

A Rogue Nation: News Headline Tone in International Coverage of North Korea's September 2017 Nuclear Test

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On September 3, 2017, North Korea underwent its sixth nuclear test despite expectations of denuclearization. News headlines from six international news sources were analyzed for journalistic tone related to the nuclear test. As with previous research on earlier tests, headlines were primarily neutral or negative regardless of the news source. Given that 60% of people only read the headlines, and a similar number share news stories on social media based on headline, examining journalistic tone in headlines during international crises is worthwhile.

Keywords: Korea, nuclear, headline, tone, journalism.

Introduction

News coverage of North Korea's continued thwarting of denuclearization efforts has often ranged from neutral reporting of events to negative condemnation with little to no positive commentary (Cain & Drumheller, 2014). North Korea's sixth nuclear test on September 3, 2017, brought variations in headlines from news organizations around the world. News headlines might be all that is read of a news story as headlines are highlighted in email briefs and social media shares. This study analyzes the news headlines from six international broadcasters on the day of the detonation and examines them for journalistic tone to assess agenda setting trends set by the limited but salient information a headline provides.

The relationship the United States has with North Korea has long been one of proximity through maintaining a base in South Korea and policy demand in the form of CVID (complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization; Anderson, 2017). Despite demands from the US, sanctions, and withheld aid, North Korea's intention to weaponize in the 1980s has grown in scale and technical prowess with each nuclear test (Anderson, 2017). North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test detonating "a nuclear device that was vastly more powerful than its last" (Fifield, 2017, para. 2). Global news coverage of the event began soon afterward and international condemnation was swift ("North Korean Nuclear," 2017).

This was the first nuclear test of the Trump presidency, testing the administration's claims of low tolerance for any aggression coming from North Korea. Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson gave no clear policy indication in spring 2017 but stated "a different approach is required" (Graham, 2017, "March 16" para. 1) and "the policy of strategic patience has ended" (Graham, 2017, "March 17" para. 1). While Tillerson vacillated between no policy and

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resuming talks, Trump stated his expectations that China should solve the problem or the US will, while also indicating there could be "a major, major conflict with North Korea" (Graham, 2017, "April 27" para. 1). In April 2018, Mike Pompeo was sworn in as Tillerson's replacement, and on May 10, President Trump announced plans to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Singapore to discuss plans to curb North Korea's nuclear weapons program (Nakamura & Wagner, 2018). In an apparent effort to support Kim Jong-un's pledge to stop all nuclear testing, North Korea invited journalists to witness the May 24 destruction of the country's nuclear testing site at Punggye-ri, where all six of North Korea's nuclear tests were conducted (Hass & Borger, 2018). However, just hours later, President Trump announced that the summit was being canceled because of recent rhetoric from the North Korean government (Borger & Hass, 2018). By June 1, however, the summit was again on the schedule for June 12. In preparing for the historic meeting, Secretary of State Pompeo stated publicly that US objectives were "the complete, and verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" (Rosenfeld, 2018, para. 7). After the June 12 summit, President Trump said he "believed that Mr. Kim's desire to end North Korea's seven-decade-old confrontation with the United States was sincere" (Landler, 2018, para. 3). Meeting with Kim Jong-un once again in October 2018, Pompeo announced that North Korea was willing to allow inspectors into the nuclear testing site the country claimed it blew up in late May 2018. In November, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that Kim was also considering allowing international inspectors to visit North Korea's main nuclear complex (Johnson, 2018).

Rationale

For decades, world leaders have had to contend with the isolationist and dictatorial tactics of North Korea and its leaders who have not engaged in diplomacy – the leaders have not seemed to care much about what anyone thinks. Surprisingly, there is little research on the news coverage of North Korea and its actions. Jung and Park (2014) mapped Twitter-mediated interpersonal communication networks to analyze how homeland security benefits from crowd-sourced information. Jiang (2006) analyzed cross-cultural differences in questions and responses between journalists and spokespersons at press conferences in the US and Japan regarding the North Korean nuclear tests, but this study had little to do with North Korea other than as a context for coding responses. Similar to this study, Cain and Drumheller (2014) analyzed the agenda setting and tone evident in newspaper headlines related to North Korea's fourth nuclear test. Most research, however, comes out of fields in international affairs, analyzing policy and strategy of world leaders from the US, South Korea, and China, in particular (e.g., Anderson, 2017; Cho, 2017; Hong, 2017; Oh & Hassig, 2010). Although the politics behind North Korean tensions are important, media representations should not be overlooked given their role in framing arguments for the public.

