

# What Sustains the Trade Winds? --- The Pattern and Determinant Factors of International News Flows

by Youichi ITO\*

*The currents of information in the world today are nearly as predictable as the currents of air that we call prevailing winds. Frequently an event or a series of events disrupts the information flow as a storm disrupts the meteorological chart. Nevertheless, underneath these disruptions are repetitive patterns as regular as the trade winds.*

Wilbur Schramm (1964, p. 58).

In an article entitled “The Trade Winds Change”, Ito (1990) argued that the “trade winds” (of information), even if they exist temporarily, are changeable. The reason is that in a world where countries are in severe competition with each other, nothing lasts for very long. When the United States (hereafter U.S.) was the world’s top producer in iron and steel production, Americans thought that it would last forever. When the United Kingdom (hereafter U.K.) was outstripping everyone else in shipbuilding, the British thought that it would last forever. When Japan was leading the world in semi-conductor production, the Japanese thought that it would last forever. Even economic and social theories were posited in an attempt to explain why it was likely to last forever.<sup>1</sup> As you know, however, none of the above situations lasted indefinitely, so why should information and culture be any different?

Ito (1990) used Japan in the period from 1965 to 1985 as an example and

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emphasized how drastically Japan changed from an information importing country to an information generating and exporting country in the fields of popular culture and news. Responding to Ito's contention, Tehranian (1990), Yadava (1990), and Galtung and Vincent (1992) argued that Japan is by no means a good example on which to base a claim that this world is changeable.

Looking back over the past few decades, these criticisms were at least partially justified. In 1965, the after effects of defeat in the Second World War still remained. Japan at that time was dependent on the U.S. militarily, politically, and economically. On the other hand, Japan in the 1980s was enjoying its "economic golden decade". In 1989, Sony absorbed Columbia Pictures, which later produced a "Godzilla movie". Then, Matsushita Electric purchased Universal Studios, and the Mitsubishi Real Estate arm took over Rockefeller Center in New York City. In sum, Japan in 1965 was underestimated and Japan in 1985 was overestimated. Therefore, Japan's change during this period seemed extremely drastic.

Lee (1980) in his book entitled *Media Imperialism Reconsidered* made arguments similar to Ito (1990) using China as an example. We must admit, however, that China is by no means a good example by which to "reconsider (Western) media imperialism" either. Throughout its history of nearly four thousand years, the period when the Chinese could be considered victims was "only" 150 or so years. (If Mongolians and Manchurians are not considered as Chinese, the period becomes about 400 years longer). During the rest of that time (more than three thousand years), intellectuals in countries bordering China were distressed by "Chinese cultural imperialism". There were times in the past when the Chinese not only looked down on their neighbors but also invaded and ruled them. The present Chinese leadership modestly defines China as a "developing country". However, having 55 (officially admitted) minority ethnic groups, modern China, as well as modern Russia, still maintains the framework of classical "empire." In addition, because of its long history as a typical empire and its potential power in the future, the Chinese mentality in general is that of center rather than periphery.

If somebody had compared Germany in the 1960s and 1980s, the conclusion would have been the same, that is, this world is very changeable and unpredictable. In the present-day world -- where China, Japan, and Germany, who were "potential powers" in the 1960s and have succeeded in "making their comeback" on to the world stage of international politics and economics, and are settled in their "natural" or "proper" positions -- does the world look as changeable and unpredictable as it did in the 1980s? If so, to what extent? If not, what makes the world difficult to change? The purpose of this research is to answer these questions by analyzing the survey data on international news flows collected during 1995.

## **International Collaborative Research Project on International News Flows**

The data used in this research are the product of the large-scale international collaborative research project initiated and led by Robert L. Stevenson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the U.S. and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi of the University of Leicester in the U.K. It was planned in the fall of 1994. Participants at this stage, including me, sent comments on their basic plans, schedules, content analysis codebooks, and methods of analysis, including sampling, sample size and so on. Preliminary surveys were conducted in May for 41 countries. After some modifications were made, the final survey was conducted in September, 1995 and the data for 46 countries were obtained as a result.<sup>2</sup>

## **Theories and Basic Design of this Research**

Many theories on international information flows can be considered as variations of either one of the following two “grand theories”: (a) Market mechanism theories and (b) information and cultural imperialism theories. The former assumes that peoples of all countries in the world have equal opportunity and capability to choose and buy information or cultural products. Therefore, the pattern of international information flows is the result of “free choice” by “consumers” living in “free and equal nations”. In other words, the “principle of relative advantage” that is a theory of international trade of commodities can be applied to information and cultural products as well.

On the other hand, the latter type of theory assumes the opposite. International relations between nations are understood in terms of domination and dependence. Except for a few top powerful nations, most nations in the world do not have the “freedom to choose” information or culture. They are “structurally” or “de facto” “forced to buy” information and cultural products provided by dominant countries.

In my view, these two theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In many cases, it is a matter of perspective or interpretation. Think, for example, of the flow of news and popular culture between the following two sets of countries: (a) the U.S. and Japan and (b) Japan and Korea. More news and cultural products flow from the U.S. to Japan than the other way around and more news and cultural products flow from Japan to Korea than the other way around. These phenomena can be explained or viewed by both types of theories. In my view, it would be too “ideological” to adamantly stick to only one of them and completely ignore or deny the other. There are some cases and phenomena that are better explained by the former type of theory and some others by the latter.

