

*The Political Assassination of Kim Jong Nam:  
A Comparative Analysis of US and South Korean News Coverage*

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**Abstract**

North Korea is one of the most secretive and closed countries in the world that is still under communist rule. This paper presents a comparative content analysis of the overall framing in the online news coverage of the assassination of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, from *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo* (N = 154). Results showed that while U.S. and South Korean newspapers displayed considerable similarities among the use of texts, visuals, sources, and news frames, differences existed in the use of hyperlinks and news tones. This study not only adds to the body of work in framing theory by examining the coverage of Kim Jong Nam's sudden death from the lens of two different news media, but also contributes to international communication by exploring how international newspapers covered the same event related to North Korean political figures. The implications are discussed.

**Keywords**

North Korea; Framing; Assassination; Newspapers; International

**Introduction**

On February 13, 2017, Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was assassinated at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia (Westcott, 2017). Half-brother of North Korean leader was attacked with a VX nerve agent, an internationally-banned chemical substance classified by the UN as a weapon of mass destruction, by one Indonesian woman and one Vietnamese woman at the airport (Smith, 2017). The footage, which first aired on TV in Japan, showed Kim was grabbed from behind and was laced with the nerve agent over his face, causing him to feel dizzy. Kim then went to an airport customer assistance counter to seek medical help. Kim died en route to the hospital from Kuala Lumpur airport which was within 15 to 20 minutes after the attack (Paddock & Choe 2017). South Korean officials have called the sudden death of Kim Jong Nam an "act of terrorism." The murder of Kim Jong Nam was an act of systematic terror ordered by his estranged half-brother and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (Berlinger, 2017).

Isolated North Korea has a long history of assassinations, including estranged relatives of the Kim clan when they are viewed as threats to its regime. Since North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un came to power in 2011, Kim has ordered 340 people to be executed, showing an extreme level of brutality and ruthlessness (Kwon & Westcott, 2016). Although Kim Jong Nam, who had been living abroad for years, was not known to be seeking political power, his position as eldest son of the family that has ruled North Korea could have made him a threat to his half-brother Kim Jong Un as a potential rival in the country's dynastic dictatorship as the older Kim often criticized North Korea's government and its system of dynastic succession. According to former

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Kim Jong Nam's death is a sign of instability and uncertainty in the North Korean leadership (Lee, 2017).

The sudden death of Kim Jong Nam quickly attracted widespread international media attention, shaping the public's understanding of North Korea, one of the most secretive, isolated, and closed countries in the world. The assassination of Kim Jong Nam serves as an ideal event to analyze how the international media covered this event as the public largely depend upon the media regarding news occurring abroad. While there are repeated recognitions of the critical importance news coverage of North Korea plays in helping the world understand and react to such terror acts, a comparative content analysis of the international coverage of the sudden death of Kim Jong Nam is particularly lacking.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to compare the coverage of the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in U.S. and South Korean newspapers, examining the differences in their use of texts, visuals, news tones, and sources through the lens of framing theory. In doing so, this study makes a contribution to the media framing literature by exploring various ways of framing terror acts in the international arena, particularly in the context of the long-lasting North Korea terror issues. This study also contributes to the study of international communication by exploring how the international newspapers framed the same events related to North Korea. By and large, this study is one of the first to compare online news coverage between U.S. and South Korean media regarding Kim Jong Nam.

### **Background of Kim Jong Nam**

Kim Jong Nam was born on May 10, 1971. He was the eldest son of the late North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il and a leading North Korean actress Song Hye-rim who divorced her husband to live in secret with the leader (Campbell, 2017). As Kim Jong Il kept his relationship with Song Hye Rim secret, he ordered to execute anyone who talked about his private life and sent his son Kim Jong Nam overseas for his education when he was 8 years old. In the meantime, Kim Jong Il started a new life with another woman Ko Yong Hui, who gave birth to three children, one of whom was Kim Jong Un. Resenting the fact that his father had started a new family, Kim Jong Nam reportedly met several different women whom he lived with at various stages and has at least three children (Chosunilbo, 2017).

