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What Makes African News Newsworthy? Coverage Determinants in East Asian News Media

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Abstract

This study focuses on the coverage of Africa by the Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean media, examining articles from the *People's Daily*, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and the *Chosun Ilbo*, respectively, during 2015–2017; it identifies the factors that influence such coverage. These factors include (1) the traits of African nations, and (2) the interactions and relatedness between East Asia and African nations. Content and regression analyses with panel data were implemented to assess 12 determinants in each individual nation to elucidate the determinants of the coverage. The results reveal the primary predictors that make African countries newsworthy in the three East Asian media outlets, as well as with some variation, identify notable differences between Western and East Asian coverage. These results are meaningful for agenda-setting and enhance our understanding of the extent to which international and domestic issues, and policymakers influence the coverage of African nations by East Asian media outlets.

Keywords: News values, international news coverage, Africa, East Asia, panel analysis

Introduction

News media is limited to reporting on specific content of some selected countries due to spatiotemporal restrictions. That is, it is necessarily selective. Given the almost universal home-centric stance of news media, the resulting coverage tends to show significant imbalances in terms of what and which place is covered. This tendency is evident in international news coverage the world over, and the East Asian media are no exception. The results of a regional analysis of the international news coverage by China's *Guangming Daily*, Japan's *Asahi Shimbun*, and South Korea's *Hankyoreh Shinmun* (Kim et al., 2011) revealed that all three news media outlets had a pronounced focus on Northeast Asian and North American countries. In an ongoing study conducted by Global News View (GNV, 2019), which focuses on international news coverage by the three major Japanese newspapers, namely

Asahi Shimbun, *Mainichi Shimbun*, and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, news on Asia accounted for the highest proportion with 46.5% in 2016 and 42.7% in 2017, followed by North America, which accounted for 32% in 2016 and 28.4% in 2017. Africa-related news coverage by the three Japanese newspapers accounted for only 2.1% in 2016 and 3.3% in 2017, showing high levels of disparity in regional distribution in news coverage.

Globally, low-income countries have long argued that the imbalance in information distribution along with the negative nature of coverage has an adverse effect on their political, economic, social, and cultural interactions with the world. A movement by these countries resulted in the creation of the New World Information and Communication Order movement, which was discussed through the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1970s and 1980s (Pavlic & Hamelink, 1985). The idea of 'A free and more balanced flow of information' was coined as the new order of international communication at the 16th General Conference of the UNESCO in 1970.

Scholars who have examined international news coverage have tried to clarify the imbalance in international news coverage and selection for decades, and have tried to predict factors that determine news value. Schramm (1959) may have made the very first attempt to understand news value, but his research did not attract attention until UNESCO's contention. Research on the factors that determine international news coverage can be traced back to a study by Galtung and Ruge (1965). They proposed 12 determinants of coverage, such as frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, and reference to elite nations among others, and showed that the possibility of polyvalent news coverage increases with the increased presence of these determinants. Since then, various scholars have examined news values.

Some research on the determinants of international news coverage has focused on the prominence and deviance of the covered country (Boukes et al, 2022) and relations between the reporting and covered country (Jones et al., 2011), in order to explain news value. The literature shows that countries that are in line with the following factors, are more likely to be covered in the media. That is, countries that are 'large' in terms of population or economy, or that are experiencing significant negative events, and have strong ties to the reporting country, are likely to receive greater consideration in decisions identifying the countries that will feature in international news coverage.

Although existing research has provided some direction in terms of the news values that are relevant to international coverage, factors determining such coverage remain

unclear. Most research on this topic has focused on the media in the US and other Western countries, and the conclusions on the key determinants of international media coverage vary widely. Particularly, a question arises regarding East Asian countries' media outlets. Previous studies have shown that African countries have often been neglected by the international news media, which usually regards them less newsworthy.

Hence, this study explores reporting trends in China, Japan, and South Korea when covering African countries to shed light on the factors that make them newsworthy.

Literature Review

It is important to understand the factors that determine the issues or events that the news media chooses to focus on, given the influence of the media agenda on the public and policy issues. The literature on the determinants of international news coverage has focused on two streams: (1) the national traits of the reported country, namely in terms of deviance and prominence, and (2) political, economic, and social interactions and relatedness, between the countries reporting and reported in the news coverage.

