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DIVERSITY IN FOREIGN NEWS IN US NEWSPAPERS BEFORE AND AFTER THE INVASION OF IRAQ

Jihyang Choi

Abstract / The objective of this study is to explore how the Iraq War affected the patterns of newspapers' foreign news coverage, specifically how the war affected the quality of foreign news in three prominent US newspapers, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald* in 2001, 2003, and 2005. Diversity was adopted as a criterion to measure the quality of foreign news coverage, employing the Herfindahl Index to calculate the level of diversity. The study reveals that, in general, the diversity of sources, geographic origins and topics significantly decreased after the start of the war. This was due to the pattern of concentration on a few categories. After the invasion of Iraq, newspapers' preferences for government sources, Middle East origins, military/defence related stories and news about international politics increased.

Keywords / diversity / foreign news / Herfindahl Index / Iraq War / US press

Introduction

Since the late 1970s when UNESCO initiated international comparative research about the information imbalance and bias of foreign news, specifically with regard to the depiction of the developing world, a number of studies have raised questions about the quality of foreign news reporting (MacBride, 1980). Foreign news in the US media has long been accused of inaccuracy and incompleteness, and that its manner of reporting tends to the so-called coups and earthquakes approach (Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1982).

Even in the 21st century, where the importance of foreign news is increasing as the world becomes ever more economically, politically, socially and culturally globalized, the US media are not free from the charges that they are still depicting a skewed world. Beaudoin and Thorson (2001) analysed foreign news in the *Los Angeles Times*, and revealed that the headlines were more negative than positive (39 percent as compared to 28 percent).

Moreover, US audiences, as has been historically noted, are not interested in foreign news. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004) showed that the proportion who answered that they followed

foreign news closely was 21 percent in 2002, rising to 24 percent in 2004. Given that there was tremendously significant news beyond the borders of the US, particularly the Iraq War, the actual increase of interest in foreign news was unexpectedly small.

However, the importance of foreign news cannot be disregarded in the shape of audiences' views of the world. A study on the second-level agenda-setting effect of foreign news implies a vital function of such news. Wanta et al. (2004) examined how foreign news influences the perception of people and found that the perceived importance of a particular nation to the US's interest increases as the media's coverage about that nation increases. Particularly, the study's finding that the negative depiction of a nation by the media is closely related to negative perceptions about that nation provides an alarming implication regarding the importance of foreign news.

Therefore, looking at the patterns of the US media's foreign news coverage leads us to infer the audience's view of the world. Since the start of the Iraq War, there has been much concern voiced that the unbalanced manner of foreign news has been aggravated. After analysing the airtime of ABC, CBS and NBC, the Tyndall Report found that foreign news coverage in 2006 concentrated on war and terrorism; about 15 percent of the total airtime was dedicated to Iraq-related stories and second to these came the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah (Lobe, 2007).

The current study is related to the abundant number of previous studies that have revealed the patterns of the US media's foreign news coverage; however, it focuses on the issue via a new criterion of news quality: diversity. This present study compares the quality of *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald's* foreign news coverage before and after the invasion of Iraq, using diversity as its criterion of analysis. Specifically, the study looks into the diversity of sources, geographic origins, topics and themes within military/defence news. The value of diversity has often been used to measure the quality of news, but it has rarely been used to evaluate foreign news in spite of the huge discussion about the imbalance in that coverage.

By adopting the concept of diversity, this study aims to add knowledge to the many studies about the media's foreign news coverage. Moreover, the study hopes to indicate the possible impacts on the perceptions of the people consuming the media that the unbalanced patterns of foreign news have brought since the start of the Iraq War. It also offers a guide as to how to restore the quality of foreign news reporting.

Literature Review

As already mentioned, diversity has often been adopted as a measurement in discussing the quality of news. The Merriam-Webster dictionary clarifies the term 'diverse' as 'differing from one another' or 'composed of distinct or unlike elements or qualities', however researchers have not reached a consensus about what types of diversity are significant in assessing news.¹ Thus, researchers have adopted a variety of criteria: ideological differences (Herman, 1985), different channels of news gathering (Hansen, 1991) or substantive differences in content, views and decision-making processes (Gomery, 2000). Even though the approaches to news diversity

vary, the basic premise of the diversity debate was that the media are obliged to contribute to a democratic society by providing diverse information (Dahl, 1999; Hansen, 1991).

Until now, the most common approach to diversity has been the diversity of sources, which values the use of various channels in obtaining information. In accessing sources, foreign news is different in nature from domestic news: geographical distance is the biggest obstacle to obtain diverse sources. Hackett (1985) asserted that media tend to rely on high-level or official sources when the event is unusual or happening far from home. Martin (1988), following Hackett's study, further explored the relationship between the proximity of event and source selection, and found that the coverage tended to include a greater number of sources when the reporters were geographically close to an event.

Media companies dispatch foreign correspondents to increase the geographical proximity, but the language barrier is another obstacle that prevents accessing various news sources and performing in-depth interviews. Limitation of sources affects the quality of news. When media continuously depend on official sources, they fail to deliver a variety of information to the public, and also fail to contribute to a pluralistic democracy (Brown et al., 1987).