The authors have done similar research on newspaper coverage of North Korean nuclear tests and more needs to be done, including expanding into other media such as international broadcast news. The journalistic tone developed through headlines alone can be important when measuring attitudes toward national policy. The American Press Institute reported in 2014 that only 40% of Americans reported reading beyond a news headline ("How Americans get," 2014), while another study reported that 59% of shared article URLs were never clicked (Gabiolkov et al., 2016). This points to a trend in journalistic consumption that should be explored.

Literature Review

North Korea's Nuclear Program Since 2013

Cain and Drumheller's (2014) analysis of agenda setting and tone in coverage of North Korea's third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, contains a brief history of the country's nuclear program up to that month. In April of that year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which is the North's official name, announced plans to "restart all facilities at its main Yongbyon nuclear complex" ("North Korea Profile," 2017). In March 2014, the country "warned it was preparing to test another nuclear device" (McKirdy & Kim, 2014), and it followed that warning in May 2015 with a claim that it had "developed technology to mount [a] nuclear warhead on a missile" (S. Kim, 2017). North Korea confirmed in September 2015 that it had restarted its Yongbyon nuclear plant ("North Korea Profile," 2017), and the following January the country announced it had conducted its fourth nuclear test since 2006 – a hydrogen bomb – though international experts doubted the claim (McCurry & Safi, 2016). Two months later, the country's state-run news organization reported North Korea had "miniaturized nuclear warheads to fit on ballistic missiles" (Almasy & McKirdy, 2016). On September 9, 2016, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test, a 10-kiloton explosion causing seismic activity registering 5.3 in magnitude (Erickson, 2017). Nearly one year later, the DPRK engaged in its sixth test.

Policy and Positioning

In reviewing the headlines news organizations use to report on North Korea's nuclear tests, it is important to understand the policies and positions in North Korea's tensions with the United States. For years the US and North Korea have entered into agreements easily broken by North Korea (Cain & Drumheller, 2014). In 2003, the Agreed Framework of 1994 collapsed and the US, Japan, South Korea, and China provided incentives such as construction and energy supplies for North Korea to denuclearize (Oh & Hassig, 2010). Yet, North Korea tested its first nuclear device in 2006, its second in 2009, and in 2013, North Korea ran its third test and announced it would no longer discuss denuclearization regardless of UN sanctions imposed (Cain & Drumheller, 2014). The current US president has used

more aggressive rhetoric than previous politicians (Hong, 2017), yet North Korea did not seem initially moved by the president's tone, running its sixth nuclear test despite warnings. The seemingly improved, yet still uncertain climate between two aggressive opponents potentially affects the responses out of North Korea and mediated reports.

North Korea has had an historically poor economy, relying on food subsidies for the poor largely due to elite and military extravagances (Oh & Hassig, 2010). Despite these struggles, North Korea's economy does appear to be experiencing a 1% to 5% annual growth (M.F., 2017). Sanctions placed on the country are often targeted to affect the elite and military spending. Despite bans on doing business with North Korea, many still do enter trade agreements without much risk of the UN following up with secondary sanctions (M.F., 2017). This economic growth has likely empowered North Korea in demonstrating its increasing military power as well.

