

## Four facets of Latin America: A study of the German press coverage from 2000 to 2014

Regina Cazzamatta, University of Erfurt, Department of Media and Communication Studies, Germany  
regina.cazzamatta@uni-erfurt.de

### Abstract

This paper reassesses the image of the twenty Latin American countries in the German press – the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), the alternative newspaper *taz* and the political magazine *Der Spiegel* – almost forty years after the NWICO debates. The study comprises 3831 analysed articles published during 15 years (from 2000 to 2014), a period in which the continent has experienced substantial political transformations. We identified four main categories of foreign reporting related to the region; 1) Germany's most important trading partners (Brazil, Argentina and Mexico); 2) the states against the Washington consensus (Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador); 3) the invisible Central American countries and 4) the other Mercosur and Pacific Alliance's nations (Colombia, Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay). The main postulations of the "Foreign News Study" – negativity, focus on politics and dominance of elite – should be relativised, especially in the case of the first category.

### Keywords

foreign reporting, global news coverage, press coverage, news values, NWICO, international communication

## 1 Introduction

Since the debates of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the early 1980s, the global media landscape has been changing significantly with the advent of the Internet and its digital technologies (K.-K. Chang & Lee, 2010; Paterson & Sreberny, 2004; Thussu, 2004). On account of this altered media environment and the new role of Latin America on the global stage at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lowenthal & Baron, 2015), it seems plausible to reassess the image of the region produced by the media. We chose the German press system because it is one of the strongest in Europe (Vyslozil & Surm, 2019) and it belongs to the democratic corporatist model that exhibits a consistent development of mass-circulation newspapers (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Moreover, the German press dedicates, traditionally, the most considerable coverage of global issues (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985) and shows currently the most sizeable number of citizens who claimed to "read international news very carefully" when compared to

other nations in Europe (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Our purpose is to reassess the image of Latin America in the German press, but this analysis faces two main difficulties. The first one is related to the lack of studies regarding the continent in the German-speaking world. Since the 1980s, reporting on the region has hardly been examined (Göbel, Birle, & Specht, 2009). According to a report of the Ibero-American Institute in Germany (Göbel et al., 2009), even within the field of international communication, the majority of studies deal mostly with other regions (e.g. the Islamic world). The second obstacle is the diverse research designs. Some of them focus on the communicators and not necessarily on the media content (Lange, 2002; Renneberg, 2011). Others emphasise the press messages, however, related to a specific thematic coverage such as the depiction of the Mercosur alliance (Rodríguez, 2010). To lay the minimal basis for our comparison, we are going to present in the next section a short literature review, even if the periods of analysis, units of analysis or states' selection vary substantially.



## 2 The hitherto image of Latin America produced by the German press

Roemeling-Kruthaup (1991) investigated back then the backgrounding reporting on crises' regions (Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Nicaragua). The author concluded that the news factor "proximity" (political, economic or ideological) and "negativity" dictated the coverage. The presentation of the topics, concentrated mostly on politics and economy, led to a fragmented image of the nations. In Nicaragua's case, the reporting was limited to its political situation and clashes with the USA. The Chilean coverage focused on the confrontations between the Pinochet's government and the opposition. One noted the mono-thematisation also in the case of Brazil and Mexico in which economic issues, in particular the debt crises, played a vital role. Cultural reporting received by the time no attention whatsoever.

Another relevant empirical work on Latin America's image stems from the seventies. Wöhlcke (1973) noticed an intense topics' concentration on just a few subject areas. The author deemed the reporting as event-centred, conflict-oriented and sensationalist. On the one hand, the most substantial focus of the coverage was on politics. On the other hand, themes related to culture, education or religion were underrepresented. Besides, the press covered just a few countries in the region such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile. In conclusion, Wöhlcke indicated that there was only a minimal interest in Latin America.

Based on a global historical analysis of the news value theory, Wilke and Schenk (1987) discussed (without presenting any empirical evidence) four characteristics of Latin America's depiction in Germany. Firstly, due to the geographical distance, "regionalism" did not apply as a factor for the news selection. Secondly, "political" and "economic" proximity was relevant only in exceptional cases since the continent did not have strong ties to Germany or the European states. Thirdly, one could not consider the Latin American states within the category "elite nations" when

compared to the USA, the Europeans industrialised countries or even the USSR. Following the authors' arguments, the only factor left for the selection of the continent by the press was thus "negativity" (Wilke & Schenk, 1987, pp. 30–31).

However, we probably could relativise these postulates. A more recent study on the Brazilian image demonstrated (Cazzamatta, 2014), for instance, that its coverage is not strongly determined by "negativity" anymore. Besides, the dominant focus on politics was also no longer evident, and other areas such as the economy and environment gained significant importance. Besides, we have corroborated somewhere else that the main determinants of Latin America's news coverage are "power status", "economic proximity" and "socioeconomic status", respectively (Cazzamatta, 2018). Although these factors could predict the amount of coverage, we identified outliers, i.e., nations that due to ideology received much more attention than expected.

## 3 The global traits of foreign reporting

More than 40 years ago, a large part of the developing nations within the UNESCO debates for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) criticised the predominance of Western global news agencies and the image of the developing states they constructed in the Western media (such as Latin America in the German press). They condemned the understanding of the news as something abnormal, which results in the overrepresentation of negative occurrences (Hafez, 2007).