Kim Jong Nam was originally thought of as the heir however, he fell out of favor with the late Kim Jong Il when he was caught trying to sneak into Japan on a fake diplomatic passport to visit Tokyo Disneyland in 2001 (McKirby, 2017). This incident led his younger half-brother, Kim Jong Un, to be heralded as "the Great Successor." From around 2003, the older Kim lived largely in exile in Macau, a Chinese-controlled territory near Hong Kong. Kim was known for his penchants for gambling, drinking, going to expensive restaurants, and setting up more than one home (Ng, 2017).

According to South Korean intelligence agency, the murder of Kim Jong Nam does not appear to have been the first attempt on his life. In 2012, the older Kim wrote to his half-brother begging for his family and himself to be spared as a North Korean agent tried to assassinate him in Macau in 2011 (Choe & Paddock, 2017). With a 13-year age gap, the two brothers were brought up by different families, and they had reportedly never met because of the ancient practice of raising

potential successors separately. Kim Jong Nam has never been mentioned or portrayed in the North Korean media and only few elite North Koreans may know his existence (Fifield, 2017).

## **Theoretical Background**

### **News framing**

According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), a news frame is a central organizing idea that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, which guides audiences to a particular understanding of an issue. Entman (1993) proposed that to frame is to engage in a process that selects 'some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (p. 52). Framing can also be used as a tool to (1) define problems; (2) diagnose causes; (3) make moral judgments; and (4) suggest remedies (Entman, 1993). Frames introduce or raise certain issues to salience and encourage the recipients of the message to think about the issue in a particular way and even go so far as to recommend what should be done (Nelson & Kinder, 1996). Consequently, the way the media frame events and issues will have important implications for the audiences come to understand and interpret social issues and events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price et al., 1997).

Online news differs widely from traditional mass media between the organizations and readers. Readers can choose or read many stories on a single webpage or switch from a story to read news or watch related videos on another webpage. Therefore, using a variety of framing devices, such as headlines, leads, presentation of news items, photographs, graphs, sources, hyperlinks, and the tone of news, the media can emphasize elements of the news to assign newsworthiness and construct the news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Severin & Tankard, 2001; Tankard, 2008).

For example, hyperlinks in news stories help readers to see a story from multiple angles and perspectives by connecting stories to broader themes and issues outside a single episodic frame (Pavlik, 2001). They can provide users with additional background information, more context to a developing news story, and even original source material (Dimitrova, & Neznanski, 2006). The tone of news – positive, neutral, or negative – can generate behavioral effects among the audiences (Manheim, 1994). News sources help journalists to tell sides of the story that they lack the knowledge of (Sundar, 1998). Similar to framing of texts in news stories, visual framing can suggest a particular way of emphasis and presentation by including or excluding persons or items in a photo and by the number of photographs covering an event (Hall, 1973; Messaris and Abraham, 2001). Visuals are also effective in augmenting the textual content, focusing the attention of the readers on the news story, and engaging more fully with the content. Lastly, episodic and thematic frames are two contrasting forms that portray issues differently. While episodic frames focuses on an individual or case study to illustrate an issue, thematic frames place political issues into a broader context and give collective or general information (Iyengar, 1991).

Numerous studies have focused on how international media cover foreign issues, using news framing as a basis for their analysis (Dimitrova & Neznanski, 2006; Storie, Madden, & Liu,

2014). For example, Choi (2010) who examined how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* framed North Korea's national image from 2001 to 2002 found that both newspapers showed a similar trend in their portrayal of North Korea by using an anti-North Korea frame in their news coverage. The study showed that while the U.S. newspapers did not use positive images of North Korea in their coverage, they framed the national image of North Korea through evil, enemy, and poor country images.

## Literature Review

### Media coverage of crisis events

During times of crisis events, publics rely heavily on the media as a valuable asset to seek information, better understand the crisis, relieve uncertainty, and prepare for consequences (An & Gower, 2009; Li, 2007). As a consequence, the media coverage of dramatic and extraordinary world events, such as assassinations of important social or political figures, terrorist attacks, nuclear power accidents, and accidents involving loss of life, play an important role in the process of shaping public discourse on the issues (Choi, 2010; Sorrentino & Vidmar, 1974).

