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The 2008 US Presidential Campaign as Represented in the Online Edition of *The Korea Times*

Because public opinion has been found to influence government policy (Page & Shapiro, 1983, p. 185) and because media are cultural products that “mirror society” and “contribute to the reconstruction of the culture” (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 250), I conducted a rhetorical analysis of the coverage of the 2008 US presidential campaign in the online edition of the English language newspaper, *The Korea Times*. Using Entman’s (2007) concept of framing bias in the media as a means to influence the distribution of power, I found that *The Korea Times* used the deictic expression ‘we’ to express and (re)construct nationalistic views of three salient issues: the Korean-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA), the economy, and North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim Jongll. The results indicated that *The Korea Times* mitigated Barack Obama’s opposition to KORUS FTA and willingness to meet with Kim Jongll while also (re)constructing John McCain’s image as economically and militarily dangerous.

SHERRI L. TER MOLEN

A HISTORY OF THE SOUTH KOREAN-US BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Throughout Korea’s four-thousand-year history (Baik, 1992, p. 15; C. S. Lee, 1965, p. 3), it has been highly desired by its neighbours, Russia, China and Japan, for its natural resources and its geographic location (Buck, 1963, p. 9). When Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces at the end of World War II, their thirty-five-year annexation of Korea came to an end (Baik, 1992, pp. 19, 24), and the United States became the dominant power in the region (p. 16). Because the United States viewed the Korean Peninsula as a potential trap for American Forces if an all-out war broke out on the Asian continent, they were hesitant to establish much of a military presence there at that time (K. W. Kim, 1995, p. 61), but the United States and South Korea fought together during the Korean War just a few years later (Kleiner, 2006, p. 215). At the end of the war, the Korean Peninsula was divided at the 38th Parallel into two countries (Buck, 1963, p. 9): The Republic of Korea (ROK), which is commonly referred to as South Korea, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), also known as North Korea (Howard, 2004, p. 806). Today, the United States has roughly 28,500 troops in South Korea (Schmitt, 2008, p. 6), fortifying “the most

heavily armed border nation in the world” (Lord, 1997, p. 113; S-N Working, 2008). Communist North Korea was dubbed a member of George W. Bush’s axis of evil (Howard, 2004, p. 806), and the vast majority of their arsenal is at this time within firing range of Seoul, which is home to one-fifth of the South Korean population (p. 807).

The South Korean-US bilateral¹ relationship is a bi-product of the Cold War (K. W. Kim, 1995, p. 19; K. W. Kim, 1995, p. 61), and it has not been free from “underlying tensions and periods of extreme rancor” (Noland, 1993, p. 14) despite the fact that the relationship has otherwise been called “rock-solid” (Lord, 1997, pp. 109–110). Anti-Americanism is growing in South Korea (Jhee, 2008; Kim, Parker & Choi, 2006; Risse, 2001; Young, 2006), and public opinion has the possibility of shaking the South Korea-US relationship, undermining US interests. After all, South Korea is the thirteenth largest economy in the world and one of the largest trading partners of the United States (Howard, 2004, p. 810; Korea’s Economic, 2008; Lord, 1997, p. 110; Noland, 1993, p. 13).

South Korea’s interest in maintaining its bilateral relationship with the United States is not restricted to military reinforcement or trade. “The United States is the second largest investor and second largest source of technology transfer to Korea (following Japan in both cases)” (Noland, 1993, p. 14). Additionally, South Korea occasionally relies on the United States in political

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matters. The United States has continuously leant its support regarding South Korea's intentions for "peace, reconciliation, and reunification of the Korean peninsula [sic]" (Lord, 1997, p. 110) because peace is in the economic best interest of both South Korea and the United States. However, events such as the reported stroke of North Korean leader Kim Jun Il in August 2008 (NK leader, 2008) coupled with North Korea's uncertain commitment to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (Singh, 2008) means that a solidified peace may be just out of reach for the time being. South Korea, therefore, had a vested interest in the 2008 US presidential election since the United States played an active role in the security of the region.