This discussion prompted one of the large-scale global news studies hitherto, the so-called *Foreign News Study* (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985), which analysed the main structural characteristics of foreign reporting from 29 media systems. The main traits identified were: a) regionalism, b) conflict perspective (negativity), c) the dominance of political coverage, d) focus on elite and decontextualisation (Hafez, 2002a; Sreberny-Mo-

hammad, Nordenstreng, Stevenson, & Ugboajah, 1980). Concerning the volume and direction of the global news flow, the study demonstrated that the USA along with Western Europe attracted the most press attention worldwide, whereas Asia, Africa and Latin America remain out of the press-radar. The most recent news flow study also classifies Africa and South America as “consistent areas of invisibility” (Tiele, 2010, p. 261). In sum, the global news flow follows a specific structure – first the consistent newsmakers (the US and Western Europe), followed by the neighbouring nations and crises’ regions (e.g. the Arabic world) and then the so-called invisible areas.

#### 4 The determinants of international news

The variables discussed in the *Foreign News Study* – crisis, negativity, the dominance of politics, and focus on elites – can be classified as “event-oriented”, i.e. internal attributes intrinsic to the global occurrences (K.-K. Chang & Lee, 2010). These factors are the basis used to compare the global news coverage from our twenty analysed different Latin American states. However, in order to explain the similarities and differences among the countries’ coverage, we might need to evaluate other organisational and context-oriented variables (K.-K. Chang & Lee, 2010; Golan, 2010). For instance, the size of the correspondents’ network and the influence of the international news agencies are essential components of this meso organisational level of analysis (Hafez, 2002a; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The context-oriented variables refer not only to the attributes of the depicted events but also to the characteristics of the countries (T.-K. Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Hagen, Berens, Zeh, & Leidner, 1998). Wu (2000), for example, pointed out that trade volume and the presence of global news agencies are the main determinants of global news.

*Research Questions:* within this theoretical background, this analysis lays on the amount, nature and type of Lat-

in America’s news coverage. Considering that the image of Latin America may have shifted considerably since the publication of the *Foreign News Study*, we asked the following research questions:

- › RQ1: How does the German press portray Latin American countries?
- › RQ2: Which news factors come into play when reporting on Latin America’s states?
- › RQ3: Do the features of international news coverage identified by the *Foreign News Study* – negativity, the dominance of politics and focus on elites – still apply to Latin American countries?
- › RQ4: Does one observe the typical structure of global news flow within Latin America? In other words, the consistent regional newsmakers, the areas of crisis and the invisible “unimportant” nations?

#### 5 Methodology

In this section, we are going to discuss our empirical procedures and research design. Firstly, one presents the corpus of the study and explains the process of sampling building. Afterwards, the analysed categories of news factors and structural characteristics of foreign reporting are displayed. The subsection then finishes with a reflection regarding our system of classification to establish the four proposed categories.

##### 5.1 Unit of Analysis

Initially, this empirical analysis includes two national market-dominant German newspapers, which comprise the most sizable correspondent network in Latin America, specifically the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (liberal and politically broad) and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (economically liberal and politically conservative). Besides, the most crucial political weekly in Germany – *Der Spiegel* – was incorporated. In addition to these three recognised publications, we included the alternative newspaper *tageszeitung* (taz) due to its capacity of agenda-setting. Empirical research by Mathes and Pfetsch

(1991) proved an overflow effect mostly commenced by taz, i.e., counter-issue dissemination from the alternative to the traditional press. Furthermore, these publications possess a considerable impact on the active public sphere such as states' members, politicians, decision-makers and other social groups (Jarren & Donges, 2011). They are besides "nationwide newspapers", whose journalistic output is disseminated in the whole national territory (Pürer & Raabe, 2007). Lastly, several studies demonstrate that the prestigious press also has a vital role as an intra-media agenda-setter (Jandura & Brosius, 2011).

### 5.2 Sampling

One categorised every article concerned to the twenty Latin American countries published between January 2000 and December 2014, totalling fifteen years of analysis of the printed version of the publication mentioned above. Every contribution was classified according to newspapers, the number of words and date of issue (21929 news items). We did not consider stories from *SZ.de*, *FAZ.NET*, *taz.de* and *Der Spiegel Online*. An analysis of newspapers and their online version among 18 European states demonstrated that 70 % of the most relevant online news items derive from their printed counterparts (Wurff, 2008).

The search criteria comprise every allusion to the expression "Latin America" or the name of its twenty states and their respective capitals and main metropolises not only in the headlines but also in the first paragraphs. One also considered the adjectives related to the nations and its German declination to polish up the search principles. To guarantee that every state would have the same probability of being accurately represented, one drew a sampling of 25 % of published news items from every single country.

Besides, we disregarded small texts (less than 150 words), observing that they possess almost no news factors. Based on the rotation principle, we selected every n-4th printed article of every country within each publication. Since one knew the distribution of the population, the pre-

requisite for a layered sample was hence fulfilled. The ultimate sample comprises 3,831 contributions. Finally, we conducted a Holsti coefficient reliability test, oriented on a sampling of 5%, and the outcome demonstrated a 94.3% overlap between the two coders.

### 5.3 Categories of news values and structural traits of foreign reporting

In order to investigate the reporting structures of the Latin American countries, every news item was coded according to its nation, eleven thematic areas, central and subtopic, depicted actors<sup>1</sup> and reporting valence (positive, negative or neutral). It is essential to notice that sometimes there is a conceptual overlap between the news factors and the structural traits of coverage (Hafez, 2002a). Although they refer to the same concept, the operationalisation might differ. Hence, we considered the appearance of some news factors not only related to their frequency in percentage but also to their intensity from zero to three (not identified at all; light, medium or strong presence), oriented on definitions sustained and tested by preliminary empirical analyses (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017; Schulz, 1976; Staab, 1990). To simplify the results' presentation, we excluded news factor such as damage and success since they access the idea of negativity. In summary, we considered the following news factors and structural traits:

Event-oriented variables:

- › Main thematic areas of coverage (list in the results' section).
- › Crises and Conflict: crises' classification as specified by the Heidelberg Conflict Research: non-violent crises, violent crises and limited wars (HIIK, 2013).
- › Negativity (reporting valence): tone's assessment of a happening. It was coded separately from the previous category since crises can also be depicted in a

1 Official states representatives, organised social groups, non-organised social groups, and personalities from Latin America, Europe, the USA or other nations.

