Reconsidering Agenda Setting and Intermedia Agenda Setting from a Global Perspective: A Cross-National Comparative Agenda Setting Test

Christoph Rosenthal,
MSc in Global Media and Communication

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The Author can be contacted at: Rosenthal.christoph@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The power of the media to set agendas is migrating from the national to the international, and perhaps to the global level. Despite this trend, cross-national comparative agenda-setting research has been scarce. The current study addresses corresponding gaps in the literature by conducting a comparative multinational analysis of the link between media and public agendas in, as well as intermedia agenda-setting patterns among, 15 countries worldwide. Further exploration of intermedia agenda-setting patterns for potential directionalities between Western and non-Western countries facilitates a reconsideration of media imperialism theories from a global perspective. A content analysis of national newspapers paired with an analysis of 2005 BBC poll data on events of global significance provide the basis for correlation and cross-lagged correlation analyses, which suggest that the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis holds true across different countries with different media systems. In addition, this study finds multi-plait reciprocity among different national media agendas, and in doing so, proves the existence of conditions necessary for international intermedia agenda setting. Finally, the lack of clear directionalities between the nevertheless multi-nationally linked international media agendas casts doubt on imperialistic theories about Western media dominance, and instead suggests that such reductionist logics have to be fundamentally rethought.

Keywords: Agenda setting, intermedia agenda setting, media systems, media imperialism, globalisation, cross-lagged correlation analysis

INTRODUCTION

On a global scale, more than 2.5 billion adults read a daily print newspaper. People spend less than 5 per cent of their television viewing time and less than 1 per cent of their time on the Internet informing themselves about the news, as print newspapers are still the first choice for news (World Association of Newspapers (WAN), 2013). Hence, newspapers play a central role for the public to learn what is important, what is happening in the world and what is new. But to what extent do newspapers really shape the public agenda and determine what the public is concerned about? More importantly, if the media set the public agenda, who sets the media agenda of the newspapers that impact so many people around the world?

These questions lie at the heart of the agenda-setting theory developed in a rather US-focused, Western-centric context by McCombs and Shaw in 1972. The gist of agenda setting is the limited, inevitably hierarchical space news media have to cover the infinite number of daily events, some of which are strategically highlighted over others and thus perceived as more important by the public (McCombs and Shaw, 1993). Agenda-setting research has been a burgeoning field of inquiry (Bryant and Oliver, 2008), receiving supporting evidence in many national contexts across a range of issues such as culture, crime, political elections, war and health (McCombs, 2004). However, very few studies have employed a cross-national comparative perspective, which has limited agenda-setting research to national contexts.

Public concern for certain events may vary from country to country, as well as the degree of media coverage of those events. But is it true across countries that people learn how important certain issues are in direct proportion to the amount of media coverage on those issues? Also, do newspapers from different countries imitate each other in terms of the amount of media coverage they devote to certain issues? And lastly, when thinking about movements such as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) that sharply critiqued the global status quo for a lack of free and equal flow of information between Western and non-Western nations, another question comes to mind: Is there an unequal influence by Western on non-Western news media?

These questions have largely remained unanswered due to difficulties with obtaining systematic, cross-national data on media and public agendas. However, at the end of 2005, a unique set of data was collected when the BBC World Service poll of 27 countries asked this question: 'In the future, when historians think about the year 2005, what event of global significance do you think will be seen as most important?' Since the degree of perceived importance of an issue or event is the equivalent of the public agenda in agenda-setting

research, these data resemble an opportunity to put the agenda-setting hypothesis to the multinational test.

First, a comprehensive review and critique of literature on (intermedia) agenda setting against the backdrop of globalisation is integrated with a theoretical discussion of media systems and media imperialism. This serves as the theoretical framework to combine BBC poll data from 15 countries with a quantitative content analysis of those countries' major newspapers for a multinational comparative agenda-setting test. Subsequently, national media agendas across these various media systems are comparatively examined for potential intermedia agenda-setting links, with a special focus on the question of whether Western media have a stronger influence on non-Western media than vice versa.

The main arguments emerging from this inquiry are that the agenda-setting theory seems to be applicable across countries with different media systems and intermedia agenda-setting dynamics unfold in a complexly intertwined network of international associations. Finally, the previously taken-for-granted 'powerful' West narrative may have to be rethought in an age of global media and communications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of the literature critically evaluates key concepts, ideas and arguments regarding agenda setting, intermedia agenda setting, national media systems and media imperialism against the backdrop of globalisation. Theoretical and methodological critiques are combined with a conceptual integration of the key theories to forge this study's theoretical framework.

Traditional agenda setting

The theory of agenda setting has served as one of the most powerful and fertile concepts in mass media and communication effects research (Bryant and Miron, 2004). Agenda-setting theory entails the link between the mass media's emphasis on a particular topic and the corresponding salience of that topic on the public agenda (Cohen, 1963; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). A more recent definition by Brosius and Kepplinger (1990: 190) defines agenda setting as a dynamic process 'in which changes in media coverage lead to or cause subsequent changes in problem awareness of issues'. In other words, when mass media prioritise and frequently cover a topic, the public tends to consider this topic more important.

The origins of agenda-setting theory can be traced back to Walter Lippmann and his 1922 book *Public Opinion*. Lippmann (1922) was the first to ascertain the mass media's critical role in creating and shaping the images and perceptions about the world in the minds of the public, who have little unmediated experience of distant real-world events. Related to Lippmann, another influential idea comes from Cohen (1963: 13), who suggests that 'the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about'. Hence, rather than injecting ideas and ways of thinking into the public's mind like a hypodermic needle, agenda-setting theory contends that the public learns about the importance of topics in direct proportion to the amount of media coverage of those topics (McCombs, 2004).

Since the formal introduction of agenda-setting theory by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in the Chapel Hill study on the 1968 US presidential election, a myriad of studies around the world have found correlations between media agendas and public agendas (e.g. Dearing and Rogers, 1996; Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal, 1981). On a socio-political level, these US-influenced studies largely ignored non-Western countries with, for example, communist political systems. Methodologically, a causal link between media emphasis and public concern for a topic cannot be proven with the simple correlational statistical methods used in most studies (McCombs and Shaw, 1993).

In this guise, it might not be true that the media set the public agenda. Instead, public awareness could influence focus and amount of media coverage on certain issues. For example, Brosius and Kepplinger's (1990) analysis of the link between German television news and public awareness of prominent political issues shows that the media sometimes react to the public agenda in order to reflect the amount of public concern. Various other contingent factors also undermine or foster the media's agenda-setting function, such as the quantity and quality of media coverage or media type (Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). These findings highlight the importance of being careful with causational claims in agenda-setting research.

Although the majority of agenda-setting research focuses on US media (Golan, 2006), a number of studies have been conducted within national contexts of a variety of different countries.[1] Nevertheless, from a globalisation perspective, agenda-setting theory and most

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[1] Agenda-setting research outside the US: Argentina (Lennon, 1998; Pereson, 2002), Australia (Gadir, 1982), Belgium (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008), Canada (Schultz, 2005; Soroka, 2002; Winter, Eyal and Rogers, 1982), China (Zhang, Shao and Bowman, 2012), Denmark (Hopmann, Elmelund-Præstekær, Albæk, Vliegenthart and Vreese, 2012; Siune and Borre, 1975), Germany (Brosius and Kepplinger, 1990; Brosius and Weimann, 1996; Kolb, 2005; Schoenback and Semetko, 1992), Ghana (Anokwa and

related research can be critiqued for being limited to a national perspective and ontologically equating society with the nation-state, which implies the concept of methodological nationalism (Beck, 2002; Wimmer and Schiller, 2002). In particular, most agenda-setting studies take isolated cases of nation-states, which are assumed to be the natural form of political and social organisation (Beck, 2002). Methodologically nationalistic approaches have limited agenda-setting research to the country level. Due to the consequent differences in terms of methodology, time period and media issues included in different studies, international comparisons have largely been ignored. However, the present study tackles those shortcomings by testing the media's agenda-setting function from a cross-national, comparative perspective.

