

MEDIA BIAS IN LEGITIMIZING POLITICAL ACTION

Dr. Mary Karuri

Department of Humanities, Chuka University,
P.O Box 109
Chuka, Kenya

Abstract

This article discusses media bias as it presents in situations of political conflict. Because of many factors (and which will not be part of this discussion) news writers tilt reports to suit their purposes. In so doing, they justify or legitimize certain actions while condemning others. In this paper, I look at (de)legitimization of political action in two Kenya's newspaper headline stories captured in the period 2008-2013 when Kenya had a coalition government. The government was characterized by political conflict between the political partners, President Mwai Kibaki and the Premier, Raila Odinga. The main dailies in Kenya, The Standard and Daily Nation interpreted the conflicts in ways that (de) legitimized political action that was taken in regard to the issues of disagreement. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, this paper looks at some of the legitimating features in the newspaper discourse which include quoting authorities, rhetoric forms, presuppositions, foregrounding in clauses, and use of particular lexicon. These features point to the active role that the media plays in evaluative representation of politics besides reporting news. In so doing, the media attempts to drive a political agenda partly reflecting its ideological stance towards the political establishment. Media possesses soft power and has potential to influence and shape the political thinking of a nation. Such is the assumption that underlies this analysis which confirms the view that the media is not an objective conveyer of news. It is inherently biased.

Keywords: legitimization, political conflict, CDA, evaluative representation, media bias

1. Introduction

Legitimation is the use of language to justify certain actions and portray others as being wrong. Studies of legitimation in discourse (van Leeuwen, 1996, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Reyes, 2011; Oddo, 2011)) show the various strategies social actors use to justify their actions and how the powerful use their soft power to influence public opinion towards particular directions. For instance, Oddo (2011) analyzed four speeches by two United States of America presidents (Franklin Roosevelt and George Bush) at different times in history, and showed how the two presidents used similar strategies to justify American war against real and imagined enemies. By using the 'Us' versus 'Them' technique combined with rhetoric and particular lexicon, the two presidents managed to convince USA and the world that USA had moral justification in attacking Japan, Italy and Germany in 1941 and Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001. Statistics showed that after President Bush's speech on 20th September 2001 on which he

declared war, not just on those responsible for the 11th September 2001 attack on USA but on all people deemed to be supporters of terrorists, 90% of Americans approved military action in Afghanistan. 80% approved military action against other countries suspected of harbouring terrorists. The two presidents used positive and supposedly neutral lexical items to justify the reality of killing people. Words such as ‘defend’, ‘fight’, ‘protect’, ‘confront’ were used to refer to the intended American offensive. In contrast, the verbs used to describe the ‘enemy’s action change to ‘invade’ ‘attack’ ‘kill’ ‘dominate’, ‘murder’ among others. By showing the intertextuality in the speeches of two presidents, Oddo (2011) brings out the persuasive power of language in shaping important political decisions of nations.

Reyes (2011) similarly explored the legitimation strategies in the speeches of George Bush and Barrack Obama on two armed conflicts of Iraq in 2007 and Afghanistan in 2009 as the presidents sought to justify their military presence in the two countries. The study explored the persuasive discourse that the two presidents use in showing the world the security threats posed by the Islamic extremists. By using very specific language choices, the presidents hoped to persuade people that American presence was required in the two countries in order to contain the situations. The choices range from syntactic ordering of words, to lexicon, and pragmatic structures. For Reyes (2011), using particular words to appeal to people’s emotions is also a way of legitimizing actions and an attempt to influence people’s opinion regarding a particular matter.

In reporting an event, journalists usually follow a conventional narrative style in the first paragraph which is patterned to the wh- interrogative markers namely, ‘what’, ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘who’, and ‘how’. In so doing the writer is seen as merely reporting objectively on events with subsequent paragraphs meant to fill in the details of the particular event. However, journalists have a tendency to be evaluative as they fill the details. This is done through embedding evaluative expressions in purported factual stories in order to guide interpretation. In the following discussions, I highlight particular issues that caused conflict among the coalition partners and how the newspapers used language to justify or condemn the actions of the political actors involved and thereby betraying their political alignment.