**Table 1: Countries classification based on press attention and thematic framework**

	I	II	III	IV
Press Attention	Strongest coverage among the nations	More coverage than expected according to power status or economic proximity	Invisible countries (almost no attention)	Small visibility or gradual loss of attention (except Colombia)
Thematic Composition	Smallest political focus; pronounced economic and cultural coverage	Most extensive political coverage among the nations at the expenses of other themes (except Cuba)	Politics with "crime & delinquency", "disaster & accidents" or "travel & tourism"	Politics with cultural coverage
Other commonalities	Low negativity, the smallest intensity of personification and prominence	Highest level of personification, crisis' intensity and elite-orientation	Intense negativity; most stories from news agencies among the nations	Most heterogeneous group

positive perspective (e.g., peace agreement).

- › Prominence: level of actors' prominence (regional, national or international importance).
- › Eliteness or focus on elite: representation of elites, counter-elites and non-organised social groups (ordinary citizens). Refers to the described actors.
- › Personification: how a person stays in the foreground of an article (no allude to people; named but without relevance for the primary occurrence; the event is related to a person's action or attitude; people are in the centre of the occurrence).

We used the following context-oriented variables to contextualise and explain the reporting structures above:

- › Economic proximity: understood as trade balance with Germany.
- › Power Status: analysed employing GDP, military spending, amount of scientific publications and population magnitude (Cazzamatta, 2018; Hagen et al, 1998).
- › The number of international news agencies in a country.
- › Presence of German minorities and communities.

#### 5.4 Discussion of the classification's system

Firstly, we obtained the results individually for each country. To identify possible

reporting correspondence between them, we applied a taxonomical approach, i.e., a classification system that organises entities into a set of variables supported on their similarities (Bailey, 1994; Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2014). The two main and distinctive elements of our classification are (a) the press attention of a country (measured through the total number of articles and the average of stories per year) and (b) their thematic composition. For instance, countries with a significant "power status" or "economic proximity" exhibit more substantial press attention (Cazzamatta, 2018). The coverage areas are also decisive for the image of a country. It can present multifaceted aspects of its society, or it can be focused solely on political conflicts. The other variables such as the focus on crises and negativity, orientation on elite, or the news factor personification are not decisive for the classification, though we found them to be similar within most groups. For instance, even though Haiti and Colombia show a high intensity of the factor crisis, they do not belong to the same category due to differences related to the amount of coverage and thematic composition. Thus, we firstly organised the nations according to press attention and thematic framework. Afterwards, we analysed further similarities (and eventual differences) to describe the structures of the foreign report within the identified groups. Table 1 summarises the main principles of our taxonomy.

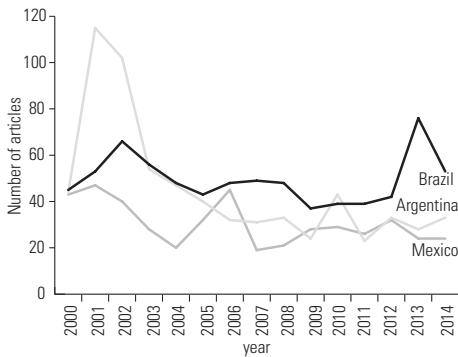
## 6 Results

Based on the amount of press attention, the thematic structure of each country and their commonalities or differences, this section presents our findings organised by the four main categorisations.

### 6.1 Group 1: *Germany's most relevant trade partners in Latin America*

The first identified category is “Germany’s most important trading partners”, namely Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. It is worth noticing that these three nations belong to the G20-Group and possess the most substantial “economic proximity” and “power status” among the Latin American states.<sup>2</sup> Besides, they have a relevant “cultural proximity”, i.e. a higher number of German minorities’ residents, although Mexico lies in the fourth position after Paraguay (Bailey, 1994; Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2014). Furthermore, these nations have the most significant number of international news agencies in their territory.

Figure 1: Reporting trends of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico over the years



The considerable “economic proximity” and “power status” in addition to the substantial concentration of wire services and correspondents lead to a particular structure of coverage. In terms of topic distribution, this first group receives a relatively small number of political reporting, different from the typical composition of international coverage (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985). Astonishingly, in the case of Brazil and Argentina, the section “Economy & Finance” lies even before “domestic politics” (Table 2). Regarding Mexico, the critical focus on business was still not enough to overtake “domestic politics”. Although Mexico reveals a stronger “economic proximity” to Germany, the Argentine economic crisis from 2001/2002 contributed to its corresponding pronounced attention to financial affairs.

Moreover, since “domestic politics” does not dominate the news landscape of these three countries, they possess a comparatively more balanced image. Despite the smallest political coverage in Latin America, they receive the most significant media attention, and their foreign reporting does not show significant gaps (Table 3). Although there are a few oscillations, the fluctuations are not as severe as by other nations, and thus the coverage remains more or less constant.

