

Going with the flow?

Coverage of world conflicts in the South African media

Quo Vadis Africa
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The issues

- The news media tend to ignore most armed conflicts most of the time (chosen conflicts vs stealth conflicts)
- Africa and its conflicts under-represented in world coverage outside continent (US/Europe: 6-9%, Japan: 2-3%)
- How does the South African news media cover world conflict?

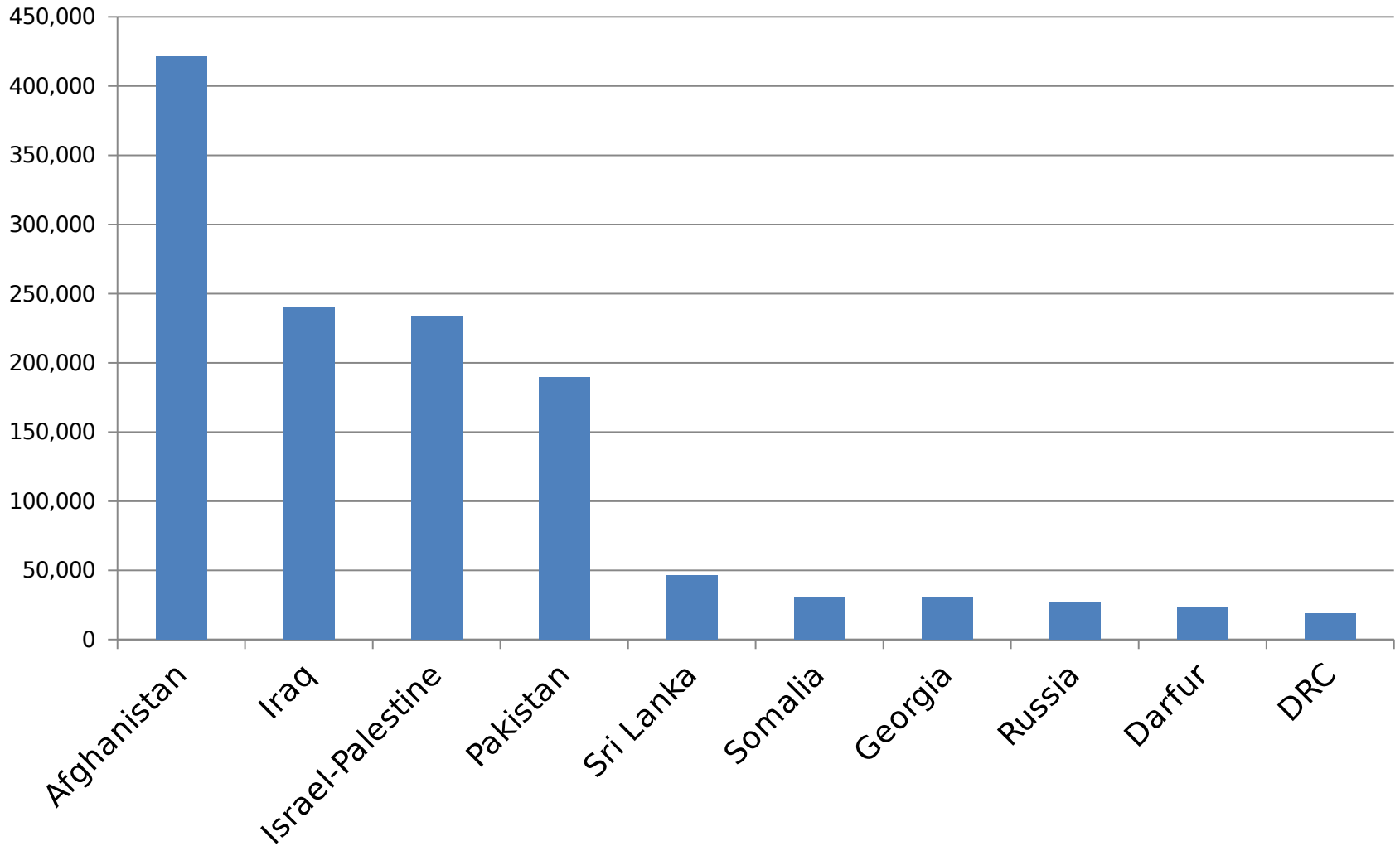
Determinants of coverage (country)

- Threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness
(Galtung & Ruge 1965)
- 'Home' ties (trade, cultural, historical),
prominence
(Golan & Wanta 2003)
- Deviance (scale, normative)
(Shoemaker et al 1986)