2. Methodology

The Standard and *Nation* newspapers written in the five-year period of the coalition government were sampled from University libraries. Theoretical sampling was the done to come up with the headline stories that would be considered “political” using a criterion proposed by Chilton and Schaffner (2011). The criterion proposes that political discourse should have aspects of legitimization, coercion and representation. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used both as a theory and a method to systematically illuminate and deconstruct the discourse texts in newspapers to show the underlying ideological biases.

3. Discussion

This section discusses the various issues that caused conflict in the coalition government and the (de)legitimizing discourses that captured the issues in the headline stories of the two newspapers.

3.1 Political Supremacy

Throughout the existence of the Grand Coalition Government, the Kenyan President and Prime Minister were in conflict for political supremacy. The National Accord they had signed at the beginning of the coalition gave them equal executive powers but the PM felt the President was exercising too much power at his expense. The following are some of the headlines that captured supremacy wars between the president and the prime minister.

Headlines

Headline No.	Date	Newspaper	Headline
1.	8/5/2008	The Standard	This is the way
2.	20/2/2010	Daily Nation	What Raila will demand at meeting with Kibaki
3.	24/2/2010	The Standard	SQUARING IT OUT

The Standard headline, **This is the way** reinforced by an image which shows the PM pointing ahead in apparent demonstration of the ‘way’ to the president is a prejudiced depiction of the President as one who is lost or uncertain and needs to be guided. The irony in the message presented by the image is that the story was about a meeting the two principals had shared with ministers to stamp their togetherness as leaders of the coalition

As captured in the following text in the second paragraph of the story, the meeting was supposed to bond the Coalition.

The government was literally under one roof- the President, the PM, the Vice President, two Deputy Prime Ministers... The agenda on the table was bonding and the formula for sticking together for the next five years. (Text 1)

The image of the premier pointing out the way to the president however implies superiority of one principal over the other and hence contradicts the written text and its an explicit inferiorization of the President. Coming at an early stage after the formation of the coalition government (May, 2008) it was a pointer to the sustained discourse of discrediting and delegitimizing the President’s actions for the whole period of the coalition government by *The Standard*. While the rest of the story does not have explicit language of delegitimation, the image

encodes the ideological stance of *The Standard* in as far as the political leadership was concerned.

In 2010, the two coalition principals differed over the sacking of two ministers (William Ruto in the Agriculture ministry and Sam Ongeru in Education) by the Prime Minister Raila Odinga over allegations of graft in their ministries. President Kibaki reacted quickly by reinstating them arguing that Raila did not have constitutional powers to make the move. The *Daily Nation's* headline 2, **What Raila will demand from Kibaki**, calls for attention because of its unusual syntactic patterning. It is an incomplete pseudo-cleft construction usually used in oral speech for foregrounding information. Pseudo clefts are information structures that express a single semantic proposition by means of two syntactic clauses (Prince, 1978). The wh- clause (which is the headline) is the first part of a pseudo-cleft which expresses a presupposition while the missing part is a focus complement and this part is the information that the reader presumably 'wants' to know. In headline 9 hence, the structure would be:

[What Raila will demand from Kibaki is [_____]
(Presupposition) (Focus)]

The presupposition implied in the wh-clause serves to make the reader engage further with the text to get the 'missing' information. Cleft constructions express information that is taken to be the common ground or what is called pragmatic presupposition (Hedberg, 2000). In spoken speech, stress would normally fall on the focus and this serves to foreground the information therein as important. For this reason, clefts are useful in rhetoric. When they appear in written texts such as in the headlines, then their use assumes a special role. They bring a dialogical character to the text which is a persuasive strategy to orient the reader towards a particular viewpoint.

The headline presupposes an audience that is aware that the PM has something to demand and the paper is offering to reveal what it is. The certainty of the 'demand' is accentuated by use of the modal 'will' which suggests that 'demanding something' is the necessary thing for the PM to do. The rest of the story does not have explicit discourse on legitimation save for some rationalizing in a middle paragraph:

The National Accord, which grants the Prime Minister the supervisory powers, is also on Mr. Odinga's in-tray in readiness for the Monday meeting. (Text 2)

The embedded relative clause 'which grants the Prime Minister the supervisory powers' is an authorial rationalization on the proposition about the PM. Rationalization serves to give credit to an argument. In this case, the writer refers to the national accord to justify the 'demands' that the PM is supposed to make, and in the development of the story, one of them is that he can sack ministers aligned to ODM. In view of the background of the reinstatement of the two ministers,

the writer is actually delegitimizing the president's action and sees it as an upfront against the PM's constitutional authority.