The foreign reporting here is not primarily focused on the problems of the political systems and their distribution of power, as in the other Latin American countries. The low interest in political affairs is compensated by the coverage of economic and cultural topics (Table 2). Besides, Mexico has a stronger focus on “crime & delinquency” and Brazil on environmental issues. Despite that, they comprise similar structural compositions and news factors (Table 3). However, despite the high importance given to economic issues, one can argue that the press is not quite interested in economic developments in itself. For instance, Hafez argues that the German press is less interested in internal economic processes per se since the reporting concentrates on globally relevant issues, i.e., regional or local economic developments that might be signifi-

2 Regarding the news factor “power status”, Argentina lies in the fourth place behind Colombia. Although the last exhibits a good position in terms of “power status” and “economic proximity” (the third and fifth place, respectively, among the twenty analysed states), it reveals a different reporting structure from these top three, as demonstrated later.



**Table 2: Reporting topics of Germany’s most important trade partners<sup>a</sup>**

	Brazil	Argentina	Mexico
Economy & Finance	29	35	15
Domestic Politics	16	24	19
Culture & Society	15	16	19
Foreign Policy & International Affairs	14	11	14
Environment & Environment Policy	7	1	3
Social & Social Order	5	2	3
Celebrity, Style and Gossip	4	2	2
Crime & Delinquency	3	2	10
Disasters & Accidents	2	1	4
Travel & Tourism	2	2	3
Research & Technology	1	1	3

<sup>a</sup>percentage of their total coverage

**Table 3: Main structural traits (in per cent) and news factors (average) in the coverage of the top three countries**

	Brazil	Argentina	Mexico
The average number of stories per year	49	45	30
<b>Structural traits of foreign reporting in percentage</b>			
Press attention <sup>a</sup>	17	15	10
Focus on Politics (Domestic Politics + Foreign Affairs)	30	36	34
Focus on crises	43	58	46
Negativity	34	49	40
Negativity without the soft-news coverage	42	61	52
Focus on elite	86	84	80
<b>The intensity of the news factors (Average 0–3)</b>			
Personification	1.4	1.5	1.5
Prominence	1.5	1.4	1.3
Crises & conflicts	0.5	0.6	0.7

Note: All structural characteristics, except for press attention, refer to the distribution of these traits within a specific country (in per cent). For example, 58% of the articles concerning Argentina focus on crises (violent or non-violent), meaning that just 42% of its reporting are not related to adversities. Another example: Brazil has 34% of negative reports, i. e. the other 66% of the coverage are positive or neutral.

<sup>a</sup>The percentage of press attention refers to the total amount of published articles concerning the twenty analysed countries. For instance, the three nations in this table are responsible for 42% of complete Latin America’s news coverage.

cant for Germany and other Western states (Hafez, 2002b, p. 116).

Looking at the coverage’s valence, Brazil exhibits the most balanced image in Latin America, at least until 2014 (36% positive, 34% negative and 30% neutral events). However, one should consider that the analysed period corresponds to the Brazilian economic boom. Argentina and Mexico, unlike Brazil, comprise a more significant share of “negativity”. However, one cannot describe their foreign reporting as crises oriented since this amount does not exceed 50%.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the crisis’ intensity, Argentina (0.6) shows a smaller coefficient than Mexico (0.7), because the financial crisis generally has a relatively smaller intensity than “crime & delinquency”, for example. Another trend of this group is the lower dominance of the “official state representatives” as described actors – 37% (Argentina), 31% (Brazil) and 26% (Mexico) – which seems plausible since “domestic politics” does not dominate their coverage. Besides, compared to other Latin American countries, these three nations show a relatively smaller intensity of the factor “personification” (from 1.4 to 1.5) and “prominence”.

**6.2 Group 2: States against the Washington consensus**

The second category of coverage applies to the nations that are opposed to the Washington consensus: Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Anti-hegemony not only emphasises “the independence of a state [...], but also the decision to challenge the existing world order and propose alternative solutions to global problems” (Alzugaray, 2015, p. 181). Due to ideological factors, this group received much more press attention than expected in terms of their “power status” or “economic proximity” (Cazzamatta, 2018). In any case, one cannot consider Cuba on the fourth and

3 Although the Argentine foreign reporting has 58% of the articles dealing with some crises (violent, non-violent, controversy), the negativity rate (49%) is a bit lower since sometimes topics related to crises can be described in a positive frame (i. e., improvement of a situation or agreement of parts).

**Table 4:** News coverage’s areas of the states against the Washington consensus (percentage of their total coverage)

	Bolivia	Ecuador	Cuba	Venezuela
Domestic Politics	56	36	29	43
Foreign Policy & International Affairs	17	33	28	33
Environment & Environment Policy	2	11	0	0
Economy & Finance	3	8	5	11
Social & Social Order	5	3	1	3
Culture & Society	6	0	28	4
Research & Technology	1	1	1	1
Celebrity, Style and Gossip	1	3	1	1
Crime & Delinquency	2	0	0	1
Disasters & Accidents	3	2	2	1
Travel & Tourism	5	3	4	2

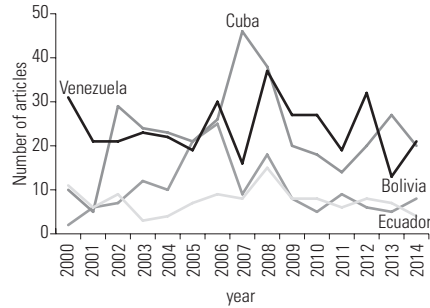
**Table 5:** Structural traits (in per cent) and news factors (average) among the nations against the Washington consensus

	Bolivia	Ecuador	Cuba	Venezuela
The average number of stories per year	10	7	24	23
<b>Structural traits of foreign reporting in percentage</b>				
Press attention	3	3	8	8
Focus on politics (domestic politics + foreign affairs)	73	70	58	77
Focus on crises	65	74	47	67
Negativity	46	57	25	47
Negativity without the soft-news coverage	51	61	34	50
Focus on elite	84	85	82	90
<b>The intensity of the news factors (Average 0–3)</b>				
Personification	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.8
Prominence	1.8	2.0	1.6	2.1
Crises & conflicts	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.8

For explanations see Table 3.