National Traits

The unique traits of countries that are considered for coverage in the news may be influential factors in terms of newsworthiness. These traits include deviance and prominence. *(1) Deviance*. Studies have discussed the positive and negative deviance observed in a country, from angles such as normativity, unexpectedness, and potential for social change, as an indicator of the news value in international news coverage. A number of studies have shown that the higher the deviance associated with a country, the more likely it is to be covered as international news. Shoemaker et al. (1986) analyzed the international news coverage of the American media and conceptualized deviance. Among the three types of deviance, (statistical deviance, normative deviance, and potential for social change), they suggested that the last two are important in predicting international news coverage. In a follow-up study, they analyzed international event traits that would be useful in estimating news coverage by the US media (Chang et al., 1987). Through discriminant analysis, they identified normative deviance and potential for social change among seven types of deviance as key predictors of international news coverage by US newspapers, and they suggested that the American media favors international news items that present high levels of deviance in

the negative sense, such as conflicts and crisis.

(2) Prominence. The degree of prominence as a trait of a country has been identified as one of the empirical variables in numerous previous studies. The country's economic power served as a key factor in determining international news coverage. The economic power of a country, represented by its GDP, GNP, and population size is a key factor in determining the importance of news coverage. Countries with higher economic power and population are more likely to be reported in the news coverage of other countries. Golan (2008) focused on Africa-related coverage on TV newscasts from 2002 to 2004 and pointed out that although Africa had various "controversial events" such as elections in Zimbabwe, numerous civil wars in sub-Saharan African countries, and famines in West African countries, there was limited or almost no international coverage of these events. Golan discovered that GDP was one of the key predictors of Africa-related news coverage.

Interaction and Relatedness

In addition to the traits of countries reported, other leading predictor of international news coverage include interactions and relatedness between the countries conducting coverage and being covered. The determinants of interactions and relatedness can be categorized by the economic, political, and social proximity between the two countries.

(1) Economic Relations. Economic relations between two countries constitute one of the important predictors of news values through a number of previous studies. In terms of economic relations, bilateral trade volume was used as a variable and was found to be positively linked to the volume of news coverage. Wu (2000) analyzed the factors influencing the determinants of international coverage flows pertaining to developed and developing countries and found that trade volumes have an effect regardless of the development status of countries covered in the media. According to Wu (2000: 127), as countries were more concerned about economic issues in the post-Cold War era, where the threat of large-scale global and/or nuclear war disappeared, 'it appears to be economic interests, rather than ideological antagonism, that play the central role in determining news about other nations.'

(2) Political Relations. According to the literature, the degree of political and security relations between reporting and covered countries can help explain newsworthiness, which determines international news coverage. When a country has deeper political and security relations with the country conducting the news coverage, it will have a greater likelihood of being covered. Jones et al. (2011) conducted longitudinal analysis on news coverage by the

New York Times and *NBC World News* by dividing the period from 1950 to 2006 into four eras, namely the Early (1950–1973), Late (1974–1991), Post-Cold War (1992–2001), and Post-9/11 eras (2002–2006). The study showed the prominence of security relations with the US in the news coverage decisions by confirming that US military presence, particularly troop deployment, in a country was one of the contextual factors in all four eras.

(3) Social Relations. As countries that share some degree of cultural homogeneity tend to be perceived as carrying more news value than those without cultural homogeneity, the former tends to be covered more frequently in the international news media. Östgaard (1965: 46) stated that an event, 'with which those handling and those receiving the news are most familiar, finds its way through the news channels more easily than news concerning unfamiliar persons, things or issues.' He identified cultural proximity as one of the key elements in newsworthiness.

News-flow Determinants of East Asian Countries

Despite voluminous research, not many studies have focused on the determinants of news coverage centered on the news media of East Asian countries. Most studies on news values have focused on Western media outlets. Whereas one may expect that many of the determinants identified in these studies would apply to the East Asian media, there is considerable variation in the research results and there may be certain geopolitical and/or social/cultural differences that may not make these findings generalizable.

