

## Shaping Perception: A Framing Analysis of Public Discourse and Foreign Aid

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### Abstract:

As the world becomes increasingly globalized and countries become more interdependent, the increased flow of foreign aid can impact how different nations view each other on the global stage. Previous aid literature delves into how aid affects economic growth and whether or not aid has a significant impact on the political institutions of the recipient country. While these studies reveal that aid does not have a significant systemic impact on political institutions, they do not show how the general population in the recipient nation responds to its donors. Therefore, I ask: how does the way a recipient country's media reports on a donor country change after receiving aid from them? I analyze how recipient countries' media reports on donor nations. Following the media framing literature, analyzing the media helps to understand how recipient citizens react to foreign aid. To accomplish this, I compare factors like headlines, and sentiments in wording before and after the flow of aid was increased. This study also looks at whether there are trends in how certain types of institutions are perceived (e.g., how a democratic government is perceived compared to an authoritarian state). Generally, the recipient country should report on the donor country more positively after acquiring the aid. However, if there are large gaps in the political ideologies of both nations, the aid may not be received well. This study is relevant helps in comprehending how effective aid truly is. It also helps to assess whether aid can be used strategically to grow the donor country's influence on the international stage.

### Introduction

Reports published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show that the largest aid donors to Africa are the USA, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Germany ("Development Aid at Glance" 2016). The aid influx from these countries into Africa was greatest in 2020, attributed to increased instability from the global pandemic ("Net Official Development Assistance" 2022). Naturally, recipient nations should foster positive relations with the donor nations, but what happens when there are tensions between donor and recipient, as was the case in Ethiopia? The USA was accused of imposing self-interest on Ethiopia and supporting the Tigray People's Liberation Fund (TPLF) over the elected government. The US also allegedly provided arms and funds to this group (Kulkarni 2022). Another special case is that of China. China has been accused of engaging in debt-trap diplomacy with various African countries and leveraging these unequal power dynamics to exploit Africa's natural resources (Himmer 2022). This brings into question whether or not recipient media will continue to frame the donor in a certain way despite cultural and ideological

differences, thereby providing deeper insight into the power dynamics between more and less economically developed countries.

The role of media in shaping public perception must be emphasized. Foreign aid holds a significant place in international relations and discourse, and media can be used to control the perception of the same. The way media frames aid can profoundly impact public understanding of the donor nation and provide an overall commentary on the success of aid interventions on the ground. Media framing describes how news outlets choose key elements of a story, highlight various perspectives, and employ particular terminology to create a narrative that appeals to their audience. This framing can have significant effects on how viewers see and understand events. As a result, the media actively participates in molding the attitudes and opinions of the general public rather than simply serving as a neutral conduit for information.

This paper will delve into the intricate relationship between media representation and international aid by examining how media outlets from different recipient nations frame discussions regarding aid initiatives. By analyzing various state media sources, limited to digital news articles, I aim to uncover patterns, biases, and prevailing narratives in the portrayal of foreign aid efforts. Furthermore, I explore the potential consequences of these frames on public attitudes, policy decisions, and the overall effectiveness of aid interventions

## **Literature Review**

According to OECD reports, the provision of foreign aid was at an all-time high in 2020 due to the pandemic. This era was defined by uncertainty and instability, bringing in the question of whether or not donor nations have vested interests in supporting Lesser Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs). Additionally, various studies have supported the claim that development aid is generally ineffective. For instance, the gap between the so-called 'core' and 'periphery' has been growing, leading to an influx of capital into African nations but minimal benefits actually realized (Andrews 2009). Literature showing the ineffectiveness of aid in positive structural change is widespread. Studies indicate that aid on condition of democratization is only accepted in a few cases where a dictator knows they will be elected democratically as well (Wright 2009). More recent literature shows that aid and the quality of governance or political stability do not have a causal relationship (Jones and Tarp 2016; Chao 2015). If the data proves that aid does not significantly impact development, why do More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) continue to increase their aid provision?