Topics of foreign news have been studied extensively and conflict-oriented or crisis-oriented foreign news has been a major issue. Patterns of crisis- and conflict-oriented news have been found conspicuous when the news is about a less developed country. Weaver and Wilhoit (1981) and Wilhoit and Weaver (1983) analysed the wire services' coverage of foreign news and concluded that the news of the Third World region is more likely to be about violence, conflict or fatal events. Their studies also revealed the disparity in topic selection: wire services were concentrating on diplomatic/political activities, conflicts or political crime, and they were neglecting issues such as social problems, culture, education, health or social services. Kirat and Weaver's (1985) study on the coverage of three wire services, AP, UPI and NANAP, supported the main argument of the Wilhoit and Weaver studies, but their analysis added a new observation by revealing a substantial decline in the proportion of news dealing with crisis and conflict. Their study also found that one- to two-thirds of the stories were focused on politics, military affairs, diplomatic activities or conflicts.

The discussion of unbalanced topic categories is closely related to the New World Information Order (NWIO) debate. NWIO, whose main premise is that the free flow of information in the Third World is restricted by the western media, asserted that the world's news flow is controlled by major news agencies, and these news agencies focus on the negative news of the Third World rather than the positive news such as development (Hachten, 1992).

Some researchers argue that the distorted nature of the US media's foreign news coverage is due to their commercial characteristics. As early as 1978, Tuchman was already noting that the media tend to avoid the complex context of international news, and imbue stories with a national flavour because, without that, they cannot attract the US readers who are not already interested in foreign news. Thus, Brock's (1992) observation of the media's coverage about America, which related the pattern with the marketing strategy of the 'American Dream', is riveting. He

explained that the media tend to attract readers by making a clear chiaroscuro between the ravaged and deprived foreign countries and the prosperous and comfortable US.

The imbalance of the geographical proportions has also been a regular subject of studies. Many studies have been devoted to finding the core factors that make a nation newsworthy. The factors discovered were diverse: economic, social, political and geographic characteristics of nations (Galtung and Ruge, 1965); trade, population and geographic distance (Rosengren, 1977); GDP and population (Ishii, 1996); and the colonial ties (Nnaemeka and Richstand, 1980).

Among the findings, geographic distance was one of the most regular factors that the researchers pointed out. Chang (1998) analysed Reuters' coverage of the 1996 WTO conference, and asserted that the core countries of the world system were more likely to be in the news than those in the periphery or semi-periphery regions. Moreover, foreign correspondents were not evenly distributed; over half of all American reporters abroad were dispatched to European countries, whereas the vast African continent was nearly deserted, with few correspondents (Hachten, 1992). However, a national survey of newspaper editors about their criteria of foreign news selection showed that geographic bias is not a significant factor in deciding newsworthiness (Chang and Lee, 1992).

Though the points of view, criteria and methods of analysis were different, previous studies of foreign news coverage have had similar objectives: the major concern was to see whether the quality of the foreign news is enough to show the real world to audiences. The current study is not a great outlier from the thread of the earlier studies, but I took the influence of the Iraq War into account to look into the patterns of foreign news coverage, and I evaluated the quality according to the criterion of diversity.

Hypotheses

Even though the US media's interest in the foreign news is not very high, the interest has fluctuated according to the issue and event, and so has the quality of the foreign news coverage.

The wars in which the US has been involved change the way the media tell audiences about the outside world. Now the US media's concern is presumably focused on the Middle East. Thus, this study has assumed that the quality of foreign news, especially in terms of diversity, will decrease.

This study also investigates themes within the subtopics of military/defence news, under the assumption that the category that would increase most after the war would be news about military/defence. It is also expected that topic frames will concentrate on a few themes due to the impact of the Iraq War.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The level of source diversity in foreign news will decrease after the Iraq War as compared with the period before the war.

H2: The level of geographic diversity in foreign news will decrease after the Iraq War as compared with the period before the war.

H3: The level of topic diversity in foreign news will decrease after the Iraq War as compared with the period before the war.

H4: The diversity of framing themes within military/defence news will decrease after the Iraq War as compared with the period before the war.

Methods

This study analysed foreign news reported in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald* in 2001, 2003 and 2005. Because the Iraq War began in March 2003, I chose the years 2001 and 2005 to examine changes in coverage patterns before and after the start of the war.

The New York Times was selected because it is one of the most trusted newspapers, which exercises an influence on policy-makers; also, it is a leading elite press that values foreign news. The *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald* were chosen to examine whether the ethnic diversity of readers affects the pattern of the foreign news coverage. The racial make-up of Los Angeles is very diverse, with white, Hispanic, Asian-Americans and African-Americans constituting 29 percent, 47 percent, 13 percent and 9 percent, respectively (State of California, 2007). And the *Miami Herald* has extensive coverage of Latin American and Hispanic affairs.

Sampling

The method of sampling I adopted was the constructed week approach in which sample dates are stratified by the day of the week. As Riffe et al. (1993) have verified, through constructed week sampling researchers can obtain proper units that can predict the population more efficiently than simple random sampling or consecutive day sampling.

Following Riffe et al.'s assertion that one constructed week is sufficient to represent six months of a newspaper, this study selected a two-week constructed sample per year: one from the first six months and one from the latter six months. The study analysed only weekday editions of the newspapers.