Under headline³, *The Standard* uses graphics to represent the conflict where the two principals face each other in a combative pose. However, uncharacteristic of *The Standard*, the written text does not reflect the newspaper's delegitimation of Kibaki's political actions (as is observed in majority of the other stories from *The Standard*). In the lead paragraph of the story, the writer in fact seems to be castigating the PM for his appeal to the West to intervene in the coalition's conflicts. The text reads:

President Kibaki used the official opening of the parliament
to reply to Prime Minister Raila Odinga over how not to
resolve coalition disagreements. (Text 3)

The text, coming at the lead which carries the most important structural element in a story was unusual in *The Standard*. To reinforce the message in the lead paragraph, the writer places a direct quote from the president's speech on the billboard. A billboard in the structure of a newspaper is a capsule summary text put strategically on the side of the front page to get the readers' attention. The quote reads:

Kenyans should abandon the temptation to look externally
for solutions that can easily be found locally (Text 4)

The strategic positioning of the two texts in the newspaper is an indication that the writer shares in the president's disapproval of the PM's soliciting for help from the West to resolve local conflicts. It is not possible to explain all the factors that drive writers to shape their stories in certain ways. Political alignments that keep shifting all the time could alter the media's presentation of matters, since the media itself is an active participant in the dynamism of politics. Other factors like the actual reporter who covers the story and the editors could also play a role in the shape the story will assume. One or more of these factors could have played a role in the unusual positive representation of the president. In the body of the story itself, under a sub title 'drastic action' the writer explains part of the president's speech where he (the president) says that the fight against corruption should not be politicized.

This was in apparent reference to Raila **who was widely
considered** to have taken **drastic** action against Ruto, his
erstwhile ally turned critic within the Orange party.(Text 5)

The passive construction 'who was widely considered' without indicating the agent gives the idea of a general agreement by everybody and this may not necessarily be the case. The structure helps to reinforce the delegitimation of the PM's action which is evaluated as being 'drastic'. In using the passive constructions, the writer pushes through his own opinion and makes it appear

as if it emanates from consensus. In this section, the newspapers' portrayal of supremacy war that existed between the president and the PM has been discussed in general way since all the conflicts in the Coalition were really about the supremacy of the two principals; that is, the power each was supposed to exercise in the running of the government. In subsequent sections, I look at specific issues of disagreement and discuss the (de) legitimizing language used by the newspapers in their assessment.

3.2 Head of Public Service

The office of the head of public service, held by Ambassador Muthaura during the Coalition Government, was a major source of conflict between the president and the PM, with the latter feeling that the office was usurping his powers. This was reflected in the front headline stories of the two papers.

Headlines

Headline No.	Date	Newspaper	Headline
4.	6/1/2009	The Standard	Why ODM is not smiling
5.	6/1/2009	Daily Nation	Make Muthaura work under Raila
6.	11/1/2009	The Standard	A new storm brews
7.	16/1/2009	The Standard	WHAT'S COOKING?

The headlines of the two papers show some differences in the way they represent conflict between the two sides of government. In headlines 4 and 7 for instance, *The Standard* presupposes that the reader has some questions that need to be addressed. In constructing headlines, news writers rely on presumed widespread representations and models of reality for the headlines to have meaning (Develotte & Rechniewski 2011). In headline 4, there is presupposition that ODM is meant to be "smiling" but it is not doing so and that readers share in this knowledge. By beginning the proposition with "why", which suggests seeking information, the writer makes the proposition conversational where he and the reader are engaged in a common task of trying to understand the situation. Such alignment of readers with the author serves the purpose of persuading the reader to agree with the proposition being made. Hardman (2008) observes that newspaper writers make assumptions about situations and create an audience which is supposed to share a common view with them. The dialogical style of the headline is further enhanced by use of 'smiling' an informal way of indirectly referring to the political position of ODM in the ruling coalition; that it is being treated unfairly by the PNU side of the government.

The *Daily Nation* uses more direct terms and spells out the exact nature of conflict (headlines 5). The headline is an imperative : **Make Muthaura work under Raila.** While the language in this

headline may seem more ‘toned down’ than *The Standard* headline just discussed, it still carries the stance of the paper on the conflict in government. The weight of the proposition lies, not in the words, as in *The Standard*, but in the pragmatic meaning of the headline. The headline may be interpreted as a piece of advice for the president as a way of resolving the political conflict. In this sense, ignorance on the part of the president on how to resolve conflicts is presumed in the advice and consequently, the authority of the giver of the advice is implied. Thus, the headline text embodies hegemonic discourse realized in the speech act of advising the president while it simultaneously captures the cause of the conflict in the coalition.