Cho (2017) makes an interesting argument that nuclear testing is part of North Korea's attempts at national branding in contrast to "liberal capitalist governments" (p. 616). Although national branding has traditionally been thought of as a promotion tactic with positive messages to highlight a positive image of a nation, Cho (2017) contends that nations can use national branding more ontologically to identify larger questions of being to "contribute to *nation building* processes, particularly when the country in question feels it lacks either legitimacy from inside or recognition from outside, as may be the case in a dictatorship" (p. 595). North Korea does not attempt to create a favorable image, but rather one more threatening, using spectacles such as the Arirang Festival, a large celebration of the ruling party with propagandized themes, and military displays, such as nuclear tests. The nuclear tests, thus, become a "political showcase" (p. 609) as North Korea follows verbal threats with literal explosions. In this, global press coverage can fulfill the purpose by fueling interest and speculation.

As for the previous failed attempts at halting North Korea's nuclear testing, Anderson (2017) argues that on one side are those arguing that it is a problem of policy and on the other a problem of personality. He argues, however, that it is "the simple fact of US *power* and its *position* on the peninsula through the US-Republic of Korea alliance" (p. 623) that largely motivates North Korea's nuclear decisions. As long as the US maintains a position in South Korea, North Korea will not abandon its nuclear efforts, forcing the US to choose between stalemate and denuclearization, making CVID ineffective foreign policy. Anderson (2017) further suggests that dropping CVID could allow the US to focus on other areas such as human rights conditions.

In a similar fashion, Roy (2017) argues that there are four common misunderstandings that affect policy decisions:

First, characterizations of the regime as irrational are wrong. ...Second, paranoid about subversion. ...Third, the option of using military action to prevent North Korea from getting nuclear missiles is not "on the table." ...Finally, depending on China to solve the problem is fruitless because the Chinese fear a collapse of the regime more than they fear a nuclear-armed North Korea. (p. 2)

North Korea seeks intimidation tactics and strongly distrusts democratic countries, so it is unlikely to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for greater economic opportunities. Prior to Cho (2017) and Anderson (2017), Oh and Hassig (2010) argued that "in the absence of economic strength and trusted allies, the country must keep its military strong" (p. 96) to maintain power. As is clearly true today, North Korea would rather be a country with nuclear potential than actually trigger a war (Hong, 2017; Oh & Hassig, 2010). It is interesting that the proximity of the US is simultaneously to protect against North Korean aggressions yet likely the reason for them as well. This duality of structure creates the opportunities and constraints for strategic responses by national leaders. Further, despite this relationship, the greatest risk is to South Korea, which has very limited input aside from being located at North Korea's border.

Journalistic Tone

As noted in the rationale, a majority of social media users share content that has not been read, making headlines fairly powerful. DeMers (2016) argues that the measure of an article's performance comes down to the headline: it might be the reason you read, do not read, or do not read but still share. Headlines contribute to the echo chamber when it supports beliefs, and some publishers write headlines expecting this very phenomenon. There are notable problems including a less informed and easily manipulated populace (DeMers, 2016) resulting from language choices used by a headline writer who might not even be the journalist who wrote the article.

These headline writers, whether editor or journalist, serve an agenda-setting function, influencing the news in snippets rather than fully investigated narratives. Agenda-setting has two primary levels: what to think about and how the public should think about those issues (McCombs, 2004; Sheafer, 2007). It is possible for headlines and their news stories to actually take the reader in different directions. Andrew (2007) found a "considerable difference between articles and their headlines in terms of emphasis and issue salience" with tone often changing between the headline and story (p. 24). When the agenda is truncated to headlines, there are clear implications for information flow and processing.

Research on valence of print news stories has included editorial views influencing the overall tone of news stories on political candidates (Druckman & Parkin, 2005; Kahn & Kenney, 2002), positively valenced tendencies toward military stories (Pfau et al., 2004), and a more positive tone from female journalists than males covering South Korea's female cabinet members (Kim & Yoon, 2008). Limited research has been done on headlines alone, yet such analysis can extend our understanding of the agenda setting function as we acknowledge that it does not even take a full news story to form attitudes and opinions on a topic. This can be especially problematic in advocating or condemning political antagonistic maneuvering. Thus, this paper asks the following:

RQ: How do headlines of major broadcast news organizations set the journalistic tone in the case of North Korea's nuclear tests?

