

## **First fact-based study of global media and violence shows Al Jazeera providing broadest coverage on Afghanistan**

- **US TV networks broadcast more violence than other countries**
- **Over-reporting on violence is impeding peace in Afghanistan**
- **BBC widest ranging international news source**

**LONDON, Oct. 26, 2010** –The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) and Media Tenor today announced the results of “Measuring Peace in the Media”, the first study that takes a fact-based approach into understanding the accuracy of international television networks’ coverage of peace, violence and conflict.

The results reveal that a majority of broadcasters do align their media reports with the actual levels of violence in countries they cover. However, many key US broadcasters devote more than 50% of their news and current affairs to topics of violence.

BBC World Service "The News" led the way when it came to breadth of coverage, regularly reporting on 67 countries across six continents, nearly twice as many countries as the average level of coverage.

The report includes a detailed case study on Afghanistan, which shows that a disproportionate amount of coverage is focused on defence and crime, while neglecting the critical factors needed to build lasting peace. These factors include well-functioning government, a sound business environment and the equitable distribution of resources within the country.

The study analysed 37 TV news and current affairs programmes from 23 networks in 15 countries\* and then cross-referenced this with the Global Peace Index (GPI) which measures the levels of peace and violence in 149 countries. A total of 197,649 reports were analysed in the study, with BBC 2 Newsnight and ZDF Heute Journal found to be the programmes that most aligned with the rankings of the GPI.

### **Key comparisons:**

- Four programmes included in the study devote more than 50% of their coverage to violence: CBS Evening News, Fox Special Report and ABC World News from the US and ITV News at 10 from the UK
- The 10 TV programmes reporting the most violence dedicate on average 48% of their coverage to violence
- The 10 TV programmes reporting the least violence dedicate on average 24% of their coverage to violence
- 8 of the 10 programmes with the most coverage of violence are from the US or UK

One of the key findings of the study is that the breadth of the subject matter covered by the media impacts on how well their audiences understand the culture of the country being covered. However, if the media is not focusing on the key factors that build lasting peace, it will then be difficult for audiences to rally behind the right initiatives.

“Regardless of whether the tone of the coverage is positive or negative, it is essential for the media to focus on the structures that will create self-sustaining nations”, said Steve Killelea, founder of the IEP. “When too much media attention is placed on violence, security is seen as the only way for establishing peace and this runs contrary to our current knowledge of what creates peace”.

### **Case study: Afghanistan**

Afghanistan receives more coverage than any other conflict-ridden country and media coverage has helped shape the world's response to the conflict. To further understand how the media covers Afghanistan, CNN International, BBC World Service and Al Jazeera English were selected for comparison. They are three credible networks from three different continents. All three networks had a similar number of reports on the topics that received the most total coverage – warfare, elections, crime and international politics. However, Al Jazeera's had the greatest breadth of coverage, with 22 out of a possible 33 topics being covered. This also included more coverage on the topics that create peace. Al Jazeera News had three times as many positive stories as BBC World Service "The News", and more than eight times as many positive stories as CNN International Desk. The network's audience has a greater understanding of the culture and is geographically closer than Europe and the US to the conflict and therefore demands a more nuanced coverage.

"Informing the public on what will build long term peace and stability is vital to the war on terrorism," said Roland Schatz, CEO of Media Tenor. "Given the media's role in shaping and informing public opinion, a robust and diverse coverage of the most important topics is essential."

### **Lack of diversity in conflict coverage restricting change in violent nations**

Other than Zimbabwe and Afghanistan, the countries with the highest level of coverage are the leading economies of the world. Although this indicates that countries with geo-political influence are more newsworthy, it also demonstrates that audiences demand a broader range of coverage of countries that they know.

"It's human nature for us to feel more empathy for people and societies we know," said Killelea. "If we wish to create peace within conflict-ravaged societies, it is important for us to have a good knowledge and understanding of these societies."

Positive-peace stories make up just 1.6% of the total number of stories examined in the study. These are stories that report on active steps taken to rectify violent situations. Such a small percentage may be partly related to what is considered newsworthy and dramatic, such as high-impact, violent or controversial events. However, the stereotyping of nations which are low on the GPI makes it harder for audiences to gain empathy and therefore to support governments and make headway towards creating peace. The two networks with the highest coverage on positive peace stories are Al Jazeera and Germany's ARD Tagesschau, which dedicated 8% of their conflict coverage to positive-peace stories.