Unit of Analysis and Materials

The unit of analysis is the news item, which includes all the material about foreign news printed under a single heading. This study limited the subject of analysis as foreign news in the front section, because foreign news is mostly carried in that section. As an exception, editorials in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald*, which are not carried in the front section, were included. Short news that provides a quick summary of stories in one or two sentences, such as the 'world briefing' of *The New York Times* and 'world in brief' of the *Los Angeles Times*, was not included. The sampling procedure yielded, in total, 1047 stories: 404 for *The New York Times*, 339 for the *Los Angeles Times* and 304 for the *Miami Herald*.

Defining the exact range of foreign news is a complicated procedure because the boundary between domestic and foreign news is progressively more blurred as

globalization advances; some domestic news is significantly relevant to certain foreign countries and some foreign news is also significant to the US.

The basic standard of foreign news was stories about events or issues that are related to foreign countries. First, stories that involve foreign actors and foreign locations, such as the change in the government of a foreign country, are foreign news. Second, issues or events that happened on foreign soil were included within the foreign news boundary, even if the main actors were US citizens. Third, news that happened in the US but was relevant to foreign countries is included in foreign news.

Coder Reliability

One-hundred-and-five randomly selected news stories, 41 from *The New York Times*, 34 from the *Los Angeles Times* and 30 from the *Miami Herald*, were coded by an independent coder. Coefficients calculated with Scott's pi were 0.76 (sources), 0.95 (geographic origins), 0.89 (topics) and 0.88 (themes within military/defence news), and the overall intercoder reliability was 0.87.

Dependent Variables

This study included four dependent variables: diversity of sources, diversity of geographic origins, diversity of topics and diversity of themes within military/defence news. As a coding scheme, I mainly consulted the category classifications of a multinational study of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) under the auspices of UNESCO (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). This study partly modified and honed the categories to make them better fit its purpose.

Diversity of Sources

This category deals with the origins of the news. Sources were divided into seven categories: home country government, home country private, international organization, wire agency, own correspondent, US government and others. It is difficult to find a main source because a story is generally constructed based on multiple sources. Thus, this study employed a rule to regard the source that mainly influenced the frame and headline of a story as the source of the story.

The range of papers' own correspondents was the most complicated issue in source coding. Even though the byline of a story would be the name of the newspaper's foreign correspondent, the study did not classify the source as correspondent if the story was largely based on an official announcement, a press release or reported material from other sources such as the government or a private source. Stories written with the authentic frame of a correspondent, field reports or scoops were categorized as news by correspondent.

Diversity of Geographic Origins

The geographic origin refers to the location of the news event. The eight main categories were: North America, Latin America, Africa, Middle East, Asia/Pacific, Western Europe, Eastern Europe/Eurasia and multiple origins. One concern was how to classify countries located between continents such as Turkey and Afghanistan, which are placed between Asia and Europe and Asia and Middle East, respectively. By the same token, Russia can be included in either Eastern Europe or Asia. Thus, the study classified the proper area after considering the ethnic and religious factors together with the geographic factor. For example, the region from India to Japan and down to Australia was sorted as Asia/Pacific, Turkey and Russia was categorized as Eastern Europe/Eurasia and Afghanistan as Middle East.

Diversity of Topics and Themes within Military/Defence News

This is the type of event or situation the news is mainly about. I consulted the topic categories that Weaver et al. (1985) used. The topics were divided into nine categories: politics, military/defence, economics matters, international/aid, social services/public health, crime/police/judicial/legal matters, disaster/accident, personalities/culture/ecology/religion and others. Themes within military/defence news were further divided into seven categories: nuclear arms, politics independence/rebel, religious/ethnic conflict, terrorism, peace move/negotiation, war in Iraq and others.

Measurement of the Level of Diversity

As the objective of this study is to examine if there are significant changes in the level of diversity, the study adopted the Herfindahl Index as a main measurement. The Herfindahl Index is extensively used in economics to indicate how concentrated the market is, and is calculated by summing the squares of the market shares of each firm.

The index ranges from 0 to 10,000; a high index indicates that the market is excessively monopolized, and a low index means that the market is diversified. In other words, the lowest possible index, zero, informs that the market is controlled by a large number of companies; the highest possible index, 10,000, indicates that one big company is completely controlling the market because the index of 10,000 means that a company holds 100 percent of the market share.

This index is used as a standard when the US Department of Justice determines whether it should take antitrust action or not; an index below 1000 indicates that the market is diversified, from 1000 to 1800 means a moderately concentrated state and above 1800 indicates a very concentrated condition.² Except for studies regarding the media industry, this index has rarely been used in the communication area. Chan-Olmsted (1991) used the Herfindahl Index to analyse the US television syndication industry, and Stuhlfaut (2005) employed it to investigate the publishing market of agricultural magazines from 1993 to 2002.

If we apply the Herfindahl Index to the diversity of sources, geographic origins, topics and themes within topics, a lower number means a more diverse status.

Moreover, if we borrow the standard of the US Department of Justice, a Herfindahl Index above 1800 means that the sources, geographic origins, topics or themes within the news are highly concentrated in a few categories.