The following sections outline the method and analysis followed by a discussion of the findings.

Methodology

The authors employed a method similar to the one they used for their previous examination of how newspapers covered North Korea's nuclear test in 2013 (Cain & Drumheller, 2014). This study is a descriptive content analysis of 38 news headlines from six international television broadcasters: *BBC World*, headquartered in the United Kingdom; *Voice of America*, based in the United States; *Channel NewsAsia*, located in Singapore; *NHK World*, headquartered in Japan; *Arirang TV*, based in South Korea; and *China Global Television Network*, located in China. The headlines come from Sept. 3, the day of the event. These six international broadcasters were deliberately chosen because of their geographic proximity to, or their host nations' political interest in, North Korea's nuclear capabilities. Specifically, *Arirang TV*, *NHK World*, and *China Global Television Network* are each based in northeast Asia, where North Korea is located. *Channel NewsAsia* was chosen because of its coverage of the entire Asia region. *BBC World* and *Voice of America* were included because they have a history of covering North Korea's nuclear program and are based in Western countries whose governments have been critical of North Korea's efforts. Finally, each broadcaster provides information in English, which is the authors' native language. The search term "nuclear" was used to identify reports on all six broadcasters' websites for their respective Sept. 3 coverage, and stories not specifically related to that day's nuclear test were excluded. All reports were obtained on Sept. 7, 2017, and to ensure continued access to the data, they were saved to the first author's computer desktop as .HTM files. News articles came from each of the following primary news sites: *Arirang TV* (<http://www.arirang.com/index.asp>); *NHK World* (<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/>); *China Global Television Network America* (<https://america.cgtn.com/>); *Channel NewsAsia* (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news>); *BBC World* (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world>); and *Voice of America* (<https://www.voanews.com/>). The first author examined the headlines to determine their journalistic tone. An example of negative tone would be using a word such as "condemn" or implying negative consequences as a result of North Korea's nuclear test. A headline that reported favorably upon, or implied favorable results because of, North Korea's test would be an example of positive tone. A basic statement of fact would represent neutral tone. The second author served for peer review, examining the first author's analysis and categorizations.

Analysis

The authors were somewhat surprised by the number of stories featured on websites belonging to news organizations located in Asia. *Arirang TV* (South Korea) featured five reports on its website for Sept. 3, while *NHK World* (Japan)

contained only two. Considering each country's proximity to North Korea and their respective governments' consistent condemnation of the DPRK's nuclear activities, the authors expected to find more stories on these organizations' websites. Conversely, despite being located in the Asian nation farthest away from North Korea in this study, *Channel NewsAsia* (Singapore) featured the most stories of any news operation with 14. *China Global Television Network* (China) contained only two reports of the nuclear test on its *China Global Television Network America* website, which was not surprising considering China's balancing act of remaining North Korea's strongest ally while also recognizing mounting international frustration with the North's nuclear activities. *BBC World* (United Kingdom) featured 10 reports, and *Voice of America* (United States) had five.

South Korea, Japan, and China

Three of *Arirang TV*'s five headlines from Sept. 3 exhibited neutral tone. "South Korea's political parties convene emergency meetings following North Korea's presumed nuclear test" (M. Kim, 2017) was published shortly before 2:30 p.m. Korean Standard Time (KST). Less than two hours later, the next story headline suggested the South Korean government had confirmed the test: "N. Korea conducts apparent 6th nuclear test: S Korea" (H. Kim, 2017). Less than a minute later, the headline "Seismic data indicate North Korea's strongest nuclear test to date" was published (M. Y. Kim, 2017). A little more than an hour later, after 5 p.m. KST, *Arirang TV* posted a story on its website with the following headline: "South Korean President Calls for the 'Strongest Possible' Response to North Korea's nuclear test" (Moon, 2017). The phrase "strongest possible" exhibits negative tone, indicating that South Korea has been compelled yet again to respond to the North's nuclear activities with increasingly forceful language. *Arirang TV*'s second headline to exhibit negative tone suggested North Korea's nuclear test humiliated China's president. "N. Korea's sixth nuclear test embarrasses [sic] Chinese President Xi Jinping as he hosts BRICS summit meeting" (C. Kim, 2017) was the fourth headline published in *Arirang TV*'s five-story sequence.