The story under headline 4 (**Why ODM is not smiling**) explicitly employs legitimating discourse in its rendition of the political conflict. The schema of the story under the headline seems geared to have the reader interpret the situation in a pre-determined way. For instance, before the story begins, a billboard summarizes for the reader why the ODM party is unhappy. In the summary, the writer offers to address the presupposed general concern that ODM is not smiling. Here is the summary:

IN CONTENTION....

- **ODM not treated as equal partner in Grand Coalition Government**
- President ignored Raila and signed Communications bill into law
- **Muthaura office has been undermining Prime Minister’s authority**
- Unilateral decisions on electoral reforms
- **If things don’t work out in the coalition...** (text 6)

The alternating of the bold texts with unbold ones serves to give the issues raised prominence while also artistically catching the attention of potential readers through attractive design. Notable in the summary is a veiled and incomplete threatening speech act contained in the conditional clause ‘If things don’t work out in the coalition...’ It is not clear whether it is the PM or the author who performs the speech act. The vagueness in ascribing a view helps the writer to merge his own position with that of the PM and in effect, aligns the newspaper’s perspective with the PM’s (Bell, 1991). Speech acts such as commands and threats presuppose relations of dominance and power (van Dijk, 1995). In this case, the paper becomes part of the dominating force when it fuses its own voice with that of the political actor allegedly engaging in a threatening act.

After the summary of the ills in the Coalition Government, the newspaper, using bold and bigger texts observes:

Issues boil over as PM’s party works on fallback position, only weeks to coalition birthday (text 7)

The bold text is part of the semiotic features that the paper uses to foreground information that it deems important. In the summary, the degree of the severity of the bad relationship in the coalition is indicated in the choice of words, “boil over”. Notable in this particular story is that

the summary is placed next to an image of an unhappy face of the ODM leader Raila, as if to validate the claim ‘**Why ODM is not smiling**’. While ODM is a political party, it is notable that the photograph given is that of the PM, the leader of the party, hence equating a political party with an individual. While it is common in many young democracies like Kenya to have political parties that are not based on sound ideologies but are largely ‘owned’ by individuals, placing Raila’s image to represent ODM reveals what the writer seems to imply of the PM – that *he* is actually the party. In the lead paragraph, the writer engages in an evaluative analysis of the power struggles of the Coalition Government.

The delicate Grand Coalition is on **shaky ground**- ODM is unhappy with how partner PNU and **specifically** President Kibaki is running the Government (Text 8)

The Coalition is described as “delicate” and standing on “shaky ground” and notably because one wing of the coalition, ODM, is “unhappy”. The use of the copular verb ‘be’ in the indicative clause (The delicate Grand Coalition is on shaky ground) makes the proposition categorical and leaves no room for any diverse view and therefore constrains the reader’s interpretation of the issue. Biber et al (2002) argues that complements that come after the copular indicate a high degree of certainty on the part of the speaker/writer. Thus, in using the copular, the writer’s attitude towards the political situation in the country is made explicit. In this case, the writer is making an authoritative claim that the coalition is ailing as he singles out the president as the sole cause of the ills in the coalition in his use of the word ‘specifically’.

As the story develops, several paragraphs begin with words that show continuity to give the impression that there are numerous issues that ODM is not happy about. These are ‘and’ and ‘also’ as in these sentences:

Also ruffling the feathers is the unilateral decision by president Kibaki to assent to the controversial Kenya Communications (Amendment) Bill2008... (Text 9)

And the allegation that the head of civil service Francis Muthaura has been undermining the PM surfaced again (Text 10)

Also rankling ODM is the way the president –through the head of civil service – is handling the electoral reform of the Electoral Commission. (Text 11)

By using the two sequential words severally, the writer creates an impression of a grim situation where nothing seems to be right. Such elements of exaggeration were common in *The Standard*. The two words are normally used as connectors within sentences. When they appear at the

beginning of paragraphs as in texts 9-11 above, then they are being used for purposes of enumeration to create an impression of endlessness. In this story therefore, through a combination graphics, schema and structural devices, *The Standard* castigates the president and invites the reader to do likewise by creating a rhetorical situation in the headline text to ‘engage’ the reader.