International intermedia agenda setting

After a comprehensive review and critique of the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis against the backdrop of globalisation, the concept of intermedia agenda setting will now be surveyed. The original question by McCombs and Shaw (1993) asks: If the media set the public agenda, who or what sets the media agenda? McCombs (2004) identifies three key factors that influence the media agenda: News norms, news sources and, most importantly, news media. If one news medium serves as the key source for another medium's agenda, intermedia agenda setting occurs (Golan, 2006). More specifically, intermedia agenda setting entails imitation processes and the mutual influence of media agendas on one another (Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998b; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). Accordingly, just as the mass media agenda sets the importance of an issue on the public agenda (according to the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis), news media, to a certain extent, tend to rely on certain other media agendas when choosing content and topics for their own media agenda (Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998a).

Public agenda setting vs. intermedia agenda setting

Public agenda setting and intermedia agenda setting differ along the lines of a set of theoretical dimensions. On the one hand, public agenda setting concerns the often unconscious adaptation of individuals' priorities induced by media emphasis (Vliegenthart

Salwen, 1988; Sikanku, 2008, 2011), Israel (Caspi, 1982), Japan (Ogawa, 2001; Takeshita and Mikami, 1995; Takeshita, 1993), Mexico (Bennett and Sharpe, 1979), the Netherlands (Kleinnijenhuis and Rietberg, 1995), Saudi Arabia (Al-Haqeel and Melkote, 1996), Serbia/Republic of Kosovo (Camaj, 2010), Singapore (Holaday and Kuo, 1993; Kuo, Holaday, Xiaoming, Koh and Beng, 1996), South Korea (Lim, 2006; Song, 2007), Spain (Lopez-Escobar, Llamas, McCombs and Lennon, 1998b; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas and McCombs, 1998a; McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar and Rey, 1997; McCombs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas, 2000), Sweden (Asp, 1983), Switzerland (Wirth, *et al.*, 2010), Taiwan (King, 1997), Venezuela (Chaffee and Izcaray, 1975) and perhaps others.

and Walgrave, 2008). In other words, the dependent variable (public agenda), or what the public thinks about, is attitudinal. On the other hand, the dependent variable with intermedia agenda setting comprises actions and the choices of editors and journalists, and is thus behavioural (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). Moreover, in contrast to the unconscious reproduction of issue salience in public agenda setting, the deliberate actions involved in intermedia agenda setting deal with media institutions and organisational media outlets, rather than individual perceptions.

These key differences illustrate the ways in which intermedia agenda setting follows a different logic compared to traditional agenda setting in terms of transferring issue importance and saliency. Yet, while operating at different attitudinal and behavioural levels, respectively, both phenomena are intertwined and relevant to consider simultaneously since they potentially exert an influence on the other one. That is, for instance, if media agenda A influences media agenda B, media agenda A potentially has an indirect influence on the public agenda influenced by media agenda B.

After having outlined the key differences between public and intermedia agenda setting, the three main reasons for the occurrence of intermedia agenda setting will now be provided and evaluated. First, Dearing and Rogers (1996) argue that one reason for intermedia agenda setting relates to the special environment that news people operate in on a daily basis with little contact with members of the audience. Hence, media rely on cues and guidance from other media about what kinds of issues to cover and how important an issue has to be made. Rather than observing directly what is going on in the world and basing the importance of news items on first-hand experience, other media serve as the conduit to reality, which is almost impossible to directly observe (Dearing and Rogers, 1996).

Second, the accelerated nature of the contemporary news business with 24/7 news channels and harsh competition contributes to this pattern of imitation and interdependence (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). Media markets are highly competitive, unforgiving and fast-paced. As soon as a certain behaviour by a media outlet proves to yield a competitive advantage, other competitors follow the same pattern and thereby potentially contribute to the homogenisation of media coverage through intermedia agenda setting (Mathes and Pfetsch, 1991).

Third, intermedia agenda setting occurs to reinforce existing news norms of the journalistic trade (Dearing and Rogers, 1996; McCombs and Shaw, 1993). The imitation of other media outlets, as well as the decision to cover certain issues in similar ways as other media, are

indicative of newsworthiness and corroborate the initial selection of issue salience and media coverage. This way, news norms are established and reinforced through the process of intermedia agenda setting, which then leads to the emergence of widely accepted definitions of newsworthiness (McCombs, 2004).

Previous research in intermedia agenda setting

Largely remaining within the national context, intermedia agenda-setting research has been conducted with different combinations of media outlets, including newspapers' influence on television (e.g. Golan, 2006; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Trumbo, 1995), online news websites (B. Lee, Lancendorfer and K. Lee, 2005; Sikanku, 2011), and other newspapers: Sikanku (2008, 2011) has found intermedia agenda-setting patterns among major national Ghanaian print newspapers. Moreover, Mathes and Pfetsch (1991) suggest that the media agenda of alternative newspapers is a significant predictor of traditional newspapers' media agendas. Similarly, Breen's (1997) content analysis of newspaper coverage about deviant acts by clergy members has shown significant intermedia agenda-setting correlations between different newspapers in the US. Likewise, Protess and McCombs (1991) found that elite newspapers significantly influence local US newspapers' media agendas. However, more recently, Lim's (2011) US-based study concluded that the selection of breaking news stories and issue importance, as chosen by the print version of *The New York Times*, was not consistently emulated by *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

What unites these studies is that most use content analysis and time lags to study intermedia agenda setting. However, contradictory findings highlight the importance of a careful evaluation and the choice of time lags in cross-lagged correlation analysis. Furthermore, methodological incongruence and dissimilar operationalizations of media agendas not only epitomise the lack of consensus but also complicate the formulation of a general intermedia agenda-setting theory. Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008) even suggest that a real theory of intermedia agenda setting has yet to be developed. Besides such theoretical immaturity, intermedia agenda-setting research has largely ignored globalisation and international media flows, focusing almost exclusively on intermedia effects among domestic media. Replicating a recent study that argued that international intermedia agenda-setting patterns may exist (Du, 2013), the current study aims to fill this gap by exploring intermedia agenda-setting processes from a cross-national perspective with newspapers from different countries.

Media systems

When considering intermedia agenda setting from a cross-national perspective, it is important to account for the difference between national media systems. Newspapers are always subject to national media systems. These media systems imply country-specific legal, cultural, social and political norms and rules at the macro-level, which influence to some extent the editorial and journalistic operations of news media (Hallin and Mancini, 2011). There have been several attempts to create classifying, normative theories of media systems around the world (Hachten and Scotton, 2007). These classifications constitute ideal types developed from observing empiric reality, though they do not necessarily exist in reality. The general focus has been on the connection between normative media theories and political systems of the respective nations. In these normative, by and large methodologically nationalistic, classifications, nations are treated as homogeneous entities with one media system (Curran and Park, 2000).

Contrarily, McKenzie (2006) argues that media systems are affected by globalisation. Particularly, mediated globalisation in the form of international travel, communication technology and global media conglomerates, such as Time Warner (US), Bertelsmann (Germany) or News Corporation (Australia), challenge national media systems. Theorists of globalisation highlight the diminishment of national boundaries and the erosion of nation state powers (Dittgen, 2000; Giddens, 2002), which could arguably lead to the emergence of a global public sphere (Castells, 2008, 2013; Volkmer, 2003). However, nation-states should not be displaced in the study of contemporary media systems because even in a climate of globalisation, media systems (their operation and orientation) continue to be shaped by national characteristics, such as traditions, language, geography, economics, political systems, power structures and international relations (McKenzie, 2006). Moreover, nation-states still determine to a high degree how media industries and markets are organised and what media services are provided and received.

The dominant paradigm in research on media systems was established by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) with their four theories of the press. Differentiating between democratic and non-democratic nations, these four theories include libertarian, social responsibility, authoritarian or soviet communist. However, these four sometimes analytically superficial and ethnocentric theories (Hallin and Mancini, 2011) have been critiqued for holding value-laden, pro-capitalist biases and for not highlighting the potential downsides of libertarian models, such as the concentration of media ownership (Nerone, 1995).