### **Middle Eastern broadcasters are more positive than European and US outlets**

Of special interest are the different patterns of coverage from European, Middle Eastern and US broadcasters.

European TV has a similar level of coverage for the Middle East (27%) and North America (29%), while US TV networks are more concerned with the Middle East (40%) than Europe (24%). Middle Eastern coverage suggests a much stronger interest in European affairs (36%) than events occurring in North America (21%).

While US broadcasters dedicate a higher proportion of overall coverage to the Middle East than their European counterparts, broadcasters from both regions devote more than 60% of their coverage on the Middle East to violence. At the same time, the US receives a disproportionately small proportion of coverage on violence from Middle Eastern and European broadcasters, despite the fact that it ranks 85<sup>th</sup> on the Global Peace Index.

US news and current affairs programmes are the least likely to be of a positive nature, while Middle Eastern programmes are more likely to be positive. The study found a high level of negative reporting on Africa, although it did receive more positive coverage from the Middle

East compared to Europe or the US. Both European and Middle Eastern TV programmes were more likely to report positively on North America than other regions.

For more information please visit [www.visionofhumanity.org](http://www.visionofhumanity.org) or [www.mediatenor.com](http://www.mediatenor.com)

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*\*Table 1. TV programmes included in analysis*

Media Network	TV Programme	Country
ABC	ABC World News	USA
Al Arabiya	Al Arabiya News	Saudi Arabia
Al Jazeera	Al Jazeera News	Qatar
Al Manar	Al Manar SAT	Lebanon
ARD	ARD Tagesschau	Germany
ARD	ARD Tagesthemen	Germany
BBC	BBC1 10o'clock	UK
BBC	BBC2 Newsnight	UK
BBC	BBC World Service The News	UK
CBS	CBS Evening News	USA
CCTV	CCTV1 News Hour	China
CNN	CNN International Desk	USA
Dubai TV	Dubai TV	UAE
FOX	FOX Special Report	USA
ITV	ITV News at Ten	UK
LBC	LBC News	Lebanon
NBC	NBC Nightly News	USA
Nile TV	Nile News Panorama	Egypt
RAI 1	RAI TG1	Italy
RTL	RTL Aktuell	Germany
SAT1	SAT1 18:30	Germany
SF	SF Tagesschau	Switzerland
TF1	TF1 Le Journal	France
TRT1	TRT1 Ana Haber Bülteni	Turkey
TVE	TVE1 Telediario2	Italy
ZDF	ZDF Heute	Germany
ZDF	ZDF Heute Journal	Germany
SABC	SABC News @ One	South Africa
SABC	SABC News @ 10	South Africa
SABC	SABC Afrikaans News	South Africa
SABC	SABC English News	South Africa

SABC	SABC Africa News Update	South Africa
eTV	eTV Prime Time	South Africa
SABC	SABC Zulu/Xhosa	South Africa
SABC	SABC SiSwati/Ndebele	South Africa
SABC	SABC Venda/Tsonga	South Africa
SABC	SABC Sotho	South Africa

Table 2. Examples of 'Violence,' 'Peace' and 'Other' issues

Violence issues	Peace issues	"Other" issues
Demonstrations/Protests	Parliamentary work	Stock markets
Politically motivated crime	Legislative procedure	State visits
Suicide bombing	Education policy	Court cases
Assassinations	Education and demographic development	Conferences/summits
Terrorism	Positive economic outlook	National elections
Kidnapping	Human rights	Currency market
Murder	Peace negotiations	Human interest
Nuclear weapon development	Co-operation of political parties	Animal stories
Conflicts in general	Co-operation of parliament	Awards/ prizes
Negative coverage media freedom	Treaties, agreements	Appointments
Social unrest	Arms control, non-proliferation	Domestic policy
War activities	Positive fiscal policy	Economic situation
Civil war	Positive monetary policy	Music
Negative coverage on human rights	Positive local conditions for investments	Campaigning
Failed elections	Economic development projects	International politics
Air strikes	Improvement of economic policy	Foreign policy
Oppression of the people by state	Positive labour legislation	Resignations
Insurgency	Positive economic restructuring	Film/cinema
War crimes	State incentives for innovations	Committees, events
Violent crime	Positive tertiary education	Economic policy