Public opinion has been found to influence government policy (Page & Shapiro, 1983, p. 185). The media both reflect this socially constructed representation of reality while also (re)constructing this reality through the use of pronouns such as 'we' (Erjavec, 2001, p. 702). The current rhetorical analysis of articles published in the online edition of *The Korea Times*, "the oldest independent and most influential English-language daily in Korea" (*The Korea Times*, 2008), for the two months leading up to the 2008 US presidential election revealed that Korean nationalism was, indeed, salient and that there was steadfast support of presidential hopeful, Barack Obama, who they believed would represent their best interests.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER IN SOUTH KOREA

The English language was first present in Korea, prior to its division into two countries, in 1882, when it signed its first treaty with the United States. In 1915, the first American Protestant missionary schools arrived, but English was made illegal during World War II because it was the language of the enemy since Korea was, at that time, under the colonial rule of Japan (Baik, 1992, p. 24). English was not the only language banned, however. Koreans were forced to speak Japanese rather than Korean and to adopt Japanese names as a "method of imposing Japanese identity on Koreans" (p. 19).

The liberation of Korea from Japan occurred in 1945 at the end of World War II (Baik, 1992, pp. 19, 24; Lee, 1963, p. 273), but it was not until 1948 that the ROK was founded (Noland, 1993, p. 13). However, the joy of the Korean people was short lived because the Communist movement of North Korea attacked South Korea in the summer of 1950 (K. W. Kim, 1995, p. 62; C. S. Lee, 1965, p. 273). Probably not by coincidence, *The Korea Times*, the country's first English language newspaper, began publishing in November later that same year (*Media Kit*, 2008), a mere five years after the end of the Japanese annexation. The forced foreign invasion of one language was simply replaced by the voluntary adoption of another.

It has been argued that "G. I. terms and Western jargon" were the first English words to make "their mark upon the Korean language" (Page, 1967, p. 4; Baik, 1992, p. 24). Today, South Koreans are spending a plethora of money on learning English in private language schools

called *hagwons*. Many of these students study English for business purposes because it is a powerful language around the world (Baik, 1992, p. 29; T. J. Kim, 2008). Due to the cost of sending one's children to *hagwons*, "National Assembly Speaker, Kim Hyong O has expressed deep concern over the English divide, a policy problem referring to language skill disparity between children from high-income and low-income families" (Kang, 2008).

The importance of English in modern-day South Korea has not been lost on *The Korea Times*. One of its missions, according to President-Publisher Park Moo Jong, is to help their Korean readers learn English because, "no one can over-emphasise the importance of English in this globalised world and information society" (Park, 2008). Former South Korean president and Nobel Laureate, Kim Dae Jung, was its most well-known student. Kim had his wife send him copies of *The Korea Times* so that he could use them to study English after he was imprisoned on charges of being a member of a pro-democracy movement in the 1970s (*Korea Times History*, 2007). With its circulation of more than 2,000,000 in 160 countries (*AsiaMedia*, 2008; *Media Kit*, 2008) and its online presence along with its original mission to promote Korean interests abroad (*The Korea Times History*, 2007), there may be no better medium that represents and (re) constructs Korean public opinion while also imposing Korean viewpoints on English-speakers in Korea, Korean expatriates, *ggosigis* (ethnic Koreans who have spent the majority of their lives abroad such as Korean children adopted into non-Korean families), and others interested in Korean affairs because the Internet creates an "invisible, yet perceptible umbrella covering scattered diasporas in numerous countries" (Erikson, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, *The Korea Times* leant itself as an excellent medium for analysing its coverage of the 2008 US presidential campaign. Besides, the very readership of *The Korea Times* may be dependent upon the continued domination of English in business and politics and, therefore, the strength of the South Korean-US bilateral relationship.

FRAMING BIAS AS A METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

In 'Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power', Robert M. Entman (2007) proposes the integration of the prior concepts of framing, priming and agenda-setting into a single "robust, rigorous, theory-driven and productive research concept" called bias (p. 163). He argues that this integration could have two benefits: it might yield insight into how the media affect "who gets what, when and how" through its use of "problem definitions, causal analyses, moral judgements, and preferred policies", and it might improve the media's democratic contributions (pp. 170-171).

It is important first to define each of the three concepts. Agenda-setting is the identification of the problem or problems "worthy of public and government attention"; framing is the practice of taking only a few elements of a perceived reality to create a narrative that supports one's particular interpretation (p. 164), and priming is

the “name for the goal” that the particular interpretation is supposed to achieve (p. 165).