Both headlines from *NHK World* were journalistically neutral. "S. Korean media reports on possible nuclear test" ("S. Korean Media," 2017) and "S. Korea military suggested North may test new tech" ("S. Korea Military, " 2017) were published without a reporter's byline. The two headlines featured on *China Global Television Network America*'s website focused either on responses from the United Nations and United States or from Russia. The first headline published that afternoon contained a negative tone. "Xi, Putin agree to appropriately deal with DPRK's nuclear test" ("Xi, Putin agree" 2017) suggests China and Russia would work together to address North Korea's nuclear activities. The phrase "deal with" is typically used to describe a problematic or difficult situation. The second headline of the day, "DPRK nuclear test: UN Security Council to host emergency meeting, Trump admin responds" (Barton, 2017), was journalistically neutral and focused on the immediate responses from the United Nations and United States.

Singapore

All but one of *Channel NewsAsia's* 14 published headlines came from two international news services: *Reuters* and *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*. Six of the 14 exhibited neutral tone. "North Korea Announces successful hydrogen bomb test hours after tremors" ("North Korea announces," 2017), "On Chinese border, North Korea nuclear test shakes ground, but not routines" ("On Chinese Border," 2017), and "North Korea says conducts hydrogen bomb test, Trump to meet with advisers" ("North Korea says," 2017) were produced by *Reuters* and published on *Channel NewsAsia's* website. The other three neutral-toned headlines were produced by *AFP*: "North Korean missile development: A timeline" ("North Korean Missile," 2017), "UN Security Council to meet on North Korea nuclear test" ("UN Secretary Council," 2017), and "North Korea's top newsreader announces H-bomb success" ("North Korea's Top," 2017).

Seven headlines exhibited negative tone, and three of these included a version of the word "condemn" within them. "China 'strongly condemns North Korean nuclear test': Foreign ministry" ("China," 2017) and "North Korea nuclear test draws swift international condemnation" ("North Korea Nuclear Test Draws," 2017) were produced by *AFP* and published on *Channel NewsAsia's* website. The third headline focused on the response from Singapore's government: "Singapore 'strongly condemns' North Korea nuclear test: MFA" ("Singapore," 2017). This was the only published report on *Channel NewsAsia's* website included in this study that was not produced by either *Reuters* or *AFP*. Another *AFP*-produced headline quoted Japan's prime minister, who described North Korea's nuclear test as "absolutely unacceptable" ("N Korea Nuclear Test," 2017). The *Reuters*-produced headline "China's anger at West to overshadow tougher action on North Korea" (Blanchard & Wen, 2017) implies that North Korea has exposed China to increased pressure from western nations to address North Korea's nuclear activities in a meaningful way. Similar to one published on *China Global Television Network America's* website, *Channel NewsAsia* included a *Reuters* headline indicating that China and Russia would "appropriately deal" with North Korea's nuclear test (Blanchard, 2017). The final negatively-toned headline from *AFP*, "North Korea and its nuclear test: What next?" ("North Korea and its Nuclear Test," 2017), implicitly addresses a common theme that the DPRK's government is unpredictable and defies international norms. The one *Channel NewsAsia* headline that could be perceived as having either a positive or negative tone regarding North Korea was attached to a report by *Reuters*: "Is North Korea's hydrogen bomb a 'game changer'?" ("Is North Korea's," 2017). Positively, it could be interpreted as an indication of the country's newly-acquired status as a true global nuclear power. Negatively, it could be interpreted as a dire watershed event for the rest of the world.

