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Tracking Network Salience: A Transnational Study of Inter-Media Agenda-Setting in the Iranian-American Crisis 2020

Abstract

The present study investigated the international intermedia network agenda setting among eleven news websites from four different languages and three political orientations, in the aftermath of the assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Our study aimed to explore the potential for a given medium to shape the agenda of other countries' media, and to identify if language or political orientation may influence intermedia network agenda setting at both the issue and attribute levels.

The findings of our study are consistent with previous research on intermedia agenda setting, which has shown that media outlets can influence the issues and attributes that are deemed important by other media outlets. Our study extends this research by exploring the dynamics of intermedia agenda setting in the international sphere and for an unexpected situation.

Our findings showed that intermedia network agenda setting occurred among the websites studied, with high correlations between issues and a greater number of relationships between attributes. Interestingly, we found that the New York Times was not able to set an agenda in either issue or attribute levels in contrast to Tehran Times which has one of the most powerful agendas to affect many other agendas including New York Times.

Keywords: Network analysis, international intermedia agenda setting, international newspapers, Soleimani assassination, Cross-lagged correlation, Rozelle-Campbell baseline.

1. Introduction

During Donald Trump's presidency, a pivotal shift occurred in the dynamic between the United States and Iran. Trump's decision in 2018 to reimpose sanctions on Iran and withdraw from the nuclear deal marked the beginning of heightened tensions. Subsequently, he esca-

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lated the situation by tightening sanctions on Iran's oil exports. The relationship reached a boiling point in 2019 following attacks on six oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman, an incident Iran denied involvement in, attributing it to American disinformation and warmongering. Matters worsened when the US accused an Iran-backed militia of killing an American contractor, prompting the targeted assassination of General Soleimani, a move that further strained relations between the two nations (Kirkpatrick et al., 2019; Wallerå, 2020).

Soleimani, Iran's esteemed military leader and one of the country's most influential figures after the supreme leader, was assassinated while on a diplomatic mission in Iraq, targeted by a US drone strike. The attack sparked immediate reactions from Iran, Iraq, the US, and the international community ("Qassem Soleimani: Timeline of Events Following Iranian General's Assassination", 2020). The assassination polarized global opinions, with some viewing it as a triumph against terrorism and others as a dangerous escalation that could incite widespread conflict. Demonstrations both in support of and against the assassination erupted worldwide, reflecting the divisive nature of the event. This assassination is considered a prominent global event that occurred in the first half of 2020 (Alshaabi, 2021).

The incident drew significant media coverage and analysis, with international outlets scrutinizing the implications and aftermath. However, reporting on such complex international events poses financial challenges for news organizations, particularly in conflict zones like Iran, where maintaining a full-time correspondent presence is costly and resource-intensive (Izadi, 2022; Orgeret, 2016; Strauß, 2019). As a result, media outlets often rely on external sources for coverage, a phenomenon known as international inter-media agenda-setting in media studies (Mohammed & McCombs, 2021; Morales & Menechelli, 2024).

2. Literature review

2.1. International Inter-media agenda setting (IIMAS)

According to McCombs (2014), Inter-Media Agenda Setting (IMAS) is a phenomenon that pertains to the impact that different news media have on one another (p. 112). This phenomenon explains why and when one media's agenda can affect the agendas of other media outlets. Unlike the traditional agenda-setting theory, which explains how the media shape the public's agenda, IMAS examines how media agendas are developed through journalistic co-orientation. IMAS has three levels, as the original theory: The first level identifies the transfer of objects— what is being reported; the second discusses the transfer of attributes — how is it being reported; and the third covers the transfer of a network which could be an attribute network or an object network (Guo & McCombs, 2011). Adding international scope, International intermedia agenda-setting (IIMAS) focuses on the impact of international media agendas on other international media agendas, and explores the circumstances under which this influence occurs (Mohammed & McCombs, 2021).

IIMAS occurs when media outlets lack their own correspondents to cover foreign news events, leading them to rely on coverage from other sources. However the selection of news stories is not uniform across all outlets, as gatekeepers assess various factors when making decisions (Golan, 2006; Harjuniemi, 2023; Mohammed & McCombs, 2021).

Previous studies on events like the Arab Spring have shown that international media rely on each other's coverage when an event is newsworthy and there is a lack of correspondents.

These studies focused on the coverage and dissemination of the revolution through different media channels, including TV, newspapers, and social media (Alasuutari et al., 2013; Dube, 2013; Guzman, 2016; Russell, 2011). Although not all these studies are based on IIMAS theory, the outcomes assert that when an event is newsworthy and there is a lack of correspondents, practically all international media rely upon each other's coverage.

The rise of hybrid media and accessible online editions of international newspapers has made it easier to monitor stories published by news organizations in other countries. Qian (2009) found that the agenda of the New York Times could influence the coverage of Chinese newspapers during the Beijing Olympics. Elite newspapers like the New York Times still hold significant influence and can shape the agenda of others (Livingston & Asmolov, 2010; Vargo & Guo, 2017).

While studies have confirmed the existence of IIMAS, the direction of influence remains unclear. Du (2013) analyzed eleven newspapers across different countries and languages, observing evidence of IIMAS but without identifying a consistent dominant agenda. Mohammed & McCombs (2021) also found that no single agenda consistently dominates others among international media. Other studies, such as Wallsten (2007), Vargo & Guo (2017), Billard (2019), Stern, Livan, & Smith (2020), and Zhao & Zhang, (2023) recognize the reciprocal relationships and interactions between agendas over time.

During the Belgian election campaign in 2014, Harder, Sevenans, and Aelst (2017) explored inter-media hypotheses. They found mutual relations between Twitter, online and offline media, that vary in effect direction and strength. They presume that if the incident is unexpected, the results will be different. This is where this study sets in. It goes beyond the restrictions of prior studies and concentrates on one unforeseen incident, the assassination of General Soleimani. The incident and its aftermath were covered by numerous international newspapers and considered internationally newsworthy incident. This study focuses on the third (the newest) level which is IIMNAS.

2.2. Network agenda-setting

Guo and McCombs (2011) introduced the concept of network agenda-setting, a model that emphasizes news media's role in shaping individuals' cognitive networks. In this framework, media establish connections between different attributes of an issue, influencing how the public perceives these connections. So, according to network agenda-setting theory, the frequency of association between two elements in news coverage influences the audience's perception of their interconnectedness (Tahamtan et al., 2022).

This model posits that issue and attributes are transmitted to the public as networks of interconnected elements. For instance, in the context of Soleimani assassination, attributes like Iranian revenge, nuclear file, and Iranian Militia can be collectively presented to the public as interconnected components (Guo & McCombs, 2011). Consequently, when individuals think about one aspect, they are prompted to also consider related attributes. This method not only dictates what issues and attributes individuals should focus on but also guides how these issues and attributes are mentally linked (Arman & McClurg, 2024).

A key distinction between traditional agenda setting and network agenda setting lies in how attributes are conveyed to the public. While traditional agenda-setting treats issues and attributes as separate entities, network agenda-setting posits that these elements are transmitted simultaneously as a network of interconnected attributes. Whilst the first and second levels of agenda set-

ting focus on disseminating discrete objects and/or attributes, the NAS model evaluates whether the established association can be transferred among agendas. (Liu, Geng & Liu, 2022).

