean used it to welcome the new US administration and demand a tougher line with the North to end its nuclear weapons programme, reflecting the view of the government.”</p>	<p>Image of banners being burnt and people shouting in a protest with more banners and signs. Closeup of signs reveal supportive phrases of Hillary Clinton and Obama.</p>
	<p>South Korean Foreign Minister (translated in soundbite):</p> <p>“South Korea and America cannot accept North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. We will push for complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament in the North.”</p>	<p>Image of Hillary and South Korean official walking into a press conference. South Korean foreign minister seen giving a soundbite.</p>
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“Hillary added texture with no-nonsense words that North Korea would not win any concessions with America by refusing to talk to the South.”</p>	<p>Image of Hillary in a conference room smiling and shaking hands with more suited officials. She is seen in another room with cameras and delegates sitting on both sides while she chats and laughs with the minister at the head of the room.</p>

	<p>H. Clinton:</p> <p>“Now the Republic of Korea’s achievement of democracy and prosperity stands in stark contrast to the tyranny and poverty across the border to the North. I commend the people of South Korea and your leaders for your calm, resolve and determination in the face of the provocative and unhelpful statements and actions by the North.”</p>	<p>Image switches to a super crowded press conference room with many cameras and reporters and Hillary speaking at the podium.</p>
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“The board of Pan Moon Jon, set up after a 1953 ceasefire in the Korean War that technically isn’t yet over. North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Il has increased his rhetoric in recent months after South Korea rolled back a previous policy, the engagement and aid to its impoverished neighbour. Now South Korea has raised the stakes again by saying specifically it would target North Korean missile launch sites if its ships came under attack.”</p>	<p>Image switches a building in North Korea with uniformed soldiers in front of it before showing an image of Kim Jon Il entering a boardroom followed by a delegation. More images of Kim Jong Il standing in front of officials smiling, walking ahead of another delegation in grainy library pictures. Shot goes to barren and brown farmland in North Korea before switching to one showing a rocket/ missile launch.</p>
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“The capital Seoul is just 30 miles from the border and a television poll found that almost 70 percent of South Koreans believe that a military confrontation might now break out. And with 28,000 US troops in South Korea, that might draw in America too. Hillary Clinton announced that she had appointed a special envoy for the crisis, Steven Bosworth, who’d just arrived in Beijing after visiting North</p>	<p>Image of a bustling Seoul with crowds and cars in the street, an array of street signs, people selling food. Then image switches to Hillary posing with a group of American/ Asian soldiers for a photo before going to one of Steven Bosworth arriving at the airport amidst cameras and</p>

	<p>Korea itself. He was tight-lipped at the airport but at least amid this talk of war, America And North Korea are talking directly to each other.</p> <p>Humphrey Hauxley, BBC News.”</p>	<p>reporters.</p>
	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Well, staying with this story, following events in Beijing is our correspondent, Quentin Sommerville. I asked him earlier what the secretary of state could say regarding the global economic downturn that the Chinese government could be receptive to.”</p> <p>Corr:</p> <p>“She can see work together on this and she can see China’s leadership please keep buying American debt because China’s the largest purchaser of American debt and that has been making life a good deal easier for America...”</p>	<p>Image switches to Sommerville talking, with images repeated from earlier on Hillary’s arrival in China and her driving off in a car with an American flag on it.</p>
	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“The tone so far on this trip, as far as the issue of North Korea is concerned has been firm, I suppose would be the best way to describe it. How would we sum up her attitude today?”</p> <p>Corr:</p> <p>“Well, we’ve had some very tough words and perhaps we haven’t heard such tough language from the US regarding Korea in some time. But when Hillary Clinton arrives here in China, she is very aware that the one nation that North Korea listens to, the one country in the 6 party talks that are trying to find a solution to the</p>	<p>Image switches back to anchor asking the question and then to Sommerville.</p>