Although several studies have focused on the news value of domestic and international news for East Asian countries, particularly China, Japan, and South Korea, no study has identified and compared the news value for the three countries' media outlets over the same period and with respect to common targets of coverage. The political and media systems differ among East Asian countries; further, the influence of the political and media systems differs both among the East Asian countries, and between the East Asian countries and the rest of the world. Thus, demonstrating the differences and commonalities through an in-depth analysis of the news value of international news coverage using panel data and content analyses with actual news reports can enhance our understanding of the unique news value of each country and the overall framework for international news coverage.

In addition, while some studies have been conducted on the determinants of overall international news coverage by the media of East Asian countries, no study has focused on

the news values vis-à-vis the international news coverage of African countries. In recent years, China, Japan, and South Korea have been putting in tremendous effort in the areas of politics, economy, and culture, to win the hearts and minds of people across various African countries. All three East Asian countries appeared to be seeking to strengthen their relationships with African countries in terms of diplomacy and national security. The three countries have strengthened their political and diplomatic relations with African countries by establishing a cooperative forum. Both China's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which started in 2000, and Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which was launched in 1993, have become large-scale conferences over time, which the leaders of almost all African countries attend. South Korea's Korea-Africa Forum, which was launched in 2006, showed an increase in the number of participating African countries over time. In terms of strengthening their economic relations, the three East Asian countries have increased activities aimed at promoting cooperation with African countries. Africa has become an important target in terms of trade and aid for the countries over the past few years. This is represented by the efforts made by the governments of the three East Asian countries toward the expansion of corporate activities through their private companies in Africa in addition to increase in trade volume between them and African countries. The amount of foreign aid from China, Japan, and South Korea to Africa has also increased.

However, significant differences in scale have arisen between the East Asian countries, as China has a dominant presence in terms of relations with Africa. Nevertheless, all the three countries are making noteworthy efforts to establish close relationships with African countries and expand their influences in a variety of ways. This is because African countries are indispensable for East Asian countries in terms of expanding the latter's political influence in the international community and securing resources, a market for goods and services, and a host of economic benefits. With the increase in Africa's strategic importance for East Asian countries, China, Japan, and South Korea are expected to continue enhancing their relations with African countries in the future. In the process, competition in Africa may intensify, as each of the three East Asian countries compare their status and influence as well as their policymaking decisions in the country.

In this scenario, the media is an important actor as it provides information on African countries to the general public. Scholars have argued that the media can shape public opinion and influence the policy agenda. For instance, there are correlations among the media, and both public and policy agendas. Rogers and Dearing (1988) proposed the agenda-

setting theory, which focused on media, public, and policy agendas, and approached the relationship among these agendas in a linear manner and proposed that public agenda, which was previously shown to be impacted by the media agenda, influences the policy agenda. They asserted that the media agenda may have a direct influence on the framing and implementation of the policy agenda. Conversely, for some issues, the policy agenda may have a direct influence on the media agenda. From this, it is important to decide the content of African coverage in China, Japan, and South Korea. Research should analyze how the media of each country presents Africa and the factors that influence the news coverage selection process as media can influence the public and policy agenda.

This study thus analyzes aspects of Africa-related news coverage by media outlets in China, Japan, and South Korea over the same period of time, and explores the factors that make African countries newsworthy in these three countries.

Methodology

This study utilized the coverage of Africa in China's *People's Daily*, Japan's *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and South Korea's *Chosun Ilbo*. There are limits to the degree to which these three media outlets represent each country. As *People's Daily* is the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, a state-centric form of coverage is apparent, unlike other private newspapers such as *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Chosun Ilbo*. However, such variations may help clarify the differences in news values between democratic and non-democratic countries. Further, these newspapers have the highest circulation figures in their respective countries, and it can be said that each plays a leading role in influencing the public opinion of the country in which it is based. For international news, unlike for domestic news, there is no major difference among newspapers in the same country in terms of content, although there may be differences in the ideological perspectives in terms of how that content is presented (Park & Lee, 2001). Therefore, the newspapers selected for the present study were those with the largest political and social influence in each country. The period of analysis was set from 2015 to 2017. Each of the 55 African country names and 'Africa' were used as search terms in each newspaper's database.