One possible explanation is that foreign aid and development assistance are often used as tools for public diplomacy, contributing to the power of the donor nation (Alexander 2020). Hence, a country's aid policy can reveal much about its foreign policy strategy. Shifts in Canada's aid policy reflect commercial self-interest, especially with the nation's increased geographical focus on Latin America and the Caribbean (Brown 2012). Similarly, the United Arab Emirates has used foreign aid to develop a brand for itself, show commitment to the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and become more influential in international relations (Krzymowski 2022). Although aid helps grow influence, recipient nations may react differently to aid from different countries. For example, Chinese aid to Africa has seemingly not increased recipient support for the country, while US aid to Africa has (Blair et al. 2021).

While the existing literature establishes foreign aid as a soft power strategy, it does not evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy. The evaluation can be done by analyzing the most influential factor that impacts popular thought: the media. Journalists use ‘frames’ to make their stories more comprehensible. A frame is essentially a tool that helps classify the broader essence of a journalistic work (Walker and Towner 2021). By reporting on events in a certain way, the media controls the narrative the general public receives (Vladislavljević 2015). Most prior media framing literature looks at the framing of conflict and policy change (Vladislavljević 2015; Birkland and Lawrence 2009; Entman 2010). Therefore, media framing methodology can be applied to evaluating the strategic use of foreign aid. This article will use media framing and binary coding methodology to expand on the work of Blair, et al. (2021) to understand how the media changes its framing based on the country providing aid.

### Research Question and Hypothesis

Previous aid literature delves into how foreign aid affects economic growth and whether or not aid significantly impacts the political institutions of the recipient country. These studies clearly reveal that aid has various shortcomings in reaching its true recipients and bringing about positive institutional change. However, despite these shortcomings, aid may be used as a strategic tool to grow the influence of the donor country. Since 2020, the economic superpowers of the world, including the USA, UK, and China, have ramped up the provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to LEDCs all over the world. The question of their true incentives and goals remains.

Therefore, I ask: how does a recipient nation’s central media frame an aid donor country before and after a large influx of aid? This article thus helps illuminate how aid can be used strategically and whether or not it is an effective soft power strategy for the donor nation. By answering this question, I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of aid in fostering strong international ties.

To address the research question, I propose the following hypothesis: Recipient nation media will report positively on the donor nation after a large influx of aid (**H1a**). Given that the recipient nation is an LEDC, the promise of aid will incentivize the recipient to maintain strong relations with the donor despite any differences in political ideology. Hence, the themes of international relations and economy and business will be most prevalent in news articles from all assessed countries (**H1b**).

## Methodology

### *Country and Media Selection*

The first step was to decide on the aid donor countries for this investigation. Given that I aim to see how recipient media frames aid received from donors with different ideologies, I used the Polity5: Regime Authority Characteristics and Transitions Datasets to select nations with different standings on the political-ideological spectrum. I chose the largest aid donor from three categories of countries: Full Democracy, Democracy, and Autocracy, as defined by Polity5. Open Anocracy and Closed Anocracy are excluded because they are aid recipients rather than donors. A democracy is defined as a society in which the citizens are sovereign and elect the officials that control the government. While the term 'Full Democracy' is often used interchangeably with 'Democracy,' full democracies are states that protect and strengthen civil liberties and fundamental political freedoms through a positive political culture. In a full democracy, there are fewer problems in the functioning of democratic institutions. On the other hand, autocracy is a society wherein absolute power lies with one person. The largest aid donors in the 'Full Democracy,' 'Democracy,' and 'Autocracy' categories are Germany, the USA, and China, respectively.