2.3. International intermedia Network agenda setting (IIMNAS)

Intermedia Network agenda setting proposes that the media can transfer the importance of a bundle of objects, including issues, stories, ideas, or figures, as well as their attributes, to other media instead of transferring it to the public in network agenda setting (Vargo & Guo, 2017). However, studies asserted many factors could affect this process. According to Vliegenthart & Walgrave (2008), same-language influences is stronger than other language influences; nevertheless, Vu, et al. (2018) discovered that the language barrier does not eliminate all influences.

Guo et al. (2016) compared the coverage of the Iraq war in six different countries and discovered positive and significant network correlations among the various news agendas, despite their diverse political and cultural attitudes towards the war, while Mohammed (2018) demonstrated that, despite analysing three elite newspapers in the same language, allied countries have a stronger IIMNAS on the attribute level (Mohamed, 2018). Similar result from recent studies on media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war which suggest that political orientation significantly influences media coverage (Fisher, 2023; Hyzen & Bulck, 2024; El-Khouly 2022).

This study investigates the impact of language and political barriers on international newspapers' relationships by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: At the issue level, do language and political orientation affect the correlation between international newspapers agendas?

RQ2: At the attribute level, do language and political orientation affect the correlation between international newspapers agendas?

Recent studies have found reciprocal relationships among media agendas without a dominant medium consistently leading (Vargo & Guo, 2017; Vu et al., 2014; H. Wang & Shi, 2022). Interactions between different media agendas are found to be interconnected rather than hierarchical, suggesting uniform and reciprocal interactions across various media agendas (Vu, Guo, & McCombs, 2014; Vargo & Guo, 2017).

Studies in the international context have also revealed similar findings, with evidence of IIMNAS among newspapers from different countries over varying time frames (Mohammed, 2018; Vu, Guo, & McCombs, 2014). Vliegenthart & Walgrave (2008) and Vargo & Guo (2017) detected that the most efficient time lag is from one to multiple days, however, they all discovered positive and significant network correlations among the various news agendas. Similarly, studies by Su, Hu, and Lee (2020) and Su and Hu (2020) revealed reciprocal relations among major international newspapers and Twitter discussions when reporting on the anti-extradition bill movement in Hong Kong and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute.

Most studies have identified reciprocal and mutual relations among media agendas at different levels of intermedia agenda-setting. However, few studies have determined the strength and direction of these effects. In the international sphere, studies disclosed that if there is domination it usually comes from the US media on other countries' media.

While many studies have focused on issues in IIMNAS, fewer have analyzed attributes. This study delves into international inter-media network agenda setting on multiple levels across eleven countries and four languages, examining the influence of network agendas of international newspapers on each other.

This study investigates whether the network agenda of an international newspaper can influence the network agendas of newspapers in other countries. Thus, the current research questions addressed are:

RQ3: at the issue level, is there a dominant network agenda between analysed newspapers across time?

RQ4: at the attribute level, is there a dominant network agenda between analysed newspapers across time?

3. Methodology

This study pursues prior studies that revealed significant agenda-setting correlations among newspapers in the international context (Mohammed & McCombs, 2021; Vu et al., 2018). It investigates the third level of inter-media agenda-setting in the international sphere focusing on both issue and attribute levels across eleven newspapers. This study, like conventional agenda-setting research, utilizes content analysis for these newspapers.

3.1. Time lag

Vargo & Guo (2017) and Vliegenthart & Walgrave (2008) found that inter-media agenda-setting is a short-term process with limited long-term impact. In this study, the news coverage of the Soleimani assassination is examined from January 3rd, 2020, to January 10th, 2020. The authors divided this period into two time frames: January 3rd to 6th and January 7th to 10th. This specific timeframe corresponds to a period when the media extensively covered and analyzed the issue, as the world awaited Iran's response and speculated on the possibility of a third world war. Following the Iranian strike on two American bases in Iraq and subsequent statements from both the American and Iranian Presidents expressing their desire to avoid escalation, international media attention towards this issue diminished.

3.2. Sample of countries

Authors choose countries according to political orientation and language. We commenced with the conflict parties: the United States, Iran, and Iraq. Then we took their antagonists, Russia (the United States adversary), Saudi Arabia, and Egypt (as adversaries to Iran). Furthermore, we looked at allies like China, Israel, and at countries in other roles such as Switzerland (the mediator between Iran and the USA), and other powerful European countries like Germany and Austria. As a fair result, eleven countries have been chosen.

3.3. Newspaper sample

Two criteria guided researchers in determining which online newspapers qualified for study. First and foremost, it should be one of the most prominent daily newspapers in its region: second, it should provide a free archive on its website. Furthermore, we considered previous studies' results. Depending on Vu et al. (2018) the most prominent newspapers in the US, Switzerland, Israel, Germany, and Austria are accordingly New York Times, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, The Jerusalem Post, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Der Standard. According

to Ahmadian & Farahani (2014) study, Tehran Times is Iran's voice and the most influential English-language newspaper. According to McCombs & Mohammed (2021) Al-Ahram is Egypt's most influential newspaper. According to Guanjie Wang (2013), China Daily is China's most prominent English-language newspaper. The authors tried to recruit Persian and Chinese coders to have a Persian and Chinese newspaper but with no success.

Okaz and Aalriyadh are the most significant Saudi newspapers, according to Shalhob (Shalhob, 2007) and Ba'thman (Ba'thman, 2021). Notably, authors found only one article about assassinating Solimane in Okaz newspaper, hence, Aalriyadh has been analyzed instead. For Iraqi newspapers (Al-Rawi, 2020) asserts that Al-Zawraa was always one of the most notable in Iraq. We used the "statista" website to select one of the crucial Russian newspapers, and as a fair result Rossiiskaia Gazeta has been analyzed. Table 1 shows the newspaper's sample.

Table 1. Newspapers' sample and number of topics analyzed

No	Countries	Newspapers	Language	Political orientation	number of topics
1.	Russia	Rossiiskaia Gazeta	Russian	With Iran	14
2.	Iran	Tehran Times	English	With Iran	112
3.	China	China daily	English	With Iran	32
4.	USA	New York Times	English	With USA	15
5.	Israel	The Jerusalem Post	English	With USA	23
6.	Saudi Arabia	Aalriyadh	Arabic	With USA	51
7.	Egypt	Al-Ahram Egypt	Arabic	Neutral	108
8.	Iraq	AlZawra Iraq	Arabic	With Iran	19
9.	Swiss	Neue Zürcher Zeitung	German	Neutral	5
10.	Austria	Der Standard	German	Neutral	8
11.	Germany	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	German	With USA	10
Total					397

3.4. Data collection

To collect data, online archives were used for all newspapers. The search terms were Soleimani (in various spellings) as a keyword from January 3rd, 2020, to January 10th 2020. Only stories with the assassination as the main theme were added to the sample.

