

Critical Discourse Analysis of Japanese Mainstream Media Reports on China's Aid to Africa: Based on Corpus Data

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Abstract—This paper conducts a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis of coverage on China's aid to Africa by the mainstream Japanese media, *Asahi Shimbun*, using corpus linguistics and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model. The study collected relevant news articles from *Asahi Shimbun* published between 1984 and 2023. Using the timeline of the coverage as a framework, it carried out statistical analyses, including word frequency analysis, co-occurrence analysis, and correlation analysis, accompanied by visualization techniques. By integrating historical context, the study explores the linguistic features and evolving focal points across different periods of reporting. Through analyzing word frequency, keyword indexing, collocations, and grammatical structures, the study reveals the underlying meaning of the discourse, exposing Japan's ideology and discourse power structure within the media's narrative. This research offers new perspectives and methodologies for exploring the interplay between media, international relations, and development aid.

Keywords—corpus, KH coder, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fairclough

I. INTRODUCTION

In the international economic landscape, Africa's economic development lags behind, and African countries urgently need to enhance their discourse power and influence in areas such as politics, security, and diplomacy, as they are on the margins of the international system. Historically, both China and Africa have suffered from aggression and oppression, and in their struggle for national liberation and independence, they have supported each other, weathered storms together, and forged deep international friendships. Since the 1950s, China has been providing assistance to Africa, covering various fields such as infrastructure construction, healthcare, education, and agriculture. With the rapid development of the Chinese economy, China's aid to Africa has continued to expand in scale and scope. Through extensive project investment, technical assistance, and talent training, China has greatly promoted the political independence, economic development, and social stability of African countries, becoming one of Africa's most important partners [1].

Since Japan leapt to become the world's second-largest economy in 1980, it has vigorously sought to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, aiming to transition from an "economic power" to a "political power". Despite repeated rejections, Japan has never ceased to submit applications for membership to the Security Council. At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2022, President Biden announced the United States' support for adding new permanent seats to the Security Council, giving Japan a glimpse of hope. Seeking

support from Africa has become a must for Japan. However, Japan views China's influence in Africa as one of the threats to obtaining African support. China has always provided Africa with long-term, effective, continuous, and tangible assistance, contrasting sharply with Japan's aid strategy in Africa, which is seen as "not needing to pay too much to receive praise".

From a geopolitical and economic perspective, China's growing influence in Africa poses challenges to Japan's economic and political interests in the region. China's increasing influence in Africa affects Japan's market share, business opportunities, and even the promotion of its ideology and values. At the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), Prime Minister Fumio Kishida emphasized the uniqueness of Japan's aid plan, contrasting it with China's approach, with the aim of strengthening friendly relations with African countries to counter China's influence in Africa.

Previous investigations have found that there is still insufficient research on news reports related to China's aid to Africa. There is also a lack of in-depth research on Japanese reporting and public opinion trends in both Sino-African and Japan-Africa relations. This paper uses corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis of mainstream Japanese media to analyze the language, connotations, and frequency of words used in media discourse. Through this analysis, the paper aims to gain insights into the perspectives presented in the media regarding Sino-African relations, Japan-Africa relations, and Sino-Japanese relations in the context of "aid to Africa".

II. METHODOLOGY

News reporting by the media, as a social practice, involves complex human choices and is often not a neutral reflection of social reality. Discourse manifests as habitual ways of speaking and recurring expressions, forming fixed meanings through widespread dissemination in society. These linguistic realities have transcended mere linguistic forms, showing the interaction between humanistic forces and social forces. As a method of understanding the world, discourse can be identified through characteristic linguistic traces in texts. With the development of technology today, computer analysis tools have made it possible to analyze media language patterns on a large scale. Among them, corpora rely on providing high-frequency important language forms to convey underlying special discourses, becoming powerful tools for analyzing media discourse [2].