Venezuela on the fifth place of press attention as “white spots” of Latin America’s news coverage. Both nations display a similar number of articles per year, although Venezuela is more vulnerable to fluctuations due to specific events (Table 5).

**Figure 2:** Foreign reporting of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Ecuador



Besides, more than 60 % of Venezuelan and Bolivian contributions were produced by foreign correspondents (though from neighbouring countries). In Ecuador, this share is almost 50 %. Cuba proves to be an exception, as the majority of the articles (55%) have been written by the central offices in Germany and only about 30% by foreign correspondents. That is not surprising, due to the limited access to journalists in Cuba and the requirement of a press visa. Bolivia and Ecuador have a much smaller presence in the press, but still bigger than expected.

Cuba, despite a few differences, when compared to Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador, was included in this group because it received an incredible amount of press attention regardless of its lack of “power status” or “economic proximity”. The factors ideology and the involvement of the USA – Germany’s most important partner – are also crucial for the report within this group. The striking distinguishing feature of Cuban reporting is the resonance of cultural issues, one of the most significant among all analysed countries (Table 4).

Different aspects within a macro-level analysis contribute to this result: the “myth” of Cuba in the German perception, a vital cultural boom at the end of the 1990s, such as the project of the German director Wim Wenders and its resonance effects; the Cuban diaspora in the USA and its powerful lobby; the increase of German tourists on the island and the continued interest for its culture or the approximate-



ly 30 000 Cubans who studied and worked in the former GDR. Also very special in the case of Cuba is the smallest amount of “negativity” (25%). Despite its economic shortage, constant confrontation with the United States and the issue of human rights violations, Cuba creates a very positive image in the German press – 46% of the articles refer to positive events, the best among all analysed countries. This result suggests that Cuban political and cultural identities and their influence on the nation’s external projection remain a significant force (Alzugaray, 2015, p. 181).

Compared to Cuba, the cultural coverage of the radical left of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ellner, 2013, p. 5) – Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela – are not so relevant (Table 4). Venezuela has the most robust “power status” and most significant “economic proximity” within the group as an oil-exporting country. Accordingly, it receives intense press attention and a comparatively high share of “economy & finance” coverage (11%), although not as intensively as the first group. Besides, the coverage of these countries, particularly in the case of Venezuela, focuses on political elites and counter-elites. Venezuela has the highest levels of personification (2.1) and elite-orientation (90%). Independent social movements, the basis mobilisation in the *barrios* or the indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan organisations are, accordingly, ignored.

In general, these four countries have a significant focus on political coverage, higher levels of personification and significant crisis intensity (Table 5). Behind the political conflicts, one usually finds the discussion of the role of the state in shaping social policy. Ideological factors here are more important than “power status” or “economic proximity”. Another feature is the negligence of cultural issues (except for Cuba). In the case of Venezuela, cultural reporting is not particularly high (4%). In Bolivia, this share is similar (6%). In Ecuadorian reporting, cultural issues are even absent. Ecuador also shows a significant proportion of environmental reporting, in particular, because of the question of oil production in the Yasuní National Park in the Amazon rainforest (Table 4).

All in all, a high concentration on politics dominates the coverage within this group, although each country has a more or less different thematic accent. Cuba is very noticeable due to its “culture & society” reporting. Ecuador is marked by environmental issues, mainly because of the German involvement in the issue of the Yasuni Nacional Park. Venezuela and Ecuador – as oil-exporting countries – also show a portion of finance coverage, while Bolivia exhibits a quota of “culture & society” and “travel and tourism”. The trio Venezuela (2<sup>nd</sup> place), Bolivia (4<sup>th</sup> place) and Ecuador (5<sup>th</sup> place) have the most extensive political focus among all analysed countries (Table 5). They also exceed the 50% limit of “negativity” within the area of “politics” (ignoring the soft news coverage). The tendency of crisis-reporting is also a very distinctive characteristic of this trio, only behind Haiti (earthquake, putsch), Honduras (putsch) and Columbia (civil war). Another distinguishing feature is the highest number of “official state representatives” as described actors among all nations.

### 6.3 Group 3: The invisible small Central American countries

This third group of states in Central America (except Cuba in group 2) generally attracted almost no attention from the press and could be deemed as “white spots”. One of the reasons is that they comprise neither power status nor economic and cultural proximity. None of the eight countries presented here is characterised by German minorities (Rosenberg, 1998) and besides, they have the smallest number of global news agencies. The amount of professional based correspondents is also microscopic since the majority of journalists writing about Central America live in Mexico. A correspondent emphasised the lack of interest from the editorial office for Central America, especially after the end of the civil war (Keppeler, 2018).

Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama received individually maximal 2% of the total press coverage.