Entman states that the media’s power to influence what people think about translates into the power to influence the stances people take on issues (p. 165), and he argues that those benefited by slant (the favouring of one side over another) affects the balance of power among “groups, individuals or issues” (p. 166). Unfortunately, although he argues that bias is distinctly different from slant (p. 165), he fails to clearly distinguish one from the other. Admitting that bias itself had not been defined clearly in the past, he divides the definition of bias into three parts: distortion bias, content bias and decision-making bias. For an undisclosed reason, he dismisses distortion bias, which he declares “distorts or falsifies reality” (p. 163). He defines content bias as “news that favours one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict” (p. 165), but this seems to be only a wordier version of the parenthetical definition of slant above. The difference, I believe, is that content bias involves “consistent patterns” (p. 166) whereas repetition may not be an aspect of slant. Decision-making bias, the motivations of journalists, or perhaps editors, who choose to create and perpetuate biased content, and content bias are the two types of bias he includes in his “integrated concept” (pp. 163–164).

In his effort to create a formula for calculating slant and bias, Entman first defines framing as taking a few elements from one’s perceived reality to construct “a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). He describes agenda-setting as the identification of the issue that will be brought to the public’s attention and priming as the “intended effect” of framing the issue in a particular way (pp. 164–165). What’s most important in Entman’s formula-seeking article is not the formula itself. Instead, it is his steadfast assertion that “what we can and should do is to determine *whose power over government action is likely enhanced by media framing*” (emphasis in the original) (p. 166).

METHODS

Therefore, using Entman’s (2007) notion of framing bias in the media as a means to influence political power, I conducted a rhetorical analysis of original and syndicated articles appearing in the online version of the English language South Korean newspaper, *The Korea Times*, leading up to the 2008 US presidential election from 1 September through 4 November to discover how the symbols worked, why and how they could be understood, and how the symbols represented communication choices (Foss, 1996, p. 3). The purpose of this study was not to measure the impact that *The Korea Times* had on its worldwide audience but only to determine the ways that it used language and power in an attempt to influence public opinion, if at all. It should be noted that although 4 November was Election Day in the United States, it was the day prior to the election in South Korea.

The current study includes 39 articles: 23 original

and 16 syndicated. I categorised 27 of the articles as editorials and 12 as news. All of the articles were found on the website of *The Korea Times* (www.koreatimes.co.kr) using the following keywords: Biden, McCain, Obama, Palin, US election, and US presidential election. The date and time each article was published was recorded along with the author, whether the article was an original or syndicated piece, and the candidate focus of the article. Each article was coded for examples of framing, priming and decision-making bias as defined by Entman (2007) by discovering examples of language and power, particularly masking within the texts. According to Ng & Braduc (1993), “Masking does not withhold true information or present false information as if true, rather it presents true information in an incomplete or partial way under the cover of one or more literary mask” (p. 145). Each article’s slant was then determined and examples of Korean nationalism were noted. Content bias was determined after all the individual articles were analysed for consistent patterns (Entman, 2007, p. 166). This operationalised procedure was put into place in order to explore the following research question:

R1 How was language used to represent nationalistic Korean interests during the 2008 US presidential campaign, if at all?

Cultural products “mirror society” and “contribute to the reconstruction of the culture” (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 250). Therefore, the steadfast support *The Korea Times* seemed to offer Democratic Candidate Barack Obama juxtaposed to their criticisms of Republican Candidate John McCain, may have been both “expression” of their own slant and “control” of reader opinion in a circular model of culture (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 250). As the world now knows, Barack Obama won the election, and South Korean public support of the US president is important in maintaining South Korean-US relations in an age in which anti-Americanism has become salient (Risse, 2001; Kim, Parker & Choi, 2006; Young, 2006; Jhee, 2008).²

ANALYSIS

According to Entman (2004), “Although the schemas and interpretations within individuals’ minds arise from prior beliefs and interpersonal communication as well as from the media’s words and images, there is no escape from framing.” He goes on to say that this is especially true with regards to foreign policy because few people have access to first-hand information, and most of the information they have comes from the news or through conversations with people who received their data from the news (p. 124). Framing influences public opinion; polls reflect public opinion, and, in turn, affect foreign policy decisions (pp. 126–127; Page & Shapiro, 1983, p. 185).