First, content analysis was conducted to understand the degree to which African countries were covered in the East Asian media. It was seen that the number of characters were evenly divided and allocated to each country when more than one country was

mentioned in an article. As Kim and Barnett (1996) stated, content analysis has been used the most in research on foreign news coverage. However, to understand the determinants of the content, and the production process of and factors determining coverage, there is a fundamental limitation to relying only on content analysis. To identify factors that motivate this coverage, this study conducted regression analysis using panel data. For each newspaper, this study generated panel data for 55 African countries between 2015 and 2017. The unit of observation was country-year.

Panel data have been increasingly used in research in the field of social sciences (Morgan & Winship, 2015). They combine time-series data, which record the phenomena or characteristics of an entity in chronological order, and cross-sectional data, which record the phenomena or characteristics of multiple entities at a specific point in time. As panel data comprise observations of multiple phenomena obtained on the same country at multiple points in time, it is possible to analyze the same cross-sectional unit over multiple time periods using panel data. While analyzing panel data, the number of character counts of coverage on each African country was set as a dependent variable. Drawing from previous studies, 12 possible independent variables that can be expected to affect the coverage were identified as shown in Table 1. Regression analysis was conducted separately for each newspaper. Thus, three different analyses are presented in the following subsections.

The 12 independent variables can be divided into two broad categories: (1) national traits of African countries, and (2) interactions and relatedness between East Asia and Africa. First, as a factor influencing Africa-related coverage, the national traits of the African country in question can be considered. This can be categorized into 'deviance,' including the number of refugees, conflict fatalities, and the death rate, and 'prominence,' which includes GDP per capita and population.

Table 1. Independent variables vis-à-vis the coverage of Africa.

Independent Variables		
National Traits (Africa)	Deviance	Number of refugees by origin
		Number of conflict fatalities
		Death rate
	Prominence	GDP per capita
		Population
Interaction and Relatedness (East Asia- Africa)	Political/Security relations	Number of treaties and agreements
		Deployment of peacekeeping operations (PKO)
		Number of high-level diplomatic visits
	Economic relations	Trade volume
		Amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA)
	Social relations	Number of visitors from an African country to an East Asian country
		Remittances from an East Asian country to Africa

Data on refugees by country of origin, set as a variable representing the characteristics of the country's 'deviance,' were gathered from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees *Statistical Yearbook*. To find the number of conflict fatalities, a data tool from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, a non-governmental organization specializing in the collection and analysis of armed conflict data and crisis mapping, was used. The number of casualties caused by conflict was recorded for each African country. Statistics from the World Bank were used to draw data on the overall death rates. Data on the GDP per capita of 55 African countries were drawn from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Economic Outlook database. The GDP per capita of each African country was used as an independent variable representing the characteristic of 'prominence.' Although studies have used GDP and GNP as variables, GDP per capita was used in this study as its multicollinearity was very high, meaning that it was highly correlated with other variables and had a negative effect on data analysis. Additionally, the UN's Total Population by sex was referenced for the population of each African country.

As an important variable in determining African coverage, along with the characteristics of Africa, it is necessary to consider the relationship between East Asian and African countries. The variables representing the relationship were classified into 'political/security,' 'economic,' and 'social' relations. The number of treaties and agreements, peacekeeping deployments, and high-level diplomatic visits were selected as variables related to 'political/

security relations.' Materials from the foreign affairs ministries of China, Japan, and South Korea were referenced for data on the numbers of treaties and agreements with each African country and high-level diplomatic visits. Data on the status of the dispatch of peacekeepers to Africa were extracted from the *UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country*. IMF's 'Goods, Value of Exports, and Value of Imports' was referenced for data on the trade volume, which represented 'economic relations.' OECD's *Aid (Overseas Development Aid or ODA) Disbursement to Countries and Regions* was referenced for the data on the amount of ODA to African countries as provided by Japan and South Korea. Data on the amount of ODA for African countries from China could not be confirmed as China is not an OECD member country and its statistics are not recorded on its database. Given that it is difficult to find accurate data for China, the average value of the aid from 2010 to 2014, which was the latest data available at the time of this study from AidData's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset, 2000–2014, which conducts international development-related fund research, was used. Finally, the number of visitors from African countries to each East Asian country was selected as a variable representing 'social relations.' The number of visitors from each African country was referenced based on the World Tourism Organization's *Yearbook of Tourism Statistics Data*. Data on remittances from East Asia to Africa were extracted from the World Bank's *Annual Remittances Data*.

