



## **Superpower: Global Affairs Television**

*A weekly show bringing international voices to American audiences*

September 2002

### Executive Summary

The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks underscored a phenomenon that had become increasingly apparent, though barely understood by most Americans. The march of "globalization" has overtaken us in every facet of our lives. Yet there is dangerously little regular consideration of this uncharted frontier of human and political relations in the mainstream U.S. media. PBS President and CEO Pat Mitchell challenged media makers to address this ignorance of world events and attitudes:

*In this increasingly interdependent world, our fate as a nation will depend to a larger extent than ever before on our interaction with the rest of the world. We will not succeed without citizens who care about, know about and understand what is going on beyond our borders. That's where the media have a role to play, a big role. (Oct. 16, 2001)*

In March 2002, Azimuth Media, an independent producer of public interest television, began broadcasting *Superpower: Global Affairs Television* to the Washington metropolitan area and nationwide.

*Superpower* is a half-hour weekly public affairs show in which guests from around the world and regular American hosts discuss and debate a current global topic in which U.S. policy plays a role. The show frames complex international issues for American audiences and offers feedback from around the globe. Recent program topics have included "Isolated from the International Criminal Court," "Iraq Attack?" and "Aftermath in Afghanistan."

The **mission** of *Superpower* is straightforward: To provide a regular televised forum for American viewers in which the actions and policies of the United States are explored from the perspectives of people from the regions directly affected.

*Superpower* is designed to help Americans understand why global affairs matter, by giving them direct access to voices from abroad, undiluted and unfiltered. Unlike other news programs, the *Superpower* format was designed to showcase first-hand perspectives of opinion-makers from other countries instead of punditry by American commentators. The panelists who appear on the show are drawn from the large pool of distinguished international journalists, scholars, and foreign policy analysts working in or visiting the Washington area. Two highly regarded journalists, Lisa Simeone of *National Public Radio* and Mark Thompson of *Time Magazine*, host the show and query the foreign guests to articulate how these issues affect Americans.



## WORKING TREATMENT

### FOREIGN EXCHANGE

A half-hour public affairs show  
featuring international views on America

#### Editorial Focus

What makes a topic a *Foreign Exchange* story? Globalization, in all its manifestations, is at the heart of it. But beyond that, it is about how the globalizing process affects Americans. Not merely an economic phenomenon, *Foreign Exchange* views globalization as an evolutionary aspect of human society that is characterized by a varied group of trends, such as:

- increasingly blurred borders
- growing communications interconnectivity
- faster transmission of goods, ideas, diseases, and other human by-products
- increasing role of non-governmental actors
- new challenges to traditional notions of statehood
- clashes between tradition and modernization
- changing definitions of community – beyond geographic proximity
- new vulnerabilities to those opposed to these trends

*4X* views globalization as neither black nor white, but a fact which is shaping the world we live in. It has the potential to be an agent of democratization and economic stability, as well as the potential to diminish the individual's rights and prosperity while bestowing undue power onto corporate-minded authoritarians.

Here are some questions we will ask of each story to filter it:

What does it have to do with globalization?

What does it have to do with Americans?

Has this story been covered before in the U.S. media?

[Add something – examining the preoccupations of the world ... in the context of globalization – what makes the rest of the world tick? How are they different from us?

How are they the same? ....]

#### Production Design

*Foreign Exchange* = 4 X = "four corners of the earth"

The program will consist of a mix of elements anchored around a host and talk-show format, combined with documentary stories and a variety of interstitials. Camera movement using cranes will be used when appropriate to add variety, such as to "enter" and "exit" the show space, and to incorporate graphic elements on plasma screens into the studio space.



### **Title graphics**

The "x" in "Exchange" has compass arrows on each end, and expands out from the screen, pointing in four directions, dividing the screen into four triangular sections of different colors. This motif could be used to transition from one segment to the next – for example, the right section expands to fill the frame, with a title in it introducing the next segment. These four sections could be used to structure the show and help give viewers a sense of where we are in the show.

### **Set design**

The set should have a modern, international flair, using images, surfaces, textures, colors, and shapes to create a spatial architecture that evokes both the variety and connectedness of the world. The exact design of the set will take into account the existing options at the studio. We are currently working out an agreement with the National Geographic Society to shoot in its state-of-the-art, [\$26 million studio??] (created in collaboration with a major network).

### **Documentary segments**

Short documentary stories (2-4 mins.) from the field will be incorporated thematically into the program. Generally two will appear in each show, with the first providing a news story related to the main topic. This segment is intended to provide a lead-in to the panel's broader "state-of-the-issue" discussion.

The second segment will spotlight an individual, group, or organization, particularly non-governmental groups working to effect change in their country. This segment would alter between two regular elements, "People of the World" and "NGO Eye."

Field pieces will be shot and produced by international producers/filmmakers in their home countries; the intent is to highlight other points of view than those that are traditionally featured in the U.S. news media.

### **Interstitials**

The show will make frequent use of short interstitial segments to provide variety, texture, change of pace and tone. They will be directly relevant to the subject matter of each episode.

One interstitial concept is "GlobalVillage Voices," in which three sound bites from three different people around the world provide a quick survey of alternative views on the topic of the week. In particular, this segment would provide an opportunity to highlight women, who are often at the core of microeconomic growth in developing countries but are greatly undersubscribed in getting their opinions aired.

