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Transnational coverage of news in European Union (2010)

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Methodological Notes¹

The dataset collects data and information from several European sources, providing a useful means in order to study the systemic factors correlated with the transnational media coverage of foreign news.

In particular, data is based on the following sources:

Economisti Associati

In the framework of a feasibility study for the preparatory action “Erasmus for journalists” commissioned by the DG Information Society of the European Commission, and implemented by a consortium led by the Evaluation Partnership and involving the European Journalism Centre, Economisti Associati has released a large dataset on the transnational coverage of foreign news. based on 148 national media and 1.96 million articles published between 16 August and 15 November 2010 by the main general and business newspapers in the EU countries².

For each European country the foreign news coverage was measured in terms of the presence of references to other EU countries in articles published in national media. References to foreign EU countries are sought in the title and body of every article through search strings containing the name of the target countries, translated into various languages.

Once aggregated by nationality of origin, the total number of articles referring to each target country is divided by the total number of articles published in the source country, which represents a normalized measure for the country-specific number of outlets and articles per outlet. Given any ordered pair of countries (i,j) , the unit of analysis, p_{ij} , is therefore the fraction of articles in the source country i referring to the destination country j among all the articles published in i ; this can be conceived as the probability that an article published in i refers to j .

Dataset includes also the logistic transformation of p_{ij} , $\text{logit}(p_{ij}) = \log\left(\frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}}\right)$ – that is, the log of the odds in favour of picking an article referring to j randomly choosing among all the articles published in i .

Eurostat

Beyond to the foreign news coverage, dataset consists of six Eurostat variables concerning to, respectively, the population size of each European country, the level of their economic development and the trade ties between each pair of countries.

The population size is the average of the country's population over the period 2000-2010. The level of economic development is the average of the GDP per capita in purchasing power standard (PPS) over the period 2000-2010 in International Dollars. The trade ties are measured by two variables: the average of total bilateral trade flows (import and export) in Euros; the bilateral trade flows as a fraction of the total international trade flows of the source country averaged over the period 1999–2001.

European Central Bank

In order to capture the intensity of country's experiencing concerning financial distress, dataset also includes the long-term interest rates from the European Central Bank (ECB), which reflect the perceived country risk. The variable is the harmonized long-term interest rates average in destination country over the period August-November 2010, retrieved in 2013.

1 The methodological notes are curated by G. Vittucci Marzetti and UniData – Bicocca Data Archive. For more information, please contact giuseppe.vittucci@unimib.it

2 For more informazion about the full list of newspapers covered and the selection criteria see Economisti Associati (2011), *Feasibility Study for the Preparatory Action “ERASMUS for Journalists”*: Statistical Review. Specific Contract 30-CE-0343284/00-24, European Commission

Center d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales

Two variables included in the dataset are concerned to physical and linguistic distance between countries, produced by CEPII (Center d'études prospectives et d'informations internationales).

For each pairs of countries, the physical distance is based on bilateral distances between the largest cities of those two countries, those inter-city distances being weighted by the share of the city in the overall country's population. This procedure can be used in a totally consistent way for both internal and international distances. Using latitudes, longitudes and populations data of main agglomerations of all countries available in the World Gazetteer web site, the distance formula used is a generalized mean of city-to-city bilateral distances developed by Head and Mayer (2002)³, which takes the arithmetic mean and the harmonic means as special cases.

Moreover, the language proximity is based on the official or national languages and languages spoken by at least 20% of the population of the country, using the information available in the Ethnologue web site, and the CIA Word Factbook. The dummy variable has value 1 for common official language.

Chapel Hill Expert Survey

Dataset includes two variables concerning to the country's political position. The first is referred to the left-right ideological position of the parties in power in each country; the second measures the ideological position of the parties in power about European integration. Using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010 data, the first variables is the average of all parties forming government coalition on left-right ideological position in each country. The variable has value 0 for extreme left position, and value 10 for extreme right position. The second variable is the average of all parties position values forming government coalition on pro-EU stance in each country. The variable has value 1 for strongly oppose position, and value 7 for strongly in favour position⁴.

Researcher's variables (10)

In addition of information from the above-mentioned sources, the principal investigators have create ten dichotomous filter variables in order to study the following 5 dimensions hypothetically connected to the transnational media coverage of foreign news:

1. conflict

Since events connected with the idea of "conflict" could be news factors, two dummy variables are added in the dataset in order to test whether Ireland and Greece were particularly covered because of their financial and economic conditions, as well as their resort to EU and intergovernmental loans. Then, the two variables select respectively flows to Greece and Ireland.

2. physical closeness

Beyond CEPII's data, a new dichotomous variable is added in order to select all neighboring countries for a given country.

3. euro-related dimension

A dummy variable is created in order to study the euro-related dimension of transnational news. Then, the variable selects flow between Euro-zone members.

3 Head K., Mayer T. (2002), *Illusory Border Effects: Distance Mismeasurement Inflates Estimates of Home Bias in Trade*, CEPII Working Paper 2002-01

4 For each party forming government coalition the orientation towards European integration assume the following values: 1 = Strongly opposed; 2 = Opposed; 3 = Somewhat opposed; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Somewhat in favor; 6 = In favor; 7 = Strongly in favor. The value of the variable is the average of the different orientations in the government coalition.

4. international political meetings

Two additional variables are created in order to analyze the attractive effects of international political meetings among European countries. In particular, the first dichotomous variable selects flows to the larger countries in the Euro-zone that may have received greater coverage because of their participation in G8 meetings (France, Germany, Italy and UK); the second variable selects flow to Germany and France to test the effect of the Deauville meeting held in October 2010.

5. historical and cultural linkages

Since historical and cultural linkages among countries could strengthen foreign coverage, four dummy variables are added in the dataset in order to test whether bilateral news coverage is positively affected by the existence of historical ties. Then, the four variables select respectively flows to Comecon countries, Baltic countries, Benelux countries, Czech Republic and Slovakia.