The entire story has been analyzed to determine the issues and attributes. The main topic in a given story was defined as an issue, while the subtopics have been defined as attributes (Ghanem, 1997; S. Mohammed, 2018). The transmission of IIMNAS at issue and attribute levels from one newspaper to another has been analyzed over two-time lags. To ensure the validity of our coding book, we initially selected a random sample of 10% of the articles and analyzed them. Table 2 presents a complete breakdown of the issues and attributes. This article's sampling unit is dyad, which relates to the co-occurrence of two elements (Issues or attributes) in the same news story.

Table 2. A list of the detailed issues and attributes

Issues	Attributes
Assassination Soleimani Operation	Reasons The Operation details Results
public Iranian responses	Solimani Funeral demonstration against US or Israel
Iraqi responses	responses to save its land responses against US responses with Iran responses with the USA
American responses	war with Iran preparations Against Soleimani assassination responses to official Iranian statements
International responses	with the USA Against USA with Iran Against Iran Neutral
Iranian Nuclear File	Uranium production agreement (JCPOA) With the Iranian Uranium enrichment Against the Iranian Uranium enrichment
official Iranian responses	Iranian threatening to Israel Iranian threatening to US strike US military bases other responses to US statements The Ukrainian Plane
Others	

4. Research strategy

In order to achieve the goals of this study, the empirical research has been divided into steps.

4.1. First: preparing for matrices

This step involves learning about the sampled newspapers' issues, and attributes agendas. Table 1 displays the total number of stories analyzed from each newspaper, along with their language and political orientation. This analysis yielded eight issues and twenty-five attributes (table 2).

4.2. Second: network agenda

This study employs network analysis to investigate how the sampled websites portrayed General Soleimani's assassination comparably. Specifically, the study compared the sampled websites' networked agendas, based on issues and attributes, to gain a more nuanced perspective on the networks presented by this news coverage.

Following previous research, to examine the Network Agenda Setting (NAS) model and answer RQ1, and RQ2, we built issue-based and attribute-based matrices for each newspaper as network agenda analysis is interested in dyads showing how frequently every issue appears with every other issue and how frequently each attribute appears with every other attribute for each newspaper.

Recall that Non-directional networks consist of edges that represent the strength of the relationship between nodes, which represent issues or attributes. These networks focus on the connections between issues or attributes, rather than solely counting the occurrences or frequency of each individual issue or attribute. We divided the sample based on language and political orientation. For language, English newspapers include New York Times, The Jerusalem post, Tehran Times, and China Daily. Arabic newspapers are Al-Riyadh, Al-Zawraa, Al-Ahram. German newspapers include Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Der Standard, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung whereas the Russian newspaper, Rossiiskaia Gazeta, stands alone.

For political orientation, we divided the sample into three categories: allied with the US (New York Times, The Jerusalem post, Al-Riyadh, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung), allied with Iran (Tehran Times, China Daily, Al-Zawraa, Rossiiskaia Gazeta), neutral (Al-Ahram, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Der Standard)

We then summed the English newspapers that were pro-America (New York Times and The Jerusalem Post) as one matrix, the English newspapers that were pro-Iran (Tehran Times, China Daily) as one matrix, The German newspapers which were on neutral side (Der Standard, Neue Zürcher Zeitung) as one matrix; all other categories were presented with only one newspaper as shown in table 1.

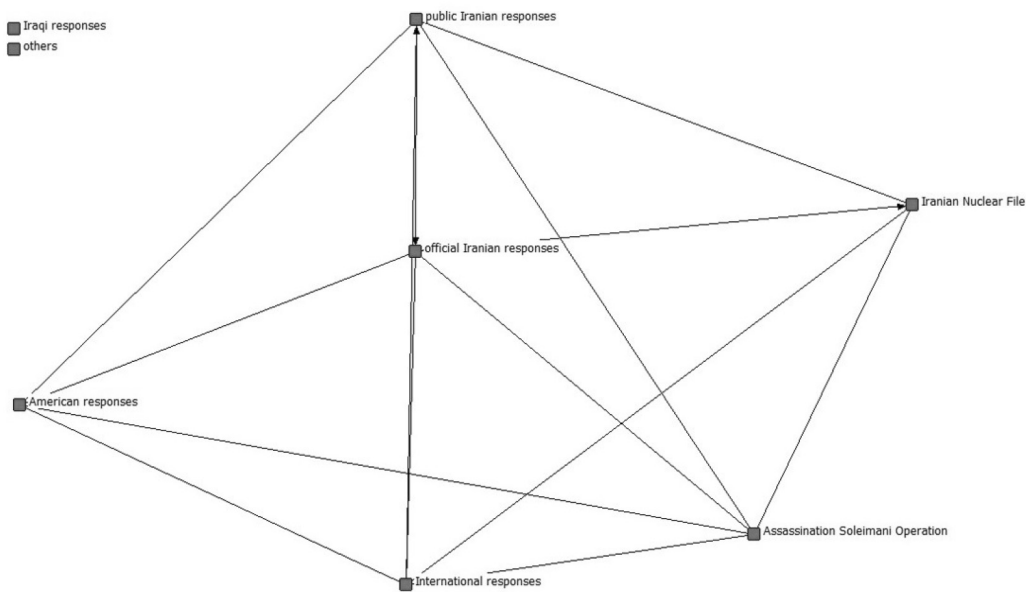
We used UCINET 6.631 program (Borgatti et al., 2002) to:

- Draw the network agenda by Net Draw tool to visualize the results (Borgatti, 2002).

For example, Figure (A) illustrates the network of issues covered by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper. As depicted, most of the issues are interconnected, except for “Iraqi responses” and “others.” This indicates that whenever the newspaper mentions a particular issue, it also references at least one other related topic, excluding Iraqi responses and others.

The isolation of “Iraqi responses” and “others” in the graph suggests that the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has not connected these issues to any other topics in its coverage. While the newspaper may have discussed these topics, it has not established any relationships or associations between them and other relevant issues. Consequently, both “Iraqi responses” and “others” remain disconnected from the main network of topics, highlighting their lack of integration within the newspaper’s coverage.

Figure A. German newspaper network agenda (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)



- Measure Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) correlations to examine the correlation between all the matrices.

QAP correlation was calculated for issue-based and attribute-based matrices among all matrices. (QAP) correlation, is a frequent measurement used in network agenda-setting studies (e.g. Liu, Geng &Liu, 2022; Mohammed & McCombs, 2021; Tahamtan et al., 2022; Tang, 2021). “The QAP correlation regresses is a dependent matrix on one or more independent matrices and computes the significance of the r-square and regression coefficient” (Tang, 2021, p.181). The QAP value is divided into three categories. A weak correlation is represented by a value less than 0.31. A moderate correlation is indicated by a value between 0.31 and 0.69, while a value above 0.70 suggests a strong correlation between the matrices being compared (ĀĀĀ, 2018).

4.3. Third: inter-media network agenda-setting

To answer RQ3 and RQ4, we divided data from each newspaper into Time 1 (T1; from January 3rd to 6th) and Time 2 (T2; from January 7th to 10th). To measure IIMNAS, Cross-lagged correlations and Rozelle-Campbell baseline were used. The Rozelle-Campbell baseline was calculated with QAP correlations. QAP correlation was computed among all newspapers in T1 and T2 for issue-based and attribute-based matrices.