Critical discourse analysis emerged in the late 1970s. It views language as a social practice, combining the interaction

between text and social context, focusing on the intertwining of language and social structures, and revealing the relationship between language and power. Here, “critical” refers to revealing the hidden relationships between things. Critical discourse analysis has absorbed a large amount of reasonable core content from different disciplines and follows certain basic principles, such as focusing on social issues, the idea that discourse carries a certain ideology, and the inseparable connection between discourse and history and society, thus accurately and comprehensively analyzing the information conveyed by discourse [3, 4].

The analysis methods of corpora and critical discourse analysis each have their own advantages, and the organic combination of the two breaks the boundary between quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. The combination of the two, through analyzing the meaning behind discourse using methods such as statistical word frequency, thematic indexing, collocations, and grammatical structures, can to a certain extent guarantee the comprehensiveness and objectivity of the data.

In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have applied corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to the analysis of media discourse, spanning disciplines such as sociology, political science, and journalism. Among these, news and media discourse, due to their political relevance and ideological impact, have become the primary focus of critical discourse analysis. Abundant research indicates that under different stances and interests, media from countries with different ideologies focus on different aspects of news events, leading to distinct discourse constructions and public opinion fields [5, 6].

Currently, the most influential methods of critical discourse analysis include Fowler’s critical linguistics, Fairclough’s dialectical relationship analysis of socio-cultural contexts, Van Dijk’s social cognitive analysis, and Wodak’s discourse-historical analysis.

This paper adopts Fairclough’s approach of dialectical relationship analysis of socio-cultural contexts combined with corpus linguistics for research. Fairclough points out that news reporting reflects the power behind media discourse. The media frames readers and audiences within discourse frameworks by continuously repeating values and ideologies. Texts are products of discursive practices, which are often constrained by certain social practice conditions. Building on previous theories, Fairclough has developed his own theoretical framework for the study of media discourse, dividing critical discourse analysis into three levels: describing text features, interpreting discursive practices, and explaining social practices, to analyze the relationships between texts and social contexts. Specifically, texts include vocabulary, grammar, and discourse organization; discursive practices demonstrate the production and consumption processes of texts, focusing on how producers create texts and how receivers interpret them; social practices observe whether existing discursive orders are reproduced or reconstructed, and what influence they receive or give to existing ideologies and powers [7–10].

Technically, constructing a corpus can reflect some special language phenomena and the underlying discourse meanings. Word frequency statistics are the most basic method of

corpus linguistics, which can distinguish the distribution of the total vocabulary of the corpus from high-frequency words. Additionally, through corpus indexing tools, one can observe the fixed collocations of these high-frequency words. These word clusters provide important linguistic evidence for identifying the implicit meanings of discourses.

This study focuses on the coverage of China’s aid to Africa by mainstream Japanese media, represented by Asahi Shimbun. The corpus used in this study is derived from relevant news articles in the Asahi Shimbun database from January 1984 to December 2023. For quantitative analysis, this study uses KH Coder, developed by Koji Higuchi of Ritsumeikan University, as a text mining tool. It is equipped with ChaSen, a tool for morphological analysis in Japanese, which enables word frequency analysis, co-occurrence analysis, correlation analysis, and other statistical research, as well as visualization functions.

Due to the extensive time span covered by the collected corpus, this study selected representative information and organized the content of news reports into an Excel document based on the timeline. The text was then imported into a text mining tool for preprocessing. When processing large amounts of data, the software segmented long texts into short sentences and words, and then calculated the frequency of word occurrences. After the above analysis, useful information was selected and the KWIC index function of KH Coder was used to further analyze the left and right co-occurrence patterns of high-frequency words, as well as the context. The high-frequency words were visualized in stages and categories to discover language features and hot topic changes in reports from different periods. Subsequently, relevant historical backgrounds were researched, and the relationship between text and social context was analyzed. Based on this, Fairclough’s three-dimensional analysis framework was used to explore the focus, policy tendencies, public opinion stance, and discourse image construction mechanisms of mainstream Japanese media on China’s aid to Africa from the perspective of critical discourse analysis.