Findings

This study's findings indicate that, with one exception in the *Los Angeles Times*, the levels of diversity of sources, geographic origins and topics in the newspapers sampled decreased after the beginning of the Iraq War. Thus, hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported by *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald*. Hypothesis 1 was supported only by *The New York Times* and the *Miami Herald*, not by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Within news about the military/defence, contrary to the expectation that the level of diversity would have decreased after the Iraq War started, themes were rather diversified. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported by any of newspapers.

The Diversity of Sources

With regard to the shift of the level of diversity of sources, each newspaper demonstrated distinctive differences, and this finding yielded interesting points that deserve careful attention (see Figure 1 and Table 1). The analysis of the sources of *The New York Times* revealed that the Herfindahl Index of sources gradually increased from 2034.8 (2001) to 2182.2 (2003), and again to 2269.1 (2005). Given that an index above 1800 indicates a very concentrated state, the results imply that foreign news in *The New York Times* did not use diverse sources even before the war; and the level of diversity of sources has gone from bad to worse year by year since 2001.

Against the steady increase of *The New York Times'* index, the Herfindahl Index of sources for the *Los Angeles Times* was relatively stable. The index was 2038.3,

FIGURE 1
The Herfindahl Index in 2001, 2003 and 2005

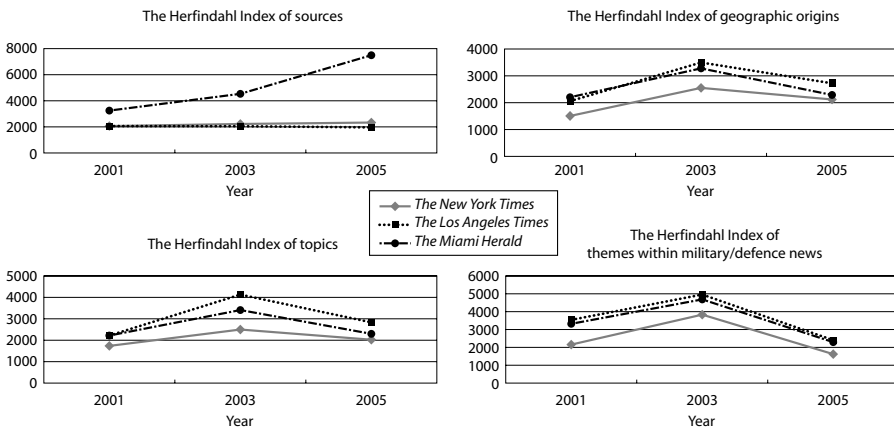


TABLE 1

The Movement of the Herfindahl Index in 2001, 2003 and 2005

	2001	2003	2005
Sources			
<i>The New York Times</i>	2034.8	2182.2	2269.1
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	2038.3	2037.3	1965.8
<i>Miami Herald</i>	3236.5	4504.5	7467.7
Geographic origins			
<i>The New York Times</i>	1535.7	2560.9	2138.4
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	2039.5	3505.3	2729.6
<i>Miami Herald</i>	2199.3	3324.6	2301.6
Topics			
<i>The New York Times</i>	1741.4	2456.6	1979.7
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	2203.2	4069.2	2800.0
<i>Miami Herald</i>	2230.9	3405.4	2259.1
Themes within military/defence			
<i>The New York Times</i>	2168.0	3837.5	1605.2
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	3527.9	4961.2	2428.4
<i>Miami Herald</i>	3320.7	4681.9	2291.6

2037.3, and 1965.8 in 2001, 2003, and 2005, respectively. Contrary to hypothesis 1, the index revealed that the diversity of sources did not get worse, and rather improved somewhat.

The source analysis of the *Miami Herald* yielded a remarkably high level of concentration: the Herfindahl Index was 3236.5 (2001), 4504.5 (2003) and 7467.7 (2005). A key reason for the sudden and large leap was definitely its overdependency on wire agencies. The proportions of foreign news that reproduced the contents of wire agencies and other media companies were 52.4 percent (2001), 65.1 percent (2003) and 86.2 (2005). On the other hand, news produced by its own correspondents greatly declined: the proportion was 15.5 percent in 2001, 9.5 percent in 2003 and merely 1.1 percent in 2005 (see Figure 2).