	<p>nuclear programme in North Korea, is China. And China, over the last year and a half or so, has actually hardened its language; it's been an indication that the leadership is losing its patience somewhat with Pyongyang. So she'll be hoping to build on and hoping that China will be willing to apply pressure.</p> <p>Peter, if we could take a quick look at her agenda over the next couple of days, climate change is going to be one of the other things she's going to be talking about. She's going to visit a power station..."</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>"Quentin Sommerville in Beijing."</p>	
<p>27/03/09 (23.52 – 26.10min)</p>	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>"Russia has joined the international cause for North Korea to abandon a planned rocket launch at the start of next month. Russia warned the North that tests would only ignite passions in the region. Meanwhile Japan says it is deploying missile interceptors to destroy any parts of the North Korean rocket that might fall on its territory. From Tokyo, the BBC's Roland Burg has this report."</p>	<p>Image on screen behind anchor shows a statue of Kim Jong Il and a big red star with the words North Korea.</p>
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>"Commercial satellite images from Digital Globe show steady progress in North Korea towards a launch. In recent weeks, there have been flurries of activities at the site. North Korea insists its planning to put a satellite into space for peaceful purposes but Japan is taking no chances. The country's missile defence shield has</p>	<p>Grey satellite images shown and closeup of the North Korean launch site from high above.</p>

	been mobilized for the first time.”	
	<p>Japan Defence Minister (translated soundbite):</p> <p>“I’ve issued an order according to our self-defence forces act to prepare to destroy any object that might fall on Japan as a result of an accident involving a flying object from North Korea.”</p>	Image of minister giving soundbite surrounded by a horde of journalists and tape recorders.
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>“The self defence forces as Japan’s military is known will deploy patriot missile interceptors on land as well as destroyers off the coast. North Korea has already announced that the rocket’s trajectory will take it over the North of Japan as early as next week with booster stages falling into the sea to the west and the east. Japan will only take action if the rocket or fragments of it threaten to land in its territory. Japan, South Korea and the United States are convinced that North Korea will actually test a ballistic missile. In theory, it could carry a warhead as far as Alaska but their earlier launch ended in apparent failure. The United States has called it a provocative act that will have consequences.”</p>	Image of Japan’s military equipment of green metallic tanks and ships firing interceptors into the sky. Closeups of Japanese army at work before switching to a scene of North Korea firing a rocket/ missile. Image moves on to a North Korean parade square where missiles atop tanks are paraded down the street with the North Korean flag.
	<p>Corr:</p> <p>“Japan’s government is urging people here to remain calm saying that it’s unlikely that the North Korean rocket would land on the country. And it says there are plans in place to public immediately a launch takes place. But despite the reassurance, some doubts remain, to least whether any attempt to shoot down debris would even</p>	Image switches to correspondent talking in front of some skyscrapers in Tokyo.

	succeed, given the difficulty of tracking its trajectory. Roland Burg, BBC News, Tokyo.”	
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Channel NewsAsia (Sri Lanka)

Date	Transcript	Image
27/01/09 (8.36 – 9.23 min)	Anchor: “The United Nations has expressed concern over the fate of civilians in Sri Lanka’s war with Tamil Tigers separatists. 30 civilians had been killed in the fighting. A spokesman based in Colombo says 10 were killed in the declared safety zone by the military. The news comes as government troops advanced onto the last pockets of jungle still being held by the Tigers. The Sri Lankan Army Chief says 95 percent of the work is done and the Tamil Tigers are about to be completely defeated. Military officials say 50,000 troops are now fighting fewer than 2000 Tiger fighters. The Tigers are now being relegated to a handful of bases scattered over just 300 sq kilometers of jungle. That’s down from the 15,000 sq. kilometers they used to control.”	Images of war involving tanks, infantry firing from trenches, running through the jungle, trudging through rivers, helicopters firing missiles, explosions on land.
04/02/09 (5.11- 6.02 min)	Anchor: “The United States and Britain are urging a temporary ceasefire between government troops and Tamil Tiger separatists in Sri Lanka. They say a truce will allow an evacuation of civilians and the wounded and the delivery of aid into the warzone. The US is also leading a call for the Tamil Tigers to surrender and avoid a bloodbath. Washington warns that time is running out. The US, the European Union, Japan and Norway	Images of war, explosions in the sand, infantry firing from machine guns against a backdrop of coconut trees, audio of continuous gunfire, soldiers throwing grenades from behind trenches, soldiers loading a missile.