Winfield, Mizuno and Beaudion (2000) also critiqued the four theories for disregarding Asian press models and cultural traditions. Arguably, the Western-focused perspective ignores Asian traditions, beliefs and philosophies. This critique is echoed by Gunaratne (1990) as well as Yin (2008), who found the theories too static, non-exhaustive and ignorant of cultural diversity in non-Western and Asian countries. In an attempt to balance Eastern and Western conceptualisations of the press, Yin (2008) proposes a dynamic two-dimensional model that positions a country according to the degree of national press freedom and responsibility of the press. Excluding the fact that this rather simplistic conceptual model fails to account for nuances of different national press systems, it affords mapping individualistic and capitalist Western as well as paternalistically collectivist Asian press systems in juxtaposition.

While Siebert *et al.* (1956) and Yin (2008) theoretically propose normative frameworks, Hallin and Mancini (2004) base their theoretical framework of media systems on an empirical study of 18 Western democracies, including the US, Canada and most of Western Europe. Western countries are economically strong, governmentally stable, capitalistic and religiously tolerant democracies according to common geo-political standards (Curran and Park, 2000; Du, 2013). Within this macro category, Hallin and Mancini (2004) differentiate between a Polarized Pluralist model, a Democratic Corporatist model and a Liberal model.

From a global perspective, however, these models are still all Western – i.e. very similar in terms of press freedom and the ability to issue reports, commentary and critique about the government (Du, 2013; Hachten and Scotton, 2007). Thus, while offering a useful tool for comparing Western countries' media systems, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) early framework fails to accommodate for non-Western media systems. In a later attempt, however, Hallin and Mancini (2011) update their initial framework with a compilation of media systems beyond the Western world that affords a broader, worldwide comparative perspective (including specific discussions of Brazil and Russia, among other countries). This strikes a chord with Hachten and Scotton's (2007) categorisation of Western as opposed to Communist, Authoritarian, Revolutionary and Developmental media systems around the world. Altogether, these macro-categorisations provide a useful frame to create aggregates of Western and non-Western countries for investigating potential directionality in intermedia agenda setting from a media imperialism perspective.

Media imperialism

The above discussion of Western and non-Western media systems relates to the ongoing scholarly debate as to whether Western countries' media have an influence on culture, public opinion or the media of non-Western countries. Media imperialism is defined as 'the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution, or content of the media in any country are singly or together subject to substantial external [and unilateral] pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries' (Boyd-Barrett, 1977: 117). A key assumption underlying this definition is that the production and distribution of media are centralised in core nations that deliberately try to dominate periphery countries through media presence in those countries.

Employing a cultural imperialism perspective, Schiller (1991) and Galtung (1971) propose that developing countries are subject to powerful foreign media impacts in an increasingly globalised world. Sharply criticising globalisation theorists such as Appadurai (1996), Beck (2002) and Giddens (2002), Sparks (2007) contends that globalisation is confused with media imperialism, which globally unfolds through Western/American hegemony and capitalist ideology. In the same guise, Elasmar and Bennett (2003) contend that exporting media products serves Western nations as a conduit of power over other nations, 'reinforcing the dominance of the Western states and the capitalist predominance in relationships of neo-colonial dependency' (as cited in Norris and Inglehart, 2009: 42).

For example, more than 99 per cent of the total US broadcast media capacity is occupied by national productions. In contrast, Australia, as well as many Latin American countries, including Chile, Mexico and Venezuela, have about 30 per cent of their total broadcast programmes imported from the US (Straubhaar, 2007). Such a massive presence of US media content in Latin American and other countries has been critiqued as a form of media imperialism, especially in the case of Latin America (Beltrán, 1980; Kaplún, 1973; Pasquali, 1972; Reyes Matta, 1983). This illustrates the basic media imperialism argument, which claims that the media of Western nations have a unilateral influence on the national cultures of non-Western nations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Synthesising the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the majority of agenda-setting research features methodological nationalism and unjustified conclusions about causal links between media and public agendas based on correlational statistics. This research has also remained merely within the national boundaries of a particular country. Little research has been conducted on public agenda setting and intermedia agenda setting from a multinational comparative perspective. After a comprehensive review of agenda setting and intermedia agenda setting, as well as a conceptual discussion of media systems against the backdrop of globalisation and media imperialism, the conceptual framework for the present study will now be outlined.

The review of the literature has shown that agenda-setting theory has thus far largely ignored globalisation theory and the international sphere of news media. Theoretically bridging agenda setting with different national media systems and globalisation has also opened up novel avenues to reconsider global media imperialism and the question of whether Western media have an influence on non-Western media.

First, agenda-setting theory resembles the theoretical frame with regard to the empirical comparison of the associations between media and public agenda in different countries. Second, intermedia agenda-setting theory (Boyle, 2001; McCombs and Shaw, 1993) will be put to the empirical test concerning the potential links between the different countries regarding the media agenda. Third, the concept of media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett, 1977) is integrated with the theory of intermedia agenda setting in order to reconsider the theoretical and philosophical question of the potential Western dominance over non-Western nations in the context of global media and communications. Put differently, media imperialism and globalisation theory function as the more philosophical/theoretical frame through which the potential intermedia agenda setting effects are considered.

Media systems theories provide the comparative dimension and thus form an overarching frame. For testing the traditional agenda-setting hypothesis and inquiring into potential international intermedia flows, theories about media systems at the country level can be availed (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, 2011). To examine potentially unequal flows of media content from Western to non-Western countries, broader theories of media systems facilitate grouping countries into the two categories (Hachten and Scotton, 2007; Yin, 2008).

Media imperialism must be understood not so much in the Gramscian sense of hegemonic cultural dependence of peripheral countries on the industrialised world (Hamelink, 1983). Instead, this study conceptualizes media imperialism in a less structural, Marxist way that implicates imbalanced power relations and flows of media content between nations (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; C. Lee, 1980). Building on Boyd-Barrett's (1980) demarcation of media imperialism as a system of international relationships in the realm of media characterised by imbalance and dependency, the flow of news between Western and non-Western countries will be considered as one empirical manifestation of such potentially imbalanced relationships between countries in the sphere of media.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Agenda-setting theory and globalisation are quintessential and highly influential concepts for the study of media and communications. However, there is a dearth of studies that have bridged the two. The present study aims to close this gap in the literature by reconsidering the almost classical agenda-setting theory from a global comparative perspective. A global perspective enables agenda-setting theory to transcend its originally nation-focused theoretical scope and affords novel insights into international media landscapes. Accordingly, the following main research question in line with the above literature review guides the present study.

Main RQ: To what extent, if any, does agenda-setting theory hold true from a global perspective?

The main research question is divided into three topically related sub-questions, each of which investigates the empirical, theoretical and philosophical aspects of the agenda-setting theory applied to the medium of newspapers.

RQ1: To what extent, if any, are there significant correlations between the media agendas and the public agendas in the countries under study?

Pertaining to the potential link between the volume of domestic newspaper coverage of a set of issues and the domestic public's perception and concern with these issues, the first sub-question concerns the agenda-setting function of the media across different countries from a cross-national, comparative perspective. Furthermore, this question aims to validate previous, methodologically similar, research, which suggests positive correlations between

media and public agendas across countries (Du, 2013). This allows the formulation of the following directional hypothesis. H1: *There are positive correlations between the media agendas and the public agendas in the different countries under study.*

RQ2: To what extent, if any, are there significant similarities between the media agendas among the countries under study?

Intermedia agenda setting has largely remained within national boundaries. However, it is hard to imagine a more international, perhaps global sphere than that of news media. Thus, tackling the absence of studies on potential intermedia agenda-setting patterns between newspapers from different countries (Du, 2013), the following hypothesis is formulated.

H2: *There are positive international intermedia correlations between the media agendas of the newspapers from the different countries under study.*

RQ3: To what extent, if any, do the Western countries' news media agendas have a stronger influence on the non-Western countries' news media agendas than vice versa?

In the context of media imperialism and the potential interdependency of different national media systems (Fraser, 2007; Straubhaar, 1991), this question has long been fuelling academic debates both on a theoretical as well as philosophical level (Wu, 1998). More recently, Du (2013) has rightly suggested that the many inconclusive findings necessitate further research, concentrating on the question: 'Do Western countries' media indeed still have a stronger influence on the media agenda of non-Western countries than vice versa?' (p. 32). Following these suggestions, the present study sets out to contribute to a clarification of this issue.