This research, therefore, was designed to be disinterested in both of them. The statistical pattern of international flows of news can be explained by either the former theory or the latter. Some determinant factors of flows such as geographical

and cultural propinquity would fit better in the former type of theory and military, political, and economic factors of news origin countries would be more suited for the latter.

### *Sample*

The original “raw data” are the results of content analyses of selected newspapers and television news programs during the first and third weeks of September, 1995. Using the standardized manual (throughout the entire research teams), coders identified “international news” in (two or three) selected newspapers and (two or three) television news programs. The definition of “international news” in this international collaborative survey was rather complicated. It referred not only to news about a foreign country that took place in the foreign country, but included the following: (a) News about a foreign country or foreigners that took place in the recipient country, e.g., the arrest of German radicals in France reported in French mass media. (b) News about the recipient country that took place in a foreign country, e.g., Mrs. Clinton’s speech at the World Conference on Women in Beijing reported in the American mass media. (c) News about international regions and international organizations such as Africa, Asia, Europe, the United Nations, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and so forth. As a result, the data for 46 countries became available. The sample size differed from one country to another. The smallest was Gambia (94) and the largest was Germany (10,249). The total sample size of this set was 66,186 and the average size was 1,439.

However, as the focus of our research was news about foreign countries, we eliminated the “news about the recipient country that took place in a foreign country” (b) mentioned above and the “news about international regions and international organizations” (c), and adopted the “news about a foreign country or foreigners that took place in the recipient country” (a) in addition to the “common sense meaning” of international news; that is, news about a foreign country that took place outside the recipient country. Naturally, the sample size became smaller than the original “raw data” set mentioned above. The total size became 44,066 and the average size 958. The 46 countries and their sample sizes used in this research are shown in Table 1.

The classification of countries into regions basically followed that of the *Visual Data Atlas, '95-'96* published in London (Dougall et al., 1994). However, small modifications were made in order to make the number of countries in each region as equal as possible. For example, Europe was divided into Western and Eastern Europe, East Asia, South Asia and Oceania merged into Asia and the Pacific, so therefore, the designation of West Asia had to be changed to the Middle East. North America posed a problem because the U.S. was the only country in North America that participated in this collaborative survey. North and South America could have

been merged into the Americas. However, we judged that the problems created by this merger would be greater than any benefit gained from it. Therefore, North and South America were kept separate.

Table 1: The 46 Countries and their Sample Sizes

**North America**

U.S.A.
Sample size 852

**South America**

Argentina	Brazil	Cuba	Peru	Venezuela
Sample size 1,917	252	156	44	608

**Western Europe**

Austria	Belgium	Denmark	Finland	Germany	Greece	Ireland	Norway	Portugal	U.K.	Spain
Sample size 1,298	1,308	142	2,109	7,077	144	1,393	394	976	2,994	1,149

**Eastern Europe**

Bulgaria	Estonia	Hungary	Romania	Russia	Slovenia	Ukraine
Sample size 932	410	1,577	560	413	1,298	732

**Africa**

Benin	Gambia	Cote d'Ivoire	Kenya	Nigeria	Senegal	South Africa
Sample size 108	73	94	1,130	178	286	1,121

**Middle East**

Iran	Israel	Kuwait	Lebanon	Turkey	Cyprus	Armenia
Sample size 303	1,166	438	2,668	782	82	542

**Asia and Pacific**

India	Indonesia	Japan	Malaysia	Australia	New Zealand	Thailand	China
Sample size 371	447	2,345	124	1,260	1,077	605	231

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Total: 44,066    Average: 958

## The Pattern of International News Flows

Table 2 indicates the rankings and shares of the top 20 MIFCs in the world and in seven regions. When the shares in the world or international regions were calculated, the primary data for individual countries were not used in order to avoid the influence of difference in sample size. Instead, the average values of MIFCs' shares in recipient countries were calculated. The U.S. in the North America column is blank because, as mentioned before, it was the only country in North America that participated in this collaborative research.

Table 2: Top 21 “Most Important Foreign Countries (MIFCs)“ in News and their Average Shares in Each Region

MIFC	World	North America	South America	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Africa	Middle East	Asia and Pacific
	Rank	Share	Rank	Share	Rank	Share	Rank	Share
United States	1	13.15%	2	19.85%	1	15.46%	1	10.26%
France	2	7.61%	3	7.51%	3	6.92%	2	11.99%
China	3	7.34%	5	6.22%	1	19.96%	7	4.13%
United Kingdom	4	6.55%	2	8.57%	7	3.13%	3	8.59%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	5.86%	1	13.73%	9	2.80%	4	6.90%
Russia	6	4.65%	7	4.46%	16	1.33%	6	4.20%
Germany	7	3.26%	9	2.70%	18	1.17%	5	4.79%
Japan	8	3.02%	4	7.28%	11	2.13%	12	1.67%
Israel	9	2.21%	6	5.52%	28	0.46%	13	1.45%
Italy	10	2.18%	12	1.41%	10	2.30%	8	3.51%
South Africa	11	1.50%	14	1.29%	37	0.34%	19	1.07%
Spain	12	1.35%	30	0.59%	6	3.43%	9	2.55%
India	13	1.34%	11	2.23%	33	0.41%	14	1.23%
Mexico	14	1.25%	10	2.46%	4	4.67%	34	0.48%
Egypt	15	1.12%	14	1.29%	49	0.17%	47	0.33%
Canada	16	1.10%	8	3.29%	24	0.66%	24	0.73%
Algeria	17	0.97%	25	0.82%	20	0.86%	21	0.87%
Iran	18	0.89%	23	0.94%	19	0.91%	32	0.53%
Iraq	19	0.87%	36	0.47%	44	0.23%	31	0.54%
Sweden	19	0.87%	43	0.35%	42	0.24%	10	2.50%
Argentina	19	0.87%	53	0.23%	5	4.22%	33	0.49%