Findings
Media Coverage of African Countries

This study collected 2,269 articles over three years; 1,349 (913,596 characters) from *People's Daily*, 578 (320,325 characters) from *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and 342 (388,812 characters) from *Chosun Ilbo*. First, the statistics show that the volume of *People's Daily's* coverage of Africa was far greater than those of its counterparts. While these figures do not take into account the relative length of the publications, and there could be some degree of variation in length owing to differences in language, the absolute quantity of coverage of Africa for the *People's Daily* was considerably greater than that of the other two newspapers. The analysis revealed that this newspaper's reporting was not only relatively large in quantity but also offered the widest coverage, namely of 49 out of 55 African countries. *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Chosun Ilbo* had lower volumes with a limited number of countries featured in their coverage. For instance, out of 55 countries, 13 and 18 were not areas of focus and thus were never mentioned by *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Chosun Ilbo*.

Table 2 presents the top 10 countries mentioned in each newspaper. Egypt was featured the most by all three East Asian countries (roughly 20%), followed by South Africa, Tunisia, and Libya. When the distribution of coverage was compared by dividing the top 10 countries into 5 geographical regions, namely Northern, Eastern, Central, Western, and Southern Africa, a minor difference in proportion was found among the three East Asian countries. However, the overall patterns were similar.

Table 2. Top 10 African countries that featured in Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean media

Rank	People's Daily	% of articles	Yomiuri Shimbun	% of articles	Chosun Ilbo	% of articles
1	Egypt	22.1%	Egypt	24%	Egypt	19.1%
2	South Africa	15.6%	Tunisia	13%	Libya	10%
3	Kenya	5.8%	South Sudan	9%	Zimbabwe	7%
4	Sudan	3.6%	Nigeria	8.3%	South Africa	6.4%
5	Libya	3.5%	Kenya	8.2%	Ethiopia	6%
6	Nigeria	3%	South Africa	8%	Kenya	5%
7	South Sudan	2.9%	Libya	5.5%	Uganda	4.8%
8	Ethiopia	2.8%	Zimbabwe	5%	South Sudan	4.4%
9	Somalia	2.5%	Morocco	2.7%	Tunisia	4.3%
10	Zimbabwe	2.4%	Somalia	2.7%	Tanzania	3.7%

Figure 1 shows that Northern Africa, including Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco, accounted for the largest percentage (*People's Daily*: 29.2%, *Yomiuri Shimbun*: 45.1%, and *Chosun Ilbo*: 33.4%), followed by Eastern Africa, including Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Tanzania (*People's Daily*: 13.9%, *Yomiuri Shimbun*: 24.8%, and *Chosun Ilbo*: 23.7%), and Southern Africa, including South Africa and Zimbabwe (*People's Daily*: 18.1%, *Yomiuri Shimbun*: 8%, and *Chosun Ilbo*: 13.1%). Western Africa, including Nigeria, accounted for the smallest percentage (*People's Daily*: 3%, *Yomiuri Shimbun*: 8.3%, and *Chosun Ilbo*: 0%). Coverage of Central Africa was particularly rare, meaning that no country from Central Africa featured among the top 10 most covered countries in any of the three newspapers.
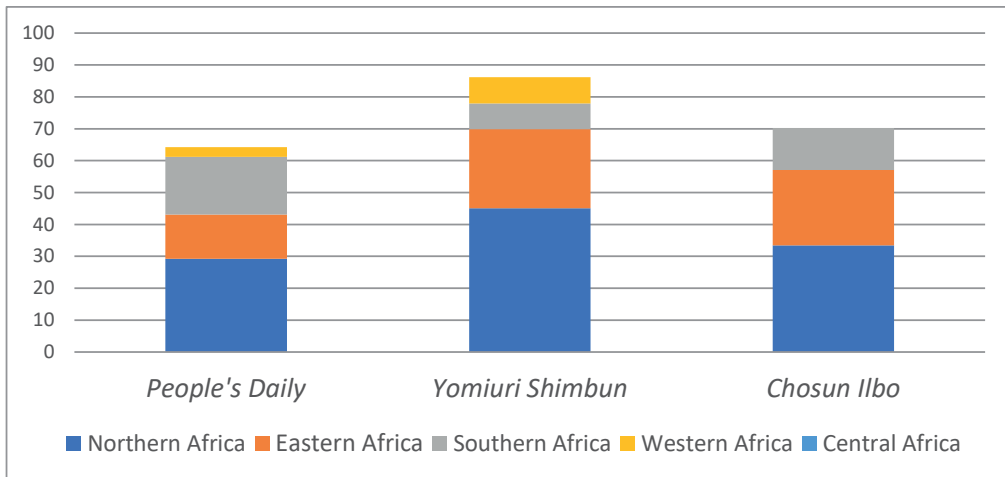
Figure 1. Comparison of the coverage of the top 10 African countries in *People's Daily*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Chosun Ilbo* by region