Imbued with a colonial legacy, media imperialism has been critiqued with the arguments of active audiences (e.g. Fiske, 1987) and natural commercialisation of media systems (Wallerstein, 1979). However, these points of critique were based on entertainment content on television. News in newspapers, on the contrary, is highly concentrated and controlled by a few Western news agencies (AP, UPI, Reuters, Agence France Presse), epitomising the imbalanced relationships and Western-dominated media flows (Boyd-Barrett, 1980; C. Lee, 1980). H3 thus suggests that *Western news media agendas have a stronger influence on non-Western news media agendas than vice versa.*

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the above research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses, the appraisal of the 2005 BBC World Service Poll of 27 countries[2] on the public's perceived importance of nine events from 2005 is combined with a quantitative content analysis of major national newspapers from 15 countries, which are this study's units of analysis.

Several factors justify content analysis as the most appropriate method. It is suitable for studying media with large amounts of unstructured content (Babbie, 2010), such as newspapers, which are this study's units of observation. The deductive, nomothetic character of content analysis enables researchers to derive generalizable conclusions and consider trends and patterns across comparative frames, such as countries, which makes it especially useful for the study at hand (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998; Krippendorff, 2004). In line with the global perspective, it affords breadth and a representative picture of texts as well as phenomena at the macro level of analysis (Neuendorf, 2002).

Also on a theoretical level, content analysis is justified since intermedia agenda setting can best be captured by studying a medium (newspapers) that is accessible and cannot be changed after its release, such as websites. Finally, content analysis was ethically unproblematic and convenient for this study's purposes since the necessary data for the current study are already available for a wide range of countries in academic databases, such as LexisNexis® and Factiva. In short, contrary to discourse analysis, content analysis is most appropriate as it is systematic, replicable and objective (Neuendorf, 2002) and facilitates comparatively studying large amounts of data from multiple countries (Krippendorff, 2004).

This study's methodology borrows from Du (2013), who has studied English, French and Spanish newspapers in a comparative multinational analysis of the link between the media-object agenda and the public-object agenda, as well as intermedia agenda-setting patterns across different countries. After a critical assessment, the present study employs a similar, partially improved methodological approach to validate previous findings. Yet, it focuses on a different, larger set of countries. Improvements of the content analysis mainly pertain to a more nuanced and sophisticated keyword selection.

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[2] Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Congo (DRC), Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, the UK, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey and the USA.

Operationalization

The two main variables used in this study are public agenda and media agenda. Following Du (2013), the BBC World Service poll yields the data for the variable public agenda, which is defined as the percentage of the public that mentioned a specific event as Most Significant Event (MSE) in response to the following question: 'In the future, when historians think about the year 2005, what event of global significance do you think will be seen as most important?' Executed during October, November and December of 2005, the poll features a sample size of 32,439 people. Commissioned by the BBC World Service, the project is a collaboration between the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) and GlobeScan, an international polling and research company.

Whereas the BBC poll data serves as an indicator of the public agenda, media agenda is defined as the frequency of news articles on a certain event in a particular country's main newspaper(s) between 26 December 2004 and 31 December 2005, as obtained from the LexisNexis® academic database or the Factiva database. The instrument to measure this variable is a specifically designed codebook (Appendix 1). The time frame is based on the events featured in the BBC poll, including the 'Asian tsunami' (26 December 2004), the 'US hurricanes' (29 August 2005), the 'death of the pope' (2 April 2005), the 'London bombings' (7 July 2005), the 'Bali bombings' (1 October 2005), the 'Pakistan earthquake' (8 October 2005), the 'war in Iraq', 'global warming' and the 'avian flu'. The last three events are long running events of 2005 and thus have no specific date.

Sampling

Countries
From the 27 countries included in the BBC World Service poll, all countries with English, German, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish as an official language were selected for the current study: Australia (AU), Canada (CA), India (IN), the Philippines (PH), the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (USA); Germany (GER); Italy (IT); South Korea (KR); Poland (PL); Brazil (BR); Russia (RU); Argentina (AR), Spain (ESP) and Mexico (MX). A total of eight languages and 15 countries from five different continents were included. Kenya and South Africa, though having English as an official language, were excluded due to unavailability in the databases. Turkey had been included initially, but was dropped after the bilingual coder had become unavailable.

Newspapers

For each of the aforementioned countries, a purposeful sample of major national daily newspapers was selected based on circulation and availability in the databases. A combination of sources was consulted to determine which newspapers qualified as top national dailies for the respective country, including the International Federation of Audit Bureaux of Circulations (IFABC), the Circulation Verification Council (CVC), Europa World Yearbook Online and the World Press Trends by the World Association of Newspapers. In order to triangulate and ensure validity, native citizens of the respective countries as well as specialist librarians and academics from the field of journalism and international communication were also consulted. Availability in the databases was an additional decisive factor. For instance, if the national daily newspaper with the highest circulation was not available in neither of the two databases, the consecutive newspaper was included.

The LexisNexis® database was used for 13 newspapers from eight countries, including *Herald Sun*, the *Daily Telegraph* (AU); the *Toronto Star* (CA); *Hindustan Times* (IN); the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Guardian* (UK); *USA Today*, the *New York Times* (USA); *La Nación* (AR); *El País, El Mundo* (ESP); *Reforma, El Norte* (MX). The Factiva database was used for 17 newspapers from nine countries, including *The Times of India* (IN)*; Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PH); *Sueddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt, Frankfurter Rundschau* (GER); *El Universal* (MX); *Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Izvestia, Vedomosti Daily Newspaper (Russian Language)* (RU); *Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, Il Sole* (IT); *Chosun Ilbo* (KR); *Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, O Estado de São Paulo* (BR); *Gazeta Wyborcza and Wyborcza.pl* (PL).

Data collection

For each event, a set of relevant keywords (Appendix 2) was selected to search the number of articles in the databases. For Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Italian and Korean, native bilingual assistants provided the keyword selection in the respective language as well as the letter strings in the respective alphabet for Russian and Korean. Being native German and sufficiently fluent in the remaining languages, the author selected the keywords for English, German, Portuguese and Spanish. To ensure validity, absolute accuracy and account for potential cultural and linguistic nuances, native bilingual assistants independently constructed keyword selections for English, Portuguese and Spanish. The two independent keyword selections were discussed and a final selection was made in collaboration with the respective native speakers on the basis of the two independent selections.

This procedure served as a variant of an intercoder reliability test. Conventional intercoder reliability tests were not necessary since there was no human judgement involved. Previous agenda-setting studies have used intercoder reliability tests to ensure reliable coding and sample selection (e.g. Kiousis, 2005; Kiousis and McCombs, 2004; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Ragas, 2010). However, after the keywords had been selected and translated, they were simply entered into the database search form to obtain the corresponding frequencies.

Keyword selection was refined compared to previous studies to ensure that only articles that are actually about the particular event were included in the analysis. Contrary to Du (2013), who seems to have used single catchall keywords that are too inclusive and yielded slightly too high frequencies (including articles unrelated to the event but containing the keywords), the use of 'and' operators allowed the author to construct searchable keyword combinations that only return articles specifically about the respective event. For example, to search an English newspaper for the event 'Asian tsunami' (26 December 2004), the keyword combination was '(Tsunami and Asia) or (Tsunami and Sri Lanka) or (Tsunami and Indian Ocean)'. This way, only articles that contained the words 'Tsunami' and either 'Asia' or 'Sri Lanka' or 'Indian Ocean' were returned, ensuring validity and accurate database returns. Articles that used possible keywords in a different sense of the word, for example, the metaphorical use of the word 'Tsunami', were excluded.

For additional validity, the keyword selection included semantically related keywords that could appear in a newspaper article for all languages. For example, in English, there are not many possibilities to describe the event 'death of the pope'. Perhaps journalists would write: 'The pope has passed away.' Thus, besides 'death' and 'pope', 'passed away' would also be a keyword in the context of the event 'death of the pope'. This way of putting together a selection of keywords affords a rigorously accurate description of the event that captures all articles about the particular event, and only about that event, excluding other issues and articles that might contain similar combinations of keywords.