**Table 6: Coverage areas of the invisible Central American countries (percentage of their total coverage)**

	Costa Rica	Dom. Republic	El Salvador	Guatemala	Haiti	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama
Domestic Politics	30	17	33	41	36	77	47	34
Crime and Delinquency	5	13	21	18	1	4	0	3
Disasters and Accidents	3	13	12	3	36	1	2	3
Travel and Tourism	13	13	7	5	1	6	10	9
Foreign Policy and International Affairs	8	10	7	12	12	8	13	31
Research and Technology	8	10	2	5	1	0	0	3
Social and Social Order	5	7	9	8	6	1	5	0
Culture and Society	8	7	7	6	4	1	8	3
Economy and Finance	5	7	0	0	2	0	11	9
Environment and Environment Policy	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Celebrity, Style and Gossip	3	0	0	1	0	0	3	3

**Table 7: Structural traits (in percent) and news factors (average) of the forgotten Central American states**

	Costa Rica	Dom. Republic	El Salvador	Guatemala	Haiti	Honduras	Nicaragua	Panama
The average number of stories per year	2	2	3	4	11	5	4	2
<b>Structural traits of foreign reporting in percentage</b>								
Press attention	1	1	1	2	4	2	1	1
Focus on politics (domestic politics and foreign affairs)	38	27	40	54	48	86	61	66
Focus on crises	35	47	57	54	81	79	46	49
Negativity	32	53	48	48	64	75	34	40
Negativity without the soft-news coverage	44	67	54	57	68	80	42	48
Focus on elite	78	61	74	70	74	84	87	79
<b>The intensity of the news factors (Average 0–3)</b>								
Personification	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.2
Prominence	1.2	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.4
Crises and conflict	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.3	0.4	0.5

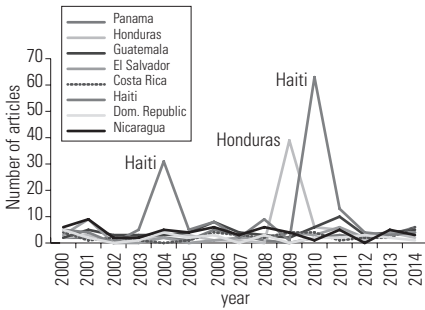
For explanations see Table 3.

Haiti is an exception within the group with 4 % due to its event-oriented reporting. Usually, these so-called “invisible countries” received on average less than two contributions per year; Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua less than five and Haiti less than eleven (Table 7). Analysing the reporting development of these countries, one notes three specific occurrences – Haiti in 2004 (coup against President Aristide) and 2010 (earthquake and cholera outbreak) and Honduras 2009 (coup against President Zelaya). In other words,

one has a “coup-earthquake syndrome”. Among the newspapers, the alternative *taz* devotes the most significant attention to these eight Central American countries (14 % of its coverage), followed by *SZ* (13 %), *Spiegel* (11 %) and *FAZ* (9 %).

Thematically, these “forgotten states” also show some similarities. The hypothesis of a pronounced orientation on politics can only be applied to half of the nations – namely Honduras (86 %), Panama (66 %), Nicaragua (61 %) and Guatemala (54 %). In other countries, this share does

Figure 3: Reporting trends of the Central American states



not exceed 50% (Table 7). Although topics related to “domestic politics” receives the most noticeable press attention as usual (except Argentina and Brazil), the main distinguishing topics of this groups are either “crime & delinquency”, “disasters & accidents” or “travel & tourism” (Table 6).

Moreover, the press also focuses on environmental issues in the case of Costa Rica. Panama and Nicaragua show some coverage within “economy & finance” due to the problems related to the Panama Canal for the traffic of huge containers and the discussion of an alternative route through Nicaragua. Another common topic of Central America’s coverage is “travel & tourism” (except Haiti), a clear indication of the portrayal of exotic aspects (Table 6).

Observing the structural traits and news factors within this group, one immediately notices that Costa Rica exhibits different values (Table 6). Similar to its neighbours, it receives minimal press attention and has the topic of “travel & tourism” among the most pronounced. However, unlike all the other nations, Costa Rica had not suffered under a military regime for almost hundred years, i. e., it has the longest democratic tradition in the region (Argueta, Huhn, Kurtenbach, & Peetz, 2011). That is to a certain extent reflected in its foreign reporting, which exhibits the smallest proportion or intensity of “crisis-orientation”, “negativity” and “damage” (Table 7). Among the twenty analysed states, Costa Rica and Uruguay (Group 4 in the next section) are the only countries with micro-

scopic visibility that have achieved a positive image.

Analysing the authorship of Central American reporting, one also finds similarities. The majority of these countries exhibit the most substantial volumes of news stories written by news agencies – Dominican Republic (27%), Haiti (25%), El Salvador (19%), Honduras (16%), Panama (14%), Guatemala and Costa Rica (11%). Besides, this group has the most considerable amount of travelling journalists’ contributions – Dominican Republic (17%), Panama, Guatemala and Costa Rica (11%) and Nicaragua (8%) – since tourism and travel reports play a relatively significant role.

Concerning “negativity”, only the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Honduras exceeded the 50% limit (Table 7). However, if one considers “negativity” without the soft news sections, El Salvador and Guatemala also cross the border. Furthermore, Honduras (47%), Panama (42%), Nicaragua (39%), El Salvador (32%), Haiti (32%) and Guatemala (31%) display the most considerable number of “official state representatives” as described actors, which is undoubtedly related to the noticeable focus on politics. However, compared to the other groups, Central America (except for Honduras and Panama) shows a relatively small number of “official state representatives”.