In this study, the search criteria were set to “China” and “Africa” to comprehensively analyze mainstream Japanese media coverage of China’s aid to Africa. The text was collected from the Asahi Shimbun database, specifically from newspaper articles from January 1984 to December 2023, using “China” and “Africa” as search criteria. During the corpus establishment process, content that was less relevant to China’s aid to Africa was manually excluded.

Following Fairclough’s three-dimensional discourse analysis framework theory, the analysis of critical discourse should involve factors such as vocabulary, grammar, themes, and text structure. Due to the varying linguistic characteristics of different texts, this study primarily focused on the more typical vocabulary expression features in Asahi Shimbun’s relevant reports, specifically word frequency and word collocation, as the content of text analysis.

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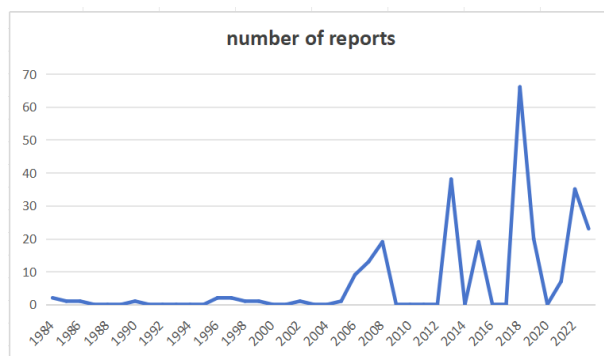


Fig. 1. Line graph showing the text volume of Asahi Shimbun’s reports on China’s aid to Africa from 1984 to 2023.

Firstly, the amount of report texts per year was counted, and a line graph was plotted as shown in Fig. 1. From the specific amount of text, it was observed that from 1984 to 2003, there were relatively few reports in the mainstream Japanese media about China’s aid to Africa. Starting from 2003, there was a slight increase in the amount of reporting, reaching a small peak in 2013. Since 2013, as China has increased its aid to Africa through a large number of project investments, technical assistance, and talent training, the relevant reports in the mainstream Japanese media have also continued to grow. Although there have been fluctuations in the amount of reporting from 2013 to 2023, overall, it still reflects a high level of attention from Japan to China’s aid to Africa. Therefore, based on the change in the amount of reporting shown in Fig. 1, the study can be divided into three stages: 1984–2003, 2003–2013, and 2013–2023.

Table 1. Top 30 high-frequency word list for the overall period from 1984 to 2023

Serial number	Vocabulary	Word frequency	
1	中国	China	478
2	アフリカ	Africa	420
3	援助	aid	151
4	日本	Japan	122
5	関係	relationship	111
6	経済	economy	101
7	台湾	Taiwan	101
8	外交	diplomacy	98
9	支援	support	82
10	協力	cooperation	69
11	政府	government	67
12	資源	resources	59
13	南ア	South Africa	57
14	会議	conference	55
15	国際	international	54
16	北京	Beijing	54
17	開発	development	52
18	投資	investment	51
19	諸国	countries	50
20	世界	world	45
21	首脳	leader	44
22	国連	United Nations	43
23	主席	chairman	40
24	TICAD	TICAD	39
25	企業	company	39
26	成長	growth	39
27	問題	problem	39
28	途上	en route	38
29	首相	prime minister	36
30	建設	construction	35

The text was analyzed in stages using KH Coder to analyze the frequency and collocation expressions of the text, resulting in Table 1.

The word frequency analysis of the corpus revealed that “China”, “Africa”, and “aid” were the top three high-frequency words. Since the corpus collected was related to China’s aid to Africa and the search terms were “China” and “Africa”, it is natural that the frequent mention of China, Africa, and aid occurred. Collocation analysis using the KWIC index function revealed that the term “China” often appeared in contexts such as “China’s financial aid”, “China provides aid”, “China’s loans to Africa”, “China supports projects”, “China’s economic development”, “China-Africa cooperation forum”, and “Chinese version of TICAD”. Additionally, the term “support” also appeared frequently in the list, ranked ninth, and combined with the sixth high-frequency word “economy”, the tenth high-frequency word “cooperation”, the twelfth high-frequency word “resources”, and the eighteenth high-frequency word “investment”, it can be seen that mainstream Japanese media, represented by the Asahi Shimbun, often use words like “aid” and “support” in their reports on China’s aid to Africa, focusing on the economic and resource aspects of China-Africa relations. Furthermore, some reports refer to the China-Africa cooperation forum as the “Chinese version of TICAD” (the Tokyo International Conference on African Development organized by the Japanese government), indicating Japan’s mainstream media’s support and confidence in its own aid to Africa and potential hostility towards China’s aid to Africa.