The media coverage of crisis events has been studied under the umbrella of news framing. In the context of terrorism, for example, Iyengar (1991) found that when the news media framed terrorism as an individual event, readers were more likely to blame the individual perpetrators. However, when the news media framed terrorism as societal problems, readers were more likely to blame society as a whole. Furthermore, in their analysis of the newspaper coverage of the death of Osama bin Laden in 2011 in U.S. and Russian newspapers, Storie, Madden, & Liu (2014) found that terrorism events were framed as national concerns rather than global issues, suggesting that the framing of bin Laden's death varied drastically between U.S. and Russian media. Although the fears of foreign policy implications of the event were raised, U.S. newspapers framed the death of bin Laden as U.S.-centered story of heroes to promote American exceptionalism and the idea that United States is the "good guys" and leader in this global fight (Storie, Madden, & Liu, 2014). In the context of shootings, Schildkraut & Muschert (2014) who compared between the media coverage of the Columbine and Sandy Hook school shooting found that the media used continual frame changing to keep the story fresh and satisfy the audience's desire to consume varying facets of the story.

The current study applies previously developed framing schemes – episodic and thematic frames. Episodic and thematic frames are two contrasting forms that portray issues as either specific events or larger and more complex issues. Episodic frames focus exclusively on an individual, event, or case study to illustrate an issue while avoiding analytic or explanatory writing (Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1991). For example, a study found that embedded journalists personalized issues when covering reports on the first days of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq by covering battlefields more visually and emotionally (Pfau et al., 2004). In contrast, thematic frames place political issues into a broader context and focuses on collective or general information such as background, context, cause and effect, and the public realm (Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1991). For example, Dimitrova (2006) who examined how the framing of the 2003 Iraq War changed over time in New York Times online stories found that there was a noticeable change from episodic to thematic framing containing coverage of rebuilding and the future prospects of Iraq.

Because frames in the news can shape how individuals perceive the world, the constant analysis of news coverage is crucial. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how major newspapers in the U.S. and South Korea framed the murder case of Kim Jong Nam, and how differently they used the frames in reporting the murder of Kim Jong Nam. While a number of studies compared international media portrayals of North Korea, such as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (Rich, 2014), North Korean nuclear testing (Kim & Jahng, 2016), and North Korean national image (Choi, 2010; Jang, 2013; Saleem, 2007; Lim & Seo, 2009), no framing studies have focused on comparing U.S. and South Korean newspapers' depiction on Kim Jong Nam alone. Therefore, to fill the gap, the following research questions are proposed:

**RQ1:** What are the most prevalent frames used by a U.S. newspaper when covering the assassination of Kim Jong Nam?

**RQ2:** What are the most prevalent frames used by a South Korean newspaper when covering the assassination of Kim Jong Nam?

**RQ3:** Are there significant differences between U.S. and South Korean newspapers when covering the assassination of Kim Jong Nam?

In addition to providing insights into how media in two different countries covered the same event, the answers to these research questions suggest important implications for understanding the current state of North Korea. The answers also build on the understanding of framing assassinations of important North Korean political figures, that is often neglected in the international communication research.

## **Methods**

### ***Data collection and the coding process***

A quantitative content analysis of the news coverage was conducted to identify the news frames used in the reporting on the killing of Kim Jong Nam in one U.S. newspaper (*The New York Times*) and one South Korean newspaper (*Chosun Ilbo*). These newspapers were selected for their prominence and influence in their corresponding countries. *The New York Times* was selected because the United States has been and continues to be a major influence to other news media worldwide. Also, with the globalization of the media organization, online content from *The New York Times* reaches millions of readers worldwide. *Chosun Ilbo* was selected because it is the oldest and largest, and the most influential print media outlet in South Korea.

Riffe, Aust, and Lacy (1993) found that between 1 and 3 constructed weeks produces more productive and efficient data samples than does simple random day sampling of newspaper articles. Therefore, the dataset for this study was drawn from articles published between February 13, 2017 (the day of Kim's death in Malaysia as a result of poisoning at Kuala Lumpur International Airport) and February 26, 2017 (two weeks after the assassination of Kim Jong Nam), which represented the peak period of the sudden death incident of Kim Jong Nam.

The units of analysis were online newspaper articles. Articles with keywords 'Kim Jong Nam' from the *New York Times* were searched and collected from the LexisNexis database and the newspaper's website. Articles with keywords "김정남", which means and read the Kim Jong

Nam in Korean, were selected in *Chosun Ilbo*'s newspaper website to collect the articles. While irrelevant articles and overlapping articles were excluded, all news stories related to Kim Jong Nam were gathered. This procedure resulted in a total of 154 news articles.