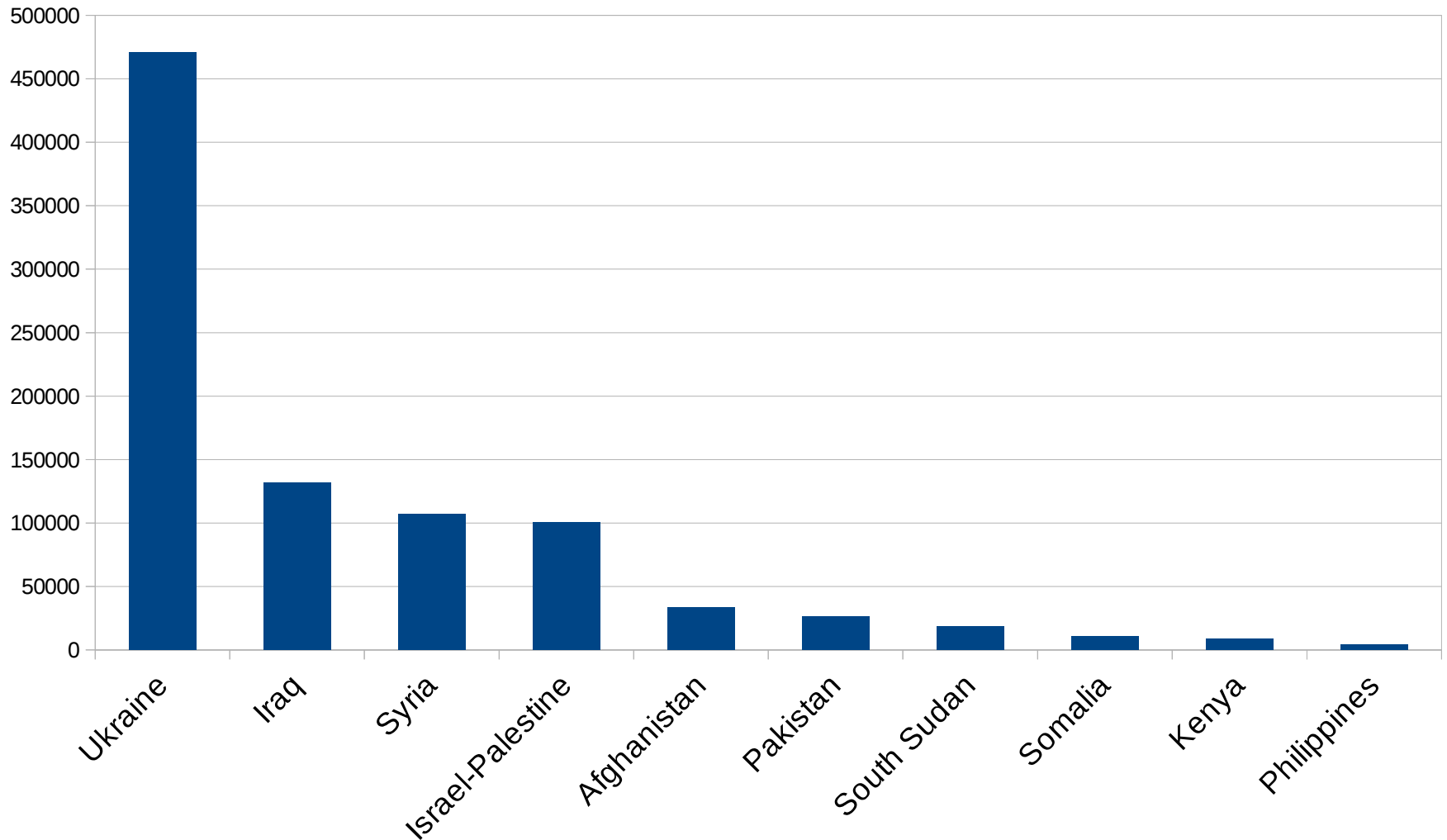
Determinants of coverage (conflict)

- National/political interest
- Distance/access
- Ability to identify
- Ability to sympathise
- Simplicity
- Sensationalism

Conflict coverage New York Times (2009)



Conflict coverage Yomiuri (Japan) (2014)