Another interstitial element could be humor-oriented ("Laugh Trek"??), featuring an amusing story, scene, or stand-up comedian with an international angle, such as Azhar Usman, a Muslim-American comic whose good-natured lampooning of stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs helps break down those preconceptions.



"What in the World" could highlight a subject that is strange, bizarre, or imaginative from abroad – a very short visual of an unusual place, business, artwork, profession, performer, ritual, etc. – a brief voice-over would provide context.

Occasionally, fast motion visuals of international scenes that evoke humankind's commonalities – bored shift workers, housing tenements, school kids larking, crowded public transportation, people and their pets – will be used to create transitions.

A text-based interstitial concept is a group of three quick facts, presented one after another, that relate to each other, but indirectly enough to involve the viewer in making the connection, a la "Harper's Index." (See example under Interstitial below). Viewer helps create meaning in the show by extrapolating the relationship between the facts.

Some text interstitials will be interactive, posing interesting "brainteaser" multiple choice questions about the topic that will be answered later in the show. Others will compare prices or conditions throughout the world, asking viewers to guess the correct answer – which city has the highest average rent, match a city with the price of a gallon of gas there, which country has the most paid vacation days, the ratio of doctors to population by country, and other statistics that viewers can relate to their own lives.

### Pilot Show Structure

**Teaser** (10 secs.) -- Footage with host voiceover

**Show opening graphic** (10-15 secs.) rapid montage of world images with music, ending with *Foreign Exchange* logo on plasma screen.

**Intro** (45 secs.)

With title logo screen still visible, camera reframes as host walks onto set: "Welcome to *Foreign Exchange*, where we learn how the rest of the world sees the United States. I'm Fareed Zakaria."

Globalization is one of the most powerful forces shaping the world today. For both good and bad, it is erasing borders and changing the relationships between countries, between people, and in the ways they work and live. It can simultaneously make us closer to people far away and remote from our own communities. Globalization brings interdependence, and with it a new range of opportunities, and, as 9-11 showed us, new vulnerabilities as well.

*Foreign Exchange* offers you a window on that world – not a familiar window, but rather a view from beyond U.S. borders, from the perspective of some of the people who make up the 98% of the world's population who are not American.

(Footage over: Montage of interesting images from around the world.) "In that spirit, each week *Foreign Exchange* will bring you news, stories and analysis that put the United States in a global context – and that you won't see anywhere else."



**4X Table of Contents** (30 secs.) Graphic: *Foreign Exchange* four quadrants: "First, from Brazil: turning sugar into fuel that will change the way you drive;" In "People of the World: shopping for an SUV -- in Shanghai.

Then, for perspective: the views of two leading foreign reporters, (name) from (country) and (name) from (country).

Finally, on "Laugh Trek:" a visit to one of the world's true curiosities -- a hugely successful ice cream vendor -- in Siberia. / or have segment that features an international stand-up comic, such as one of the Muslim comedians (must be in English).

**Field Segment #1** (4 mins.) Field-produced story: "Each year, Brazil is clearing an area the size of Maryland to grow crops to make ethanol, a low-emission fuel that more and more cars run on. American farmers are up in arms, fearful of how Brazilian ethanol exports, predicted to top a billion gallons a year by the end of the decade, are going to undermine their market share..." (story continues, putting the Brazil story and alternative fuels into context of global energy prospects).

**Studio Discussion** (8 mins) Back to host. "Today to discuss what this means for you we have" (names two guests -- foreign journalists. 1 Brazilian, 1 Chinese or Middle Eastern). 4 camera studio discussion.

Host turns to camera: "Next, we'll look at a very different aspect of the energy equation -- how China's booming economy is driving the global demand for oil, as we follow (Zhang Yuan) as he buys his first car in Shanghai."

**Interstitial** (20 secs.) -- Three relevant factoids appear on screen in text:

- 1) Growth of oil consumption in China since 2000: 40%
- 2) Projected growth in U.S. oil consumption by 2020: 50%
- 3) Number of Pentagon war games since 2000 in which a large Asian country called "Red" is the enemy: (TK).

**Field Segment #2** (3 mins.) "People of the World": a feature-oriented, character-driven documentary field segment. Follows a nouveau riche Chinese consumer as he/she shops for a new SUV. Compare transportation in rural China with new urban elite; also compare street scenes in Shanghai from 1990 and today: show same street, difference in rush hour traffic.

**Studio Discussion** (cont.) (8 mins.) Host frames the issue to guests: "They say imitation is the *greatest* form of flattery, so should Americans be pleased that the Chinese are picking up their love affair with the internal combustion engine? Demand for oil is growing in both the U.S. and China -- is there a potential resource war brewing?" Discussion.

**Host Sign-off** (20 secs.) Host thanks guests, then direct to camera: "Thank you for joining us. Please let me hear from you -- email your feedback to [foreignexchange@opb.org](mailto:foreignexchange@opb.org). We will read selected letters on the air." (In future episodes, read pithy extracts from letters.)

"And finally, in 'The World Unfiltered,' we leave you with a scene from (city, country)."

**"The World Unfiltered"** (30 secs.) Show street performer, cultural event, or scene from everyday life abroad. Identify persons or event and location with text onscreen.

(OR ALTERNATELY: "And finally, in "What in the World," we leave you with a story that illustrates the old saw, "truth is stranger than fiction." )

**Credits** (30 secs.) Roll credits over with music as footage continues. Voiceover invites viewer to learn more and continue this discussion on the web site.