The framing of the assassination of Kim Jong Nam was examined according to four different dimensions, including the intensity of coverage, news sources, tone of the news articles, and news frames. The intensity of coverage was studied from three different angles, including number of textual and graphical elements and type of news items. The tone of the news article refers to the attitude expressed towards any individual, group, or institution (Baumgartner & Wirth, 2012). This study used the categories of positive, neutral, and negative for the analysis of attitudes expressed towards the incident of Kim Jong Nam by the two newspapers. In general, a positive tone refers to news articles supporting a particular issue or figure and using affirmative words or comments. On the other hand, a negative tone refers to news articles delivering more vivid and sensational news which can cause the audience develop negative perceptions, feelings, and attitudes (Bohle, 1986). The theoretical definitions of the three items are as follows: (1) Positive – A story that portrays a favorable and supportive attitude towards the incident of Kim Jong Nam; causes the audience to form a positive opinion towards the issue; and contains favorable descriptions of the issue. (2) Neutral – A story that conveys the issue neither favorably nor unfavorably. (3) Negative – A story that portrays a negative and unfavorable attitude towards the incident of Kim Jong Nam; causes the audience to form a negative opinion towards the issue; and contains unfavorable descriptions of the issue.

Next, two coders participated in the coding. Each news story was coded the presence and absence of the following specific news frames identified in previous studies (Dimitrova, 2006; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Kinder, 1991; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Storie, Madden, & Liu, 2014). The theoretical definitions of the two frames are as follows: (1) Thematic frame – A story centered on emphasizing broader issues and roles, such as this paragraph from the sample: “If North Korean citizens were behind the killing, as Malaysian officials suggest, the use of VX raises several questions: Was the North Korean government using the attack to signal to the world its fearsome arsenal of such dangerous weapons? Or was the toxin simply an attempt to avoid detection in carrying out a brazen killing at one of the world’s busiest airports?” (2) Episodic frame – A story centered on emphasizing the private or personal lives, traits, images, opinions and statements of Kim Jong Nam, such as this paragraph from the sample: “Kim Jong-nam, the eldest son of Kim Jong-il, had been widely considered next in line to succeed him until 2001, when he was caught trying to take his son to Tokyo Disneyland with a fake visa. He was detained for several days, then deported to China.”

### **Coding and reliability**

Two coders, who are graduate students, coded articles for basic newspaper characteristics (e.g. the news organization name, the date of publication, and the number of texts, paragraphs, photographs, videos, graphics, illustrations, texts, hyperlinks, suggestions, sources, frames, and tones). Guidelines were provided to systematically handle variables in the codebook. 15 news articles covering the assassination of Kim Jong Nam was randomly selected for intercoder reliability (10% of total). Followings are reliability estimates for each category calculated by Scott's pi: number of texts 100%; number of paragraphs 100%; number of photographs 100%;

number of videos 100%; number of graphics 100%; number of illustrations 100%; number of hyperlinks 100%; number of sources 93%; overall tone of the news article 86%; and overall news frames 86%. Using Scott's pi, intercoder reliability was established at .97. Therefore, reliability scores were more than acceptable at each point.

### Findings

Overall, the results showed there were four times as many news articles in South Korean newspaper than U.S. newspaper. Of the 154 reports analyzed, 30 came from *The New York Times* and 124 from *Chosun Ilbo*. The first research question asked what were the most prevalent frames used by a U.S. newspaper when covering the murder case of Kim Jong Nam. *The New York Times* had significantly a high percentage of reporting that focused on more textual elements than visual elements. While *The New York Times* used a total of 29,789 words (M = 992.97, SD = 439.30) and 648 paragraphs (M = 21.60, SD = 11.13), it used 27 photographs (M = 1.50, SD = 1.54), 4 videos, 3 illustrations, and no graphics (See Table 1). Further, 93.3 percent of *The New York Times* stories had the neutral news tone, 6.7 percent had the negative news tone, and none of the news articles had the positive news tone. The paper used a total of 283 hyperlinks (M = 2.27, SD = 2.68), 77 percent of the hyperlinks were connected to internal archival content (M = 7.23, SD = 4.60) and 23 percent of the hyperlinks were connected to external online websites (M = 2.27, SD = 2.77), such as thestar.com, korea.net, japantimes.co.jp, theguardian.com, and reuters.com. *The New York Times* used a total of 156 sources (M = 5.20, SD = 2.50). Lastly, the paper employed thematic (76.7%) as the most dominant frame, followed by episodic (23.3%).