In addition to the high-frequency words listed in the table, special attention was paid to “America”, “United States”, where “America” appeared 20 times and “United States” appeared 19 times, which together also fall within the high-frequency range. Collocation analysis revealed expressions such as “US Department of State”, “US military government”, “US following diplomatic policy”, and “US-China relations”, indicating that the behavior of the United States in Africa, US-China relations, and US-Japan relations are all focal points that Japanese mainstream media cannot avoid when reporting on China’s aid to Africa. Considering the consistent practice of Japan following the United States’ stance on international issues, the coverage of the United States is not unexpected. Additionally, the frequency of the words “world” and “countries” is also high. Further observation of collocations revealed expressions such as “Third World”, “world economy”, “world trade”, “world diplomacy”, as well as “African countries”, “Western countries”, and “Southeast Asian countries”, reflecting that Japanese mainstream media’s coverage of China’s aid to Africa is not limited to China and Africa but adopts a more international macro-multifaceted perspective, focusing more on the United States and other Western powers or Southeast Asian countries that have close relations with Japan.

Next, this study separately counted the high-frequency words in three stages, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison table of high-frequency words in different stages

Serial number		Vocabulary	Word frequency	
From 1984 to 2003	1	中国	China	94
	2	台湾	Taiwan	81
	3	南ア	South Africa	54
	4	外交	diplomacy	43
	5	援助	aid	40
	6	関係	relationship	38
	7	アフリカ	Africa	30
	8	経済	economy	28
	9	国交	diplomatic relations	17
	10	断交	break off diplomatic relations	17
	11	世界	world	14
	12	外相	foreign minister	13
	13	協力	cooperation	13
	14	政府	government	12
	15	訪問	visit	12
	16	マンデラ	Mandela	11
	17	委員	committee member	11
	18	香港	Hong Kong	11
	19	国際	international	11
	20	昨年	last year	11
From 2003 to 2013	1	中国	China	232
	2	アフリカ	Africa	175
	3	援助	aid	87
	4	日本	Japan	58
	5	資源	resources	49
	6	外交	diplomacy	47
	7	政府	government	41
	8	経済	economy	40
	9	開発	development	37
	10	関係	relationship	35
	11	支援	support	34
	12	石油	oil	31
	13	国連	United Nations	29
	14	スーダン	Sudan	26
	15	協力	cooperation	26
	16	途上	en route	26
	17	北京	Beijing	26
	18	問題	problem	26
	19	会議	conference	24
	20	世界	world	23
From 2013 to 2023	1	アフリカ	Africa	215
	2	中国	China	152
	3	日本	Japan	61
	4	支援	support	45
	5	関係	relationship	38
	6	経済	economy	33
	7	習	Xi	33
	8	T I C A D	TICAD	32
	9	諸国	countries	32
	10	協力	cooperation	30
	11	会議	conference	27
	12	援助	aid	24
	13	開催	held	24
	14	フォーラム	forums	23
	15	国際	international	22
	16	投資	investment	22
	17	開く	open	21
	18	発展	development	21
	19	表明	indicate	21
	20	首脳	leader	20