Cross-lagged correlations with Rozelle-Campbell baseline can explore the causal relationship between two different media X and Y at two different times. They help to determine which agenda influenced the other. Rosenthal (2015) detailed that “This requires computing three pairs of correlations: the synchronous correlations $X1Y1$ (X in $T1 * Y$ in $T1$) and $X2Y2$ (X in $T2 * Y$ in $T2$), the autocorrelations $X1X2$ and $Y1Y2$, and the cross-lagged correlations $X1Y2$ and $X2Y1$. Synchronous and auto-correlations are used to calculate the Rozelle-Camp-

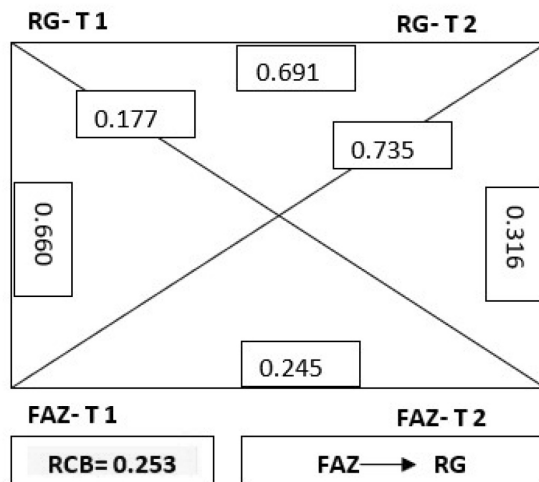
bell baseline value” (p. 20). Utilizing QAP values, we were capable of computing the Rozelle-Campbell baseline formula, which is:

$$\frac{X1/Y1 + X2/Y2}{2} \sqrt{\frac{(X1/X2)^2 + (Y1/Y2)^2}{2}}$$

The range of the baseline is from -1 to 1. If one agenda affected the other one, two conditions need to occur: first, the cross-lag correlation between X at T1 and Y at T2 must exceed the cross-lag correlation between Y at T1 and X at T2. Second, the cross-lag correlation between X at T1 and Y at T2 must exceed the Rozelle-Campbell baseline statistic. Thus, if $X1Y2 > Y1X2$ and $RCB > Y1X1$, we conclude that X1 has an influence on Y2” (Rosenthal, 2015).

For example, The relation between (Rossiiskaia Gazeta) and (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) is shown in figure (B). The correlation between Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) in Time 1 and Rossiiskaia Gazeta (RG) in Time 2 (0.735) is greater than the correlation between Rossiiskaia Gazeta at Time 1 and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in Time 2 (0.177) and the Rozelle-Campbell baseline (0.253). This means Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung set the Rossiiskaia Gazeta agenda in Time 2.

Figure B. The relation between (Rossiiskaia Gazeta) and (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung).



4.4. Inter-coder Reliability

Three authors have coded the sampled newspapers. We had one independent coder for the Russian newspaper only. To test inter-coder reliability, two authors coded approximately 15% of the obtained data from English (37 stories) and Arabic (27 stories) newspapers to measure agreement levels. For the Russian and German language newspapers, we had one independent coder in each language analyzing around 15% of the articles (3 stories for the Russian and 5 stories for the German newspapers). Those articles were randomly selected.

Inter-coder reliability was computed using Holsti's reliability formula, $CR = 2M / (N1 + N2)$, where M is the number of times the coders concurred, and N1, N2 represent the total number of each coder's coding decisions” (Rourke, Anderson, Garrison & Archer, 2001, p.11).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), intercoder reliability greater than 75% is desired. All variables fell within acceptable levels.

Table 3. intercoder reliability for each category in newspapers

Issues	Newspaper Attributes	Rossiiskaia Gazeta	Arabic newspapers	English newspapers	German newspapers
Assassination Soleimani Operation	Reasons	% 100	100%	97%	% 80
	The Operation details	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	Results	% 100	96%	95.9%	% 100
public Iranian responses	Solimani Funeral	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	demonstration against US or Israel	% 100	100%	% 100	% 100
Iraqi responses	responses to save its land	% 100	96%	97%	% 100
	responses against US	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	responses with Iran	% 100	96%	100%	% 100
	responses with the USA	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
American responses	war with Iran preparations	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	Against Soleimani assassination	% 100	100%	97%	%80
	responses to official Iranian statements	% 100	96%	95.9%	% 100
International responses	with the USA	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	Against USA	% 100	100%	97%	% 100
	with Iran	% 100	100%	100%	%80
	Against Iran	% 100	96%	97%	%80
	Neutral	% 100	100%	89%	%80
Iranian Nuclear File	Uranium production agreement (JCPOA)	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	With the Iranian Uranium enrichment	% 100	96%	95.9%	% 100
	Against the Iranian Uranium enrichment	% 100	96%	100%	% 100
official Iranian responses	Iranian threatening to Israel	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	Iranian threatening to US	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	strike US military bases	% 100	100%	100%	% 100
	other responses to US statements	% 100	92.5%	91.8%	% 100
	The Ukrainian Plane	% 100	% 100	100%	% 100
Others		% 100	96%	97%	% 100

5. Results

5.1. Network Agenda setting (NAS) at issue level

To address RQ1, QAP correlation was conducted across all tiers. Newspapers are divided into 8 tiers which are: pro-America English newspapers (New York Times and The Jerusalem Post), pro-Iran English newspapers (Tehran Times, China Daily), neutral German

newspapers (Der Standard, Neue Zürcher Zeitung), pro-America German newspaper (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung), Arabic newspapers that are pro-American (Al-Riyadh), pro-Iran (Al-Zawraa), and neutral newspapers (Al-Ahram). Pro-Iranian Russian newspaper (Rossiskaia Gazeta). Figures 1 through 8 in the appendix represent network agendas.

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate high, moderate, and weak significant relations among various matrices. Looking at the neutral Arabic newspaper network agenda, it has moderate and significant relations with pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.423), pro-American Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.431), pro-Iranian English newspaper network (0.590), and German newspaper network agenda with neutral orientation (0.591). Although it had relationships with other Arabic agendas, the strongest relation was with German newspapers with similar political orientations (neutral).

Similarly, pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper network agenda has moderate and significant relations with pro-American Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.606), pro-Iranian English newspaper network agenda (0.570), and neutral German newspaper network agenda (0.643). Although it has relations with other Arabic agenda and newspapers with identical political agenda, its prominent relation was with a network agenda that is different in language and political orientation.

The most remarkable result is that the network agenda of a pro-American German newspaper matches perfectly with the network agenda of a pro-Iranian Russian newspaper. Both have moderate relations with the pro-Iranian English newspaper network agenda (0.623), the pro-American English newspaper network agenda (0.582), and the neutral German newspaper network agenda (0.639). Both have relations with network agendas that differ in language and political orientation.

Furthermore, pro-American Arabic newspaper network agenda has moderate and significant relation with pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.606), neutral Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.431), pro-Iranian English newspaper network agenda (0.570), and German newspaper network agenda with neutral orientation (0.571). Its highest relation was with an Arabic network agenda with distinct political orientation (with Iran).