For each data base search, a random sample of 5 per cent of the total of returned articles was read entirely to substantiate validity (if total number of articles returned was less than 20, all articles were read entirely). Only 0.68 per cent (13 articles) out of 1,916 randomly selected articles were mistakenly returned by the database search – that is, the article was not mainly about the respective event, but only contained the necessary keywords. This means that more than 99 per cent of database searches are expected to be accurate.

For the languages that feature case-sensitive declensions of nouns (German, Polish, Russian) or person-sensitive inflections of verb conjugations (German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), the keyword selection was constructed with a slightly different approach. Words with different endings may perform a different grammatical function, but essentially mean the same thing. For the database search to catch orthographically disparate but semantically equivalent words, wildcard characters were used to include all words that feature the decisive part of the word.

For example, analysing a German newspaper for the event 'Pakistan earthquake', the keyword selection was *'Pakistan and !beben!'* to include all articles that feature the word '*Pakistan*' and words that contain the letter string '*beben*' (German for earthquake). The exclamation marks before and after the word '*beben*' tell the database to look for all words that contain the letter string '*beben*', no matter what comes before or after it. This means that words like '*Erdbeben*' (variant of German: earthquake) or '*Bebens*' (genitive singular of '*Beben*') are also included in the search. This way, all articles that specifically are about the earthquake in Pakistan are included.

For each newspaper in the LexisNexis® database, the respective event's keyword combination was pasted into three search term fields. These were filtered so that the database would return all articles where the keywords appear 'In the Headline' or 'At the Start' or 'In the Indexing' of the article. The same search criterion was used for the Factiva database. Since the Factiva database has a free search form, the keyword combinations were entered with the following code: (Hd= *keyword selection*) or (hlp= *keyword selection*) or (RF= *keyword selection*), with 'hd' (Headline), 'hlp' (Headline/Lead Paragraph) and 'rf' (Reference/Notes) being the equivalent to 'In the Headline', 'At the Start' and 'In the Indexing', respectively. These filters were an additional tool to ensure validity and return only topically related articles.

Research strategy

The BBC poll percentages and the article frequencies from the database searches were collected and entered into Stata to construct the two main continuous variables public agenda (ratio level) and media agenda (interval level). For H2, composite variables for each country's respective media agenda were computed. For H3, in line with the conceptual framework, eight countries were grouped together as Western countries (AU, CA, UK, USA,

GER, IT, ESP, PL) and seven countries as non-Western countries (RU, AR, MX, IN, KR,[3] PH, BR). Departing from this categorisation, four new composite variables were computed, including the combined Western media agendas at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2', as well as the combined non-Western media agendas at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2'. Definitions of 'Time 1' and 'Time 2' will be discussed below.

The following statistical analyses were conducted in Stata for the three hypotheses. For H1, pairwise correlations between media agenda and public agenda were calculated for each individual country. For H2, pairwise correlations between the media agendas of the individual countries were obtained. The calculations for H3 are discussed in the following section.

Cross-lagged correlational analysis

In order to surpass the limitations of simple correlational statistics and clearly filter out the direction of the relation between media agendas from different countries for H3, the study employs a quasi-experimental design in the form of a cross-lagged correlation analysis and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline statistic. Cross-lagged correlation analysis is a passive, indirect tool to explore directional causality by investigating the direction of cause and effect between two variables X and Y, each measured at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2' (Campbell and Kenny, 1999; Rozelle and Campbell, 1969). This technique's validity and applicability to intermedia agenda setting research is justified by its successful application in several studies on the intermedia agenda setting function of newspapers (Al-Haqeel and Melkote, 1996; Du, 2013; King, 1994; Lim, 2006; Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998b; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Sikanku, 2008).

Having data points at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2' for both variables enables the researcher to calculate three pairs of correlations: synchronous correlations $C.X_1Y_1$ and $C.X_2Y_2$, auto-correlations $C.X_1X_2$ and $C.Y_1Y_2$ and cross-lagged correlations $C.X_1Y_2$ and $C.Y_1X_2$. Synchronous and auto-correlations are used to calculate the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value.[4] The baseline value resembles a correlation value that indicates no influence between X and Y (Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998b). Causality between X and Y can be assumed in a situation where: a) the cross-lagged correlation coefficient between X at 'Time 1' and Y at 'Time 2' ($C.X_1Y_2$) is higher than the one between Y at 'Time 1' and X at 'Time 2' ($C.Y_1X_2$);

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[3] Some aspects of Korea's media system would justify a placement in the Western category, such as relatively high press responsibility. However, pseudo press freedom, self-censorship and government control of the newspapers led to the choice of putting it into the non-Western category.

[4] Rozelle-Campbell baseline formula: $[(C.X_1Y_1 + C.X_2Y_2)/2] * \{[(C.X_1X_2)_2 + (C.Y_1Y_2)_2]/2\}^{1/2}$

and b) the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value is smaller than the coefficient for C.X1Y2 but larger than the one for C.Y1X2. If these conditions are given, X can be assumed to have a causal effect on Y and the directionality of the correlation goes from X to Y and not vice versa (Campbell and Kenny, 1999; Ragas, 2010; Rozelle and Campbell, 1969).

Time interval for cross-lagged correlation analysis

A critical element of cross-lagged correlational analysis is the time interval. Previous intermedia agenda-setting studies on newspapers have generally used time lags of one week or more (e.g. Du, 2013; Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998a; Roberts and McCombs, 1994; Sikanku, 2011; Trumbo, 1995). However, the question remains of whether imitation of issues and content between different newspapers after one week or more really entails intermedia agenda setting. In a model fit comparison of different time lags (ranging from one day to two weeks), Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008: 867) have shown that 'longer lags lead to rapid decline in model fit' and concluded that intermedia agenda-setting effects mainly occur within one or several days.

Shorter time lags also make sense from a substantive point of view. The extremely fast-paced and competitive news business makes intermedia effects after one week or more rather improbable as media compete for audiences and strive to cover top stories immediately, not after one week (Clausen, 2003; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). Furthermore, potential external influences on news media, such as real world events, may occur during long time periods, which is another argument against using long time lags for studying intermedia agenda-setting effects. Similarities of media agendas after long time lags may point to media convergence rather than intermedia dynamics (Deuze, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Kolodzy, 2006). Intermedia agenda setting occurs instantly because 'if media imitate each other, it should be immediately' (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008: 861). Hence, short time intervals between the points of measurement are substantially logical.

Accordingly, rather than taking a time interval of one week or more, the present study uses a time lag of two days. 'Time 1' was set as the first two working days after the day of the event, and 'Time 2' as the consecutive two working days (working day three and four after the day of the event). Following Du's (2013) suggestion from a previous study with the same data, the long-running issues in 2005 ('war in Iraq', 'global warming', 'avian flu') were dropped. These issues received year-long coverage and did not have a specific date, which renders them futile for cross-lagged analysis. The other six issues comprised the set of events for H3, including the 'Asian tsunami' (26 December 2004), the 'US hurricanes' (29 August 2005), the 'death of

the pope' (2 April 2005), the 'London bombings' (7 July 2005), the 'Bali bombings' (1 October 2005), the 'Pakistan earthquake' (8 October 2005). The frequencies of newspaper articles on each of the events at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2', respectively, were obtained from LexisNexis® and Factiva and entered into Stata for statistical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, the variables were graphically and statistically tested with Stata regarding the four assumptions (approx. normal distribution, linearity, homoscedasticity, no significant outliers) necessary for Pearson's correlation analysis (Dixon and Massey, 1969; Sirkin, 2006). The assumption of normal distribution seemed violated graphically. Tests echoed this with the kurtosis value for media agenda (-2.21) and the skewness value for public agenda (1.40) being slightly lower/higher than -1 or 1, which casts doubt on the distribution being normal (Sirkin, 2006). Moreover, linearity was difficult to derive from relevant scatter plots, but the relation definitely appeared to be monotonic.[5] The nonlinear correlation coefficient Eta (η = 0.881) was more than twice as large as Pearson's R (R = 0.429), which suggests nonlinearity (Garson, 2012; Sirkin, 2006). Furthermore, the ANOVA test of linearity clearly suggested a non-linear relationship: $F(1, 161) = 1.760$, $p = 0.001$. Accordingly, Spearman's rank-ordered correlation coefficient (r_s), which is the equivalent to Pearson's R used for non-parametric, monotonic data (McCombs and Bell, 1996; McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Weaver, *et al.*, 1981), was chosen as the most appropriate correlation statistic.