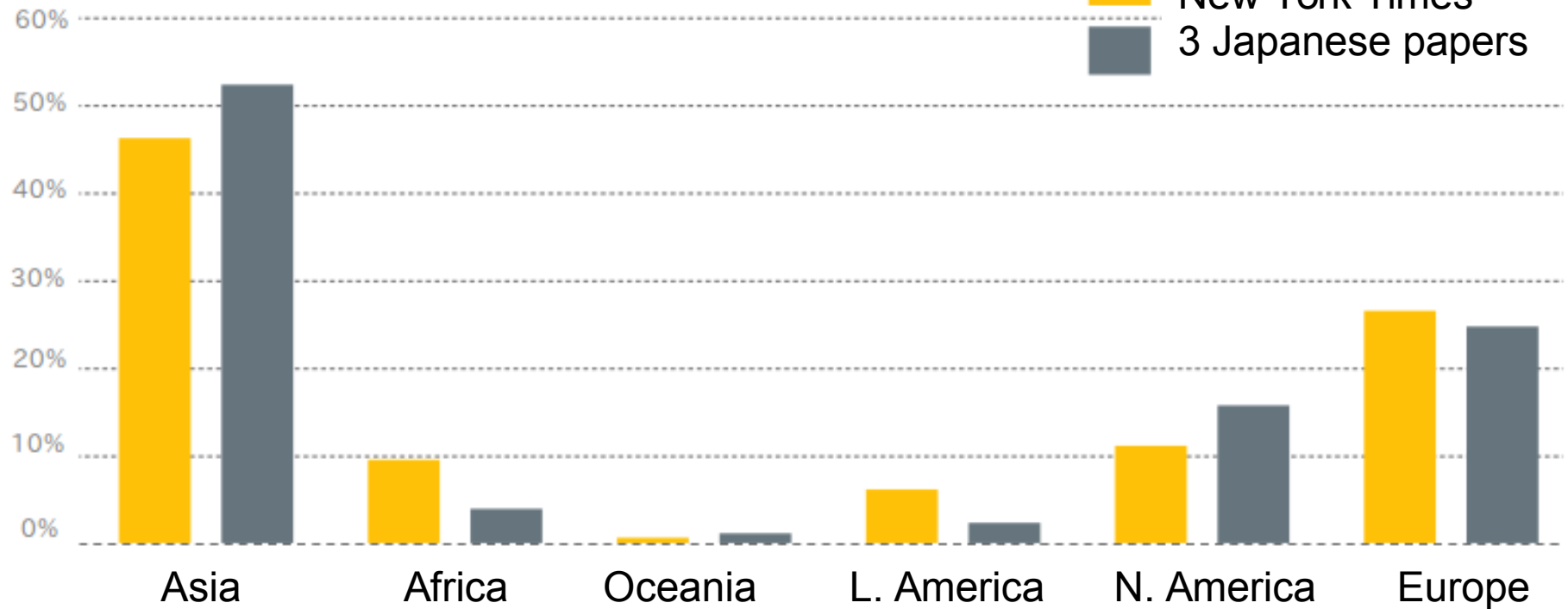
Global news flow

- Determinants of coverage not only domestic concerns/values
- Influence from powerful news media
 - Inter-media agenda-setting
 - Both gathering and distribution issue
 - Both newspapers and news agencies
- 'Coups and earthquakes' approach to reporting developing countries

World coverage

US-Japanese papers (2015)

国際報道に占める割合(%)

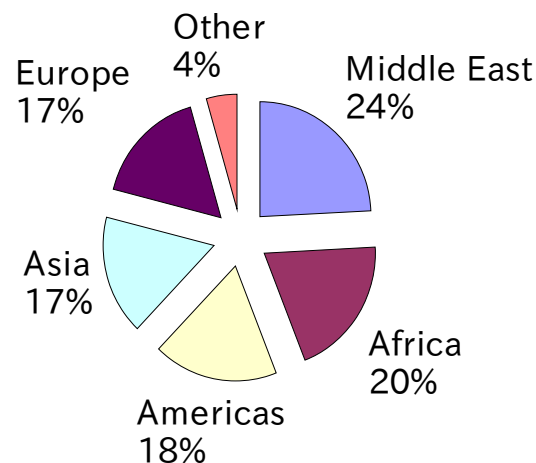


World coverage in Zambia

The Post Newspaper 2004 (% of articles)

Coverage (Zambia's Neighbours)	
Zimbabwe	1.7%
DRC	1.4%
Namibia	0.4%
Botswana	0.1%
Tanzania	0.1%
Malawi	< 0.1%
Mozambique	< 0.1%
Angola	< 0.1%
TOTAL	4.0%