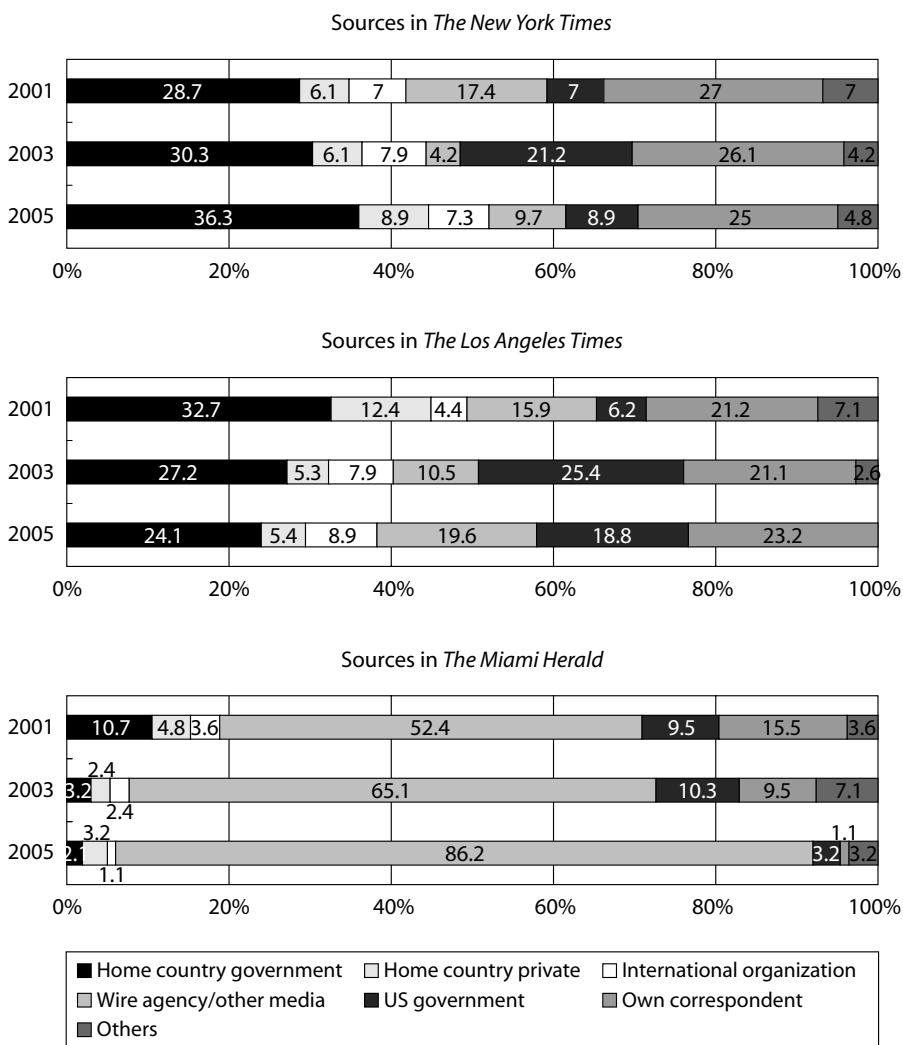
In *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, the proportion of foreign news by correspondents remained almost stable. The only slight changes in these numbers implies that even in 2003, when many US media outlets sent reporters to Iraq as part of the embedded journalist programme, in-depth or creative stories by correspondents did not increase substantially.

The Diversity of Geographical Origins

Depending on the ethnic characteristics of a newspaper's audience, the diversity of geographic origins demonstrated discernible differences. In particular, as Table 1 and Figure 1 indicate, the level of diversity, in general, is lower in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald* as compared with that of *The New York Times*. In the *Los Angeles Times*, the geographic origins were not particularly skewed to Asia or Latin