Next, I established a set of requirements to select the recipient countries to be analyzed. For my analysis, I focused on African countries that have experienced a humanitarian crisis in the past ten years (2013 - 2020) and are part of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s top 15 aid recipients list. These criteria make the countries more easily comparable as they are geographically and culturally similar. The African countries on the DAC top 15 aid recipients list were Ethiopia, Morocco, South Sudan, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Kenya. Morocco was eliminated as part of the study because its Mediterranean, Arab, and European influences set it apart culturally from the other selected countries. Also, while there is a Moroccan migrant crisis, this has not been widely defined as a 'humanitarian crisis.' As for the other countries, Ethiopia and South Sudan faced widespread malnutrition and food insecurity due to conflict and drought, and Tanzania and Kenya faced a series of droughts and refugee crises.

Upon finalising the recipient states, I had to find the leading state-affiliated news agencies in each nation. I chose to look at state-run agencies as they most clearly reflect government intentions regarding international relations. Also, I decided to use only digital articles for the sake of consistency and accessibility. Since South Sudan was formed in 2011 and has been in a state of crisis ever since it does not have an established media agency. All Sudanese news sources are operated from other countries. Therefore, I decided not to include South Sudan as a recipient nation. The final list of such news agencies included Kenya News Agency, Ethiopian News Agency, News Agency of Nigeria, and Daily News Tanzania. Table 1 provides more details about these news agencies. However, the News Agency of Nigeria and Daily News Tanzania did not have digital archives available on their website. Hence these countries were not included in my analysis. I also included the press freedom index score to show the extent to which these news sources have the power to influence the general public. The lower the score,

the lower the press freedom, which means the state-run outlets are the main sources of information in these countries (“Reporters Without Borders 2023”).

Outlet	2023 RSF’s World Press Freedom Index Score of the Country	2023 RSF’s World Press Freedom Index Rank of the Country (out of 180)	Availability of digital archives
Kenya News Agency (KNA)	51.5	116	Available
Ethiopian News Agency (ENA)	47.7	130	Available
News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)	49.56	123	Not Available
Daily News Tanzania	44.02	143	Not Available

*Table 1: News agency selection*

\* All described news agencies are state run. Hence this variable was not described in Table 1

### *Coding System*

After finalizing the news agencies, I developed a coding framework to categorize better and understand the connotations of the articles published by these media outlets. First, I recorded descriptive information, including the date the article was published, the news source, the link, and the recipient and donor countries involved, which can be found in Table 2. Second, I used four theoretical variables to develop a comprehensive coding system. These variables were the sentiment of the article, aid type, event in the donor country, and theme of the article, which can be found in Table 3. Article sentiment uses literary analysis to find whether the article has a positive, negative, or neutral connotation about the donor country. For example, if the article discusses how trade with the donor nation ‘enhances’ and ‘strengthens’ its relationship with the recipient, using positive adjectives classifies the article as positive. This variable is crucial in understanding government sentiments towards the donor nation. The aid type variable concerns whether the article reports on humanitarian assistance, technical assistance, military aid, development aid, disaster relief, or no aid at all. This helps in understanding the role of aid in international relations and whether or not certain types of aid are more effective than others. Event in donor country looks at if the article reports on a specific event in the donor country. If the article chooses to report on negative events, it conveys a negative sentiment towards the donor nation, and vice versa. Finally, the overall theme helps classify the content of the article. The list of themes includes Politics and Government, Economy and Business, Disasters and

Accidents, Crime and Law Enforcement, Health and Environment, Education and Social Issues, Science and Technology, Culture, and International Relations. These variables help understand how the recipient country reacts to aid by analyzing attitudes towards the donors in state media.