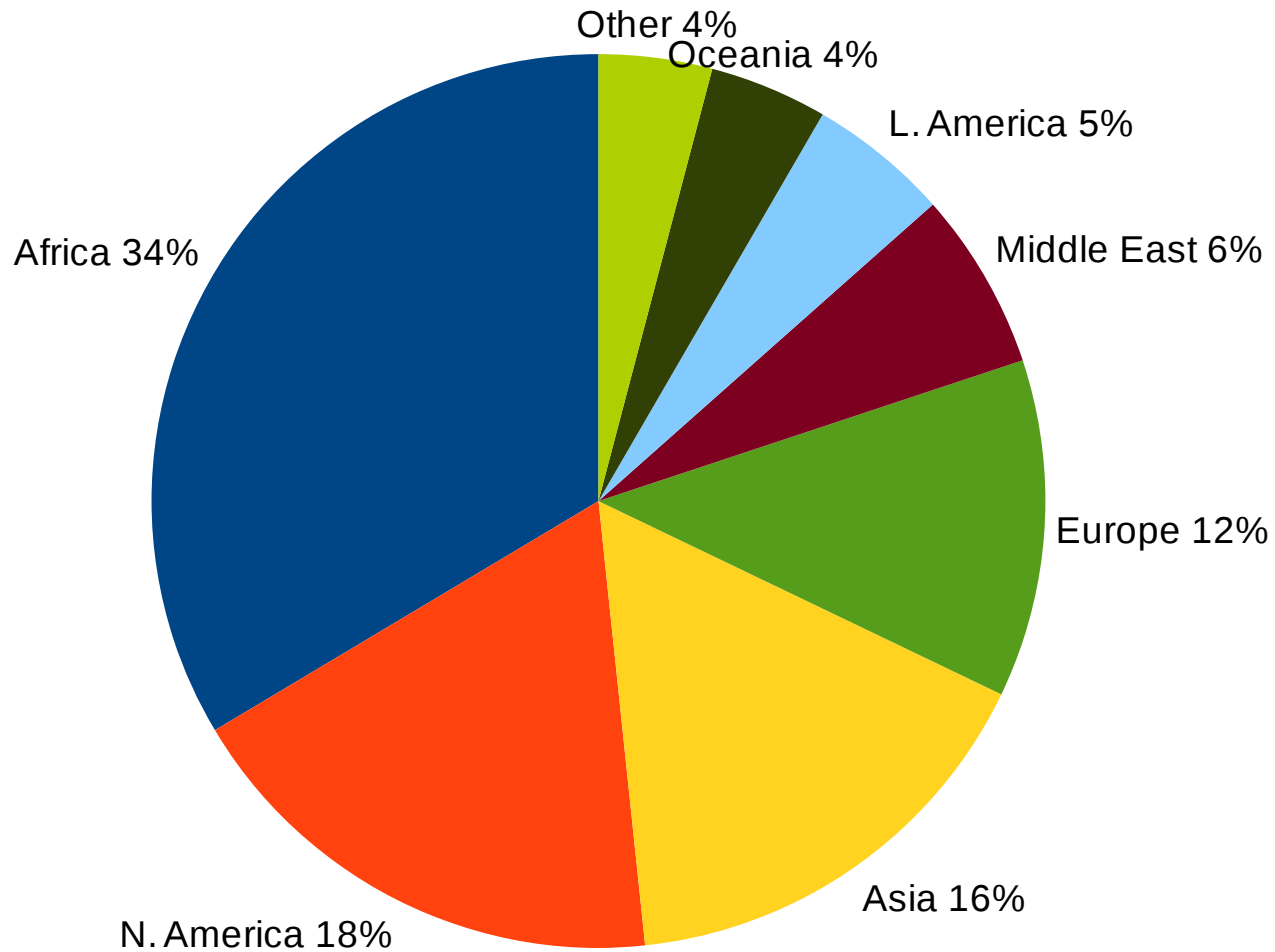
Coverage by Region



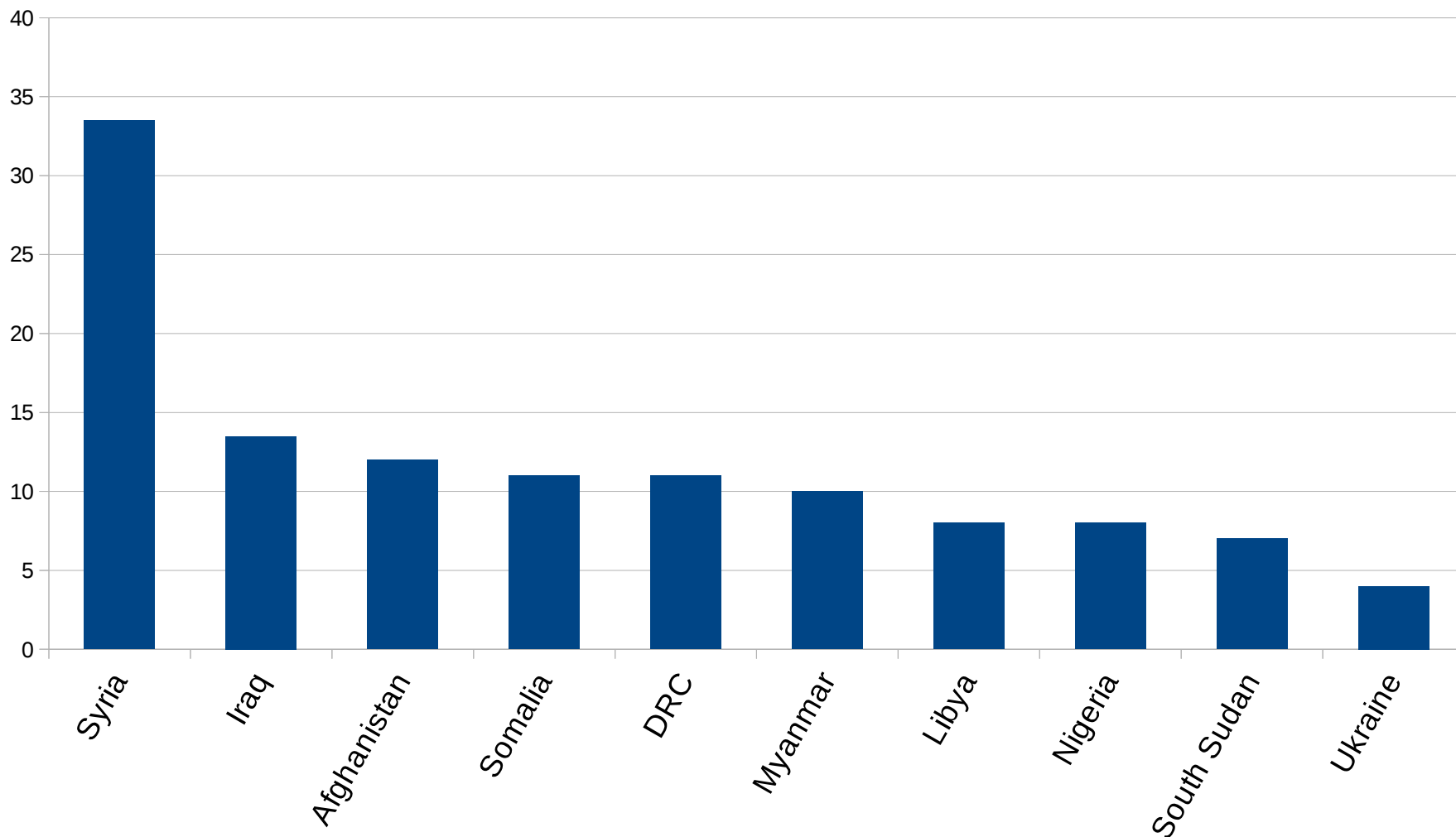
Coverage by Country	
USA	13.1%
Iraq	11.5%
Israel-Palestine	9.3%
UK	4.7%
Sudan	3.9%
Russia	3.2%
Afghanistan	3.1%
Pakistan	2.1%
India	2.1%
Haiti	1.9%