One may be curious about the reasons for these phenomena. As mentioned in the Methodology section, for each newspaper, this study generated panel data for 55 African countries between 2015 and 2017. The following section details the process of examining why such trends were observed and what accounted for the differences among the three newspapers. The analysis examines how the key predictor variables are associated with the volume of coverage separately for each newspaper. It helps us compare the determinants of African coverage among the three East Asian newspapers. The regression models included the country and year-fixed effects. The former helps us control for time-invariant country-specific characteristics like geography and culture. The latter helps us control for global economic and political shocks each year for African countries. To account for autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity, the standard errors are clustered by each African country.

Estimation Results for *People's Daily*

As indicated by Table 3, of the 12 variables, three seem to be important for the coverage of Africa by *People's Daily*. The frequency of high-level diplomatic visits between China and African countries had a positive and statistically significant relationship with news coverage. For instance, in *People's Daily*, it was found that China was in focus in articles covering politics in Africa frequently over a span of three years. There were numerous articles such

as those on official visits and talks between leaders from China and African countries, as well as articles stating that China and African countries had positive and cooperative diplomatic relations and a two-sided partnership. This analysis showed that most articles in *People's Daily* on politics in Africa reported on incidents in which China was directly involved politically. These articles focused more on China than on the African countries. The tendency to report the news from the perspective of a news outlet's home country was clearly the case in Africa-related coverage by *People's Daily*.

Similarly, the number of general African visitors to China was positively related to coverage. The number of visitors to China from Egypt were particularly large when compared to other African nations, with over 80,000 visitors on an annual basis. China had a large number of visitors from South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Kenya, which were among the top 10. These five countries accounted for nearly half the entire *People's Daily* coverage as presented in Table 2.

In contrast, the log of trade volumes had a negative relationship with *People's Daily's* coverage of Africa. Higher trade volume was associated with decreasing volume of coverage; that is, a negative correlation was found. A country with low trade volume with China was associated with greater coverage in Chinese media. This was vividly different from the findings of previous studies, which noted that higher trade volume with a reporting country was associated with a larger volume of coverage. Wu (2003) claimed that trade volume determines the volume of coverage regardless of whether the reporting country is developed or developing. Thus, the results of the regression analysis with panel data showed that relations with China, especially in political and social aspects, rather than the characteristics of the African countries in question, was the main determinant of African coverage in the Chinese media.