The countries in the list of the top ten are interesting. Let us temporarily exclude two small countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina (5<sup>th</sup>) and Israel (9<sup>th</sup>), that probably were included in the top ten not because of their political, economic, or military power but because of the regional conflicts that they were embroiled in at the time of the research. The remaining eight countries were already major powers in the 1930s and were major participants in the Second World War. In spite of the rather self-flattering and narcissistic theories in the 1970s and 80s that overemphasized "Western domination," one could interpret from this result that the "world order" has not changed much since the 1930s.

Japan was better covered than Russia and Germany in Africa and South America. The reason has to do with Japan's economic aid. The amount of Japan's economic aid in the 1990s was the largest in the world and news about economic aid usually accounts for a large share in recipient countries.

Note also the existence of "regional powers". For example, Mexico was the fourth and Argentina fifth in South America, and South Africa was the fourth in Africa. It is wrong to assume that scant coverage is reserves for non-Western, Third World, and Southern countries only. The coverage of Scandinavian and Eastern European countries (except Russia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) was also very scant. The rankings of Scandinavian countries were: Sweden (19<sup>th</sup>), Denmark (66<sup>th</sup>), Finland (67<sup>th</sup>), and Norway (91<sup>st</sup>). The rankings of Eastern European countries other than Russia and Bosnia were: Croatia (37<sup>th</sup>), Yugoslavia (39<sup>th</sup>), Ukraine (45<sup>th</sup>), Poland (53<sup>rd</sup>), Slovakia (54<sup>th</sup>), Rumania (57<sup>th</sup>), the Czech Republic (60<sup>th</sup>), Hungary (71<sup>st</sup>), and Lithuania (79<sup>th</sup>). As Fridriksson (1993) once lamented:

...were it not for the reporting of various isolated crises, overall coverage of Scandinavia in the American media would be so scant as to be practically nonexistent...the Third World has no exclusive right to complaints that the U.S. media largely overlook developmental stories in favor of spot crisis-oriented news.

## Determinant Factors of Flows

### *Sample*

In order to see the determinant factors of international news flows, multiple regression analyses were used. The focus of this research was news flows from the "most important foreign country (hereafter MIFC) in the news" to each of the 46 recipient countries. There exist more than 200 countries in the world that could qualify to become an MIFC in news. However, about 50 of them are too tiny to be regarded as a "state". Some of them are just a city or a group of several small islands. If we treated them equally with giant states such as China, India, the U.S., and Russia, our data would be skewed. Therefore, we excluded the MIFCs whose

population is less than one million, except one country, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The population of Bosnia-Herzegovina was about 420,000 in 1995. However, as the amount of news from Bosnia was so large during our research period we did not eliminate Bosnia from our list.

The number of countries whose population was more than one million was 151. As the recipient country was eliminated from the list, the number of MIFCs for each country became 150 except for Cyprus. As the population of Cyprus was less than one million (708,000), it was not included in the list of eligible countries, but it was one of the 46 countries who provided us with their news flow data. In other words, because Cyprus was not on the list of 151 countries, all the 151 countries were used when Cyprus was the recipient country.

### *Variables*

#### **The Dependent Variable**

In order to analyze determinant factors in the world or international regions, country data have to be mixed. In order to avoid the influence of the difference in each individual country's sample size, the share of each MIFC (each MIFC's frequency divided by the total number of frequencies in each recipient country) was used as the dependent variable.

#### **Independent Variables**

Independent variables included in the model were as follows. Hereafter, labels for independent variables are expressed by capital letters.

1. The logarithm of the MIFC's POPULATION.
2. The logarithm of the MIFC's GDP (gross domestic product).
3. The logarithm of the MIFC's PER CAPITA GDP.
4. The logarithm of the MIFC's annual DEFENSE BUDGET.
5. The logarithm of the number of ARMY SOLDIERS in the MIFC.
6. The existence of an INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY (0. no, 1. yes).  
It is generally agreed that international news agencies in the strictest sense exist only in the U.S., the U.K. and France. Major international news agencies are the AP (U.S.), the Reuters (U.K.) and l'Agence France-Presse France). Most of other smaller and specialized international news agencies such as the UPTIN exist either in the U.K. or the U.S. Therefore, only these three countries were given 1 and the rest 0.
7. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the ENGLISH LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
8. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the FRENCH LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
9. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the

SPANISH LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).

10. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the ARABIC LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
11. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the RUSSIAN LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
12. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the CHINESE LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
13. The official language, or one of the official languages, of the MIFC is the GERMAN LANGUAGE (0. no, 1. yes).
14. COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP ---- the recipient country was once a colony of or was ruled for more than ten years by an MIFC after the 15<sup>th</sup> century (0. no, 1. yes). Although some people might disagree, we regarded Eastern European countries that were under the rule of the ex-Soviet Union as “ex-colonies” of Russia.
15. Existence of COMMON RELIGION --- The recipient country and the MIFC share the same religion (0. no, 1. yes). For this judgment, coders used the unified manual made using Dougall et al. (1994), in which “major religions” in each country are listed.
16. COMMON IDEOLOGY --- The recipient country and the MIFC are both capitalist or socialist countries (0. no, 1. yes). For this judgment, coders used the same manual just mentioned in which all countries are classified into either “capitalist” or “socialist”.
17. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE --- The logarithm of the direct distance between the capital of the recipient country and that of the MIFC (The data was obtained from the *World Atlas, Ver. 4*, 1991-1994).
18. TRADE --- Trade statistics were often provided using local currencies as a unit, therefore, each MIFC's share in the total amount of trade with the recipient country was used.
19. INCIDENT ---- In order to minimize the effects of unusual incidents during the research period, this dummy variable was used. During our research period, i.e., September, 1995, unusual incidents occurred in the following countries: France (a nuclear test in the South Pacific), China (the Fourth World Conference on Women by the United Nations), Russia (the Chechnyan conflict), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (a civil war). These four countries were given 1 and the rest 0.

*Results*

**Whole World**

**Table 3: Determinant Factors of International News Flows**

	World	North America	South America	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Africa	Middle East	Asia and Pacific
Sample Size (Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> )	3,324 (.483)	65 (.952)	339 (.378)	733 (.713)	551 (.791)	552 (.478)	541 (.524)	539 (.600)
Determinant Factors	Rank	Beta	Rank	Beta	Rank	Beta	Rank	Beta
INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY	1	.370***	1	.704***	4	.131*	1	.480***
TRADE	2	.330***	5	.176***	1	.344***	2	.411***
POPULATION	3	.101***	4	.177***	5	.109*		
CHINESE LANGUAGE	4	.098***	2	.343***	2	.284***	5	.050*
INCIDENT	5	.076***			3	.161***	3	.127**
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE	6	-.056***	6	-.128***				
RUSSIAN LANGUAGE	7	.052***	3	.247***	6	.048*	3	.245***
COMMON RELIGION	8	.041***					7	.077*
DEFENSE BUDGET	9	.039*	8	.086*	4	.075***		
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	10	.038***					3	.192**
COMMON IDEOLOGY	11	-.037***					5	-.124**
FRENCH LANGUAGE	12	-.032*	9	-.081*				-.058*
SPANISH LANGUAGE	13	.032*			6	.104*		
COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP							2	.172**
GDP						4		.132***
ARMY SOLDIERS						5		.058*
GERMAN LANGUAGE			7	.094***			4	.115**

\*\* p<.01 \* p<.05

As mentioned above, the number of MIFCs in each country was unified at 150, with the exception of Cyprus (151), and the amount of news about each MIFC and the amount of trade between each country and MIFC were standardized in the way already mentioned. Then the data for 46 countries were mixed and multiple regression analysis was conducted ( $n = 150 \times 45 + 151 = 6901$ ). However, due to the lack of data in many countries especially in annual DEFENSE BUDGET and the number of ARMY SOLDIERS, the actual number of sample used in the calculation drastically decreased as shown in Table 3.

“Beta” in the table is the “standardized partial regression coefficient” the meaning of which is almost the same as the “partial correlation coefficient”. It indicates the degree of “genuine or pure correlation” between the dependent variable (the MIFC’s share in the total amount of news) and each independent variable (determinant factor).

The problems of “multi-collinearity,” that is, the redundancy among independent variables or a high correlation between independence variables, and the “variable selection” was left to the “Excel Statistics 2004” software program made by the Social Survey Research Information Co. Ltd. However, for those who are suspicious of leaving the whole process to a sophisticated machine, simple correlations between the dependent variable (the share of the most important foreign country in the news) and 19 dependent variables are shown in Table 4. This calculation can be made even with a small calculator (although an enormous amount of time would be necessary). Therefore, the result should satisfy the needs of those who tend to believe the results of simple calculation rather than those of sophisticated statistical data processing.

Table 4: Simple Correlations Between the MIFC in News and Independent Variables

Independent Variables	Rank	World (n=3324) Simple Correlation
INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY	1	0.558
TRADE	2	0.543
GDP	3	0.393
DEFENSE BUDGET	4	0.378
POPULATION	5	0.307
INCIDENT	6	0.296
ARMY SOLDIERS	7	0.237
COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP	8	0.219
PER CAPITA GDP	9	0.197
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE	10	-0.133
CHINESE LANGUAGE	11	0.129
RUSSIAN LANGUAGE	12	0.127
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	13	0.116
ARABIAN LANGUAGE	14	-0.086
SPANISH LANGUAGE	15	-0.068
COMMON RELIGION	16	0.065
COMMON IDEOLOGY	17	-0.048
FRENCH LANGUAGE	18	0.041
GERMAN LANGUAGE	19	0.013

Tables 3 and 4, especially the rank orders of important (i.e., high-ranking) variables, are obviously similar to each other. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that the results shown in Table 3 are reliable enough.