	<p>are warning the rebels that they must quickly negotiate the terms of surrender or risk more deaths. This follows Sri Lankan President M. R.'s vow to crush the Tamil Tigers. The warning also came after a hospital in the combat zone was shelled twice on Tuesday. There was no immediate response from the Tigers to the US led calls. The Sri Lankan government says the rebels are using some quarter of a million civilians as human shields."</p>	
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BBC (Sri Lanka)

Date	Transcript	Image
<p>27/01/09 (10.27 – 10.45min)</p>	<p>Anchor: "Now pressure's building on Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tiger rebels to protect thousands of civilians caught up in the fighting on the island. US Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has expressed deep concern over the fate of the civilians. The UN says dozens are dead or injured. Sri Lanka's army pushed the rebels to their last major base Mulaitibu on Sunday."</p>	<p>Image of anchor switches to some men in army uniforms standing around a dilapidated building with murals of uniformed men holding red flags and a red Tiger painting on the wall and soldiers carrying more torn paintings showing army leaders to the yard. Words on screen read: Sri Lanka Fighting – Pressure on both sides to protect civilians.</p>
<p>04/02/09 (5.51 – 14.50min)</p>	<p>Anchor: "25 years of on-off civil war in Sri Lanka could be over in a matter of days. That's the suggestion coming from the Sri Lankan President M. R. who says the army is on the verge of defeating the Tamil Tiger rebels. There has been more intense fighting</p>	<p>Image switches from anchor to soldiers fighting with machine guns amidst coconut trees and throwing grenades behind sand trenches and explosions in the sand. Soldiers walk in a big trench</p>

	<p>going on in the Northeast. Pictures have been shown on Sri Lankan TV and in the latest reported violence, the UN says more than 50 people have been killed in the last 24 hours. The last remaining hospital in the area has been hit by cluster bombs. Mike Woolridge has this report.”</p> <p>Reporter:</p> <p>“Is this 25-year conflict now moving towards its final stages? As these pictures of the Sri Lankan army in recent days have shown on Sri Lankan television would purport to show. Today is the 61st anniversary of independence from Britain and against the background of a joint call from the United States and Britain for a ceasefire to allow the evacuation of civilians and casualties, the President in a nationally televised speech suggested that the conflict would soon be over.”</p>	<p>during dusk, close ups of soldiers on the radio, on the beach, moving equipment, more shooting.</p>
	<p>President (translated by reporter):</p> <p>“I am confident, he said, that in a few days, we will decisively defeat the terrorist force that many repeatedly said was invincible. President R issued what he called an open invitation to all Sri Lankans who’d left the country because of the war to return to their motherland.”</p>	<p>Image switches to President speaking.</p>
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“Across the narrow strait that separates Sri Lanka from India, a show support for Sri Lankan Tamils. The shops in Chennai closed in protest against the fighting. Some 60million Tamils live in the state of Tamilnadu and opposition parties had called for a shutdown across the state.</p>	<p>Image switches street scenes of closed shops in Chennai before moving to scenes of people in suits protesting, shouting with signs.</p>

	Lawyers in the Coimbatore region of Tamilnadu staging a demonstration of their own to press the Indian authorities to intervene on behalf of Sri Lankan Tamils.”	
	<p>Lawyer (President of Coimbatore Lawyers Association) :</p> <p>“We request that the state government as a central government to take immediate steps to stop the genocide by the Sri Lankan government, especially by the Sri Lankan army against the Tamil people.”</p>	Image of lawyer speaking. Behind him is a crowd of well-suited fellow lawyers and protest signs.
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“The Sri Lankan conflict has often in the past stirred passions in this part of India and India has had discussions with the Sri Lankan government about protection for Tamils trapped by the current offensive.”</p>	More images of this group protesting.
	<p>Reporter:</p> <p>“At the President’s Day Rally, the President insisted that the battle was being waged with great care so as not to cause harassment to innocent Tamils. But the latest report from UN of casualties and the use of cluster bombs, though it’s not clear by whom, will do nothing to allay the growing international concern. Mike Woolridge, BBC news.”</p>	Image of a parade of soldiers marching, the president watching from the podium, a parade of tanks on the street and ships and helicopters moving in formation.
	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Tensions between the Sinhalesian Tamil people have been simmering for centuries. The Sinhalese majority, which represents about three-quarters</p>	Image switches back to anchor before a heading “Sri Lanka Conflict” comes out and the anchor’s key points are summarized on the