In order for leaders to be affected by public opinion they have to perceive that the opinions represented in the media, their primary source of tapping into public opinion, reflect the majority (Entman, 2004, pp. 126–127). South Korean public opinion is shaped by nationalism, which is reproduced by the media (Chung, 2000, p. 105).

This nationalism was awakened during the Japanese annexation when the people shared a single, national enemy (C. S. Lee, 1965, p. 175; Risse, 2001, p. 91) because the narrative of a national identity is created when a “temporal moment in history” is identified (Chung, 2000, p. 103). In 2008, this temporal moment was the US presidential campaign.

Korean nationalism was expressed in two distinct ways in the data. The first was with the use of the deictic expression ‘we’ in editorials. Petersoo (2007) claims that the motive of ‘we’ is not always to produce nationalism (p. 433). Nevertheless, this deictic expression was used frequently in editorials in *The Korea Times*, expressing nationalistic perceptions of Self and Other (Chung, 2000, pp. 111–113).

2 September 2008

The past eight years have seen the destruction of the American spirit as *we* know it ... The America *we* knew was a liberator, not an occupier (Oh, 2008).

South Koreans are paying much attention to who will be elected to the White House ... We hope the new U.S. president will take a more proactive foreign policy approach to help bring peace around the world, including the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia (“Obama vs. McCain”, 2008).

26 September 2008

We Koreans used to learn from the U.S., yet the November election is calling on Americans to reverse the trend (Kim, H. S., 2008).

19 October 2008

We hope Obama, if elected, will prove to be a gentler leader than his predecessor, as his Korean counterpart, also about 20 years older than him, might stress the need to confront North Korea until its complete denuclearization, while pursuing the Democratic leader to accept the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement as is (“Wind of Change”, 2008).

Ng and Braduc (1993) label deictic phrases as a form of powerless speech (p. 19). Yet, with regards to generalising as a masking attempt, they also regard ‘we’ as a deictic expression that can be used to create a sense of cognitive and emotional solidarity in influencing attempts (p. 159). Fowler (1991) also “suggests an existence of so-called ‘implied consensus’, a special conjunction of the newspaper and its readership whenever the deictic expression ‘we’ is printed, and read, in the newspaper” (Fowler, 1991 as quoted by Petersoo, 2007, p. 421). Therefore, the use of the deictic phrase ‘we’ may not be powerless in that it helps draw a clear line between the notions of Self and Other (p. 420) that result from pressures coming from outside Korean society (Chung, 2000, pp. 111–112). The pressures during the 2008 US presidential campaign were found in the KORUS FTA, the economy, and the issues of North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim JungIl. Negotiations between the United States and South Korea on KORUS FTA

were completed on 1 April 2007, but the agreement has not been ratified by the US Congress.³ The agreement would eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers, allowing for increased trade in goods and services between the two countries. Some of the trade items that would fall under this agreement include agriculture, automotive and textiles. Telecommunications, audio-visual products and pharmaceuticals are services that would be covered in the agreement as well. Both countries have pledged to aid competition, protect intellectual property rights, and provide greater transparency (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2007).

In the months leading up to the election, John McCain made his support of KORUS FTA known whereas Obama voiced his opposition to the agreement over concerns that it might hurt US auto makers. During the last 2008 US presidential debate held on 15 October 2008, Obama said:

And when it comes to South Korea, we’ve got a trade agreement up right now, they are sending hundreds of thousands of South Korean cars into the United States. That’s all good. We can only get 4,000 to 5,000 into South Korea. That is not free trade. We’ve got to have a president who is going to be advocating on behalf of American businesses and American workers and I make no apology for that (CNNPolitics.com-a, 2008).

KORUS FTA appears to favour South Korea when it comes to the inequity of the numbers of autos being imported and exported between the two countries. The agreement might also have had support in the South Korean public during this time because it was expected to create “as many as 249,000 jobs”, to lower prices, and to provide greater access to US goods and services (Peck, 2006), and the economy of South Korea was suffering as was the economy of the United States. Interestingly, a week prior to the final debate, *The Korea Times* mitigated Obama’s opposition.