As shown in Table 3, the most important factor was found to be the existence of an INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY. As this factor is so important, we will discuss it later at length in a separate section. The amount of TRADE (2<sup>nd</sup>) and GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE (6<sup>th</sup>) between the MIFC and the recipient country, POPULATION (3<sup>rd</sup>), and the amount of DEFENSE BUDGET (9<sup>th</sup>) of the MIFC are “natural” factors that can be easily predicted from precedent research and theories, which will not be referred to in this article because of the limitations on space. There are many good books and articles that introduce and discuss these theories (Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998; Cooper-Chen, 2001; Giffard, 2000; Ito, 1990, 1998; Kamalipour, 2002; Malek & Kavoori, 1999; Rosengren, 1976; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984; Stevenson & Shaw, 1984; Wu, 1998, to name a few). In this article, newer points that have not been fully considered in precedent research will be discussed.

It is well known that empirical research on international news flows are doomed to be influenced by what happens during the research period. During our research period, France tested its nuclear bombs in the South Pacific, the U.N. World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, and military conflicts in Chechnya and Bosnia-Herzegovina were going on. In order to adjust these “unusual” events, we introduced INCIDENT as a “dummy variable” giving 1 to France, China, Russia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina and 0 to all of the other 147 MIFCs.

As a result, INCIDENT appeared as a significant variable as shown in Table 3. However, while INCIDENT took only two values, 0 and 1, all these four events were different in their degree of influence. Therefore, INCIDENT could not completely absorb their influences. It was probably for this reason that CHINESE LANGUAGE (4<sup>th</sup>) and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE (7<sup>th</sup>) (as official languages) appeared as highly influential variables. In other words, CHINESE LANGUAGE and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE practically functioned as second and third dummy variables to absorb the influences of the World Conference on Women and the Chechyan conflict respectively.

Therefore, in this study, CHINESE LANGUAGE and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE may be considered as ad hoc factors peculiar to our research period (September, 1995). Then why was FRENCH LANGUAGE negatively correlated with news flows? The following two reasons are conceivable: (a) The increase of news from France during our research period was absorbed not only by INCIDENT but also by another dummy variable: INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, where France was allocated 1 together with the U.S. and the U.K. (b) There exist several small French speaking countries in Africa such as Senegal and Cote d'Ivoir, from which the lack of news dragged down the importance of FRENCH LANGUAGE.

On the other hand, in the case of ENGLISH LANGUAGE, which appeared in the 10<sup>th</sup> position, it may be possible to explain that even after the adjustment by INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY and the “dragging down effects” of several small English language speaking countries, news flows from the U.S. and the U.K. were large enough.

COMMON IDEOLOGY was expected to be positively correlated with news flows. The result, however, proved to be the opposite. One of the reasons is obviously the influence of the World Conference on Women in Beijing. (The 46 countries that provided us with their data, which became the recipient countries in this research, were all capitalist countries. Russia in our research was coded as a capitalist country). Although COMMON IDEOLOGY is an interesting factor theoretically, it is very difficult to measure its importance because (a) the number of socialist countries is now too few and (b) it is difficult to conduct an international collaborative survey in socialist countries. In order to assess accurately the importance of COMMON IDEOLOGY, data collection in socialist countries such as China and Cuba would be indispensable.

### **International Regions**

#### **(1) North America**

As mentioned before, the U.S. was the only country in North American that participated in this collaborative research. In this research, therefore, North America and the U.S. are identical. INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY as the top factor for the U.S. means that the amount of news about the U.K. and France is more than the amount predicted by other important factors such as their POPULATION (4<sup>th</sup>) and the amount of TRADE with the U.S. (5<sup>th</sup>) because there exist powerful international news agencies in these two countries. In the case of the U.S., however, the meaning could be more than that. The top ranking of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY in the U.S. could imply that the U.K. and France are “special countries” for the U.S., historically and culturally.

After putting aside the U.K. and France as exceptional countries and considering that CHINESE LANGUAGE (2<sup>nd</sup>) and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE (3<sup>rd</sup>) as ad hoc factors peculiar to our research period, the news flows into the U.S. seem to be explained by the MIFC's POPULATION (4<sup>th</sup>) and the amount of TRADE with the U.S. (5<sup>th</sup>), which is very easy to understand theoretically. Let us look at the list of top ten MIFCs in the American mass media during our research period (Table 2).

Compared with other regions and countries, heavy involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a telling characteristic of the American mass media. After Bosnia (top), come the U.K. (2<sup>nd</sup>), and France (3<sup>rd</sup>), followed by Japan (4<sup>th</sup>), and China (5<sup>th</sup>); then Israel (6<sup>th</sup>), Russia (7<sup>th</sup>), Canada (8<sup>th</sup>), Germany (9<sup>th</sup>), and Mexico (10<sup>th</sup>). The regional pattern looks more “balanced” than in most other countries,

representing the U.S.'s position as a worldwide super power.

A reason why INCIDENT did not appear as a significant determinant in spite of Bosnia's large share is probably "technical". After the large shares of China, Russia, and France were adjusted by CHINESE LANGUAGE, RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, and INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY respectively, Bosnia probably remained as an exception and was practically "ignored" statistically.