The differences in the representational styles of the two papers can also be seen in the images. While *The Standard* as observed uses Raila’s image to represent ODM, the *Daily Nation* combines the image of the premier with other ODM members although the image of the premier is enlarged. This difference indicates the different ways the papers view the premier. While *The Standard* takes him as *the* party and therefore elevates his status to a high level politically, *Daily Nation* takes a more moderate stance and brings in other stake holders of the party. There is also a marked difference in the demeanor of the premier as shown in the two newspapers. *The Standard*’s image shows an ‘unhappy’ face of the premier, while the *Daily Nation*’s image is not as ‘severe’. These differences point to the generally more moderate approach the *Daily Nation* adopts in its interpretation of politics and its stance on the political actors.

The summaries of the stories at the billboards of the newspapers also point to some differences between the two papers. While *The Standard* has a long summary as shown in text 6, the *Daily Nation* has a shorter one (text 12). The framing of the proposition also deviates from *The Standard*’s as the text shows:

Party **may** demand fresh agreement on coalition, saying it had
been sidelined (Text 12)

The use of the tentative modal ‘may’ contrasts with the more definitive language in *The Standard*’s billboard in text 6. By using a tentative modal, the writer avoids absolute commitment to the proposition. In outlining the issues that the two sides of government are conflicting over, the two papers concur that ODM is the aggrieved party. However, the *Daily Nation* does not discuss the conflicts using sequential markers that serve to exaggerate the extent of conflicts as *The Standard* does. It instead puts them down in one paragraph using the usual punctuation marks of sequence; commas. These differences in style make the story in *The Standard* longer than in the *Daily Nation*, suggesting *The Standard*’s commitment in presenting the conflicts in more details which makes them look serious and help in justifying the castigation of the president as the apparent culprit in the Coalition.

The conflict surrounding the office of the head of public service continued to take centre-stage in media and provided a chance for news makers to inter-weave the story with their own perspective about the coalition government. *The Standard* on January 11, 2009 reviewed the issue under the headline **A new storm brews**. The story explicitly creates a schism between the two sides of the coalition government by choosing words that legitimize the actions of the ODM side of the government while decrying those of the PNU side. The graphical representation of the

conflict is captured by the images of the president and the prime minister with an intruding image of Mr. Muthaura coming between them to explicitly communicate the cause of the conflict. In the actual story, the writer engages in evaluation of the two sides of government. In the following text for instance, the writer evaluates the prime minister thus:

Top leaders in ODM say party leader is **stoically determined to make the coalition work** (Text 13)

The positive orientation of the paper towards the PM is seen in its portrayal of the PM as an enduring and selfless person who ‘stoically determined to make the coalition work’. In contrast, the PNU leaders are described in derogatory terms as in the following text:

Separately, we learnt a **flurry of nocturnal consultations** in city hotels preceded the change of tune over the media law. The meetings were preceded over by leading politicians in PNU. (Text 14)

By referring to the activities of PNU politicians as ‘flurry’ and ‘nocturnal’ the newspaper portrays PNU leaders in negative light. It brings them out as people in a panic, and like animals, they are operating at night under the cover of darkness. Further in the story, the creation of a divide between the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’ is more evident.

“But it is the aftermath of this single action that sent the **president’s men** in panic. The **rival ODM as well as general public** immediately took sides **with the media**, leaving PNU **badly exposed**,” said our source (Text 15)

The ‘action’ refers to a news item aired by a local television station that suggested that President Kibaki had pre-planned the rigging of 2007 general election. In text 10, the newspaper’s source aligns the general public, ODM and the media on ‘One side’ and PNU on the ‘Other’. The source must therefore be presumed to be on the ‘right’ side of things. Such a claim explicitly spells the ideological stance of the paper in open legitimation of the actions of the one side of the coalition government. Quoting of authority is a pervasive practice in media in (de) legitimizing political action. Of interest also in the above text is the reference to PNU leaders as “president’s men” which helps in disassociating the speaker and by extension the paper, from the ‘wrong’ side.

The structure of the rest of the story further encodes the papers ideology in the country’s politics. Several paragraphs begin with sequential adverbs (firstly, secondly, thirdly) to list the things that PNU and Kibaki have done wrong as shown in text 16.