FIGURE 2

A Comparison of Sources

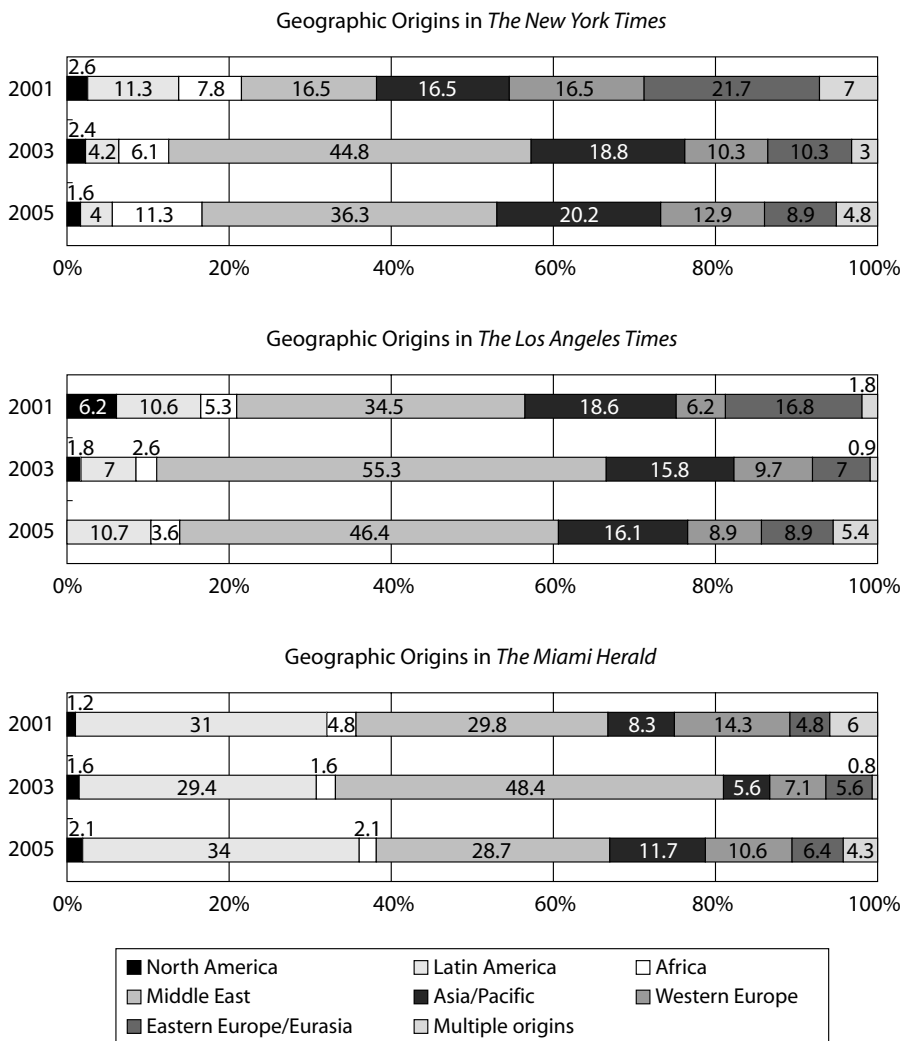


America when compared to that of *The New York Times* (see Figure 3), even though Los Angeles is a city where Asians and Hispanics comprise a large percentage of the population. For example, Asia-related news in the *Los Angeles Times* was 18.6 percent, 15.8 percent and 16.1 percent, while in *The New York Times* the proportions were 16.5 percent, 18.8 percent and 20.2 percent in 2001, 2003 and 2005, respectively. However, in the *Miami Herald*, the slant to Latin America was conspicuous. News articles related to Latin America, were 31.0 percent (2001), 29.4 percent (2003) and 34.0 percent (2005).

In all three newspapers, the level of geographic diversity has significantly declined since the beginning of the Iraq War. In *The New York Times*, the Herfindahl Index

FIGURE 3

A Comparison of Geographic Origins



in 2001, 1535.7, implies that the level of diversity was moderate, since the number is below 1800. However, it soared to 2560.9 in 2003 and then somewhat decreased to 2138.4 in 2005. With this variance of the index, we can infer that the moderately dispersed geographic origins of *The New York Times* became highly concentrated at the height of intensity of the Iraq War and was slightly restored in 2005. In the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald*, the patterns of movement in the index were similar; however, the levels of diversity were even lower than those of *The New York Times*.

Consequently, news from other parts of world decreased; however, regions that became less visible as a result of the Middle East's increase were different depend-

ing on the ethnic orientation of newspapers. In *The New York Times*, news from Latin America and Eastern Europe/Eurasia moderately decreased; Latin America related news, which comprised 11.3 percent in 2001, decreased to 4.2 percent in 2003 and 4.0 percent in 2005; news of Eastern Europe/Eurasia, which was as much as 21.7 percent in 2001, accounted for only 8.9 percent in 2005. In the *Los Angeles Times*, news of North America and Eastern Europe/Eurasia shrank; North America related stories accounted for 6.2 percent in 2001, but disappeared in 2005; Eastern Europe/Eurasia related news, which was 16.8 percent in 2001, dropped to 8.9 percent. The results for the *Miami Herald* were even more interesting. Even in 2003, when it devoted a large portion of its news hole to the Iraq War, the percentage of Latin America related news kept relatively steady (29.4 percent), which reflected the newspaper's special focus on Latin America.

The Diversity of Topics

One significant change was a concentration in the news about military/defence and politics. Findings indicate that, since the war started, newspapers not only moved their focus to military/defence news but also to the politics of foreign countries (see Figure 4). In 2003, news about politics and military/defence made up 15.2 percent and 44.2 percent of *The New York Times'* foreign news, and those together accounted for more than half of the total news. In the *Los Angeles Times*, the slant to those two topics was more notable. Military/defence related news took 60.5 percent and news about politics 17.5 percent.

One interesting point to mention is that stories about politics greatly increased after the war. In 2005, that category took up 30.6 percent, 31.3 percent and 35.1 percent for *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald*, respectively. When we compare those numbers with those of 2001, which were 17.4 percent, 19.5 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively, the increase is remarkable.