Results for H1

The overall general correlation between media and public agendas in the 15 countries is highly significant with $r_s = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 270$. There seems to be a moderate positive association between media agenda and public agenda. Considering the aggregate of all countries under study, higher frequencies of news articles about a particular event (media agenda) are associated with higher percentages of people who cited that event as the Most Significant Event (MSE) of 2005. Events that were more prominent on the public agenda also tended to have received more media coverage by the national daily newspapers across the different countries.

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[5] Monotonic relationships are always heading toward one direction (increasing or decreasing), but not at the same rate at all times, like linear relationships.

After obtaining significant results for the overall correlation between media agenda and public agenda, the individual pairwise correlations also turned out to be statistically significant for 12 out of 15 countries with a median correlation of $r_s = 0.711$ (Table 1). All individual countries show positive associations between media agenda and public agenda. That shows that a general pattern that seems to be similarly apparent in different countries with statistical significance: Higher volumes of media coverage of the nine events of global significance proportionately go together with higher levels of perceived public importance of these events.

Canada has the highest significant correlation ($r_s = 0.902$, $p = 0.004$) and Germany has the lowest significant correlation ($r_s = 0.474$, $p = 0.012$), which is still considered an association of moderate strength. H1 (*There are positive correlations between the media agendas and the public agendas in the different countries under study*) thus is largely corroborated and received robust support. With the exception of the Philippines, India and Poland, the results suggest that higher levels of media attention devoted to the nine events by major national newspapers are positively associated with higher levels of perceived importance of the nine events as accorded by the public of the respective countries. From the countries that received insignificant results, India ($r_s = 0.436$, $p = 0.070$) is still significant at the 10 per cent level and thus also allows the suggestion that moderate positive agenda setting correlations may exist.

The analyses for the Philippines ($r_s = 0.574$, $p = 0.106$) and Poland ($r_s = 0.437$, $p = 0.239$) returned non-significant results. Poland's insignificant results may be explained with the extraordinarily high percentage of the public (48 per cent) that mentioned the death of the pope as the number one event of global significance. This is not surprising given the fact that the pope was Polish and the Catholic Church plays an important political, cultural and religious role in the country. As for the Philippines, this present study's non-significant findings stand in contrast to Du's (2013) results where the positive association between media object agenda and public object agenda attained significance for the Philippines. One reason for this inconsistency may be the use of a different database (the present study has used Factiva rather than LexisNexis®) as well as a refined keyword selection. Yet, the insignificant results might also be due to sampling error since the value ($p = .106$) is close to being significant at the 10% level, which is an arbitrary benchmark level after all. In a general comparison to Du (2013), this study obtained significant results for a similar set of countries, but with slightly weaker associations. These differences may stem from a more selective use of key words and larger samples at both country and media level.

As for the case of Mexico, this study's results suggest a positive, statistically significant correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda (r_s = 0.539, p < 0.001). Such findings contradict Du's (2013) findings, which found the correlation between Mexico's media object agenda and public object agenda to be non-significant in a similar study. Du (2013) suggested that her insignificant results for Mexico might have been due to the fact that she only included one newspaper (*El Universal*), which besides might not be very influential in public opinion in Mexico due to decreasing circulation (WAN). This current study has included *El Universal* as well as two more major Mexican newspapers with comparable circulations.

Table 1: Correlations of media agendas and public agendas in 15 countries

Official language	Country	Spearman's Rho (r_s)	p-value
English	CA	0.902**	0.004
	AU	0.847**	0.001
	UK	0.772**	< 0.001
	USA	0.714**	0.001
	PH	0.574 (NS)	0.106
	IN	0.436 (NS)	0.070
German	GER	0.474*	0.012
Italian	IT	0.611**	0.001
Korean	KR	0.798**	0.010
Polish	PL	0.437 (NS)	0.239
Portuguese	BR	0.646**	< 0.001
Russian	RU	0.707**	< 0.001
Spanish	AR	0.763*	0.017
	MX	0.539**	< 0.001
	ESP	0.527*	0.025

Notes: ** Correlation significant at the 1% significance level (2-tailed); * correlation significant at the 5% significance level (2-tailed); (NS) = not significant

Results for H2

Having found evidence for public agenda-setting patterns on a global scale in the cross-national comparison, the question remains of whether international intermedia agenda setting also occurs between the countries under study. Table 2(p24) shows that 35 country pairs of intermedia agenda-setting comparisons are significant at the 5 per cent level of significance. Of these, 20 are significant at the 1 per cent level. Additionally, nine sets of

comparisons are significant at the 10 per cent level. All of the statistically significant correlational pairs are positively associated.

For the country pairs with significant correlations, higher frequencies of newspaper articles about a particular event in one country are associated with higher frequencies of newspaper articles about the same event in the other country. Put differently, events that have received high volumes of media coverage in one country's major newspaper(s) tend to have received high volumes of newspaper coverage in the other country's major newspapers. With 44 out of the 105 pairwise correlations being statistically significant at least at the 10 per cent level, H2 *(There are positive international intermedia correlations between the media agendas of the newspapers from the different countries under study)* is thus partially confirmed.

Table 2: Intermedia agenda-setting correlations between 15 countries

		AR	AU	GER	RU	CA	IN	PH	UK	USA	ESP	MX	IT	KR	BR
AU	r_s	.377													
	p	.318													
GER	r_s	**.678***	.052												
	p	.045	.839												
RU	r_s	.584	**.474***	**.575****											
	p	.099	.047	.002											
CA	r_s	.603	**.883****	.250	.460										
	p	.086	.002	.516	.213										
IN	r_s	-.109	.333	.186	.323	.500									
	p	.781	.176	.460	.192	.170									
PH	r_s	.197	.109	.218	**.777***	-.059	.075								
	p	.611	.781	.574	.014	.881	.847								
UK	r_s	.418	**.750****	.020	.310	**.883****	**.558***	-.033							
	p	.262	.000	.938	.211	.002	.016	.932							
USA	r_s	**.678***	**.580***	.300	**.475***	**.950****	**.581***	-.159	**.773****						
	p	.045	.012	.227	.046	.000	.011	.683	.000						
ESP	r_s	**.778***	.346	**.720****	**.534***	.433	.212	.335	.424	**.628****					
	p	.014	.160	.001	.022	.244	.399	.379	.079	.005					
MX	r_s	.595	.340	**.615****	**.615****	.303	-.122	.515	.253	.368	**.572***				
	p	.091	.168	.001	.001	.429	.629	.156	.312	.133	.013				
IT	r_s	.550	.111	**.625****	**.386***	.259	.374	.592	.320	.311	**.645****	.142			
	p	.125	.662	.000	.046	.500	.126	.093	.195	.209	.004	.481			
KR	r_s	.458	**.703***	.301	**.857****	.628	.561	.555	.510	.485	.552	.582	.403		
	p	.215	.035	.431	.003	.070	.116	.121	.160	.185	.123	.100	.282		

	r_s				**.900***				**.600***					
BR	**.745***	**.701****	.373	**.793*****		.323	.259	**.730****	**.824*****		**.638****	.252	**.678***	
	p	.021	.001	.055	.000	.001	.191	.500	.001	.000	.008	.000	.205	.045
PL	r_s	.151	-.050	.633	.243	-.067	.300	.351	.017	-.033	.567	.361	.611	.201	-.100
	p	.699	.898	.067	.529	.865	.433	.354	.966	.932	.112	.339	.081	.604	.798

Notes: ** Correlation significant at the 1% significance level (2-tailed); * correlation significant at the 5% significance level (2-tailed)