Ultimately, the pro-Iranian English newspaper network agenda has six moderate and significant relations in addition to one high and significant relation. It has moderate relations with neutral Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.590), pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.570), pro-American Arabic newspaper network agenda (0.570), pro-American German newspaper network agenda (0.632), pro-Iranian Russian newspaper network agenda (0.632), neutral German newspaper network agenda (0.795), and pro-American English newspaper network agenda (0.671). Although it has relations with all other network agendas, its highest relation is with a network agenda that differs in language and political orientation (Neutral German network agenda).

Thus, answering RQ1, the results indicate that neither language nor political orientation can predict IIMNAS at issue level.

Table 4. Shows relations between all tiers for issue level

		Neutral Arabic	With Iran Arabic	With USA German	With Iran Russian	With USA Arabic	With Iran English	Neutral German	With USA English
Neutral Arabic	QAP	1.00							
	Sig.	0.000							
With Iran Arabic	QAP	0.423*	1.00						
	Sig.	0.037	0.000						
With USA German	QAP	0.255	0.246	1.00					
	Sig.	0.199	0.170	0.000					
With Iran Russian	QAP	0.255	0.246	1.000 **	1.00				
	Sig.	0.197	0.163	0.000	0.000				
With USA Arabic	QAP	0.431*	0.606 *	0.195	0.195	1.00			
	Sig.	0.048	0.003	0.249	0.261	0.000			
With Iran English	QAP	0.590*	0.570 *	0.632*	0.632 *	0.570 *	1.00		
	Sig.	0.022	0.009	0.018	0.020	0.031	0.000		
Neutral German	QAP	0.591*	0.643 *	0.639 *	0.639 *	0.571 *	0.795 *	1.00	
	Sig.	0.017	0.004	0.029	0.025	0.035	0.008	0.000	
With USA English	QAP	0.186	0.266	0.582 *	0.582 *	0.257	0.671 *	0.403	1.00
	Sig.	0.264	0.172	0.035	0.032	0.218	0.013	0.131	0.000

The RQ3 asks whether there is evidence of IIMNAS among the newspapers sampled. To solve this question, a matrix for each newspaper in each time was created, Correlations among Agendas across times has been conducted, cross-lagged correlations were calculated between a pair of agendas at two points in time and compared with the Rozelle-Campbell baseline statistic to determine the influence direction (e.g. Lopez-Escobar et al., 1997; Roberts & McCombs, 1994). All of these correlations and the influence direction are presented in the appendix in figures 9 to 63.

Applying Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCB) roles, if $X1Y2$ is greater than $Y1X2$ and RCB, and $Y1X2$ is less than RCB, $X1$ sets IIMNAS for $Y2$. If RCB is greater than both correlations, there is no relation; if both correlations are greater than RCB, X and Y have reciprocal relations without dominance for either.

Figures from 9 to 63 show relations among pairs of newspapers in T1 and T2. The results show that the most relations are reciprocal, thus we cannot assert that one agenda set the other. We only have seventeen relations to establish which agenda is the influencer. Tehran Times could set the IIMNAS for 5 newspapers which are Rossiiskaia Gazeta, New York Times, The Jerusalem Post, Al-Ahram, and Der Standard. Rossiiskaia Gazeta could set the IIMNAS for New York Times and Al-Zawra. China Daily could set the IIMNAS for Al-Zawra. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung could set the IIMNAS for Rossiiskaia Gazeta. AL-Riyadh could set the IIMNAS for New York Times. Al-Ahram could set the IIMNAS for New York Times only. The Jerusalem Post could set the IIMNAS for Der Standard. China Daily could set the IIMNAS for Al-Zawra. Neue Zürcher Zeitung could set the IIMNAS for 4 newspapers which

are New York Times, Al-Zawra, Al-Riyadh, and Der Standard. Der Standard could set the IIMNAS for New York Times, and Al-Riyadh.

Answering RQ3, results show evidence of IIMNAS in a short time span (several days), but with no dominance for any of them. Tehran Times in time1 is the most powerful network agenda affecting five other agendas. In contrast to the New York Times which has no impact.

5.2. Attribute network Agenda setting (NAS)

Figures 65 through 72 represented attribute network agendas. In order to address RQ2, the same logic at issue-level is pursued at attribute-level. The results presented in Table5 show moderate, and weak significant relations among different matrices.

Looking at the neutral Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda, it has weak and significant relations with pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.203), pro-American Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.157), pro-Iranian English newspaper attribute network agenda (0.257), with pro-American (0.205), and neutral German newspaper attribute network agenda (0.230). All relations are weak. Although it has relations with other Arabic agendas, but the highest relation was with the pro-Iranian English newspapers.

Identically, pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda has weak and significant relations with pro-American Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.140), and neutral German newspaper attribute network agenda (0.257). Although it has relations with other Arabic agenda, the highest relation was with attribute network agenda that is diverse in language and political orientation.

Although the pro-American German newspaper and the pro-Iranian Russian newspaper agendas have perfect match in issue level, it is disparate here. Pro-American German newspaper attribute network agenda has two weak and two moderate relations with other agendas. It has two weak relations with Russian (0.214), and pro-Iran English (0.230) network attribute agendas. It has two moderate relations with neutral German network attribute agenda (0.478) and with pro-American English network attribute agenda (0.538). The highest relation here is with network attribute agenda with different language, but same political orientation.

Russian network attribute agenda has weak relations with other attribute agendas. It has relations with pro-Iranian English agenda (0.227), and pro-American English agenda (0.195) network attribute agendas. Moreover, it has relations with neutral German (0.225), and pro-American German network attribute agendas. Although all relations are weak, the highest one is with a network that is identical in political orientation.

The pro-American Arabic newspaper network attribute agenda has weak and significant relations with the pro-Iranian Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.14), neutral Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.157), and neutral German newspaper attribute network agenda (0.185). Its highest relation is with an agenda with different languages and different political orientations.

Afterward, the pro-Iranian English newspaper attribute network agenda has three weak, two moderate and significant relations. It has moderate relations with neutral German newspaper attribute network agenda (0.492), pro-Iranian English newspaper attribute network agenda (0.646). Three weak relations with neutral Arabic newspaper attribute network agenda (0.257), pro-American German newspaper attribute network agenda (0.230), pro-Iranian Russian newspaper attribute network agenda (0.227). Although it has relations with many attribute network agendas, its highest relation is with an attribute network agenda that is same in language and differ in political orientation.

Thus, answering RQ2, results indicate that neither language nor political orientation can predict IIMNAS at attribute-level.