Table 3. Estimation results for *People's Daily*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and *Chosun Ilbo*

VARIABLES	*People's Daily*	*Yomiuri Shimbun*	*Chosun Ilbo*
LOG NUMBER OF REFUGEES	-0.774	-0.239	-0.965
	(0.825)	(0.401)	(0.657)
LOG NUMBER OF CONFLICT FATALITIES	0.025	**0.242****	0.005
	(0.186)	(0.143)	(0.194)
DEATH RATE	1.675	2.194	-1.253
	(3.033)	(2.188)	(2.868)
LOG GDP PER CAPITA	2.512	**-3.782*****	**3.578****
	(3.408)	(1.757)	(1.530)
LOG POPULATION	31.354	**-90.207*****	50.333
	(37.983)	(30.151)	(43.716)
NUMBER OF TREATIES	-0.107	-0.279	**1.083***
	(0.511)	(0.371)	(0.642)
DEPLOYMENT OF PKO	-	-	-0.142
			(0.114)
NUMBER OF HIGH-LEVEL DIPLOMATIC VISITS	**0.706*****	-0.159	**4.414****
	(0.255)	(0.180)	(1.879)
LOG TRADE VOLUME	**-1.929***	0.071	-0.257
	(0.989)	(0.150)	(0.199)
LOG AMOUNT OF ODA	-	0.395	-0.056
		(0.318)	(0.142)
LOG NUMBER OF VISITORS	**2.504****	0.382	0.173
	(1.210)	(0.717)	(0.578)
LOG REMITTANCES	0.485	**-61.420*****	15.318
	(0.325)	(21.374)	(12.210)
Observations	130	134	138
R-squared	0.188	0.351	0.358
Number of Country2	44	48	49

Note: The table shows regression coefficients and cluster standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the character count. The country and year fixed effects are included in the regression model. Robust standard errors are presented within parentheses.
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Estimation Results for *Yomiuri Shimbun*

Of the 12 variables, four had significant relationships with the volume of Africa-related coverage (Table 3). The logs of population and GDP per capita of African countries as well as remittances from Japan to Africa had negative relationships with *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The log of conflict fatalities in African countries had positive and statistically significant associations with *Yomiuri Shimbun's* African coverage.

With the exception of the number of conflict fatalities in Africa, all were negatively correlated. *Yomiuri Shimbun* reported more on African countries with smaller populations, lower remittances, and lower GDP per capita, which seems counterintuitive. They tended to report on countries with more deviant factors and less prominent characteristics. This finding differs from those of previous studies (Ishii, 1996). In particular, the negative correlation between GDP per capita and population was the opposite of the results in Golan (2008), who found that GDP and population size were key predictors of African coverage in the US.

To clarify why a prominent characteristic was a less vital factor than deviant characteristics as seen in most earlier studies, it may be helpful to investigate the events of sample years. Between 2015 and 2017, conflict fatalities occurred in 48 countries (Raleigh et al., 2010). Terrorism was the second frequently covered topic in *Yomiuri Shimbun* every year, and in the case of the coverage of terrorism in 2015, terrorist attacks in Nigeria and Tunisia accounted for most of the coverage. In Nigeria, terror attacks were carried out by Boko Haram in 2015 and caused 10,924 deaths and injuries. In Tunisia, terror attacks caused about 100 deaths. However, Tunisia was reported twice as much as Nigeria in *Yomiuri Shimbun*. This may have been because there were Japanese citizens among the fatalities in the terror attacks in Tunisia. Additionally, content concerning countries with the highest number of conflict fatalities in 2016, namely Somalia, Nigeria, and South Sudan, were confirmed in the coverage. Articles on the civil war in South Sudan accounted for the largest proportion. Given that the content on South Sudan included considerable coverage of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, which were sent as peacekeepers, the involvement with the home country seems to have had a partial impact on coverage levels. Accordingly, the deviant characteristics of African countries may be seen as decisive factors in determining the volume of Africa-related coverage in *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Stories related to the home country may have had a partial effect on coverage perception, as well.

Estimation Results for *Chosun Ilbo*

Table 3 shows that three determinants – number of high-level diplomatic visits, log of GDP per capita, and number of treaties – had positive and statistically significant relationships with the coverage of African countries in *Chosun Ilbo*. In this company, the relations with South Korea, especially political ones, played a pivotal role in determining the volume of coverage, and characteristics associated with prominence appeared to determine the value of coverage of African countries. These results were similar to those of previous studies (Ahern, 1984; Golan, 2008).