#### (2) South America

The amount of TRADE is the most important factor followed by the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY (4<sup>th</sup>) and POPULATION (5<sup>th</sup>). The importance of SPANISH LANGUAGE (6<sup>th</sup>) as a determinant means that South American countries tend to report news about Spanish speaking countries more than about countries of other languages. Since there was no big news from any Spanish speaking country during our research period, the importance of SPANISH LANGUAGE in South American can be considered to be genuine. Spanish speaking countries in the top ten list of the South American mass media are; Mexico (4<sup>th</sup>), Argentina (5<sup>th</sup>), Spain (6<sup>th</sup>), and Colombia (8<sup>th</sup>).

#### (3) Western Europe

Determinant factors in this region are similar to North America. After ad hoc factors during our research period such as INCIDENT (3<sup>rd</sup>), CHINESE LANGUAGE (5<sup>th</sup>), and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE (6<sup>th</sup>) are removed, news flows in Western Europe are explained by the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY (1<sup>st</sup>), the amount of TRADE (2<sup>nd</sup>), and the amount of DEFENSE BUDGET (4<sup>th</sup>) (of the MIFC). The difference between this region and North America is in the amount of news about Asia. The rankings of China (7<sup>th</sup>), Japan (12<sup>th</sup>), and India (14<sup>th</sup>) are lower in Western Europe than in North America (Table 2).

#### (4) Eastern Europe

A characteristic of this region is the overwhelming presence of Russia. This is reflected by RUSSIAN LANGUAGE (3<sup>rd</sup>) and the number of ARMY SOLDIERS (5<sup>th</sup>) (of the MIFC) as determinants of news flows. Partly because of the potential threat of Russia and also because most of these countries are small and vulnerable, they seem highly concerned with political and economic powers outside the region. The eight major world powers frequently mentioned above are all in the top ten list of the Eastern European mass media. It is reflected in the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY (1<sup>st</sup>), the amount of TRADE (2<sup>nd</sup>) with the MIFC, and the MIFC's GDP (4<sup>th</sup>) as determinants.

It has been already pointed out that the coverage of Easter European countries other than Russia and Bosnia was very scant from a worldwide perspective. Not

only that, Eastern European countries are not covered even by the mass media in this region. There is no Eastern European country other than Russia (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (4<sup>th</sup>) in the top ten list. Countries in the top 20<sup>th</sup> list in the Eastern European mass media were: Georgia (12<sup>th</sup>), Poland (14<sup>th</sup>), Slovakia (15<sup>th</sup>), Croatia (17<sup>th</sup>), Ukraine (19<sup>th</sup>), and Rumania (20<sup>th</sup>). The others were below the 20<sup>th</sup> ranking.

#### (5) Africa

There is a perception that African countries are isolated from each other and do not have much contact among themselves. It has often been said that African countries depend on major powers outside the region and receive information from those powers. According to the result of our survey, however, this was not necessarily true, or may be no longer true.

First, COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP did not appear as a determinant. Second, GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE (4<sup>th</sup>) was judged to be a significant determinant, which means that African mass media tend to report more news about geographically close countries than distant countries. African countries in the top ten list of the African mass media are: South Africa (4<sup>th</sup>), Nigeria (7<sup>th</sup>), Liberia (8<sup>th</sup>), Algeria (9<sup>th</sup>), and Sierra Leone (10<sup>th</sup>). It should be noted that these five African countries are better covered than Japan (14<sup>th</sup>), Germany (19<sup>th</sup>), and Russia (19<sup>th</sup>) (Table 2). Also note that South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone are English speaking countries and ENGLISH LANGUAGE is the third most important factor in Africa. Although the U.S. keeps the top here as well, its share is lower than in other regions. Judging from the pattern of news flows, Africa looks less dependent on major powers outside the region than either Eastern Europe or the Middle East.

#### (6) Middle East

Although COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP did not appear in Africa, it appeared here as the second most important and statistically significant determinant. The statistical significance of COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP means that countries in this region tend to report news about the countries that colonized them in the past. In fact, the Middle East is the only region in this research where COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP in the past was found to be statistically significant as a determinant factor of international news flows. The colonial powers that once ruled this region, France (2<sup>nd</sup>), Russia (3<sup>rd</sup>) (that ruled Armenia), and the U.K. (5<sup>th</sup>) account for large shares. The share of Russia in Armenian mass media is especially large (Table 2). The number of Middle Eastern countries in the top ten list of the Middle Eastern mass media are: Iraq (9<sup>th</sup>) and Israel (10<sup>th</sup>). Although Egypt was classified as an African country, it is better covered in the Middle East (7<sup>th</sup>) than in Africa (16<sup>th</sup>). In terms of dependence on outside powers, the Middle East looks better than Eastern Europe but worse than Africa or South America.

## (7) Asia and the Pacific

News flows in this region seem to be explained by the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY (1<sup>st</sup>), the amount of TRADE (2<sup>nd</sup>), and the number of ARMY SOLDIERS (4<sup>th</sup>). The share of the U.S. is larger in this region than any other regions, reflecting the importance of the U.S. in this region. The share of the U.K. is the third highest in this region followed by Western Europe and North America (Table 2).