#### 6.4 Group 4: Pacific Alliance’s countries and other small South American states

Under this most heterogeneous group, we considered the following nations – Chile, Peru and Colombia (from the neo-liberal oriented Pacific Alliance) and finally Paraguay and Uruguay (Mercosur members). Paraguay and Uruguay, similar to Central America, are invisible states. Decisive for the inclusion of these two countries in this category was not only the South American geography but also the relative “cultural proximity”, which one perceives in their cultural coverage. While there is no German minority in Central America, there are 63 000 German speakers in Paraguay, 20 000 in Chile, 10 000 in Colombia, 8 000

**Table 8: Coverage areas of the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur's nations (percentage of their total coverage)**

	Chile	Co-lombia	Peru	Para-guay	Uru-guay
Domestic Politics	47	49	44	32	33
Foreign Policy and International Affairs	12	25	12	19	26
Environment and Environment Policy	2	1	6	5	0
Economy and Finance	5	1	3	0	28
Social and Social Order	2	3	3	3	0
Culture and Society	16	10	11	11	11
Research and Technology	4	1	7	0	2
Celebrity, Style and Gossip	2	3	1	5	4
Crime and Delinquency	1	4	2	11	0
Disasters and Accidents	9	1	5	8	2
Travel and Tourism	2	2	5	5	4

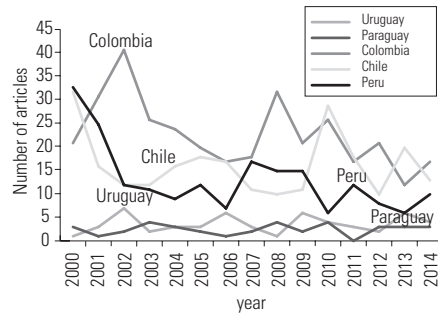
**Table 9: Structural traits (in per cent) and news factors (average) of the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur's nations**

	Chile	Co-lombia	Peru	Para-guay	Uru-guay
The average number of stories per year	16	23	13	2	4
Structural traits of foreign reporting in percentage					
Press attention	6	8	4	1	1
Focus on politics (domestic politics and foreign affairs)	58	74	56	51	59
Focus on crises	46	76	46	59	44
Negativity	37	57	39	49	22
Negativity without the soft-news coverage	45	66	49	55	28
Focus on elite	80	83	82	83	85
The intensity of the news factors (Average 0–3)					
Personification	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.3
Prominence	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.6
Crises and conflicts	0.4	1.8	0.5	0.6	0.4

For explanations see Table 3.

in Uruguay, and 4500 in Peru (Rosenberg, 1998, p.27). Besides, Central American states have no Goethe-Institutes, while the German cultural organisation is represented in almost all South American countries (except Paraguay).

**Figure 4: Reporting's trends of the Pacific Alliance and Mercosur's nations**



The key features of this categorisation are the intense focus on politics (between 51% and 59% and even more extreme in the case of Colombia with 74%) and a relatively significant cultural coverage (from 10% to 16%), as demonstrated in Table 8. Regarding Uruguay, Colombia and Paraguay, more than half of the contributions stemmed from foreign correspondents, even though from neighbouring countries. On the other hand, Peru and Chile exhibit slightly fewer articles produced by correspondents. Furthermore, the orientation on elites as actors of foreign reporting is also similar within the groups, varying from 80% to 85% (Table 9).

However, each of the five countries reveals some peculiarities in their coverage due to specific events. Uruguay, for instance, shows an atypical number of topics from “economy & finances” (18%), especially related to the impact of the Argentine crisis. Nevertheless, this financial reporting has not remained constant, as in the first group. Regarding Chile, two key events account for the large number of “disasters and accidents” (9%), a devastating earthquake and a mining misfortune (both in 2010). The other way around, a higher proportion of “crime & delinquency” (11%) marked the coverage of Paraguay. Besides, the country still has a certain proportion of “disasters & accidents” because of a fire tragedy in a supermarket in 2004. In Peru, the attention to “environment” with 6% (mostly about a controversial project in Amazon) and “research &

technology” with 7 % (excavations and research on the Inca empire and the Nazca culture) is remarkable (Table 8).

Finally, Colombia has no reporting priorities in addition to the basic coverage of “politics” and “culture & society” (Table 8). Amidst the group, Colombia received the most significant press attention (8 % in the fifth-place shared with Venezuela), but not because of its “power status” (3rd place among all countries) or “economic proximity” (5<sup>th</sup> place). Vital for the country’s attention is the “crisis intensity” (1.8), the highest in the continent, even ahead of Haiti (1.0) and Honduras (1.3), as demonstrated in Table 9. The long-standing civil war dominated Colombian reporting.

Now, we are going to consider solely the countries of the Pacific Alliance (excluding Mexico from group 1). Founded in 2012 based on a liberal agenda, the association differs from other Latin American regional organisations such as Mercosur or ALBA (Nolte, 2016). However, the press showed little interest in these new developments, considering that the numbers of economic reports from these countries are deficient (between 1 % and 5 %).

In terms of political stability, Chile is an exception in Latin America. The three presidents, democratically elected after the end of the military dictatorship, all come from the same political alliance – the *Concertación*. In a continent where the emergence and demise of dictators and parties are commonplace, Chile’s stability with its open markets and free trades is a singularity (Kaltwasser, 2006). This positive image of Chile may be one reason why the country received much less attention than expected according to its “economic proximity”. Since neoliberalism dominates, there is no conflict over the country’s development model. That may explain Chile’s positive image. Furthermore, the reduced press attention after 2000 is striking. After the democratisation and the aftermath of Pinochet in his house arrest in the UK, one notices a rapid decrease in its press coverage. Just like Chile, Peru disappeared from the press after its political stabilisation. However, unlike Chile, the country shows a slightly negative picture.

