Selection of Countries

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As in most comparative media system studies (Dorn & Traunspurger, 2017 (https://web.archive.org/web/20211209004655/http://mappingmediafreedom.de/media-system-research/)), the project "Journalists' autonomy around the globe" is based on the nation state as unit of analysis. In this chapter, we discuss first whjy we consider this approach still the right one. Second, as every study focusing the whole globe, we justify the country selection procedure.
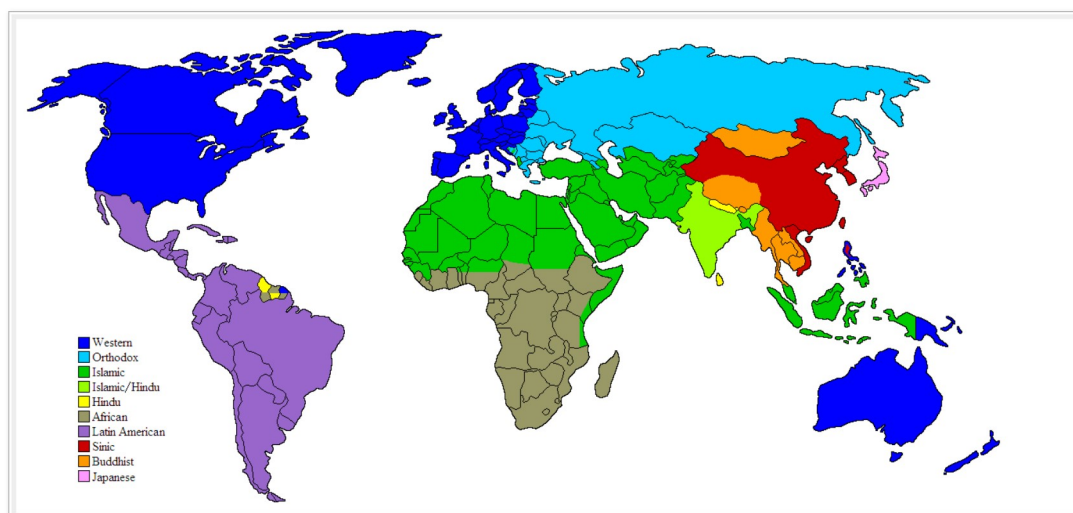

— Country Selection

Some researchers argue that focusing on national units can never comprise all specific characteristics of a media system and suggest regional subunits instead. Chakravartty & Roy (2013), for example, split India into 12 local areas. However, most of the countries are not India. To put it different, only a few, very large or highly divided countries such as Belgium may produce more than one media "system". Generally speaking, the nation state along with its country specific laws, regulations and market structures, remains the most stable and adequate unit when determining a distinctive media system, thus becoming our unit of analysis. This holds even true in the internet age, since numerous states regulate the online sphere via laws and authorities.

In order to guarantee a widespread coverage while still considering our limited human resources and time, the study is based on a theoretical selection of media systems. To be more concrete, we combined *Most Different System Design* (MDSD) and the principle of *theoretical saturation*. The strategy of the MDSD "is to choose units of research which are as different as possible with regard to extraneous variables" (Anckar, 2008: 390). "The ambition is to find common denominators across [different] systems" (ibid.: 396), which means that we compared the most different countries to find common factors that explain similarities between media systems. The concept of *theoretical saturation* is to examine new cases as long as "each new sample will refine your theoretical constructs, and give you new information and new insights" and to stop sampling when "additional research samples do not add any new information to your understanding of your theoretical constructs" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003: 102). For our research this means that we stopped choosing new countries from a certain cultural area when we did no longer detect any new aspects. The ultimate goal was to develop a typology for the world's media systems. Consequently, what was most important to us was not choosing as many countries as possible, but choosing the ones most adequate for outlining a global comparison of media freedom and journalistic autonomy.

In a first step, we defined a number of *must have* countries, that is a collection of the most influential media systems in the world that are essential for outlining media freedom and journalists' autonomy on a global scale. With regard to their political, economic as well as cultural and societal power, we decided that the G7 and BRICS countries are those *must have* countries. While the G7 (Germany, Canada, Japan, France, Italy, United Kingdom, USA) mark centres of power in the industrialized *Western* world, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) comprise a number of important and growing nations on the brink of becoming global players. The BRICS countries are also home to about three billion people, about 40 percent of the world's population, and had a 25 percent share of the global GDP in 2014 (Käkönen, 2015: 26-27).

All of the 12 G7 and BRICS countries are powerful nations and exert considerable influence on their geographical and cultural region. In terms of their media systems, they might also serve as role models or reference points, whose specific media characteristics are sometimes adopted by adjacent or neighbouring countries in that particular region. The export of media formats (e.g., 24/7 news coverage, TV shows), legal frameworks (e.g., media laws) or even regionally produced movies (e.g., Bollywood or telenovelas) illustrates the extensive political, economic and cultural influence these nations exert in their region. Thus, as a result of this adoption process, the situation of media freedom and journalistic autonomy in these adopting countries might also parallel the situation in the reference countries.

As a second step, we determined eight cultural areas roughly based on Huntington's "major civilizations", as presented in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993): Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Orthodox, Sinic & Buddhist, Japanese, and Hindu (Fig. 1). It is important to stress out that this regional classification only served as a rough mean to give us an impression which cultural regions with different languages and cultural and religious values we had to consider for our research. However, we did not regard Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* as our impeccable, final classification of media systems. His categories solely served as a first basis for assigning *regional experts* for each cultural area, thus being subject to later modifications. Every regional expert would now choose countries in his or her cultural area with reference to the MDSD and theoretical saturation. Furthermore, the selection was partly influenced by personal interests or easy access to experts, due to already existing contacts in certain countries.
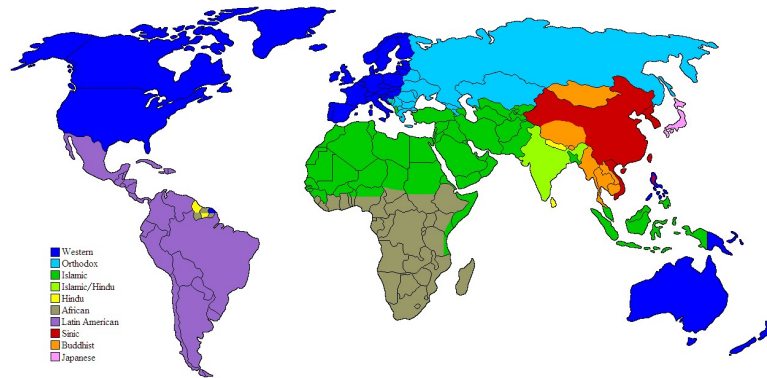
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> Wikipedia: Clash of Civilizations (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clash_of_Civilizations#/media/File:Clash_of_Civilizations_mapn2.png

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Huntington's "major civilizations"