World coverage

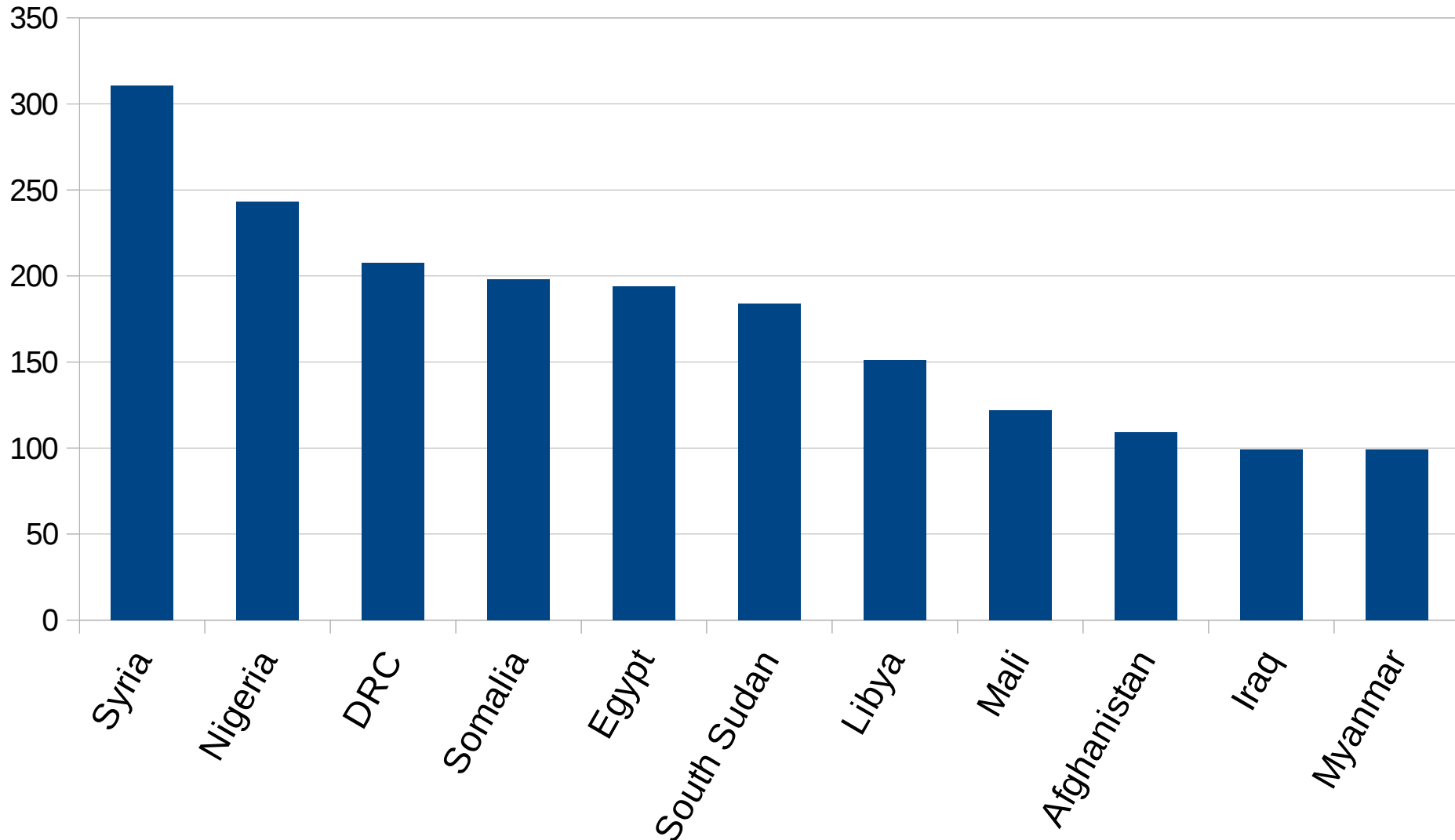
Sunday Times (Sep-Dec 2017)



Conflict coverage (South Africa) Sunday Times (July-Dec 2017)



Conflict coverage (South Africa) News24 (2017)



In other news...

- Western-centric focus on terrorism/kidnappings/arrests
- Sunday Times (2017)
 - Mogadishu attacks (>300 deaths) 1 article
 - Las Vegas attacks (58 deaths) 13 articles
 - Ouagadougou attacks (19 deaths) 1 article
 - Barcelona attacks (13 deaths) 14 articles
 - London attacks (0 deaths) 4 articles
- Foreign hurricanes/earthquakes more coverage than African droughts

Why does it matter?

- Globalization
 - Time for a rethink about what affects us?
 - And how we affect the world
(security, developmental, environmental)
- (Some?) democratization of foreign affairs
 - Public awareness of what requires attention
 - Input/feedback/scrutiny for policy decisions
(mediation, aid, sanctions, intervention)

Conclusions

- Greater balance in conflict coverage in South Africa? (News24)
 - More representative of conflict scale
 - With a regional focus
 - But, vast majority of news 'imported'
- Implications of growing online news
 - Fast newsfeed allows greater variety/balance
 - But, can it hold readers' attention?