The second research question asked what were the most prevalent frames used by a South Korean newspaper when covering the murder case of Kim Jong Nam. *Chosun Ilbo* focused on more textual elements than visual elements when reporting the event. While *Chosun Ilbo* used a total of 37,814 words (M = 304.95, SD = 143.02) and 890 paragraphs (M = 7.18, SD = 2.74), it used 79 photographs (M = 1.00, SD = 0.84), 5 videos, 3 illustrations, and 21 graphics (See Table 1). Moreover, 85.5 percent of *Chosun Ilbo* stories had the neutral news tone, 10.5 percent had the negative news tone, and 4.0 percent of the news articles had the positive news tone. While there were no hyperlinks used in news articles, *Chosun Ilbo* used a total of 395 sources (M = 3.19, SD = 2.36). Thematic (76.6%) and episodic frames (23.4%) used in *Chosun Ilbo* articles were rarely balanced.

**Table 1.** Visual features used in coverage of the political assassination of Kim Jong Nam in *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*

Rank	Visual Features	NY Times	Chosun Ilbo	All
1	Photographs	27 (90%)	79 (63.7%)	106 (68.8%)
2	Graphics	0 (0%)	18 (14.5%)	18 (11.6%)
3	Videos	4 (13.3%)	5 (4%)	9 (5.8%)
4	Illustrations	3 (10%)	3 (2.4%)	6 (3.8%)
	Total	n = 30	n = 124	N = 154

The third research question asked whether the news coverage of the murder of Kim Jong Nam in U.S. and South Korean newspapers differed significantly in using frames. Both *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo* covered the majority of the news using words more than visuals. Additionally, the two newspapers mainly focused on breaking news images, such as police press conference, a mugshot of suspects, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Malaysia, and journalists surrounding Malaysian or North Korean officials when using visuals. On the other hand, the two newspapers used less images portraying Kim's personal life images, such as childhood pictures of Kim Jong Nam, the tomb of Kim Jong Nam's mother, and a screenshot of Kim Jong Nam's Facebook page. Only *The New York Times* used hyperlinks and the majority of the links were to internal archival content. It is possible that this way of linking stories is beneficial to the readers as hyperlinks can help them find relevant news or follow stories closely for more comprehensive coverage of news event of interest.

The findings also showed that the neutral news tone was the dominant tone of the news coverage in both newspapers, followed by the negative news tone, while the positive news tone was the least. The two newspapers used similar sources for their news coverage, such as the police, authorities, officials, professors, experts, and newspapers from around the world. The findings revealed that the thematic frame, which deals with the broader coverage of the events and issues such as context and background, was the most dominant in both newspapers than the episodic frame which deals with the human side of Kim Jong Nam. Examples of thematic frames of the issue include the history of the Kim Family which has ruled North Korea since its founding in 1948, the executions of 340 people since Kim Jong-un coming to power in 2011, North Korea's possession of chemical weapons, and the history of the VX. Examples of episodic frames of the issue include the case study of Kim Jong Nam's death at the airport, the family and friends' testimonies of the two female suspects, and the statements from police or political officials about the event. For more detailed results, see Table 2.

**Table 2.** News tones and frames used in coverage of the political assassination of Kim Jong Nam in *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*

Tones/Frames		NY Times	Chosun Ilbo	All
<b>News tones</b>	Positive	0 (0%)	5 (4.0%)	5 (3.2%)
	Neutral	28 (93.3%)	106 (85.5%)	134 (87%)
	Negative	2 (6.7%)	13 (10.5%)	15 (9.7%)
<b>Frames</b>	Thematic	23 (76.7%)	95 (76.6%)	118 (76.6%)
	Episodic	7 (23.3%)	29 (23.4%)	36 (23.4%)
	Total	n = 30	n = 124	N = 154

## Discussion

This study sought to analyze how news media covered the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*. More specifically, this study analyzed the differences among the use of texts, visuals, news tones, sources, and frames used in two newspapers. In doing so, this study contributes to further understanding how international media frame news events related to North Korea, particularly important political figures.