News article information	Description
Donor country	USA, China, or Germany
Recipient country	Kenya or Ethiopia
Date published	Date of online publication
News Source	KNA, ENA

Table 2: Descriptive information

Variables	Sub-variables	Description
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	Use of positive adjectives, optimistic outlook on international relations
	Negative	Use of negative adjectives, pessimistic outlook on international relations
	Neutral	Use of language does not indicate any bias or opinion
Reporting on aid	None	
	Humanitarian aid	Short-term relief (provision of food, masks, short-term loans, etc.)
	Technical assistance	Capacity training
	Military aid	Investment in military as aid or military capacity building
	Development aid	Aid given for long-term development objectives
	Disaster relief	Humanitarian aid given in condition of a disaster (eg. earthquake)
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	
	No	
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	Policy, elections, activities of political leaders, factors that affect governance (eg. corruption)
	Economy and Business	MNC operations, trade agreements, inflation, employment, stock market

	Disasters and Accidents	Natural disasters, accidents (plane crashes, factory accidents, etc.)
	Crime and Law Enforcement	Court cases, law enforcement activities, incidents of crimes (attacks, robbery, etc.)
	Health and Environment	Public health issues (diseases; eg. HIV/AIDS), environmental concerns
	Education and Social Issues	Human rights, social welfare, social challenges (eg. discrimination)
	Culture	Sports, art, entertainment, travel
	Science and Technology	Innovation, energy, technological advances
	International Relations	Foreign policy, diplomatic activities

Table 3: Description of coding frames

### Finding Articles

In July 2023, I used advanced search on the Google Search Engine to find relevant digital archives for each news source, my search term format can be found in Table 4. Before this, I finalized a time frame for article selection. I decided to analyze articles three years before and three years after 2020, seeing as that was the year both recipient nations received the most aid from all three donor countries. I coded all articles that appeared in the search on the first two pages of the Google Search Engine (approximately 40 articles for donor country). These articles are ideal because they are the ones that receive the most traffic and are the most read. This makes them good indicators for understanding popular sentiments towards the donor country. Also, I will read and analyze the entire digital article, including the headline. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to decode connotations.

Recipient country	News outlet	Donor country	Google Search Engine advanced search search term (before 2020)	Google Search Engine advanced search search term (after 2020)
Kenya	Kenya News Agency	USA	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "USA" OR "United States" OR "American" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01*	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "USA" OR "United States" OR "American" after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01

		China	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "China" OR "Chinese" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "China" OR Chinese after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01
		Germany	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "Germany" OR "German" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01	site:www.kenyanews.go.ke "Germany" OR "German" after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01
Ethiopia	Ethiopia News Agency	USA	site:www.ena.et "USA" OR "United States" OR "American" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01	site:www.ena.et "USA" OR "United States" OR "American" after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01
		China	site:www.ena.et "China" OR "Chinese" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01	site:www.ena.et "China" OR "Chinese" after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01
		Germany	site:www.ena.et "Germany" OR "German" after:2017-01-01 before:2020-01-01	site:www.ena.et "Germany" OR "German" after:2020-01-01 before:2023-07-01

*Table 4: Search terms*

\*The terms 'U.S.' and 'US' were excluded as the search engine would display results for any article that used the word 'us' - over 2000 results for each search term

## Results

Table 5 shows the frequency of frames based on all articles across all news organizations analyzed before and after 2020. The most prevalent themes in all the articles analyzed were International Relations (in 30.43% of articles) and Economy and Business (in 26.63% of articles). This is in accordance with H1a which states there will be net positive framing of the donor after an influx of aid.



These results show that most articles have a net positive connotation (83.7%), lending support for H1. The articles with negative and neutral connotations made up just 9.78% and 6.52% of the total data, respectively. Also, most articles (58.7%) did not report on aid at all.