As shown in Table 2, combined with the word frequency statistics from 1984 to 2003, it can be seen that at that time, the Japanese media paid high attention to Taiwan in its reports on China's aid to Africa, with the word frequency ranking second. In addition to "Taiwan", the fourth-ranked "diplomatic", the ninth-ranked "diplomacy", and the tenth-ranked "severing diplomatic relations", in collocation analysis, expressions such as "diplomatic relations with Taiwan", "severing diplomatic relations with Taiwan", and "Taiwan's territory" were found. Additionally, there are collocations of "China" such as "China's diplomatic leadership" and "China's human rights policy". Considering the social background at that time, by the year 2000, Taiwan had diplomatic relations with 8 African countries, but after 2000, these countries gradually severed ties with Taiwan and resumed diplomatic relations with China (mainland). The Japanese media called this "China's great victory in the diplomatic war in Africa", which is a somewhat radical statement. The intense focus of mainstream Japanese media on the Taiwan issue reflects Japan's attempt to use the Taiwan issue for its own political interests. The political ambitions implied behind this attention are worth noting and discussing.

Continuing to observe the list of high-frequency words, during this period, the term "visit" appeared frequently, and in context, it mostly referred to visits by the Chinese side to Africa, aiming to promote communication and advance China-Africa cooperation. The term "government" also appeared frequently, with collocations such as "Chinese government" and "government aid", reflecting the real-time attention of Japanese media to Chinese government actions and aid to Africa.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that "Hong Kong" also appeared in the top twenty of the high-frequency words list, with its associated collocations mostly related to "returning Hong Kong", showing the same high level of attention from Japanese media to the return of Hong Kong. Considering the historical background, Hong Kong played an important role in China-Africa relations. The return of Hong Kong in 1997 played an important role in promoting economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa. With the historical changes in China-Africa relations, the network of African Chinese businessmen, represented by Hong Kong businessmen, has gradually formed and continued to improve. Therefore, the high level of attention from mainstream Japanese media to Hong Kong also implies Japan's commitment to safeguarding its own interests and containing China.

In comparison to the first stage, the main focus of Asahi Shimbun in the second stage remains centered around the keywords "China", "Africa", and "aid". Additionally, it can be noticed that the frequency of the term "Japan" significantly increased, ranking fourth. In this stage of reports on China's aid to Africa, the attitudes of China and Japan towards Africa are often discussed together. To explore Japan's specific actions and the attitude of mainstream Japanese media, the terms "Japan" and "China" are combined, and collocation analysis is conducted using the KWIC index function.

When it comes to the term "Japan", collocations such as "Japan's aid policy", "acquisition of rights by Japanese

companies", and "Japan also actively supports" are observed, mainly reflecting the positive descriptions by Japanese media of Japan's actions and their impact on aiding Africa. The phrase "former aid countries such as Europe, the United States, and Japan" accurately demonstrates Japan's sense of superiority in its aid and its accommodation of Western countries such as Europe and the United States.

When indexing "Japan" and "China" together, there is a significant mention of the purposes of Chinese and Japanese aid to Africa in the reports. This is mainly reflected in the terms "resources" ranking fifth, "diplomacy" sixth, "economy" eighth, "development" ninth, and "oil" twelfth in the high-frequency word list. Japanese media attribute China's aid to Africa to be part of its energy resource strategy, described as "promoting resource diplomacy", including "oil" and "rare metals resources", while Japan's aid is described simply as "providing funds". Japanese media praises Japan's actions as "acts filled with goodwill and generosity", while suggesting that China's aid is purposeful, requiring vigilance to safeguard Japan's interests. Besides resources, the political purposes of aiding Africa are also frequently mentioned by mainstream Japanese media. The reports do not shy away from calling African countries the "United Nations", "big voting base", a reason Japan aspires to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Regarding China, while there are positive descriptions of China's aid to Africa in infrastructure, there are also implicit negative descriptions such as "China's approach" and "China's presence", suggesting that criticism from Western countries, including Europe and the United States, is based on China's lack of concern for human rights issues in African countries, and that summits are a way for China to demonstrate its presence in Africa.