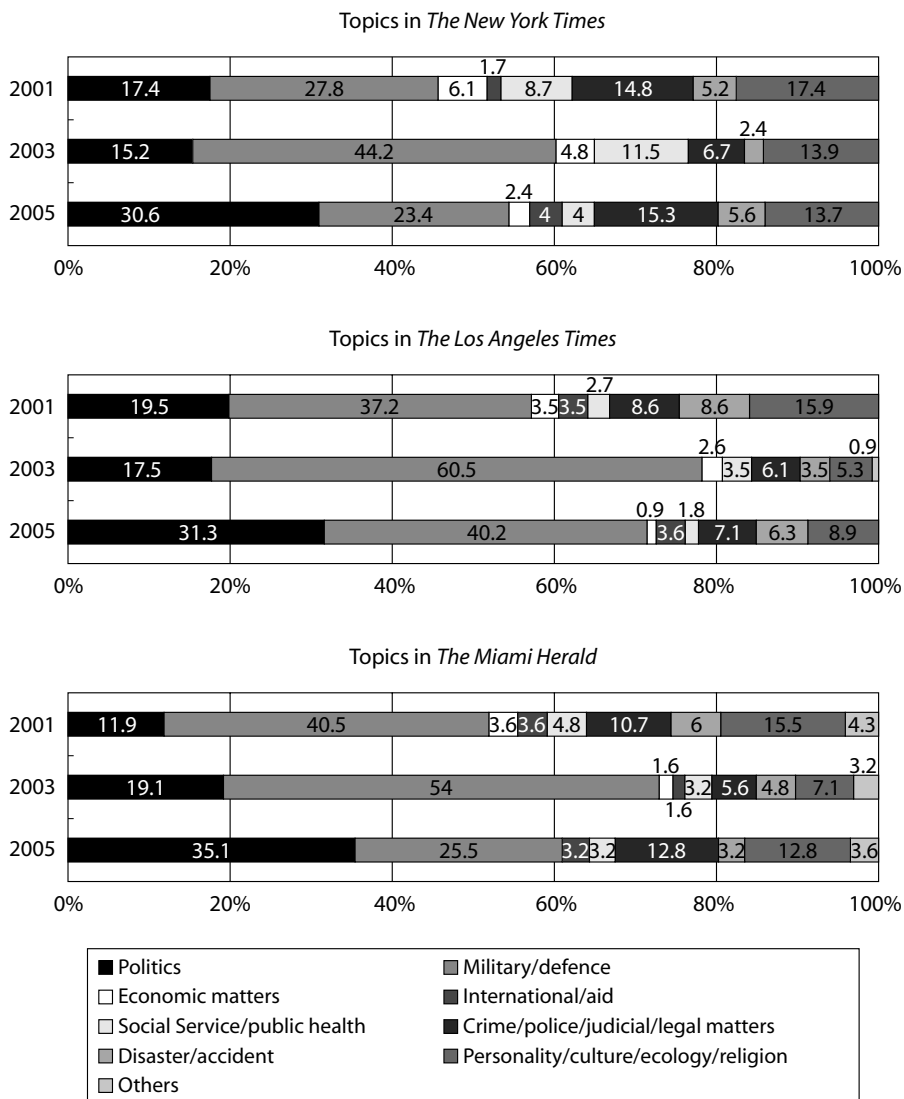
Mainly due to the concentration on those two topics, the diversity of topics decreased in all the three newspapers. In the case of *The New York Times*, the Herfindahl Index was fairly low (1741.4) in 2001 and jumped to 2456.6 in 2003; then, in 2005, it somewhat decreased to 1979.7 (see Table 1). Specifically, in 2003, the *Los Angeles Times'* level of diversity was very bad; the index rose as high as 4069.2.

Themes within Military/Defence News

Contrary to hypothesis 4, themes within military/defence topics have become more diverse after the war (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Findings concerning *The New York Times* show that the themes of military/defence news concentrated on religious/ethnic conflicts (34.4 percent), terrorism (15.6 percent) and peace movements/negotiations (15.6 percent) in 2001, and the Herfindahl Index was 2168.0. But, in 2005, the index shows a dramatic drop to 1605.2. Likewise, Figure 1 shows the themes within military/defence news of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Miami Herald* were more diverse in 2005 compared to 2001.

FIGURE 4

A Comparison of Topics



In 2003, all three newspapers showed a concentration on stories regarding the war in Iraq: the percentage of war related news was 58.9 percent (*The New York Times*), 69.1 percent (*Los Angeles Times*) and 66.7 percent (*Miami Herald*). Thus, the Herfindahl Index largely soared to 3,837.5, 4961.2, and 4681.9. As Table 1 reveals, the pattern of extreme concentration appears to be over in 2005, and news related to military/defence issues appears to reflect a variety of themes.

Discussion and Conclusions

The objective in this study was to explore whether differences exist in the quality of foreign news between the periods before and after the war started. The results summarized in the previous section demonstrate that differences do exist, and the changes are negative rather than positive.

This study implies that the war altered the criteria of news values and changed the kinds of news reported in the newspapers sampled; it also affected the quality of the news. As Kepplinger and Habermeier (1995) assert, key events influence overall news criteria and, as a result, the media tend to cover stories that are relevant to the key events even after interest in those events wanes. When we draw on the argument of Kepplinger and Habermeier, the Iraq War is a key event that changed news values. The large amount of space allocated to military/defence news in 2005, when the Iraq War was relatively quiet (23.4 percent for *The New York Times*, 40.2 percent for the *Los Angeles Times* and 25.5 percent for the *Miami Herald*), leads us to think about the repercussions of the war.

Also noteworthy here is the rise of political news in foreign countries. Such news in 2005 accounted for 30.6 percent (*The New York Times*), 31.3 percent (*Los Angeles Times*) and 35.1 percent (the *Miami Herald*), and those numbers show a large increase from those of 2001, at 17.4 percent, 19.5 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively. A possible interpretation for this increase is that, due to the war outside the US, international politics had become a relevant topic to the US media and audiences, because it could influence the result of the war. Though this study lacks concrete evidence that the war operated as a key event and triggered the increase in politics-related news, at least it shows a certain relationship between those two phenomena.

The data also show that newspapers, often regarded as the 'window on the world', specifically functioned as a window on the Middle East; the coverage of newspapers extensively focused on Iraq, Israel, Palestine and Afghanistan, which have a strong military and diplomatic relationship with the US.