These results may have stemmed from the fact that over the period of analysis, unlike the two preceding newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo* had no foreign news bureaus stationed in African countries. Given the high cost of employing permanent foreign correspondents, the South Korean media dispatches correspondents for short-term assignments rather than having correspondents reside in different regions and regularly report on issues directly; they have traditionally also opted to report 'indirect information' from news agencies and media in larger countries such as the US, China, Japan, and France (Kim & Shim, 2019). For the international coverage of regions like Africa, the media from other countries serve as major sources of information, and coverage presented from a specific perspective adopted by such media outlets can exert a powerful influence on South Korean news coverage.

In the case of the *Chosun Ilbo*, however, a reporter was sent to Egypt in 2016 and 2017 for a short period of time. As can be seen from the Table 2, Egypt was the country that was covered the most often in Africa-related coverage by the *Chosun Ilbo* during the analysis period of this study. It can also be noted that Egypt had the largest number of treaties and agreements with South Korea among the 55 African countries, which was found to be a factor influencing the coverage of Africa through panel data analysis, which may have had an impact on the coverage of Egypt and the decision to send the reporter to Egypt. However, considering the fact that there was a large volume of in-depth coverage from the point of view of the correspondent in Egypt at the time, it may be said that the presence of a South Korean reporter in Egypt for a short period of time was a factor in determining the volume and content of the coverage.

Discussion and Conclusions

Although there are countless events occurring worldwide, only select news is reported by the news media. There is a significant geographical imbalance in the news that is eventually reported. Since such biased reporting has the potential to affect public opinion formation and further foreign policy, it is necessary to clarify what causes these disproportionate reporting patterns; specifically, what factors influence the decision to report with regard to international news, especially news about African countries that are generally overlooked in international media coverage? Unlike most studies on the news values of international coverage that focus on the media in Western countries, this study analyzed the primary predictors for East Asian countries and compared the similarities and differences between the news values in these countries and those of Western media.

Particularly, the results for *Chosun Ilbo* were similar to those of previous studies. Aside from one reporter who was sent to Egypt for a brief period, they had no other correspondents stationed in Africa. Thus, they had to rely on international news carriers such as Associated Press and Agence France-Presse, and international news outlets such as *New York Times* and *BBC*; in other words, they relied on news produced in and distributed for the West. In *Chosun Ilbo*, news value was not entirely independent, and it can be assumed that the results are somewhat similar to those of Western countries. This could be because it is an independent company, and there is a lack of demand for stories from Africa and a low level of interest regarding the same among South Korean readers. However, this is not in the country's long-term national interest as coverage led by Western media can affect South Korean public consciousness and the country's foreign policy.

Except *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the level of 'deviance' was not a key variable for the newspapers. In most historical research on the coverage of African countries in the news media, the problem is that the coverage is not only remarkably little, but also that most coverage is negative, such as the association with 'dark Africa' and Afro-pessimism. Western media pays attention to negative and highly deviant issues while reporting on African nations (Golan, 2008:53). However, as Bunce et al. (2017) showed by comparing the situation in 1994 and 2013, the negative reportage on African countries has begun to fall, and the 'rising Africa' narrative is gradually on the rise. In order for African countries to receive appropriate attention and support from the international community in addressing challenging issues, it is necessary for the international media coverage to focus on deviant

aspects as well. However, in this study, it was found that in China and South Korea, as opposed to Japan, the prominence of African countries and the relationship with the home country were decisive factors and played a greater role than deviant events in determining media coverage. A narrow focus produces a narrow mindset. Thus, it is necessary to revisit the news values on African coverage.

Finally, this study has certain limitations that offer directions for future research. While clarifying the factors that affect the coverage of African countries, this study conducted an analysis by focusing only on the characteristics of the reported African countries and their relationships with China, Japan, and South Korea. In-depth interviews with journalists and editors placed in Africa by individual newspaper companies, that is the gatekeepers, would be valuable. Gatekeepers are subject to various influences in the course of gatekeeping, such as values within the media organization, personal experiences, other powers, and social ideologies (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Thus, it is also important to analyze news value from a gatekeeping perspective. After all, 'news is what newspapermen make it' (Gieber, 1964).

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