8 October 2008

U.S. Democratic presidential nominee *Barack Obama is expected to reverse his opposition to the ratification of a free trade deal* with South Korea if he is elected, *Yonhap News* reported quoting a U.S. scholar Tuesday (“Obama Likely to Drop”, 2008).

Referring back to Entman’s (2007) framing bias in the media, the author of the paragraph above set the agenda of the US presidential election as it related to bilateral US-Korean trade. The author framed this paragraph as if it is likely that Obama would reverse his position, and it is possible that the goal (priming) was to reinforce the importance of KORUS FTA while reassuring the readers that Obama would not be detrimental to Korean interests.

In contrast, McCain’s position on KORUS FTA was called “clear”, and readers were reminded that McCain’s commitment to increasing economic and military ties to South Korea were more in-line with traditional American foreign policy (Jackson, 2008a).

8 September 2008

McCain's position on the KORUS FTA is straightforward. He supports both bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, and he specifically backs the Korea-U.S. agreement, saying that it will 'expand American exports and create American jobs' (Jackson, 2008a).

This trend of providing slant in Obama's favour was also evident in articles setting the agenda of the economy.

29 September 2008

The beneficiary [of the financial crisis], at least so far, is Democrat Barack Obama. Neither candidate has been particularly strong on how to weather the economic storm, but a new Washington Post-ABC News poll shows that the voters put slightly more faith in Obama than John McCain, who has stumbled badly, most particularly when he observed with Hooverish echoes as the stock market was going over a cliff that the fundamentals of the economy were still strong (D. McFeatters, 2008).

2 November 2008

As far as the Korean stock market is concerned, U.S. Democratic nominee Barack Obama appears to be favored against Republican John McCain in the presidential election slated for this week.

A majority of Korean analysts predicted Sunday that Obama would help local bourses⁴ perform much better than conservative McCain would do in terms of leadership and relations with North Korea (T. G. Kim, 2008).

By presenting the information that Obama seemed to benefit from the economic crisis in the US polls, it provided him credibility from the backing of the American people. This framing was meant (priming) to instil confidence in Obama in terms of the Korean economic crisis since the two economies are unequivocally linked (K. W. Kim, 1995; Lord, 1997). *The Korea Times* also showed considerable bias in favour of Obama on the issue of North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim Jung Il.

27 September 2008

Despite Obama's public display of willingness to talk with Kim Jung Il *when* he wins the presidency, *he might not actually follow through his election pledges*, an American observer said ('McCain Calls Obama's NK', 2008).

This editorial, which appeared on 27 September 2008, went as far as to announce that Obama would win the election although the election was still over a month away. McCain's position on North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim Jung Il was not mitigated by *The Korea Times*. In fact, *The Korea Times* let McCain speak for himself without mitigating the message.

27 September 2008

I will sit down with anybody but there's got to be preconditions,' Sen. McCain (R-Arizona) said in

his first nationally televised presidential debate with Illinois Senator Obama Friday ('McCain Calls Obama's NK', 2008).

An article that appeared on 1 October 2008 expressed concern that an Obama win would relegate South Korea to the "sidelines" instead of including it in multilateral⁵ negotiations with North Korea over their nuclear weapons programme. Later in the same article, however, Obama's position was mitigated once again.

Michael J. Green, a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies based in Washington D.C., observed that *Obama's position on North Korean affairs is moving toward that of McCain* (Kang, 2008b).

According to Kang (2008b), a pro-North Korea newspaper in Japan reported that North Korea preferred Obama over McCain because McCain's policies were seen as similar to the policies of the Bush administration. McCain stressed "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of [North Korea's] nuclear programmes." Since North Korea's arsenal is aimed at Seoul, where one-fifth of the South Korean people live (Howard, 2004, p. 806), it would have been reasonable to assume that South Korea would have supported McCain's hard-line approach to nuclear disarmament on the Korean Peninsula over Obama's policies. However, instead of supporting McCain on this issue, *The Korea Times* used decision-making bias when they implied that Obama's position would align with South Korea's interests instead.