United States

Among the five headlines written for *Voice of America*, two were journalistically neutral, two included a negative reference to North Korea, and one could be viewed favorably or negatively regarding the country's apparent stronger

influence in global affairs. "North Korea conducts sixth nuclear test" (Herman, 2017) and "North Korea: Sixth nuclear test was an H-bomb for ICBM" (Padden & Herman, 2017) provide basic facts about the DPRK's nuclear detonation and were published during the early morning hours in the United States. However, two very similar headlines published later that afternoon exhibited negative tone when they quoted President Donald Trump referring to North Korea as a "rogue nation" (Bredemeier, Padden, & Herman, 2017; Harton, 2017). Finally, a news analysis headline provided what could be interpreted as a positive or negative assessment of North Korea's technological achievement and what that could mean for the country's global standing. "ANALYSIS - Possible two-stage hydrogen bomb seen 'game changer' for North Korea" ("ANALYSIS," 2017) was produced by *Reuters* but was published on *Voice of America's* website several hours after North Korea's nuclear test. A similar headline displayed on *Channel NewsAsia's* website included the phrase "game changer," and as noted above, a positive interpretation could indicate a new level of influence for North Korea that has been reserved only for the world's nuclear powers, whereas a negative interpretation could indicate North Korea's now greater threat to global stability.

Great Britain

Six of the Sept. 3 headlines featured on *BBC World's* website were neutral in tone. "Kim inspects 'nuclear warhead': A picture decoded" (Hanham, 2017) featured photos of Kim Jong-un, North Korea's supreme leader, examining a nuclear warhead. The photos had been publicly released a few hours before North Korea's nuclear test. Another headline maintained a similar theme of trying to analyze an event with scant information: "North Korea nuclear test: 'Tunnel collapse' may provide clues" (Dill, 2017). One headline indicated *BBC World* had collected a list of "The most powerful nuclear blasts ever" ("The Most Powerful," 2017), while another report was simply titled "North Korea nuclear test – latest updates" and had featured a live reporting feed on the day of the test (Lawson & Baker, 2017). The other two neutral headlines referred to the detonated weapon as being capable of fitting onto a missile: "North Korea 'has missile-ready nuclear weapon'" ("North Korea 'has Missile-ready,'" 2017) and "North Korea nuclear test: Hydrogen bomb 'missile-ready'" ("North Korea Nuclear Test: Hydrogen," 2017).

Three of *BBC World's* headlines were phrased as questions. "North Korea nuclear tests: What did they achieve?" ("North Korea Nuclear Tests," 2017) exhibited neutral tone and was used for an article that highlighted North Korea's previous nuclear achievements. However, the other two interrogative headlines suggested negative tone. "Nuclear N Korea: How worried should we be?" ("Nuclear N Korea," 2017) implicitly references the country's reputation as an unpredictable international pariah. "North Korea's nuclear tests: How should Trump respond?" (Nilsson-Wright, 2017) suggests the president of the United States is obligated to address yet another provocation from North Korea's government. The final headline also exhibits negative tone when addressing the United States' potential response. "North Korea nuclear test: Lindsey Graham

warns of US attack" ("North Korea Nuclear Test: Lindsey," 2017) suggests the DPRK's nuclear ambitions are a threat to US security.

Discussion

The majority of the news headlines exhibited neutral tone. This might be due largely to the timeline chosen. The news closest to the event is more likely to contain factual information. Although not surprising that early headlines might be neutral, the repeated offense of the North Korean government could support immediate value judgments from either journalists themselves or those interviewed. It is actually a bit refreshing to find most headlines attempting to provide facts over speculation or condemnation as the first reports of the nuclear test filtered through the international news media system.

When examining the tone of 60 lead paragraphs in newspaper coverage of North Korea's 2013 nuclear test, Cain and Drumheller (2014) identified 42 of them (70%) as negative. The authors expected a similar finding with broadcast headlines but only 39% had a definitive negative tone. Although there are several potential reasons for the differences, the uncertain times could be reflected through uncertainty over reporting. Rather than feeling comfortable condemning with certainty, some headlines appeared as if the news organizations were awaiting the US response, with even one headline asking "How should Trump respond?" These types of headlines might not only convey a bit of felt uncertainty, but might even set the agenda for public voices providing input for an indefinite future where North Korean denuclearization policy is concerned.