US newspapers' preference for Middle East stories can be understood as part of a nationality issue. Studies argue that the role perception of journalists is subordinate to the national interests of those journalists (Glasgow University Media Group, 1985; Shamir, 1988). Nossek's (2004) examination of how journalists react when national interests and professional values collide helps to understand that relationship. Comparing the foreign news about three violent political events in three different countries, he concluded that news is influenced by professional practices when the news is categorized as 'their news', which is not directly related to one's own national interest. But national loyalty comes as a priority when the news is 'our news' – that is, when it is connected with one's own nation's interests. If news values are affected by national interests, the emphasis on the Middle East, where the interests of the US are greatly involved, is understandable.

Another interesting finding is a noticeable difference between newspapers according to the different ethnic characteristics of their audiences. For example, the *Miami Herald's* preference for Latin American news was stable even during the Iraq War. The term 'domestication' refers to how a newspaper translates and frames

international news to make it more relevant and comprehensible for domestic audiences (Gurevitch et al., 1991). However, the present study implies that, even among newspapers in the US, different types of domestication took place. When the Pew International Journalism Program (2002) surveyed 218 editors at newspapers with circulations of more than 30,000, two-thirds of the editors stated that they provided coverage of ethnic and immigrant populations in their region regularly or fairly frequently, which reflects their concerns about the different types of domestication.

The results of this study are also related to long-standing questions about the source accessibility of foreign news. The major implications of the data are three-fold: during the war newspapers' reliance on government sources increased; news by correspondents did not increase even during the war, when many embedded journalists were dispatched; and newspapers' dependency, notably the *Miami Herald's*, on borrowed news from wire agencies or other media increased.

In 2003, when the Iraq War was at its height, US government sources were used for 21.2 percent of items in *The New York Times* and 25.4 percent in the *Los Angeles Times*, which was a large increase from 2001. This finding is in accordance with previous studies, which claim that media's foreign news coverage is usually consistent with the policy of the government (Paterson, 1999); in times of crisis, such as immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the media tend to be the government's mouthpiece (Williams, 2003). Though further studies, such as frame analysis, would be needed to claim that the newspapers uncritically follow government policy on the war, this study provides another interesting clue that demonstrates the relationship between media and government during a crisis situation.

Newspapers' dependency on government sources can be understood from different points of view. During a crisis, newspapers inevitably trust in the government's source because they lack alternative sources. Entman's (2006) study comparing the diversity of frames between the coverage of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison and that of the killing of Iraqi civilians in Fallujah demonstrates this point of view well. His study reveals that the coverage of Fallujah by the mainstream American news media homogeneously adopted the White House's frames, whereas the coverage of Abu Ghraib employed diverse frames. The large-scale adoption of the government's frame in Fallujah news resulted from the difficulties of entering the dangerous city of Fallujah and finding credible sources among Iraqis who could provide information about the Iraqi casualties.

Although this study contains valuable implications, it also has several limitations. First, it does not take all types of articles into consideration. The targets of analysis are limited to the foreign news that appeared in front sections. Even though most of the foreign news is in the front section, many articles, such as news about the economy and culture, which tend to appear in different sections, were not included. Therefore, the diversity of topics could be biased. For example, in *The New York Times* the proportion of economic matters makes up a relatively small part of the foreign news (6.1 percent in 2001, 4.8 percent in 2003 and 2.4 percent in 2005), even though the importance of the international economy is increasing as countries economies become more and more interdependent. This is because news about the international economy is generally carried in the business section.

Another limitation regarding the method adopted to measure the level of diversity is worth mentioning. This study consults the standard of the Department of Justice, which holds that 1000 and 1800 are the critical points for judging the level of concentration. However, it is not perfectly applicable to the level of news diversity because the index is sensitive to the number of coding categories that a study uses. If categories are divided into many items, the situation will look as if many companies share a small portion of the market and, therefore, the index tends to go down. Moreover, the minimum possible index is also sensitive to the number of categories.

Suppose that a study sets 10 categories. The most diverse state is where each category shares 10 percent respectively, and the lowest Herfindahl Index should be 1000. However, suppose that a study has five categories. The most diverse situation is one in which each category takes 20 percent, and the lowest possible Herfindahl Index should be 2000. In this study, the lowest possible Herfindahl Index of sources and themes within military/defence news is 1428.6, because each category is supposed to take 14.4 percent of total news. The lowest index for geographic origins is 1250 because they include eight categories. In other words, if a study has a small number of categories, the result tends to show a more concentrated state.

However, it is a good measurement when the main objective of a study lies in the movement of the numbers, which can inform the fluctuation of the level of diversity. In this study, the goal is to find out whether the levels of diversity decreased or increased after the invasion of Iraq rather than to measure the absolute status of that level. Thus, we can generalize that the levels of diversity of sources, geographic origins and topics of the three newspapers generally decreased after the beginning of the Iraq War, based on the fluctuation of the numbers. Future studies need to focus on the issue of how to measure the quality of news in a more scientific way.

Despite these limitations, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to better understand the quality of foreign news in a far more systematic way. Based on the findings of this study that the US media are not providing a diverse picture of the world, this study can be useful in a practical way. The results can inform working journalists about the current level of the quality of foreign news and can serve as an opportunity for media to think about the quality of news coverage and its possible impact on audiences.

Notes

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1. *Merriam-Webster Online*; at: www.m-w.com/dictionary/diverse
2. The US Department of Justice; at: www.usdoj.gov/atr/public/testimony/hhi.htm

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