Asian and the Pacific countries in the top ten list in the Asian mass media are: China (2<sup>nd</sup>), Japan (5<sup>th</sup>), Australia (7<sup>th</sup>), and Pakistan (8<sup>th</sup>). India was 11<sup>th</sup>. Australia is a typical regional power. The coverage of Australia outside Asia and the Pacific is very scant. Its position in the world ranking is 22<sup>nd</sup> (also 22<sup>nd</sup> in Western Europe and 40<sup>th</sup> in North America).

### *INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY as a Determinant Factor of International News Flows*

As Table 3 indicates, the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY was the most important determinant in six of the seven regions except South America. Naturally, it was the top determinant factor in the world. As shown in Table 4, the simple correlation coefficient between this factor and the share of the most important country in the news was higher than any other factor.

The definition of “international news agency” is not necessarily clear because large “national news agencies” do provide news to foreign customers. It is generally agreed, however, that “international news agencies” (as well as “international news media” in general) in the strictest sense exist only in the U.S., the U.K., and France. There are two reasons for this: (a) News media in these three countries sell news on a multinational basis, for example, they sell news about third countries irrelevant to the host country whereas the international activities of those in other countries are limited to bilateral flows (flows from foreign countries to the host country and flows from the host country to foreign countries. (b) The share of revenues gained from international activities is much larger in news media in these three countries than news media in other countries.

Therefore, as mentioned above, these three countries were given 1 and all the other 148 countries 0 in our multiple regression model. Although this dummy variable was labeled INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, it may be considered to include international news media other than news agencies such as CNN, the BBC, the New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, the London Times, Newsweek, Time magazine, and so on.

The existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY as the most important factor as a result of regression analyses does not automatically mean that news flows from the U.S. the U.K., and France to other parts of the world. Technically

speaking, it means that the amount of news coming from these three countries is more than the amount of news predicted from these three countries' other attributes such as POPULATION, GDP, PER CAPITA GDP, DEFENSE BUDGET, the number of ARMY SOLDIERS, and so on; or the "relational factors" between these countries and recipient countries such as GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE, COMMON IDEOLOGY, the amount of TRADE, and so on. Simply speaking, these three countries are spreading news about themselves more than they should (or beyond the "fair" or "proper" level).

The "hegemonic nature" of international news agencies was pointed out as early as the 1950s. (See, for example, International Press Institute, 1953). Responding to criticisms that "Western" (actually American, British, and French) news agencies are dominating international news flows, some conservative scholars including Wilbur Schramm defended the international news agencies stating that they are just trying to meet the demand internationally or supplying news for commercial profit and that they have no political or imperialistic intentions.

Responding to this, Ito (1990) explained why the Japanese Kyodo News Agency could not become an international news agency in spite of the fact that its annual sales (about \$62 million in 1976) were much greater than those of l'Agence France-Presse (AFP) (\$43 million in 1976) and were fast approaching the level of the Associated Press (AP) (\$70 million) and Reuters (\$80 million). His conclusion was as follows:

The major reason for Kyodo's inability to compete with Anglo-Saxon and French international news agencies despite its scale and financial strength is language. In order for Kyodo to sell news reports in foreign markets, the reports must be translated into English or French. This means higher cost and more important, delayed distribution. Delayed distribution is fatal in the news agency business (p.436).

If Kyodo cannot compete with American, British and French news agencies, the same is true of Russian, Chinese, and German news agencies. This "language handicap" can be applied not only to the news agency business but also to all other international businesses dealing in news media. In sum, American, British, and French international news media are enjoying a "monopolistic situation" protected by their languages. Under monopolistic situations free entry, free competition, or free choice are de facto limited. The implication of our finding (that the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY is the most important determinant) is that the U.S., the U.K. and France enjoy the privilege of transmitting their views to the world more effectively than Russia, China, Japan, or Germany.

## Summary and Conclusions

Many people have said that the empirical study of international news flows lacked reliability because it is at the mercy of what happens during the research period. Although this problem may not have been completely solved, this research indicates that it can be minimized by the effective use of “dummy variables”. A dummy variable INCIDENT was used in this research, but obviously it was not sufficient because it takes only two values, 0 and 1. When we included CHINESE LANGUAGE and RUSSIAN LANGUAGE as dummy variables, our intention was to compare their influences on international news flows with other major international languages such as ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH, GERMAN, and ARABIC. Contrary to our initial intention, however, CHINESE and RUSSIAN LANGUAGES actually functioned as second and third dummy variables to offset the influences of unusual events during our research period: the World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Chechyan conflict.

Dummy variables do not change the shape of the regression line. They only *shift* the line upward or downward. Therefore, after the dummy variables representing unusual events during the research period are removed, the remaining variables may be considered to explain the international news flows *under normalcy*. The top five factors that seem to explain international news flows under normalcy were: (1) the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, (2) the amount of TRADE between the recipient country and the MIFC, (3) COMMON LANGUAGE, (4) GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE, and (5), the amount of the DEFENSE BUDGET of the MIFC.

However, as discussed in regional analyses, there existed some regional characteristics. For example, it was found that SPANISH LANGUAGE was an important determinant in South America.