An interesting added agenda setting issue is the cultural implications of noting US uncertainty, embarrassment of Chinese leadership, and game changing moves by North Korea. These headlines taken together illustrate the power and position arguments of Anderson (2017) while calling into question hanging any hopes on Trump to bring peace (Hong, 2017) in a way that does not ultimately harm South Korea. China's embarrassment is largely because it has not been in their best interest to act against North Korea (Roy, 2017) and continued nuclear detonations only put China's power into question. As long as the US is positionally a threat to North Korea's power, nuclear detonations and missile launches are likely to continue.

Conclusion

The expectation of a similar percentage of negative headlines found in Cain and Drumheller's (2014) previous work carried over into this research, but that is not what the authors found. Of the 38 news headlines examined from Sept. 3, 2017, only 15 of them (39%) were identified as exhibiting negative tone. The number reaches 45% when including the two headlines that could be interpreted either as positive or negative in tone. There could be several likely causes for this. The previous study focused on four newspapers, two from South Korea and two from the United States, and included one week's worth of reporting. Because the

governments of both countries oppose North Korea's nuclear efforts, it was not a surprise that newspapers located in South Korea and the United States depicted the DPRK negatively. This study, however, contained news headlines from only one day – the first day of the event – creating the possibility that the authors could have identified more headlines exhibiting negative tone as news coverage continued to examine the nuclear event and global reactions to it. Another possibility for the lower percentage of negatively-toned headlines could be that the news outlets examined for this study are international broadcasters from six different countries and are trying to appeal to a wider global audience by adopting a more neutral journalistic tone. Related to this, one potential limitation of this study is that all six news organizations use the English language and are clearly aiming to attract an English-speaking audience. If these headlines had been written in each respective country's native language or languages for a localized audience, the results may have been different. Another potential limitation that was not explored in this study is whether the tone of the headlines matches the tone of the lead paragraphs.

This study also does not account for the historical, political, and cultural expectations that may directly or indirectly influence each news organization. All news media in China are owned by the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), so it is expected that *China Global Television Network* will report on topics that the Chinese government deems acceptable and will avoid those topics considered taboo. Singapore does not have the same type of press freedom exercised in democratic nations, but its government also does not exert total control of all media (Weaver & Willnat, 2012), meaning *Channel NewsAsia* is potentially subject to political pressure regarding what it broadcasts or publishes. *NHK World* is part of *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* (NHK), or *Japan Broadcasting Corporation*. It is Japan's only public broadcasting organization, and its stated mission is to inform the world about the latest developments in Japan and Asia ("About NHK," n.d.). *Arirang TV* is a public service agency in South Korea with a mission to enhance Korea's international image ("Company Profile," n.d.). It would not be unusual to expect story selection and presentation for both *NHK World* and *Arirang TV* to be influenced by those mission statements, particularly when their respective host countries view North Korea as a threat. The same idea holds for *Voice of America*, whose mission statement includes the idea that "the long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world" ("Mission and Values," n.d., para. 5). The *British Broadcasting Corporation*, which includes *BBC World*, is generally considered to be the public broadcasting model to which all other broadcasters are compared. Still, being situated in a western country that is often at odds with North Korea may influence the *BBC's* tone of coverage related to the DPRK.

Future academic research should examine journalistic coverage of North Korea beyond the typical narratives related to its nuclear program. News media coverage of North Korea's human rights abuses would be fertile grounds for exploration. The country's institutionalized propaganda machine remains worthy of academic analysis, as well. Additional studies of how coverage of North Korea is presented by news organizations in other countries would provide interesting

insights, particularly if the organization's home country considers itself an ally of North Korea.

With so many people sharing headlines without even clicking article links, headlines carry more responsibility than in the past. It is no longer news stories alone setting agendas, it is often solely on the support of a single headline. This should be a cautionary tale to journalists and editors that the weight of what the world thinks about may not be resting on investigative journalism, but on cleverly-written headlines.

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