First, the findings revealed that words were significantly more dominant than images in news presentation in *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*. One possible reason for this may be that although a visual has its own unique meanings to convey in the communication process (Sontag, 1997), the words have great power to convey information and explain the meaning of the issue. The study also found that while U.S. and South Korean newspapers used photographs as the most dominant visual coverage, the newspapers used remarkably few videos, graphics, or illustrations. This is perhaps because the realistic nature of photographs, as evidence that the incident ‘happened’, may have a more powerful impact than other visual presentations in crisis events which can enrich the presentation of a story, especially for international crisis events that take place in remote locations and different time zones. These results support previous studies that still photographs guarantee the truth and objectivity of news reporting as they record the actual scenes during the event and grab people’s attention (Newton, 2003; Sontag, 1997). Another possible explanation for using photographs as the most common features among other visual elements when covering the assassination of Kim Jong Nam may be linked to editorial decision making. News editors of both *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo* may perceive still photographs as more important and beneficial to their audiences, furthering its effectiveness. Future research conducting interviews or surveys with news editors may help explore this area.

Secondly, interesting differences emerged regarding tone of the coverage in *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*, giving different overall impressions of the incident of Kim Jong Nam. While *The New York Times* only had the neutral and negative news tone of the coverage of Kim Jong Nam, *Chosun Ilbo* combined all news tones including positive, neutral, and negative. Although further research is needed to find concrete answers, this finding may be that the positivity in tone is not necessarily relating to the news of assassination of Kim Jong Nam in U.S., inferring that the influence of Kim Jong Nam was not as strong on U.S. as it was on South Korea. Another possible reason could be the different target audiences. For example, *The New York Times* has larger audiences and has a considerable impact on other news media and millions of readers around the globe whereas *Chosun Ilbo*’s main target audience is South Koreans. Further, as only *Chosun Ilbo* portrayed positive sides of Kim Jong Nam, it can be inferred that the journalists in each country had different interests and amount of resources to access that were specific to Kim Jong Nam. These findings also support previous studies that media in different countries have different salient frames and nationalistic view of the topic when covering global issues (Choi, 2010; Pfau et al., 2004; Rich, 2014; Storie, Madden, & Liu, 2014). That said, news media communicate in the context of national interests, international relations, and historical events when reporting international issues.

Lastly, it is important to note how the information regarding the incident were framed and presented in international news coverage. The findings showed that the thematic frame was more dominant than episodic frame in both *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo*. Although it would be difficult to assess exactly why the assassination of Kim Jong Nam news was significantly more dominated by a thematic frame than the episodic frame, there are a few considerations worth noting. Kim Jong Nam could have been the most powerful person in North Korea after his father however, he was not interested in politics in North Korea. Nonetheless, as the eldest son of the late North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il, the significance of Kim Jong Nam came under international attention and scrutiny. Given these factors, it is not unreasonable to point out that the frames built by *The New York Times* and *Chosun Ilbo* were inclined to emphasize the

incident's immediate impact on the understanding the current state of North Korea and the on-site breaking news stories to highlight the description of an overview of the incident in a broader, more complex issue, reinforcing international solutions and anti-terrorism.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The present study has some limitations. The U.S. and South Korean newspapers examined in this study do not provide a sufficient basis for determining an overall view of the full coverage. Therefore, future studies could incorporate longer time frame and perhaps more newspapers from different countries to examine how the frames are built and used in online news coverage in international settings. A further limitation is the coding categories used in this study which need to be redefined and reformulated according to specific incidents for future comparative content analyses.

Nonetheless, this study is among the first to examine the online news coverage of the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in U.S and South Korean newspapers. This study builds upon a small but growing body of literature on news framing and international communication. On a practical level, journalists worldwide covering the assassination in an international setting would be well served by additional studies that provide deeper understanding into some of the trends with covering political assassinations or attacks. Offering a baseline for other research, this study's findings will be also helpful in guiding similar quantitative research and generating future studies to examine news framing within other media, such as Malaysia and Japan. Finally, investigating why news editors used certain features, tones, and news frames were not a part of this study. It would be worth to explore these areas to provide deeper investigations of online news coverage of assassination of Kim Jong Nam.

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