Surprisingly, only 1.63% of the articles presented were about events in the donor countries. A key aspect of the methodology of this study was analyzing which types of events in donor countries were picked up by recipient media, but a significant majority of the articles only discussed domestic affairs. Even when the article discussed events in the donor country, the event revolved around the recipient. For example, ENA published an article about 'The Grand African Race' held in Washington D.C. Essentially, the few articles about affairs in donor countries were not about the donor country at all.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>no. of articles satisfying each variable</b>	<b>% of articles satisfying each variable</b>
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	154	83.7
	Negative	18	9.78
	Neutral	12	6.52
Reporting on aid	None	108	58.7
	Humanitarian aid	7	3.8
	Technical assistance	20	10.87
	Military aid	3	1.63
	Development aid	46	25
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	3	1.63
	No	181	98.37
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	4	2.17
	Economy and Business	49	26.63
	Disasters and Accidents	3	1.63
	Crime and Law Enforcement	7	3.8
	Health and Environment	22	11.96
	Education and Social Issues	28	15.22
	Culture	11	5.98

	Science and Technology	5	2.72
	International Relations	56	30.43

*Table 5:* Frequency of frames based on all articles across all news organizations analyzed before and after 2020

Looking at donor-country-specific data can help in obtaining a more accurate evaluation of the hypothesis. Table 6 describes the framing of the USA in Kenyan and Ethiopian media before 2020, or before the influx of aid. The total number of articles analyzed before 2020 is  $N = 25$ . Of these 25, 24 articles were positive, suggesting support for the U.S. The other article was neutral, reporting about a travel advisory issued by the U.S. embassy in Kenya, but this does not have a significant impact on the overall perception of the donor. The type of aid most mentioned in the articles was development aid (16%), and the most common theme was international relations (36%). The preponderance of this theme shows Kenya's and Ethiopia's interest in maintaining stronger international relations with the U.S.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>no. of articles satisfying each variable</b>	<b>% of articles satisfying each variable</b>
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	24	96
	Negative	0	0
	Neutral	1	4
Reporting on aid	None	18	72
	Humanitarian aid	0	0
	Technical assistance	2	8
	Military aid	1	4
	Development aid	4	16
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	2	8
	No	23	92
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	1	4
	Economy and Business	3	12
	Disasters and Accidents	1	4
	Crime and Law	1	4

	Enforcement		
	Health and Environment	6	24
	Education and Social Issues	1	4
	Culture	3	12
	Science and Technology	0	0
	International Relations	9	36

*Table 6:* Frequency of frames based on articles about the USA from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia before 2020

After 2020, however, the number of positive articles about the USA drops by about 25%. This can be attributed to a conflict between Ethiopia and the USA, where the USA supplied arms to the TLPF, the opposition to the Ethiopian government. Negative articles were most common in 2020 when this conflict was at its peak. From 2021 onwards, the trend of positive articles continued. Articles from Kenya at this time remained positive. Additionally, the overall number of articles reporting on aid increased two-fold. Themes such as Education and Social Issues and Health and Environment became more popular, showing how these African countries started giving greater recognition to the USA for assisting in development objectives.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>no. of articles satisfying each variable</b>	<b>% of articles satisfying each variable</b>
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	27	71.05
	Negative	7	18.42
	Neutral	4	10.53
Reporting on aid	None	23	60.53
	Humanitarian aid	2	5.26
	Technical assistance	4	10.53
	Military aid	1	2.63
	Development aid	8	21.05
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	0	0
	No	38	100
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	1	2.63

	Economy and Business	9	23.68
	Disasters and Accidents	0	0
	Crime and Law Enforcement	1	2.63
	Health and Environment	5	13.16
	Education and Social Issues	4	10.53
	Culture	2	5.26
	Science and Technology	2	5.265
	International Relations	14	36.84

*Table 7:* Frequency of frames based on articles about the USA from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia after 2020

As for China, the percent of articles having an overall positive connotation before 2020 was 87.5%, lower than for the other two donor countries. This value only decreased after 2020, when the percentage of negative articles rose from 4.17% to 5.13%. This can be explained by China’s neocolonialistic ideals when it comes to investment in Africa. The most common theme in articles about China across time periods is Economy and Business, showing the highly transactional nature of China’s international relations with Africa.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>no. of articles satisfying each variable</b>	<b>% of articles satisfying each variable</b>
Overall connotation of the article	Positive	21	87.5
	Negative	1	4.17
	Neutral	2	8.33
Reporting on aid	None	13	54.17
	Humanitarian aid	1	4.17
	Technical assistance	3	12.5
	Military aid	0	0
	Development aid	7	29.17
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	0	0