Table 5. Shows relations between all tiers for attribute level

		Neutral Arabic	With Iran Arabic	With USA German	With Iran Russian	With USA Arabic	With Iran English	Neutral German	With USA English
Neutral Arabic	QAP	1.000							
	Sig.	0.000							
With Iran Arabic	QAP	0.203	1.000						
	Sig.	0.015	0.000						
With USA German	QAP	0.116	0.096	1.000					
	Sig.	0.096	0.082	0.000					
With Iran Russian	QAP	0.035	-0.008	0.214	1.000				
	Sig.	0.303	0.593	0.025	0.000				
With USA Arabic	QAP	0.157	0.140	0.127	-0.035	1.000			
	Sig.	0.027	0.045	0.095	0.385	0.000			
With Iran English	QAP	0.257	0.086	0.230	0.227	0.096	1.000		
	Sig.	0.006	0.108	0.035	0.015	0.151	0.000		
Neutral German	QAP	0.230	0.257	0.478	0.225	0.185	0.492	1.000	
	Sig.	0.014	0.004	0.000	0.024	0.042	0.000	0.000	
With USA English	QAP	0.205	0.097	0.538	0.195	0.154	0.646	0.557	1.000
	Sig.	0.023	0.091	0.000	0.042	0.066	0.000	0.001	0.000

International Inter-Media network Attribute Agenda Setting (IIMNAS) at attribute level

The RQ4 asks whether there is evidence of IIMNAS among the newspapers sampled. To answer this question, Matrix for each newspaper in each time was built, Correlations between Agendas across times has been conducted, cross-lagged correlations were calculated between a pair of agendas at two points in time and compared with the Rozelle-Campbell baseline statistic to determine the influence direction (e.g. Lopez-Escobar et al., 1997; Roberts and McCombs, 1994). Hence, Figures 72 to 126 illustrate all of these correlations and the influence direction.

Applying Rozelle-Campbell baseline (RCB) roles, if $X1Y2$ is greater than $Y1X2$ and RCB and $Y1X2$ is less than RCB, this means $X1$ sets IIMNAS for $Y2$. If RCB is greater than both correlations this means there is no connection; if both correlations are greater than RCB, X and Y have reciprocal relations without any dominance for either.

Results show that most relations are reciprocal in which we can't assert that one agenda set the other. Only twenty-seven relations that we could determine which agenda is the influencer. Der Standard could set the IIMNAS for 6 newspapers which are Al-Ahram, Tehran Times, New York Times, China Daily, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, and Al-Riyadh. Rossiiskaia Gazeta could set the IIMNAS for five newspapers which are New York Times, China Daily, The Jerusalem Post, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Der Standard. Also, Tehran Times could set the

IIMNAS for 5 newspapers which are New York Times, China Daily, Al-Ahram, Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung could set the IIMNAS for Rossiiskaia Gazeta, New York Times, and The Jerusalem post. Neue Zürcher Zeitung could set the IIMNAS for New York Times, and Al-Zawra. China Daily could set the IIMNAS for The Jerusalem post, and AL-Riyadh. Al-Ahram could set the IIMNAS for China Daily and The Jerusalem Post. The Jerusalem Post could set the IIMNAS for New York Times. Al-Riyadh could set the IIMNAS for The Jerusalem Post

Answering RQ4, results show evidence of IIMNAS at attribute level in a short time span (several days), without dominance for either. Der Standard in T1 is the most powerful network agenda affecting six other agendas. In contrast to the New York Times which has no effect.

6. Discussion

This study is among the few studies interested in exploring cross-country, cross-language, and different political orientations intermedia network agenda setting. It assesses the effects and relationships between media in countries that are geographically, politically, culturally, and economically diverse.

In this study, we investigated the occurrence of intermedia agenda-setting in the international sphere, with a particular focus on the factors that may influence this process like language and political orientation. Our findings suggest that intermedia network agenda setting is indeed present in the international sphere, with high correlations between issues and a greater number of relationships between attributes.

This study asked which could affect more language or political orientation. Results at issue and attribute levels didn't give a definitive answer. Most media agendas have relations with other agendas that are similar in language or in political orientation, but they also have relations with agendas that are different in both variables.

We also found that although these countries have different political and cultural attitudes towards the assassination, most of the network correlations among the various news agendas were positive and significant. This result goes well with Guo et al. (2016) who investigated transnational inter-media agenda-setting at the network level and compared the Iraq war coverage of newspapers located in six different countries and found that despite the diversity all the network correlations were positive and significant.

Despite the high harmony between the agendas, there is no single agenda was able to lead all others in either issue or attribute levels. However, our results did show that the Tehran Times had the most powerful agenda, which was able to set many other agendas including that of the New York Times. This surprising result could be interpreted in different ways, Tehran Times has published a lot about this crisis and every aspect in it while New York Times has published less, so the similarity happened to show up just for the same interests. Other interpretation could be that journalists in New York Times look at the enemy's media (specially it is published in English and easy to follow) and they were affected by it so what Tehran Times give attention for in the first time, New York Times adopted in the second time.

Previous studies usually bound media power with western media (Ekeanyanwu et al., 2012; Golan, 2006; Kim & Barnett, 1996) as they are the focus of other media's attention. Qian (2009) resulted that New York Times could set the agenda for Chinese media even when the event was in China. In contrast, Interestingly, we found that the New York Times was not

able to set an agenda in either issue or attribute levels. This is somewhat surprising, given the influential role that the New York Times has traditionally played in shaping public and media discourse in the United States (Golan, 2006; Kushin, 2010) and beyond. It is possible that the influence of the New York Times has declined in recent years, what supports this idea is recent studies results. Meraz (2016), who has found supporting evidence for the flow of influence from Twitter discussions to traditional media (New York Times and Washington Post). Weiss-Blatt (2016) found comparable results, reporting that technology blogs were the main drivers of traditional media coverage of technology. This agrees with Vonbun, Königslöw, & Schoenbach (2016) who discussed that online media have the power to influence other traditional media outlets and that. This study agrees with recent studies that New York Times couldn't set any agenda at issue or attribute levels. Moreover, many other agendas have similar priorities and could affect New York Times' agenda.

Therefore - on a professional level - it can be said that such events that receive international attention represent an opportunity for local media to spread and influence. Therefore, these local media outlets must work to exploit these events to reach the international level.

Another noteworthy finding of our study was that language and political orientation did not appear to influence media behavior in transmitting issues and attributes. This suggests that intermedia agenda setting may be more influenced by factors such as audience preferences, media ownership, and journalistic norms. Here, at the theoretical level, the results of the current study refute the idea that language and political orientation may represent an obstacle to the transfer of the agenda of issues and attributes from one media outlet to another. The agenda transmit through the media, although the perspective differs according to political or cultural orientation. The priorities in such cases are similar in their subject, but they may not be similar in their content and attitude, as each media outlet has its own biases.

Overall, our study adds to the growing body of research on intermedia agenda setting and underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. Further research is needed to better understand the factors that influence intermedia agenda setting in different contexts and to develop strategies for promoting more diverse and inclusive media agendas.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of research on intermedia network agenda-setting, across countries with diverse political orientations, languages, and cultures. Through an exploration of the influences on this intricate process, particularly focusing on language and political orientation, the study uncovers the presence of intermedia network agenda setting on the international stage.

The findings reveal a complex network of interconnected media agendas, showcasing high correlations between issues and a multitude of relationships between attributes. While the study does not definitively determine whether language or political orientation exerts a greater influence, it highlights the coexistence of similarities in the agendas across various media outlets emphasizing reciprocal relations over the dominance of a single agenda.

Interestingly, despite differing political and cultural stances towards Soleimani's assassination, the study uncovers positive and significant network correlations among news agendas, mirroring previous research on transnational inter-media agenda-setting. Notably, the Tehran Times emerges as a potent influencer, capable of influencing other media outlets, in-

cluding the New York Times. This finding underscores a shift in influence dynamics, challenging the traditional notion of Western media dominance in shaping global discourse.