Colombia exhibits the highest number of press coverage, focus on politics and crisis’ intensity within the group (Table 9). Moreover, a very negative image marked its foreign reporting. Outside the analysed period of this work, on September 23, 2015, the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas signed a peace agreement (Kurtenbach & Lutscher, 2015). It would be interesting to investigate whether the Colombian coverage after the process of peacebuilding will disappear from the German press as happened to Chile and Peru after their democratisation.

Unlike the countries of the Pacific Alliance, Paraguay and Uruguay are entirely out of the press radar, since they do not have relevant “economic proximity” or “power status”. During the last century, Uruguay was one of the freest countries in Latin America and one of the first to democratise (Grassi, 2014, p. 125). Between 1930 and 2010, Democratic governments ruled in Uruguay for more than 60 years. To sum up, the more stable a country becomes (e.g. Chile and Peru after democratisation or Uruguay all the time), the press’ interest decreases.

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

When analysing the depiction of the twenty Latin American countries in the German press, one realises four different profiles of foreign reporting. This lack of balance provides (partially) support for the earliest NWICO’s arguments. We identified four main categories of coverage, namely 1) “Germany’s most important trading partners”, 2) the states against the Washington consensus, 3) the invisible Central American countries and 4) the other Mercosur and Pacific Alliance’s nations (RQ1). In other words, the press portrayed these four groups in different manners, stressing distinct topics and, consequently, news factors (RQ2).

The first group diverges mostly from the identified scheme of international news coverage of developing countries, discussed previously by the *Foreign News Study* (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant,

1985). The representation of Brazil, Mexico and Argentina is marked by an intense interest in economic affairs and less focus on political developments. Besides, they show a relatively sizable coverage of cultural issues and thus a well-balanced topics' distribution. Consequently, their images are relatively balanced (positive-neutral), because the press also considers a more complex and often positive daily-life environment of their citizens (Hafez & Grüne, 2015). Because of the low concentration on politics, this group reveals a low intensity of the news factors personification and prominence (RQ2). Concerning our RQ3, the main structural characteristics of global reporting discussed by *the Foreign News Study* are not a completely valid premise within this category anymore.

On the contrary, the second group with its lack of "economic proximity" and irrelevant "power status" (except Venezuela) exhibits the most substantial focus on politics among all analysed Latin American countries. Consequently, they possess a significant intensity of the factor "personification", pronounced "negativity" and "crises-orientation" and a notable proportion of "official state representatives" (elite-orientation) as depicted actors among all observed nations (RQ2). This group receives much more attention than expected according to their "economic proximity" due to ideology (Cazzamatta, 2018). Except for Cuba, which boasts a vast cultural reporting, the coverage of Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela reveals entirely the same problems discussed during the NWICO's era (RQ3).

One concludes the same regarding the Group 3 (RQ3) with their irrelevant "power status", tiny economic and cultural "proximity" and their minimal number of correspondents or news agencies. These invisible countries receive the minimum press coverage (less than five articles a year), and their thematic focus usually lies on "domestic politics", followed by "crime & delinquency", "disasters & accidents" or "travel & tourism", i.e., bad news and exotic aspects dominate their foreign reporting. Honduras and Haiti are the most extreme cases of event-centred coverage, the

so-called "earthquake-coup" syndrome. Both states also comprise the most extensive amount of "negativity" across the entire region (RQ2). Furthermore, except for Nicaragua, this category also displays the most significant number of stories produced by international news agencies.

In the case of Group 4, although one identified an intense orientation on politics, it also comprises a comparatively pronounced cultural coverage. As mentioned by an ex-German correspondent, the Latin American culture is more comprehensible for the German and European audiences than other regions due to its Christian influence (Karnofsky, 2018). That might be a reason why cultural aspects are comparatively good observed by the press, especially if compared to other areas of the globe. The most prominent themes related to these nations were "Pinochet", "Fujimori" and the long-standing war with the guerrillas in Colombia. Thus, negativity and personification also play an essential role (RQ2). While Chile and Peru suffered a sharp reduction in their coverage following the stabilisation of their political situation between 2000 and 2001, Uruguay and Paraguay were always invisible. The development of the newly formed Pacific Alliance is not yet sufficient to increase the financial reporting of its members (here Chile, Peru and Colombia). Except for Colombia, which had some continuous coverage due to its long civil war, the other nations received minimal attention.

Solely in term of press attention, it is plausible to confirm that the Latin American's news coverage follows the traditional scheme of global news flows and reflects the power structure within the region (RQ4). The most perceived countries by the press are Brazil, Argentina and Mexico (the regional "consistent newsmakers"), followed by Cuba, Venezuela (ideologically divergent), Colombia (crisis region) and lastly the invisible countries. Apart from group one and a part of group four, it seems that the transfer of cultural knowledge and daily life experience remain challenging in the Latin America's foreign reporting (Hafez & Grüne, 2015), primarily because the coverage still concentrates



on political systems (Group 2) and crimes, crises and catastrophes (Group 3). Thus, one can conclude that almost forty years after the NWICO's debates, despite technological developments and the new geopolitical position of Latin America, the scheme of global news coverage remains quite similar as it used to be.

It would be interesting for further research to investigate if this four categories and facets of Latin America's news coverage are also reproduced in other European Media systems such as Spain, considering its particular historical and cultural ties with the continent. Deeming the impact of international news agencies on the global newsgathering, we can suppose that these schemes of coverage might be similar in other European countries. However, further empirical studies are necessary to verify this question. Besides, further studies could analyse the developed taxonomy with a more qualitative focus considering the political specificities of each nation.

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