	No	24	100
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	0	0
	Economy and Business	12	50
	Disasters and Accidents	0	0
	Crime and Law Enforcement	1	4.17
	Health and Environment	1	4.167
	Education and Social Issues	2	8.33
	Culture	0	0
	Science and Technology	1	4.17
	International Relations	7	29.17

*Table 8:* Frequency of frames based on articles about China from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia before 2020

Variables	Sub-variables	no. of articles satisfying each variable	% of articles satisfying each variable
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	30	81.08
	Negative	5	13.51
	Neutral	2	5.41
Reporting on aid	None	24	64.86
	Humanitarian aid	2	5.41
	Technical assistance	2	5.41
	Military aid	1	2.70
	Development aid	8	21.62
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	0	0
	No	37	100
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	1	2.70
	Economy and Business	15	40.54

	Disasters and Accidents	0	0
	Crime and Law Enforcement	1	2.70
	Health and Environment	3	8.1
	Education and Social Issues	0	0
	Culture	0	0
	Science and Technology	0	0
	International Relations	9	24.32

*Table 9:* Frequency of frames based on articles about China from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia after 2020

The framing of Germany shows some interesting results. Three articles with negative connotations across both time periods were about instances where German nationals were murdered in Kenya. These results can be ignored as they do not reflect the recipient nation’s sentiments about the donor country. Otherwise, articles involving Germany generally have a positive overall connotation and focus on positive themes like Economy and Business and International Relations. The percentage of articles with the theme of international relations increased by around 7% after 2020, showing the willingness of Kenya and Ethiopia to build stronger relations with Germany.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sub-variables</b>	<b>no. of articles satisfying each variable</b>	<b>% of articles satisfying each variable</b>
Overall Connotation of the article	Positive	20	80
	Negative	2	8
	Neutral	3	12
Reporting on aid	None	14	56
	Humanitarian aid	0	0
	Technical assistance	3	12
	Military aid	0	0
	Development aid	8	32
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the	Yes	0	0

Reporting on event in the

donor country	No	25	100
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	1	4
	Economy and Business	6	24
	Disasters and Accidents	1	4
	Crime and Law Enforcement	0	0
	Health and Environment	3	12
	Education and Social Issues	5	20
	Culture	2	8
	Science and Technology	1	4
	International Relations	6	24

Table 10: Frequency of frames based on articles about Germany from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia before 2020

Variables	Sub-variables	no. of articles satisfying each variable	% of articles satisfying each variable
Overall connotation of the article	Positive	32	91.43
	Negative	3	8.57
	Neutral	0	0
Reporting on aid	None	16	45.71
	Humanitarian aid	2	5.714
	Technical assistance	6	17.14
	Military aid	0	0
	Development aid	11	31.43
	Disaster relief	0	0
Reporting on event in the donor country	Yes	0	0
	No	35	100
Theme of the article	Politics and Government	0	0
	Economy and Business	4	11.43
	Disasters and Accidents	0	0

Theme of the article

	Crime and Law Enforcement	3	8.57
	Health and Environment	4	11.43
	Education and Social Issues	8	22.86
	Culture	4	11.43
	Science and Technology	1	2.86
	International Relations	11	31.43

*Table 11:* Frequency of frames based on articles about China from news sources in Kenya and Ethiopia after 2020

### Discussion:

Overall, the data shows a decrease in the number of positive articles about the USA and China after the aid influx, contrary to the H1a, which states that the recipient country will consistently frame the donor more positively after an influx of aid. The results for Germany support H1a, after discounting the articles about acts of homicide involving German nationals. For this study, Germany was chosen as the ‘Full Democracy’ country, the USA was the ‘Democracy’ and China was the ‘Autocracy’. To compare, Kenya is classified as a ‘Democracy’ and Ethiopia an ‘Open Anocracy’.