Throughout the data collection period, *The Korea Times* demonstrated decision-making bias in the selection of articles that it published. For example, Obama would not be able to seek direct talks with North Korea unless he was the president of the United States, but the aforementioned article, 'Obama Will Likely Seek Direct Talks With N. Korea' alluded to an Obama win although it appeared online more than a month prior to the election. Below are other examples of headlines with slants that reveal the decision-making bias of *The Korea Times*:

'Wind of Change' – 19 October 2008

'Obama Road to the White House' – 2 November 2008

'Goodbye Bush, Hello Obama?' – 4 November 2008 (The day before the election, *The Korea Times*)

When a propaganda message is embedded in multi-item discourse, whether spoken or written, it is known as global utterance masking (Ng & Bradu, 1993, p. 165). Change, one of the slogans of the Obama Campaign, embedded in the headline of "Wind of Change" implied that the change coming was an Obama, rather than a McCain, victory. The article went on to say,

Fifteen days from now, Barack Obama will likely be elected the first black president of the United States of America ('Wind of Change', 2008).

By 28 October 2008 in an article entitled, 'Obama

Supporters Invited to Election Party', *The Korea Times* quoted Democrats Abroad ROK who invited readers to meet at a restaurant called 'The Orange Tree' to watch 'Senator Obama become President Obama'. A search of the website of *The Korea Times* did not reveal a similar announcement for McCain supporters.

Although 72 percent of the articles that covered the 2008 US presidential election revealed a slant towards Obama, 18 percent revealed no particular slant; and in 10 percent, the slant seemed to be in favour of McCain. One such example is:

8 September 2008

McCain also emphasized, in a May 27 *Wall Street Journal* column co-authored with Senator Joe Lieberman, the need to 'reinvigorate the trilateral coordination process with Japan and South Korea' on the North Korean nuclear issue in order to maintain the trust of America's two allies in the six-party talks (Jackson, 2008b).

Jackson's (2008b) final paragraph appearing in the same article stated:

While President Lee Myung-bak [the South Korean president] is probably too polite and too politically savvy to endorse one of the candidates, there can be little doubt where his heart lies [implied: with McCain] (Jackson, 2008b).

25 September 2008

If there is a foreign policy crisis such as Russia invading Georgia or the North Korean nuclear program, McCain gets a bump, he [McCain advisor, Michael J. Green] said (Kang, 2008a).

Notwithstanding, McCain was not usually portrayed as someone who would have ensured security in Asia. McCain's perceived irrationality elicited the following paragraphs.

8 September 2008

His fellow Vietnam POW Phillip Butler writes: 'He has a quick and explosive temper that many have experienced first hand. Folks, quite honestly that is not the finger I want next to the red button... Sen. McCain first favored bombing North Korea more than a decade ago. He was unconcerned about the prospect of a devastating war on the Korean Peninsula. Then there was the unnecessary Iraq invasion and botched occupation (Bandow, 2008).

5 October 2008

Unlike Bush and Dick Cheney, McCain actually spent time in jail (in the 'Hanoi Hilton') for his war transgressions, courtesy of the Vietnamese. He wanted to bomb the North Koreans too, but he never got the chance (Ruffkin, 2008).

28 October 2008

Unlike seemingly trigger-happy McCain who argued on Meet the Press on NBC, in 1994, that if

diplomacy failed to shut down the country's [North Korea's] production facilities within ten months, 'then yes, military air strikes would be called for,' as an unscrupulous North Korea reportedly reached a level of producing enough material through its clandestine nuclear weapons program, Obama has been recognized to be an advocate in favor of diplomacy rather than sticking to the pre-emptive military strike (Lee, 2008b).

Framing McCain as irrational and "trigger-happy" (Lee, 2008b) within the agenda-setting issue of security primed the reader to, at a minimum, question McCain's judgement and perhaps go so far as to fear a possible McCain administration. As Entman (2004) explained, "words and images that make up a frame can be distinguished from the rest of the news by their capacity to stimulate support or opposition to the sides in a political conflict" (p. 6). Some images such as "the red button" and "devastating war on the Korean Peninsula" (Bandow, 2008) have more cultural resonance than others and, therefore, have more influence. The more often these emotionally-charged words or images are invoked, the greater the magnitude (Capella & Jamieson, 1997, and Patterson, 1993 as cited by Entman, 2004, p. 6).