Moreover, the study indicates that language and political orientation might not be the primary drivers of media behavior in agenda transmission, challenging the notion that language and political alignment impede agenda transfer between media outlets, emphasizing the nuanced nature of agenda-setting processes.

In conclusion, this research offers valuable insights into the dynamics of intermedia network agenda-setting in the international context. Future studies could explore additional factors that may influence this phenomenon, such as media ownership, journalistic norms, and audience preferences. Additionally, the results could vary depending on the nature of the event, whether it is anticipated (like elections) or prolonged (lasting more than several days). By deepening our comprehension of intermedia agenda setting, we can better grasp the intricate interplay between media outlets and their role in shaping global public discourse.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Neutral Arabic newspaper network agenda (Al-Ahram)

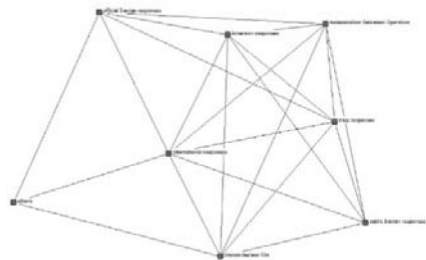


Figure 2. Pro-Iranian Arabic newspapersnetwork agenda (Al-Zawraa)

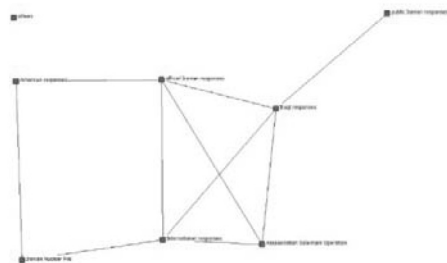


Figure 3. Pro-Iranian English newspapers network agenda (China Daily, Tehran Times)

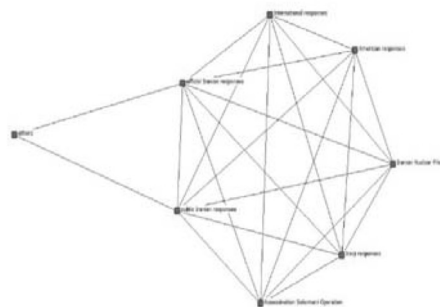
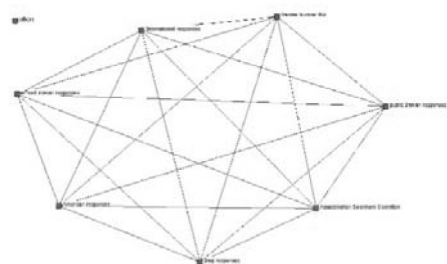
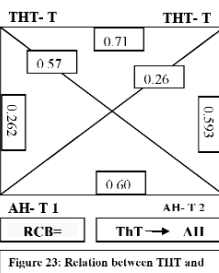
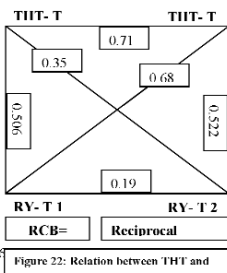
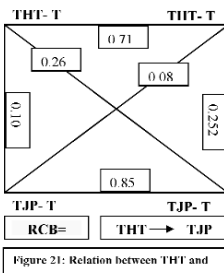
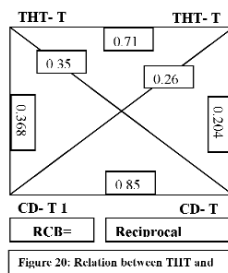
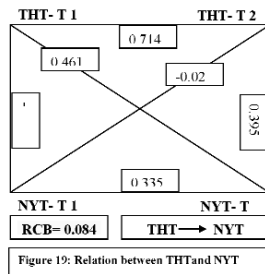
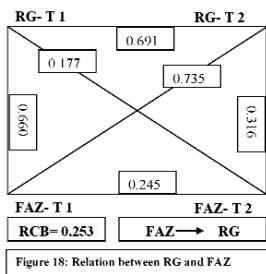
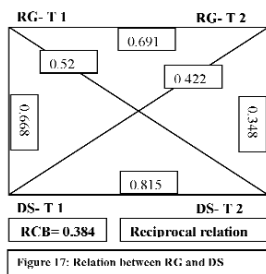
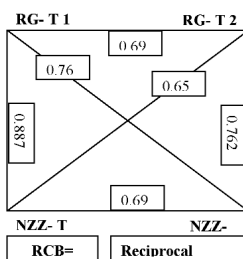
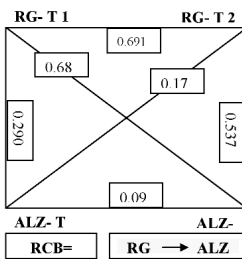
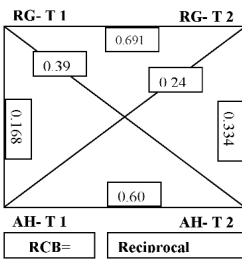
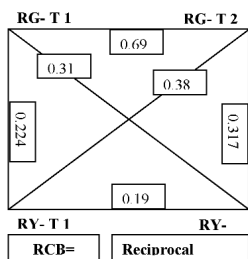
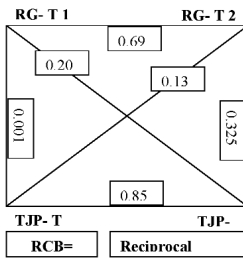
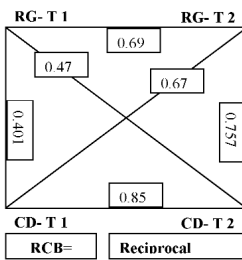
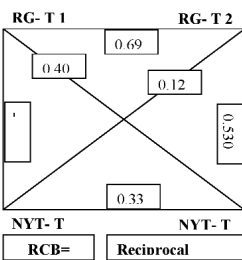
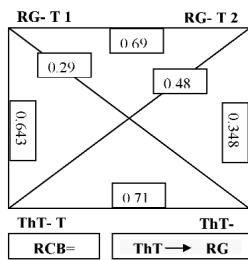
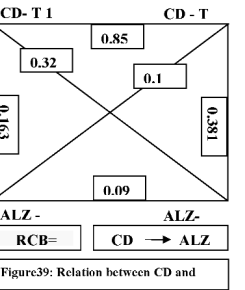
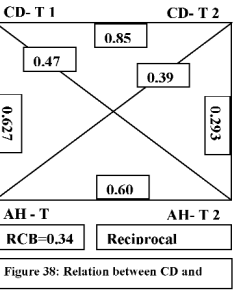
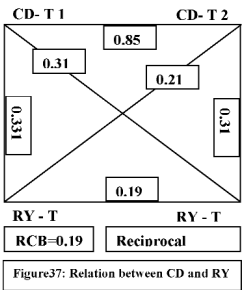
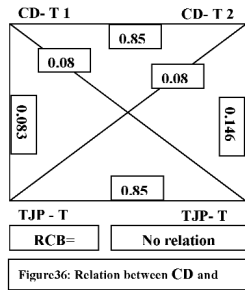
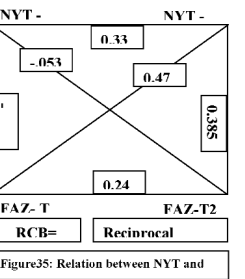
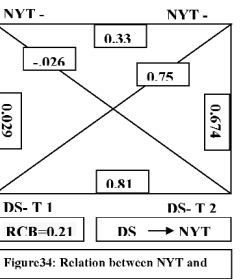
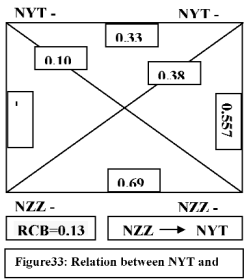
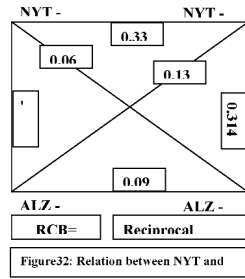
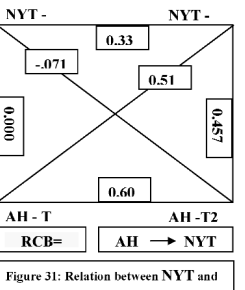
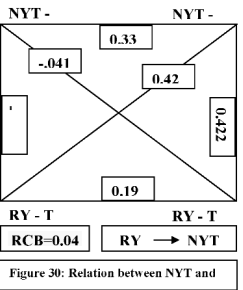
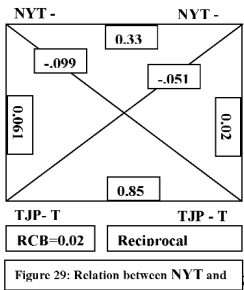
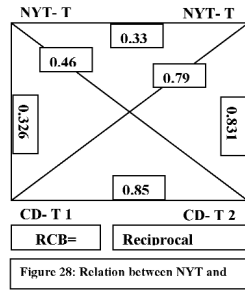
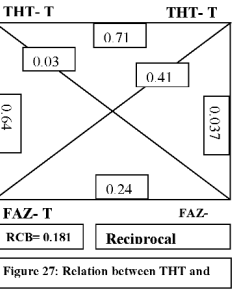
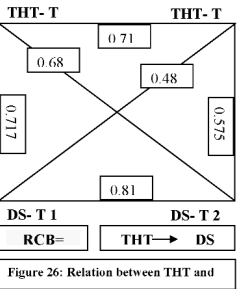
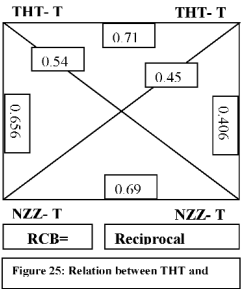
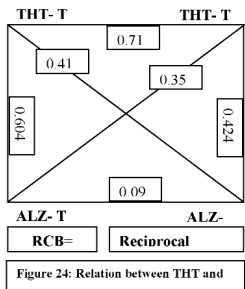
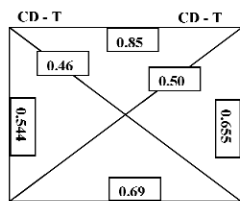