Specifically, Argentina's media agenda seems to correspond significantly with the media agendas of Germany, the USA, Spain and Brazil. Australia's media agenda is significantly associated with the media agendas of Russia, Canada, the UK, the USA, South Korea and Brazil. Germany's media agenda seems to be significantly related to Russia's, Spain's, Mexico's and Italy's media agendas, as well as that of Argentina. Russia's media agenda corresponds significantly with the media agendas of the Philippines, the USA, Spain, Mexico, Italy, South Korea and Brazil, as well as Australia and Germany. The Canadian media agenda correlates significantly with the media agendas of the UK, the USA and Brazil, as well as Australia. India's media agenda is significantly associated with the media agendas of the UK and the USA. The media agenda of the Philippines only corresponds significantly to Russia's media agenda. The UK media agenda corresponds significantly to the media agendas of the USA and Brazil, and additionally to the Australian, Canadian and Indian media agenda. The media agenda of the USA is associated significantly to the media agendas of Spain and Brazil, as well as Argentina, Australia, Russia, Canada and India. The Spanish media agenda significantly corresponds to the media agendas of Mexico, Italy and Brazil, and additionally to the Argentinian, German and Russian media agenda as well as that of the USA. The Mexican media agenda significantly corresponds to the media agenda of Brazil, as well as to Germany, Russia and Spain. The Italian media agenda is significantly associated with the media agendas of Germany, Russia and Spain. The media agenda of South Korea correlates significantly with the media agendas of Brazil, as well as Australia and Russia. Brazil's media agenda corresponds significantly to the media agendas of Argentina, Australia, Russia, Canada, the UK, the USA, Spain, Mexico and South Korea. Finally, Poland's media agenda is the only media agenda not significantly associated with another country's media agenda.

It is worth highlighting a few statistically significant associations in particular. The highest significant correlation was found between Canada and the USA (r_s = 0.950, p < 0.001), which points to a very strong positive association between the media agendas of these two countries. Moreover, the lowest significant correlation was found between Italy and Russia (r_s = 0.386, p = 0.046), which is still considered to be of moderate strength. Brazil and

Russia both have nine, sometimes extremely strong positive correspondences with other countries' media agendas, leading the set of countries in this study. They are followed by the media agenda of the USA, which significantly correspondences with eight media agendas from other countries. This suggests that there is a strong international intermedia link for Brazil, Russia and the USA – countries, whose media agendas either influence, or are influenced by, other countries' media agendas to a large extent.

In general terms, the reasons for the correlations between specific countries can only be speculated. It is clear though that the large majority of countries seem to have at least some link to foreign media agendas. Focusing on the USA, results show strong positive correlations between the USA and Brazil (r_s = .824, p < .001) as well as the USA and Argentina r_s = .678, p = .045, but non-significant results for the correlation between the USA and Mexico r_s = .368, p = .133. The latter result contradicts Straubhaar's (2007) interpretation of US dominance on Mexican television as a form of media imperialism. These findings also do not allow us to clearly confirm or disconfirm the existence of imperialistic conditions necessary for potential US media dominance over Latin America (Beltrán, 1980; Kaplún, 1973; Pasquali, 1972; Reyes Matta, 1983).

Results for H3

Further investigating the results from H2 in the context of media imperialism, potential causal directionality of the intermedia agenda-setting associations between Western and non-Western countries was tested with cross-lagged correlation analysis to inquire RQ3 – i.e. whether Western news media agendas have a stronger influence on non-Western news media agendas than vice versa.
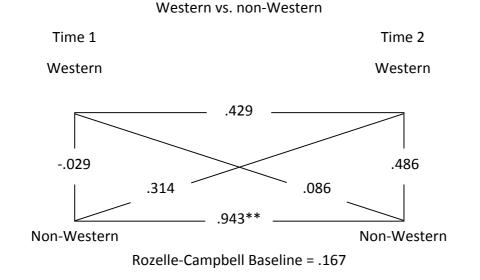
Figure 1: **Cross-lagged intermedia agenda setting correlations for Western vs. non-Western countries at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2'**

Western vs. non-Western

Time 1   Time 2

Western   Western

.429

-.029   .486

.314   .086

.943**

Non-Western   Non-Western

Rozelle-Campbell Baseline = .167

Notes: ** Correlation significant at the 1% significance level (2-tailed)

Potential causal effects can be derived by looking at the cross-lagged correlations between the Western media agenda at 'Time 1' (W1) and the non-Western media agenda at 'Time 2' (NW2) as well as the non-Western media agenda at 'Time 1' (NW1) and the Western media agenda at 'Time 2' (W1). A comparison of these two cross-lagged correlations shows that the correlation between W1 and NW2 (r_s = .086) is smaller than the one between NW1 and W2 (r_s = .314). For a causal effect to exist between Western and non-Western media agendas, the correlation between W1 and NW2 would have to be larger than NW1-W2 and exceed the Rozelle-Campbell baseline of .167, while the correlation between NW1 and W2 would have to fall below the baseline value. H3 *(Western news media agendas have a stronger influence on non-Western news media agendas than vice versa)* is rejected, as there does not seem to be a directional causal influence of Western media agendas on non-Western media agendas based on this study's sample data.

In fact, the data seem to suggest that there is a weak causal relationship between non-Western and Western media agendas. The coefficient of NW1–W2 (r_s = .314) is larger than the coefficient of W1–NW2 (r_s = .086) and exceeds the baseline of .167, while the coefficient of W1–NW2 is smaller than the baseline value. This situation in cross-lagged correlation analysis would suggests weak causality (Campbell and Kenny, 1999; Lopez-Escobar, *et al.*, 1998b). Specifically, the data seem to suggest that the non-Western media agendas have a weak positive effect on the Western media agendas. However, this is limited only to the

sample of this study, as the correlation coefficients are not statistically significant at the 5 per cent level.

The fact that the correlation between the Western countries at 'Time 1' and 'Time 2' is not statistically significant shows that the grouping of these nations into the Western category may have little utility value. Media agendas would have to be linked and vary proportionally, as is the case for the non-Western countries (r_s = .943, p < .001). The opposing non-significant relation confirms the heterogeneity of the Western grouping and raises questions as to whether the long-standing tradition of universally labelling nations, such as Germany and the USA, as Western nations and claiming similarity in terms of media systems, are still justifiable. The results suggest quite the opposite and perhaps require thinking of supposedly 'Western' nations and media systems in novel ways since they comprise a heterogeneous group of countries with sometimes very dissimilar media systems and cultural specificities that influence the national sphere of media. Here, it would perhaps be more adequate to follow Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2011), who usefully differentiate between European national media systems and who, for example, see Germany (Democratic Corporatist) and the USA (Liberal) at two end points of their categorisation scheme's continuum. Such an approach presents a more nuanced, perhaps more accurate perspective compared to grouping together nations, whose media systems might not have much in common, into universal and reductionist categories such as 'Western' (e.g. Hachten and Scotton, 2007).

Traditional agenda setting

The broader research object of this study was to test agenda-setting theory from a global comparative perspective. Results allow suggesting that agenda setting may be a universal phenomenon since there seems to be a link between media emphasis and public concern for certain issues across different countries with different media systems. The agenda-setting function of the media thus seems to be independent from the national media system variable. Future research could aim to specifically control for the type of media system in cross-national agenda setting comparisons to see whether this suggestion holds true.

Intermedia agenda setting

The results show that media attention devoted to particular events simultaneously recurs across different newspaper outlets from different countries. Hence, the conditions for international intermedia agenda-setting effects are given. This implies that previous findings on the national level suggesting that media emulate each other and tend to adopt topics that

have previously been covered by other media outlets (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008) may also be applicable to the multinational media environment across nations. However, potential directionalities in international intermedia agenda between certain countries cannot be claimed based on the present analyses. Investigating those directionalities is one important future trajectory for international intermedia agenda setting.