	<p>of the population is mostly in the Southwest of the island. The Tamil people, who make up less than a fifth live in the North and the East.</p> <p>Now Indian Tamils represent about 6percent of the population were brought to the island, then in the Ceylon, in the 19th century by the British to work in its rubber plantations. Many of these though have left since the troubles began. The British colonial policy of divide and rule so perceives renewed tensions between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities as some Tamils, although well educated, were given a disproportionate number of top jobs in the civil service by the British.</p> <p>After independence in 1948, the Sinhalese majority held sway and its politicians sough to redress that imbalance with populist but discriminatory policies against Tamils. By the mid 1970s, the Tamils were calling for a separate state of the North and East of the country while groups such as the liberation Tigers of Limalilan began to use violence for the same ends.</p> <p>In 1983...”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“A little earlier, I spoke to Dr Palitha Kohanna, he is the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka. He said that the battle was not over against the Tamil Tigers.”</p>	<p>screen against a drawing of the Sri Lankan map.</p>
	<p>Perm Sec:</p> <p>“There is a zone declared as a no-fire</p>	<p>Image switches to the Perm Sec speaking. More war images of</p>

	<p>zone and we have asked all the civilians to assemble in that zone and this is not the area into which we are firing. The LTT has masked its heavy weaponry, including mortar and artillery pieces, we are firing at those guns. There is no need for us to fire into any other areas because we know that there are civilians. And just to be remembered, and I have to say it very firmly, that this battle is not against Tamil civilians. The Tamil civilians have been herded into this own clout by the LTT to be used as a human shield and this is what we have been telling the world from the beginning. These people are used as a human shield and they should not be there. We have asked the people to move out of this area into areas controlled by the government, where the government can look after them but they have been held there against their will. We have had statements against the ICRC, the UN and other members of the international community calling on the Tamil Tigers to let the people go but they have not heeded that call.”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“So the Sri Lankan Army was not responsible for the attacks on the civilians at the XX hospital, which is now being closed?”</p> <p>Perm Sec:</p> <p>“...You’ll have to remember that this hospital is a government run hospital. Every single doctor there is employed by the government. Every single nurse is employed by the government. Why on the earth would the government shell the hospital at this stage, when</p>	<p>soldiers firing their equipment, being transported on a truck, moving equipment etc (some images are repeated) are shown as soundbite is given.</p>
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	<p>the prize is almost ready to fall into its hands? I do not think that there is any logic behind that. Our battle, I must repeat, is not against the Tamil civilians, they are our people, the battle is against the LTT terrorists.”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Ok, you made that point several times. I want to move on to other things as well but IS the Sri Lankan military using cluster bombs?”</p> <p>Perm Sec:</p> <p>“Absolutely not. I have checked this with our procurement authorities. It is a civilian group that procures hardware for the military and they have NOT procured cluster bombs, they do NOT have cluster bombs and if they do not have them, they cannot use them.”</p>	
	<p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Dr Palitha Kohanna, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry speaking to me from Colombo. We also spoke to Amuthu Arasan. He strongly disagreed with what Dr Kohanna had to say.”</p> <p>Arasan:</p> <p>“I think it’s a blatant lie by the foreign minister there. If you look at the picture of how the people got to Ranni in the first place, in the 1995, the Sri Lankan government entered artillery fire within the Jafna peninsula and they made a mass displacement and a mass refugees in 1995. And the majority of them decided to move to</p>	<p>Image moves back to anchor and then to Amuthu Arasan as the anchor conducts an interview with him.</p>

Renni. This is 13 years, 14 years. Even though there was a peace process and things, the people there never wanted to move out of the LTT controlled area because they felt purely very safe there. I have a home in the Northern peninsula and still after 13 years, I still cannot enter because they still have it as a high security zone. Most of the places still occupied by the army, even though they say it's called liberated places, you can't even enter your own houses, there are people living here, so the people do not want to move out because they don't feel safe."

Anchor:

"And there is no independent corroboration of what is happening in the warzone because international journalists are denied access but the Tigers themselves though are reported to be brutalizing local populations, scripting local people into their forces. Is THAT the case that the Tamils are caught either between the Tigers or an impossible predicament to the South?"

Arasan:

"The Sri Lankan government deliberately denied access to any international journalist, it could be clearly the pictures emerging in the papers are taken from the non-governmental organization, there is no sign of any sort of brutality..."

Anchor:

"You're pointing to the brutalisation of the Tamil Tigers on the Tamil people themselves?"

	<p>Arasan:</p> <p>“Yeah, there is no evidence whatsoever, it’s a blatant lie just to cover up, kind of to divert the attention of the international community.”</p> <p>Anchor:</p> <p>“Amuthu Arasan, speaking to me a little earlier. You can get the full background to this conflict on our website.”</p>	
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