Figure 4. Neutral German newspapers network agenda (Der Standard, Neue Zürcher Zeitung)



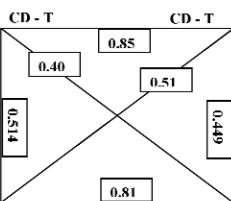






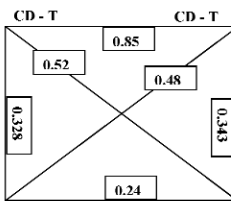
RCB= NZZ → DS

Figure 40: Relation between CD and



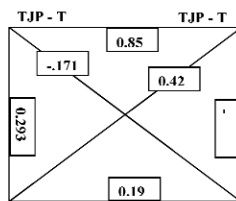
RCB=0.40 Reciprocal

Figure 41: Relation between CD and DS



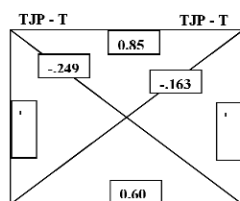
RCB=0.21 Reciprocal

Figure 42: Relation between CD and



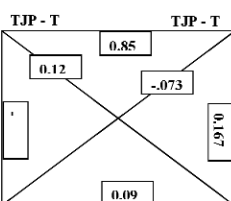
RCB= Reciprocal

Figure 43: Relation between TJP and



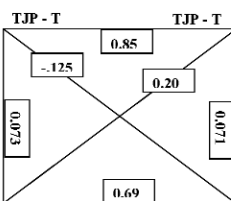
RCB= - Reciprocal

Figure 44: Relation between TJP and



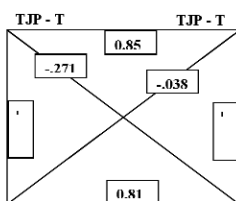
RCB=0.01 Reciprocal

Figure 45: Relation between TJP and



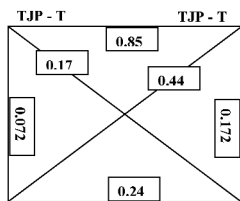
RCB=0.05 Reciprocal

Figure 46: Relation between TJP and



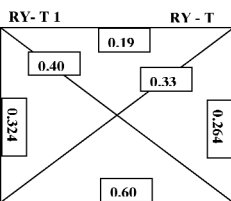
RCB= - TJP → DS

Figure 47: Relation between TJP and



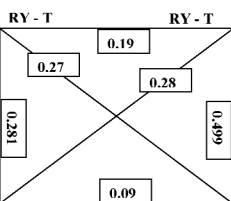
RCB= Reciprocal

Figure 48: Relation between TJP and



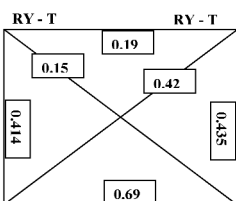
RCB=0.13 Reciprocal

Figure 49: Relation between RY and



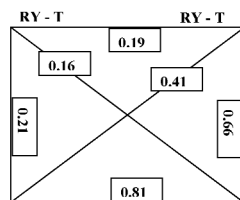
RCB=0.06 Reciprocal

Figure 50: Relation between RY and



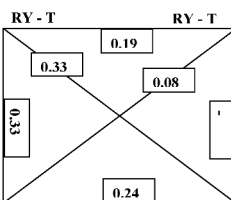
RCB= NZZ → RY

Figure 51: Relation between RY and



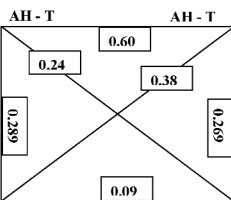
RCB= DS → RY

Figure 52: Relation between RY and



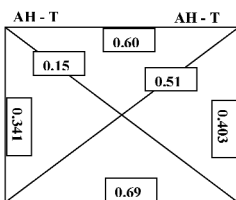
RCB=0.03 Reciprocal

Figure 53: Relation between RY and



RCB=0.12 Reciprocal

Figure 54: Relation between AH and



RCB= Reciprocal

Figure 55: Relation between AH and