Furthermore, according to our regional analyses, the region that looked most “problematic” was Eastern Europe followed by the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific. Compared with these three regions, Africa, South America, Western Europe (not to speak of North America) looked “healthier”. Apart from the issue of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY to be mentioned later, news flows in the latter four regions were determined by factors congruent with the “market mechanism theories” such as GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE, SPANISH LANGUAGE (in South America), and the amount of TRADE. (Although some people might argue that SPANISH LANGUAGE and TRADE are factors congruent with the “[information and cultural] imperialism theories”, I don’t think it persuasive in the modern world situation). In addition, mass media in the latter four regions cover news about countries within the same region more than in the former three regions.

Of course, this is a rough comparison. Eastern Europe as a region and Asia and the Pacific as a region, for example, are very different in terms of the size of area and the size of each member country. It may be natural that small countries in

Eastern Europe, perpetually intimidated by a giant country like Russia, pay more attention to outside powers than their immediate neighbors.

In 1995 when this survey was conducted, the political, economic, and military influence of the United States was overwhelming. This fact influenced or “distorted” the overall results of our research. Let us call this special effect the “American effect.” The effect of GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE was obviously affected by this “American effect.” Normally, information coming in from a neighborhood is more valuable than information from a distance. This is known as Zipf’s Law (Zipf, 1946). However, the information from the United States was so important that the “American effect” overrode this well-known “law” in many regions of the world. As a result, the strength of GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE as a determinant factor was weaker than we had anticipated.

COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP also seemed to be affected by the “American effect.” Many ex-colonies of the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Russia (we coded ex-Soviet Union satellite countries as “colonies”) nowadays pay more attention to the United States than to their former colonial masters. For example, Indonesia (ex-colony of the Netherlands) and Malaysia (ex-colony of the U.K.) nowadays pay more attention to the United States than the Netherlands or the U.K. This is the “American effect” in news flows. As a result, the COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP in the past as a determinant factor of news flows was found to have little significance except in the Middle East. The Middle East was the only region where this factor was found to be statistically significant.

Are the “trade winds” in international news flows changeable? The answer is yes and no. News flows strongly reflect political, economic, and military relationships among nations. If these change, news flows change as well. Immediately following the Second World War or even in the 1960s and 70s, those powers who won the victory dominated world politics and the economy. It was reflected in the pattern of news flows. That is why Schramm wrote in 1964 the following based on an empirical survey of 13 countries:

[News] flows from Europe and North America to the other countries. It flows from the United States and the Soviet Union to all other countries (Schramm, 1964, p.61).

At this time other major powers that were defeated in the Second World War, i.e., Germany, Japan, and Italy were weak and news from these countries was scant. Although China was a victorious country in the Second World War, it had to go through a serious civil war and the disastrous confusion of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, news flow from China in the 1960s and 70s was also scant.

By 1995 when our survey was conducted, Germany, Japan, Italy, and China had rebounded to their “natural” positions as political, economic, or military

powers. This is probably the reason why the results of our survey indicate that the world structure, and therefore the pattern of news flows as well, may not have changed much compared with the 1930s. In this sense, the “trade winds” of the 1990s might be considered similar to those of the 1930s. If countries like India, Brazil, and Indonesia grow as political, economic, or military powers, the “trade winds” may change yet again.

The factor that was found to be most important in this research, the existence of INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY, is obviously a “structural” factor as long as its monopoly is guaranteed or protected by language. As already discussed, the label INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY does not designate specific news agencies in the U.S., the U.K. and France. Rather, it represents international news media in general in these three countries. International news media in these three countries have played critical roles in world politics especially during wartime. As a result of two world wars, Germany and Japan have dropped in the rankings (or were “dragged down” depending on how you look at it) from center to semi-periphery or “partial center” (in the sense that they are now dependent on one or two of the above three powers politically and militarily). If Russia and China wish to remain center, they need to pay attention not only to their military and economy but also to the hegemonic power of language.

## NOTES

1. For example, a Korean Japanologist, Lee O. Young, argued in his best-selling book entitled *The “Contraction” Oriented Japanese* (in Japanese) that the Japanese have always been remarkably good at microscopic technologies. According to him, the Japanese have “contracted” everything from gardens, houses (for tea ceremonies), and trees (bonsai), to many fine craft works, and explained why the Japanese (at that time) could excel over others in microchip technologies. Furthermore, he added, that the Japanese are doomed to fail when they try to “expand” themselves (Lee, 1982).
2. This research was made possible by many grants from the following organizations: the Hoso Bunka Foundation (1996), the International Communication Foundation (1998-2000), and, the Institute for Communications Research at Keio University (1998-2001). In addition, many small funds at Keio University were invested to cover basic running costs. The television part of our data set was created by Professor Hagiwara Shigeru of Keio University and about one half of our data were created by another team led by Professors Ogawa Bunya (Tokyo International University) and Tanaka Yoshihisa (Hosei University). I thank Professor Yoshizoe Yasuto (Aoyama Gakuin University), a renowned statistician and econometrician, for valuable advice regarding statistical techniques used in this research. Many students at Keio, Tokyo International, and Hosei Universities contributed in creating our data set and data analyses. I would especially like to thank the following student leaders: Sako Shinsuke (Hosei University), Kondo Tomohiko (Keio University), Morishige Tatsuya (Keio University), Miyazaki Masahito (Keio University), Nishimura Keita (Keio University), Kuno Jun (Keio University) and Unno Asami (Keio University). The Japanese names in this article are written in their traditional order, the family name first followed by the given name.

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