According to the quantity curve in Fig. 1, the coverage in the third stage fluctuated over the years but showed an overall upward trend compared to the previous two stages. Based on the word frequency statistics from 2013 to 2023, the top four keywords remain Africa, China, Japan, and support. However, unlike the previous stages, the term "support" is predominantly used in the third stage instead of "aid". To accurately understand this change, we searched for these two words on Weblio dictionary and found that while they are roughly synonymous, "support" emphasizes "with human, financial, and material resources". Collocation analysis of "support" through the KWIC index function revealed phrases like "financial support", "agricultural technology support", and "industrialization support", indicating that since 2013, China has intensified its aid efforts to Africa, covering areas such as industrialization, modernization of agriculture, infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and security.

It is noteworthy that the term "Xi" (Xi Jinping) ranks seventh in the high-frequency word list, reflecting the high level of attention paid by mainstream Japanese media to Xi Jinping, the current Chinese President, and Chinese policies. In conjunction with the context, the reports objectively mention Chinese policies such as "China-Africa community of common destiny", "Belt and Road Initiative", and "Chinese-style modernization". Regarding the previously criticized "human rights issues" in China, it is positively noted that China emphasizes respecting the development

paths of African countries. However, in this stage, Japanese media also criticize certain aspects of China's aid to Africa, mainly focusing on China's financial aid. Japanese media initially took a negative stance towards China's statement of "a \$60 billion (approximately ¥6.6 trillion) fund cooperation" with Africa, citing online criticisms within China of "waste" and criticism from scholars. Additionally, most Japanese reports also noted that China's declared \$10 billion investment in the next three years is significantly lower than before, suggesting that mainstream Japanese media tend to nitpick and morally criticize China's aid to Africa.

Furthermore, Japan's aid channel to Africa, "TICAD", ranks eighth in frequency, while China's aid channel, the "Forum", specifically expressed as "China-Africa Cooperation Forum", ranks fourteenth. The difference in the frequency of these terms also reflects the preference of Japanese media for their own "TICAD". Regarding the "China-Africa Cooperation Forum", most reports describe it as a platform for "China and African countries to discuss cooperation", which is relatively objective. However, many reports also mention "China's version of TICAD" and "an international conference similar to TICAD", implying a comparison where China falls short of Japan in aid to Africa.

The concept of "intertextuality" was first proposed by the French semiotician Kristeva in the 1960s. Fairclough advocates considering intertextuality when analyzing texts, examining the relevance of other texts involved in the analysis to the text being analyzed. Fairclough believes that all discourses are not independent creations of the producers but rather absorptions and reproductions of other texts. In news reports, this absorption and reproduction are not the passive absorption of other texts by the discussor, but the result of subjective selection, usually hiding the discussor's ideology. Observing Asahi Shimbun's coverage of China's aid to Africa, this intertextuality reveals the true Japanese viewpoint and attitude being conveyed.

In terms of the form of reiteration, Asahi Shimbun's intertextuality can be divided into two types: explicit intertextuality (direct quotation) and constructed intertextuality (reiteration and blending), specifically manifested in the use of direct and indirect speech. Japanese media turn others' voices into their own, conveying their own voices in a disguised, covert manner.

Some of these voices implicitly criticize China's aid to Africa. For example, in an article in October 2018, Asahi Shimbun wrote:

African countries expect support from Japan not only in terms of economy but also in soft areas such as agricultural technology assistance and personnel exchanges. Some countries are already struggling to repay loans from China, and in recent years, there have been voices wishing for a diversification of support sources, saying "Relying on just one country is risky" (Government official in Ethiopia) [11].

This report, taken on its own, seems objective, mentioning African countries' expectations of support from Japan. However, immediately after, it mentions some countries facing difficulties in repaying Chinese loans. The tone shifts, quoting the Ethiopian government saying, "Relying on just one country is risky", seemingly impartially representing Africa's stance but actually seizing the opportunity to discredit China's aid to Europe and shape Japan's

"righteous" image in the international community.