The potential reasons for international intermedia agenda setting can be explained with previous research and theory. Just as McCombs and Shaw (1993) suggest news norms to be the reason for intermedia agenda setting at the national level, news norms have also developed on a global scale, with news media from different countries engaging in copy-cat behaviour concerning standardized formats of how to present the news (Clausen, 2003). Moreover, competition also factors in at the international level with national news media competing for international audiences and the spread of the English language making more news media accessible to more people. Finally, the special environment news people work in, with little first-hand experience of the events they have to cover (Dearing and Rogers, 1996), also makes sense in the global context. Especially with regard to events of global significance, international news and media coverage may rely on the media agendas of other countries that are geographically, politically, socially or linguistically closer to the event.

However, despite the usefulness of these explanations, they are still based on national contexts. Future research should validate the applicability of these reasons to the international news media environment and inquire whether there are other factors than, for example, news norms or competition driving intermedia agenda setting.

As suggested by Du (2013), previous intermedia agenda-setting research has concentrated on vertical or horizontal intermedia relations within one particular country. This current study adds to the still rather small body of research that transcends both the vertical and the horizontal intra-national perspective and opens up new avenues with a multinational approach to agenda-setting studies. The findings are among the first of their kind on the international news flows between geographically and culturally distant areas of the world and show the increasing significance of a cross-national, global perspective in media effects studies.

This study has presented evidence of intermedia agenda setting at the first level – i.e. the extent to which international news media imitate each other in terms of *what* they cover. Following Lopez-Escobar, *et al.* (1998b), who were the first to examine national intermedia agenda-setting effects at the second level (*how* issues are covered), future research should

inquire whether international agenda-setting effects also operate at the second level – that is, whether international intermedia agenda setting implies the transmittance of attribute saliency between news media and whether media outlets from different countries also replicate other countries in terms of *how* to present certain issues.

Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008) have argued that short time intervals between topic emulation among news media clearly indicate intermedia agenda setting, whereas longer time intervals point to media content convergence. However, rather than juxtaposing intermedia agenda setting and media convergence as mutually exclusive, it can be argued that intermedia agenda setting of short time intervals also implies media convergence in the sense of homogeneous media agenda across different countries. Put differently international intermedia agenda setting may be seen as a temporally proximate antecedent to the homogenisation or convergence of news media content at the global level. If different national newspapers emulate one another, then an internationally homogeneous media agenda is the outcome. This also fits into the picture painted by the International Press Institute (IPI), which laments the limited variety of news due to the consolidation of news sources and the decreasing number of foreign bureaus affiliated with news organisations around the world. If sources and correspondents are scarce, then imitation of other news media seems to be a logical consequence. The price is a much narrower news diet, potentially based on intermedia agenda setting.

Finally, intermedia agenda setting is contingent on several factors (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2008). This may also be the case for the international intermedia agenda-setting correlations among the different countries. On the one hand, these may stem from similar media and cultural priorities of the significantly correlated countries that result in similar volumes of coverage on certain events. On the other hand, media agendas tend to be similar between geographically and linguistically proximate countries, such as the media agendas of Mexico, Spain, Argentina, Brazil or the USA, Australia and the UK. However, there are also highly significant, strong positive correlations between countries that lack the affinity of languages. Hence, while language may explain part of the similarities among international newspapers, future research should consider other factors as well.

Media imperialism

This study confirms previous statements by Du (2013) that the long-standing narratives purporting the economic, political and cultural dominance of the West over non-Western countries (Boyd-Barrett, 1977; Wu, 1998) seem outdated. The sphere of international

intermedia flows has to be considered through the lens of a larger gamut of possibilities, potentially far more complex and intricate than it has thus far been assumed. In an age of globalisation, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of interdependency and reciprocity between national media systems.

Future research should strive to find ways of investigating whether forms of global agenda setting exist. Especially when juxtaposing the diminishing role of the nation-state (Dittgen, 2000; Giddens, 2002) and the consequent emergence of a global public sphere (Castells, 2008, 2013; Volkmer, 2003) to increasingly transnational socio-economic and political phenomena such as the globalisation of news (Clausen, 2003; Croad, 2003; Norris and Inglehart, 2009) and cosmopolitan journalism (Hannerz, 1990, 2007), the Internet and other media of global reach may play a role in setting a global public agenda. Research should also clarify in what ways a global public agenda may manifest. Is it in a global public sphere? And does such a global public sphere exist at all? What would be the implications for global governance and politics as well as for the nation itself if a global public agenda were to be set by global forms of media? From a critical perspective, these research projections also point to potential exclusion and misrepresentations implicit in supposedly global public spheres and transnational forms of governance (Fraser and Nash, 2013; Fraser, 2007).

Limitations

This study is among the first pioneering attempts to reconsider agenda setting from a cross-national comparative perspective. It has convincingly shown that the necessary conditions for public agenda setting are present similarly across several countries. However, though significantly positive for several countries, the correlations cannot be equated with conditions sufficient for causal agenda-setting effects. Directionality from media to the public agenda cannot be claimed; it may well be that public concern has preceded media focus of the nine events included in the analysis. It is the task of future research to assess cross-nationally the extent to which the media have the power to determine the degree of public attention for a certain topic.

The samples of newspapers were not representative of the respective countries and the country selection was based on data availability and bilingual assistants. This is an important limitation of the research design. It entails the exclusion of other countries and continents, such as Africa, as well as potential misrepresentation of national media agendas. The categorisations of Western and non-Western countries are also imperfect and may be refined or complemented with other categories (e.g. for South Korea or Russia) in future studies.

Public agendas for Brazil and the Philippines can also not be considered representative since respondents came from urban areas only. Future studies should aim to include more countries and use larger, preferably representative samples of national media.

Topics as complex as agenda setting that form a cross-national perspective are always subject to and limited by reductionism. It is important not to reduce the complex world of news to the media level since economic, cultural, political and institutional factors also play a role. This also relates to the more philosophical question of what is news for whom and how do issues become news? For the same reasons, one must also not assume the media's centrality in notions of imperialism and Western dominance (Tomlinson, 1991). Although this study argues against it, different disciplines may find other patterns.

Research of qualitative nature is needed to understand how important gatekeepers, news editors and journalists potentially contribute to global intermedia agenda setting. There might also be conditions – social, political, financial, ethnic, academic, access, etc. – that enhance or limit intermedia agenda setting between newspapers from different countries. Moreover, future research may focus on the psychological explanations for agenda setting. For example, Swanson (1988) suggests that a particular emphasis should be placed on journalists' and editors' need for orientation as a psychological explanation for individual-level agenda setting. Mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative, would afford inquiring into how newspapers or other media orientate themselves in relation to competitors in the new global news environment on a daily basis and shed light on personal motivations behind different national media agendas – for example, whether media content is simply disseminated unintentionally or deliberately exported, potentially as a means to an end.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has applied agenda-setting theory to the context of globalisation. Rather than investigating an isolated case of one nation, associations between media and public agendas were compared with a methodologically congruent multinational test of 30 major national newspapers from 15 countries in eight languages. Results suggest that significant positive agenda-setting patterns exist across all but two countries included in this study. These findings help to further substantiate agenda-setting theory's multinational applicability and show that the agenda-setting function operates in similar ways across nations despite cultural and linguistic differences as well as dissimilar media systems.

This study has measured newspapers' agenda-setting function as well as intermedia agenda setting dynamics from a multinational perspective. Both empirically and theoretically, the investigations make an important contribution to tackling the still unresolved issue of testing agenda-setting theory from a cross-national comparative perspective. A global perspective has not only forged an initial idea of the complexly intertwined international media flows between nations around the world, but also has allowed for a reconsideration of the sometimes taken-for-granted 'powerful' West narrative.

Contrary to the claims of a well-established school of thought advocating imperialistic media flows from a dominant West to an inferior rest, news about events of global significance do not seem to be produced in ways that imply unequal power relations, or even premeditated influence, between Western and non-Western media. In fact, this study argues quite the opposite, that old paradigms of a reductionist West-versus-the-rest logic or powerful media influences from the West have to be fundamentally rethought and broken with both at the institutional as well as the political level. This study has contributed to set an agenda for future research that actively seeks to question and reconsider such simplistic yet powerful West narratives and strives to inform best practices, policies and research paradigms in the name of a critical stance toward the distribution and migration of media power worldwide.

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