

Nov 04, 2016 by *Alvin Snyder*

Iran's English Satellite Channel Debuts, Further Crowding Competition for Coveted American Viewers ^[1]

Iran is the latest entry in the international satellite news channel sweepstakes. Its 24-hour English service, "Press TV," debuted July 2. It is funded by the Iranian government, and one supposes by each of us when we gas up our cars. But Press TV is sharing attention today with a planned Middle East "Adult" channel, which is said to be in the works.

Here we are mixing English, Arabic, and adult international channels, our rationale being that each offering, no matter what the language or fare, competes for a limited "share" of viewers as a given time.

Let's first examine the English-language fad in international satellite news broadcasting.

Like its predecessors, Press TV is meant to provide "News from another point of view," from Tehran and its bureaus in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East -- including Damascus and Beirut -- to counter not only broadcasts from Western media, but from others such as "Palestine and Beirut," according to Press TV's program chief, Nadar Rad.

On its inaugural day Press TV covered an appeal by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to military commanders in Afghanistan to end civilian casualties, an update on U.S. military casualties in Iraq, the death of an accused Egyptian said to have been an Israeli spy, and a story that US troops in Iraq are no longer intimidating to the population.

Press TV says its staff numbers more than 400, and includes British and American broadcasters. The Tehran operation fashions itself to be more objective than the Qatari Al Jazeera channel, which Rad claimed supported former Iraqi despot Saddam Hussein and the Taliban.

A member of the Association for Press Freedom in Iran is taking issue with this.

Interviewed on America's Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Isa Saharkhiz said that because of Iran's press censorship, the new channel will likely be "ignoring some news and exaggerating other unimportant news," which would make it difficult for the channel to find an audience in the West.

Because satellite dishes that are capable of receiving Press TV and news channels from other countries are banned in Iran, Tehran's new English channel can be expected to be virtually unseen in its home country.

Iran's Press TV is the latest in a string of English satellite news channels: France's news channel, patterned in the CNN mold; China's CCTV's English channel; Russia Today's English channel; Al Jazeera's English

channel, and so on.

The lone international news channel with any measurable audience in America is the BBC's World News, carried on prestigious public television stations in the U.S.

Elsewhere, Adam Clayton Powell, a TV aficionado who roams the world as Vice Provost for Globalization for the University of Southern California, kindly keeps us abreast of which English channels are showing up where on TV screens. He reports to us that:

"CNN seems the standard" worldwide, "and the BBC is almost as ubiquitous.... I was stunned to see (American comedian) Jon Stewart on CNN when I was in Singapore a month ago."

But a channel that could trump TV satire and the rest is the proposed adult channel previously mentioned. Worldcasting was tipped "that Lebanese artist Jad Choueri is planning to launch an Arabic channel that will air steamy scenes currently censored in music videos, shows and movies." Choueri is said to already received death threats. The story on Mediame.com reportedly generated some 500 comments.

Tehran's English channel, Press TV, may have to compete for attention with more than CNN and the pack of international news channels striving for Western audiences.