In recent years, some Western politicians have criticized China's investments in Africa for increasing African countries' external debt and sovereign debt risks. This viewpoint is also prevalent in the mainstream Japanese media. For example, in August 2022, a report indirectly quoted American statements:

According to Boston University, China's loans to Africa peaked at \$28.4 billion (about 3.9 trillion yen) in 2016 and have been decreasing year by year. In 2020, it was around \$1.9 billion (about 260 billion yen). The background to this change in attitude is not only China's consideration of loan risks but also increasing concerns from African countries about the "debt trap" [12].

The remarks not only suggest potential financing risks for China but also claim that African countries' concerns about the "debt trap" are growing. However, in reality, African countries' external debt stems from a combination of factors such as their economic development structure, the decline in foreign direct investment, global economic weakness, and debt management levels, rather than solely from Chinese investment. This shows that the mainstream Japanese media are following the Western political trend, unfairly blaming China for its aid to Africa.

In its quotations, Asahi Shimbun also selectively includes negative comments from African leaders and the African public. For example, two reports from September 2018:

South African President Ramaphosa expressed dissatisfaction with the distorted trade structure, saying, "We export resources and China exports processed goods. There are limits to increasing the value of natural resources and creating jobs" [13].

Criticism remains strong in Africa that cheap Chinese-made daily necessities, such as buckets, are flooding in, leading to the decline of local manufacturing. Mogita, a shopkeeper near Nairobi, Kenya, lamented, "In the past decade, even small-town markets have Chinese people doing business, and my acquaintances have closed their shops. We can't win against China in price competition" [14].

The report attempts to portray that China's aid to Africa has caused imbalances in local trade structures and reduced local job opportunities in Africa, even suggesting that China engages in "price competition" in Africa. In fact, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce has stated that, from a long-term perspective, China-Africa trade is generally balanced. While there are some areas where the trade balance is affected due to high levels of industrialization leading to imports of daily necessities and industrial products from China, China has always aimed to promote balanced development in China-Africa trade. In recent years, China has taken measures to help Africa transition from being primarily suppliers of raw materials to producers of industrial goods in the global value chain, aiming to achieve a balanced development in China-Africa trade at a higher level and on a broader scale. The mainstream Japanese media focuses only on the challenges in China-Africa cooperation, aiming to generate negative sentiment among the public toward China's aid to Africa for its political propaganda purposes.

Additionally, Asahi Shimbun also cites public opinion in China, such as in a report from September 2018:

On China's version of Twitter, Weibo, posts such as "Why

not use it to improve the lives of domestic people?" and "Taxes keep increasing" appeared immediately after the announcement, and videos of children in poverty-stricken areas suffering from hunger were also shared widely [15].

In its reporting, Asahi Shimbun deliberately selects negative comments and uses words like "one after another" and "spread" to create an impression that there are many negative voices in China and that they have a significant impact. The mainstream Japanese media, by showcasing several so-called negative comments, exaggerates the dissatisfaction among the Chinese public regarding China's aid to Africa, to some extent, attempting to create domestic conflicts in China and tarnish China's image.

Furthermore, the quoting in the report uses a narrative tone:

An Angolan staff member of a major Japanese trading company (46) shared the following story. Angolan workers are not involved in construction work. Workers from China come to the site by truck from fenced dormitories and return by truck. Local people watch China's aid efforts with bitter eyes.

The report strongly depicts a seemingly bleak scene: Chinese workers arrive at the construction site by car and leave by car, while local Angolans stand by without work. The conclusion even uses "with bitter eyes" to imply that China's aid has caused dissatisfaction among African people. The assistance provided by Chinese workers to repair roads and railways in Angola damaged by civil war is distorted and sensationalized, clearly demonstrating a certain emotional bias in the reporting of mainstream Japanese media.