When looking at country-specific responses to donor nations, Ethiopia had overall better responsiveness towards China and Germany compared to the USA. As mentioned before, this can be explained by a brief period of conflict between the two nations. In the case of Kenya, the response toward China was more negative compared to the response toward the USA and Germany. This can be explained by China’s alleged ‘debt-trap diplomacy’, in which a creditor nation uses loans with challenging terms as leverage for achieving political objectives (Himmer 2022). However, if this was the case, the claim should hold true for framing in Ethiopia as well, but almost every article analyzed regarding China had an overall positive connotation, excluding just one article with a neutral connotation.

Essentially, although the results show a decrease in the number of positive articles about the USA and China, it is difficult to determine the various factors that cause this to happen. Each recipient analyzed has varying foreign policy which may lead to different perceptions of the donor nation. The diplomacy strategy of the donor could also affect recipient perceptions. Still, the results of this study are not substantial in answering this question.

The two most prevalent themes across all articles are ‘International Relations’ and ‘Economy and Business.’ This variable in the framing shows the willingness of the recipient to strengthen economic and international relations with the donors, seeing as they are some of the most powerful nations on the international stage. This finding is in accordance with H1b, which



states that the most common themes, especially after the aid will be 'International Relations' and 'Economy and Business'. Even though there was no significant change in the percentage of articles about these two themes before and after the influx of aid, an overwhelming majority of the articles analyzed concerned these topics, supporting H1b.

Previous literature claimed that Chinese aid to Africa has seemingly not increased recipient support for the country, while US aid to Africa has (Blair et al. 2021). In this scenario, US aid, as well as Chinese aid, did not show an increase in recipient support for the countries. Hence, the results of this study are contrary to existing literature. Prior literature also asserts that the change in recipient framing of the donor can be affected by a change in donor commercial interests (Brown 2012). This investigation supports this claim as there is an increase in the percentage of articles about certain themes after the aid influx. For example, before 2020, 20% of articles about Germany analyzed were about 'Education and Social Issues', but after 2020, this value increased to 22.86%, clearly reflecting Germany's interests in improving the social welfare infrastructure of the recipient nations.

Reflecting on the research question (how does a recipient nation's central media frame an aid donor country before and after a large influx of aid?), media framing of an aid donor country differs on a case-to-case basis as the dynamics between donor and recipient are more complex than can be defined by a list of variables. Still, the articles about the donor countries, for the most part, had overall positive connotations (above 70% of articles in each category). This finding supports the fact that aid is one of the factors that can impact a country's soft power as aid donor countries are generally framed more positively.

### **Conclusion:**

This study aimed to investigate the change in the media framing of donor nations after an influx of aid. To do so, I analyzed whole digital news articles from two African countries before and after 2020, in which an influx of aid was observed in the continent as a whole. Through this investigation, I found that there are many more factors than just aid that can influence how a donor nation is framed.

The results of this study are important because they help in understanding the strategic use of international aid as a political tool. All in all, this study supports the fact that aid can be used as a soft power strategy, but does not show a statistically significant increase in its effectiveness before and after an influx.

There are limitations to this study. For example, I only analyzed two recipient countries and three donor countries. By analyzing more countries, future researchers could obtain a more accurate reflection of how media framing of aid can be represented and evaluated. Additionally, only a limited number of articles were analyzed. Due to time constraints, a sample of the first twenty articles of each category was analyzed. By analyzing the complete population, the results could differ. There was also a sample restriction because some media sources did not have digital archives available. Instead, future articles could analyze physical archives and compare the results. Despite these limitations, this article sets a foundation for understanding

which factors have a greater impact on the media framing of aid donors, which can be studied in future research.

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