McCain's judgement was also called into question regarding his choice of running mate Sarah Palin (Ruffkin, 2008; Schram, 2008) although the names of either vice presidential candidate were rarely roused during the data collection period. When Palin's name was raised, it was on three occasions with regards to personal and family issues (Creepy Online Crime, 2008; Hatridge, 2008; 'Role of Palin's Husband', 2008); and on one occasion, the quality of both vice presidential candidates was questioned (Jackson, 2008a). Biden received less press than Palin, and none of the articles included in this analysis focused primarily on Biden. Overall, the inclusion of Biden and Palin in *The Korea Times* was deemed less significant than the coverage given to McCain and Obama.

DISCUSSION

Despite its claim to have been an "unbiased and fair" news source over the decades (*Korea Times History*, 2007), the current rhetorical analysis of 39 news stories and editorials in the online edition of the English language newspaper, *The Korea Times*, indicates that the coverage of the 2008 US presidential election was not free from framing bias in the media as defined by Entman (2007). The situation was quite the opposite. Content bias, the type of bias that repeatedly favours one side over the other in political conflicts, was prevalent and unquestionably in favour of Obama. Entman (2007) acknowledges that "those officials favoured by slant become more powerful" (p. 170). He also recognises that the public discourse that is framed in the media cannot be "divorced" from public opinion (Entman, 2004, p. 142). Through the framing, priming and agenda-setting of news stories and editorials in *The Korea Times*, the slant towards Obama was constructed.

This slant was especially salient in the coverage of three issues important to nationalistic South Korea: KORUS FTA, the economy, and North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim JungIl.

The Korea Times demonstrated agenda setting in their resolution to deem KORUS FTA newsworthy and demonstrated decision-making bias in the way the agreement was presented free of criticism. As Entman (2004) so aptly pointed out, “The central goal [priming] of all political manoeuvring over news frames is simply to generate support or opposition to a political actor or policy” (emphasis in the original) (p.47). The media always believe that there is one point of view, and they mould the public perceptions and opinions of social events through their selection and omission of information (Erjavec, 2001, pp. 702–703). In their coverage of the 2008 US presidential campaign, the goal of *The Korea Times* appeared to be to convince the public of the benefit of the agreement to South Korea and to construct Obama as a friend of the agreement although he had voiced his opposition to it. McCain’s support of the agreement was represented as “keeping with the general policy of improving ties with Korea by emphasizing economic and security cooperation” (Jackson, 2008b), and Obama’s disaccord was underscored by his criticism that the agreement was “badly flawed” in that it disadvantaged U.S. automakers (S. K. Jung, 2008). Why would *The Korea Times* have supported the candidate whose views contradicted an agreement that seemed to be in South Korea’s best interest?

I surmise that the portrayal of McCain as a hot-headed warmonger (Bandow, 2008; Ruffkin, 2008; & Lee, 2008b) who would have continued the policies of the Bush administration (Holbrook, 2008) especially with regards to North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim JungIl razed support of McCain even on the issue of KORUS FTA. Obama’s preference for “sustained, direct and aggressive engagement with North Korea” (S. K. Jung, 2008) was preferred by *The Korea Times*, and perhaps the South Korean public, who have been at a military standoff with North Korea since the end of the Korean War (Chung, 2000, p. 104). Therefore, Obama’s opposition to KORUS FTA was mitigated (Obama Likely to Drop, 2008; & Obama vs. McCain, 2008), as was his assertion that he would be willing to engage in unilateral⁶ talks with North Korea (Jackson, 2008b; H. K. Kang, 2000b). This musing, in itself, would be an interesting subject of a future study.

Of course, coverage of McCain and Obama, as with Biden and Palin, included topics other than KORUS FTA, the economy, and North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim Jung Il as well. Obama’s race was discussed (Osel, 2008), and McCain was accused of being too old (S. Lee, 2008). However, none of these issues embodied Korean nationalism like the three issues previously mentioned.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to discover whether or not language was used by the online edition of the English

language newspaper, *The Korea Times*, to construct a dominant ideology through its coverage of the 2008 US presidential campaign. I found that *The Korea Times* used the deictic expression ‘we’ to express and (re)construct nationalistic views of three salient issues: KORUS FTA, the economy, and North Korea/nuclear weapons/Kim JungIl. Entman’s (2007) framing bias in the media as a means to influence the distribution of power is a concept that “is concerned with media interventions in the day-to-day contests to control government power *within* the snug ideological confines of mainstream American politics” (emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, this study demonstrated that Entman’s concept translates well to South Korean media as well. This study revealed that there was significant framing bias in *The Korea Times* that positioned Obama as the candidate who would best represent South Korean interests while also (re)constructing McCain’s image as dangerous both economically and militarily.