"Language is a social practice". Fairclough believes that language can intervene in social processes, reflecting social reality and reproducing ideologies from multiple perspectives. This creates a mutual influence between language and power relations and existing ideologies. Based on this, he proposes three frameworks for analysis: Text, discourse practice, and social practice. Previous analyses of texts and discourse practices are prerequisites for understanding social practice relationships. Summarizing the conclusions of previous studies, the Asahi Shimbun, representing mainstream Japanese media, has shown a high degree of concern for Chinese government actions and aid to Africa, using this to portray China as a country with a self-centered and arrogant image. When reporting on events related to Chinese aid to Africa, it did not attempt to hide its hostility towards China, deliberately distorting China's aid projects in Africa as "show projects" and fabricating local dissatisfaction with China, thus blurring and guiding the perceptions of the Japanese public. Japan's intention to contain China's development and its clear political ambitions to confront China are evident. Regarding the Asahi Shimbun's reports on Chinese aid to Africa, two characteristics can be summarized.

Mainstream media uses selective reporting to construct contexts and shape images. The Asahi Shimbun achieves the goal of shaping the image of Japan through selective reporting along two paths. First is the construction of Japan's own image of "greatness and brightness". Japanese media conveys the determination and huge investment of their country's aid to Africa through quotes from the prime minister's statements, but the public has no way of knowing

the extent to which the aid plan has been implemented or realized. Second is the construction of China's image of "hypocrisy and arrogance". The Asahi Shimbun does not conceal Japan's intent to increase its presence in Africa to counter China. Correspondingly, when reporting on China's aid to Africa, it deliberately distorts facts, portraying China as intervening in African affairs arrogantly, and deliberately conceals China's achievements in aid to Africa, portraying China as hypocritical, only talking but not acting. Japan's strategic goal in providing aid to Africa is to "counter China" rather than seek win-win cooperation. The Asahi Shimbun's reports contain many remarks implying that China's motives for aid to Africa are impure, aiming to expand its own influence in Africa, which is far from China's claims of "cooperation and mutual benefit". Between this contrast of criticism and praise, the perception of the Japanese public is subtly shaped.

Mainstream media news reporting is influenced by national ideology. The development of media is closely related to the dissemination of ideology. For mainstream Japanese media, national interests take precedence over true, objective, and comprehensive news and news principles. Influenced by the epidemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the global economy is showing a downward trend, and Japan-Africa relations are returning to normalcy against the backdrop of epidemic turmoil and the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Japan has always followed the United States' diplomatic strategy, using Africa as a battleground and engaging in a struggle with its "imaginary enemy" China. Japan's aid to Africa is not only motivated by impure intentions but also unable to make selfless contributions without seeking returns. All of Japan's claims of being "different from China" and seemingly generous investments come with political conditions. The Japanese media not only remain silent about this but also promotes Japan's aid to Africa, remains silent about the extent of the plan's implementation, manipulates public opinion, confuses the public's vision and hearing, and distorts perceptions. The news presented by Japan's mainstream media is not all "news"; sometimes it is just articles influenced by national ideology.

III. CONCLUSION

China has been providing assistance to Africa for several decades, during which time there has been significant improvement and progress in infrastructure construction, medical and health conditions, and economic market development in Africa. The mutual assistance and win-win cooperation between China and Africa are internationally recognized facts. This article, guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis, analyzes the reports of the Asahi Shimbun on China's aid to Africa from the perspectives of text, discourse practice, and social practice. Through the study of the discourse construction features of the reports, it is found that the Asahi Shimbun's reports are greatly influenced by Japanese ideology, and the media's stance is completely consistent with the Japanese government's attitude. Under the influence of Japan's strategic plans for China and its diplomatic attitude following the West, the Asahi Shimbun, through selective reporting and implied sentences, while vilifying China and

discrediting China's aid achievements, also shapes a positive international image for Japan, demonstrating its strategic ambition to contain and confront China's development.

China's aid to Africa has never been a "verbal plan" or a "face project", nor is it the "debt trap" as claimed by some malicious politicians, but rather a witness to China's solidarity and cooperation with African countries. China should be vigilant against the construction of false discourse patterns and the use of propaganda techniques, effectively and timely respond to external doubts and accusations against China, strengthen external propaganda, enhance agenda setting and rumor refutation capabilities, and increase its international discourse power. While safeguarding its own interests, China should help African countries in their development, promote global common development, and realize the great vision of a community with a shared future for mankind.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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