There were several limitations of this study including the fact that it only analysed articles from a single news source, *The Korea Times*. American newspapers are considered conservative (e.g. *The Wall Street Journal*) or liberal (e.g. *The New York Times*), and the South Korean media may not be different in this regard. Without comparing the framing biases of two or more media from South Korea, the lean of *The Korea Times* was not able to be determined. The bias of one medium unlikely represents the public opinion of an entire country or its diaspora. It is more likely that there are various opinions and political slants throughout South Korean communities just as there are within American society. However, viewing this single source provided intriguing data that will certainly contribute to future multimedia studies.

Of particular importance is that *The Korea Times* is an English language newspaper that was introduced in 1950, just months after the Korean War began (*The Korea Times History*, 2007) when America fought alongside South Korea against North Korea (Kleiner, 2006, p. 215). Its long-standing relationship with American expatriates and its diverse readership that includes Koreans, Americans and other English speakers from around the world (*The Korea Times History*, 2007) likely influences the decision-making bias to cover particular issues and events. The mere fact that this study analysed electronic articles on the website of *The Korea Times* might be problematic in that the Internet’s worldwide reach might lend itself to greater coverage of foreign events such as the 2008 US presidential campaign than the print version whose circulation is somewhat limited. Erikson (2007) refers to this global electronic audience as an example of ‘deterritorialised virtual nationalism’, nationalism not confined by geographic borders but shared across a global community, such as a diaspora, through the Internet (p. 15). Nationalistic websites create a sense of “social cohesion and cultural integration” (p. 16), and they often utilise English in order to increase their reach because they are concerned about the ways in which other nations view them (p. 15). Nevertheless,

the non-ethnic Korean audience as well as the ethnic Korean audience living abroad may have had different political views and perceptions of important issues than ethnic Koreans living inside South Korea during this time. Also, the journalists of *The Korea Times* are multi-ethnic and their editors may be as well. This heterogeneity may represent many opinions that are not intrinsically South Korean.

Future studies should expand in scope to include a variety of South Korean media to ensure varying perspectives and should include some Korean language media as well. This would not exclude all non-Koreans, but it would ensure a greater cross-section of the ethnic and non-ethnic Korean society. Although this study demonstrated one medium's attempts to shape the opinions of its readership and to build public support of its preferred candidate, I was not able to discern if public opinion was indeed represented or influenced by *The Korea Times* since this study was limited to analysing the text of the online edition of *The Korea Times*. Other scholars should consider embarking on empirical quantitative or qualitative studies that would determine the outcomes of the media's attempts to influence by surveying or interviewing the readers of *The Korea Times*.

According to Chung (2000), the South Korean government has an indirect influence on the content of the news (p. 105). However, this is not unique to South Korea. Entman (2004) affirms that public opinion might defer to authority when poorly informed or when driven by emotion (p. 163). Political power influences media and media framing affects political power (Entman, 2007, p. 166). It is reciprocal. And since the news is written to express a dominant point of view that is not meant to be doubted (Erjavec, 2001, p. 702), it is unlikely that the readers of *The Korea Times* questioned whose political power was being exerted during its coverage of the 2008 US presidential campaign nor is it likely that they were disappointed with Obama's victory.

NOTES

1. In this paper, 'bilateral' exclusively refers to the reciprocal relationship between South Korea and the United States.
2. The Kwangju Massacre in 1980, crimes committed by US military in South Korea and the perception of the United States as a cultural invader have contributed to this anti-Americanism (Jhee, 2008).
3. As of 25 April 2010.
4. South Korean financial securities
5. In this paper, 'multilateral' refers to talks between a number of nations including DPRK, ROK and the US, as well as other powers in Northeast Asia such as China and Japan.
6. 'Unilateral' means that Obama would be willing to engage North Korea without bringing South Korea or any other parties into the talks.

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