Fresh War

The icy relations behind the facade of a family in communion, eager to pull the nation one direction, can be captured in the analogy that for all that PNU sees as white ODM sees black and vice versa.

The fresh war, which has seen ODM call for overhaul of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, is being fought, by way of shadowboxing, over the place of Muthaura in Government.

This is fed by ODM perception that it got a raw deal, the Act merely made the PM a paper tiger and that Muthaura is the president’s proxy.

Secondly, there has been uproar over the contentious media Bill parliament passed and Kibaki signed into law. ODM disowned it and in effect garlanded PNU with its dishonour.

Thirdly, the controversial retention of a section of staff from the disbanded Electoral Commission of Kenya by Muthaura, without consultation with the PM.

Fourthly, disaffection by a section of the country that public appointments are skewed in favour of one region, and that beneath the veneer of a democratic rule, the hardliners in Government are quickly returning Kenya to its draconian phase. (Text 16)

The use of ordinal adverbs accentuates the conflict between the partners of the coalition and generally presents an exaggerated view of the political situation. The bias against the PNU side of the coalition is made explicit. As Mc Gregor, (2003) observes, listing, giving figures and quantifying things in percentages in discourse can serve to exaggerate and distort situations and this serves the ideological stance of the particular media house.

3.3 Conflict on Reforms

Among other issues of disagreement in the Coalition Government were reforms. ‘Reforms’ was a general term that entailed the implementation of the national accord which the president and the PM had signed at the formation of the Coalition Government. The following headlines capture the attempt by PNU and ODM members to bridge their differences based on perception that Kibaki and PNU were not keen to implement the reforms.

Headlines

Headline No.	Date	Newspaper	Headline
8.	5/4/2009	The Standard	Coalition in tatters
9.	6/4/2009	The Standard	Raila: It’s reforms or else...
10.	8/4/2009	The Standard	Mass action, threats, insults, resignations..what next?

The absence of headlines from the *Daily Nation* indicates that the news reports from the newspaper on the reforms issue did not qualify as ‘political’ stories using the sampling criteria discussed in the methodology section. But newspapers also engage in self-censorship and may fail to report on some issues (Lee & Lin, 2006). This can be caused by factors such as commercial considerations, prospects of political repercussions and issues of professionalism in reporting. Self-censorship may mean omission of information, distortion, change of emphasis, and choice of language of reporting. It is possible that the *Daily Nation* omitted the issues on reforms and the conflicts arising from them due to some of the reasons given here or the issues did not find their way into becoming headline stories. Either way, it is consistent with observations made that the *Daily Nation* was generally not explicit in its political stance during the period covered by the study. *The Standard* on the other hand used language that explicitly portrayed its view. In the above headlines for instance, *The Standard* is quite dramatic in its depiction of conflict as can be seen in headline 9 and 10 and even in the imagery of ‘tatters’ in headline 8. Headline 9, a threatening speech act, is the paper’s own interpretation of the PM’s speech. In having such a headline, the writer is not just reporting what the PM said but re-interpreting the message and repackaging it as a threat. In this sense, the identity of the writer ceases to be that of a reporter and becomes an activist interpreting the political situation and doing what he deems the right thing to do. This is quite different from the headline in *Daily Nation* of the same day, which read: ‘Reforms at risk as parties step up war’. So, what one paper interprets as a threat is not captured in the same sense by the other paper. While indicating there was disagreement in the coalition partners by use of ‘war’, the *Daily Nation* does not indicate there was a threat from the PM as *The Standard* does. Such differences in representation of similar issues reveal the different stances that the papers have concerning politics and individual politicians. As pointed earlier, *The Standard* sustains an explicitly negative attitude towards the Kibaki administration while portraying the PM as the better leader. That a threatening act ostensibly emanating from the PM should be the headline shows the commitment the newspaper had in making its point.

The Standard headline 10 captures the conflict on reform as **Mass action, threats, insults, resignations.... What next?** The enumerative rhetoric in the headline in representing the political situation serves to exaggerate things. As characteristic of *The Standard*, the headline serves to reify negativities and give an impression of a country that has come to a halt. This is further enhanced by the interactive nature of the headline which ‘engages’ the reader in attempting to ‘understand’ the situation by ‘asking’, “What next?” This question implies that the situation cannot get worse than it is. The story following the headline employs evaluative discourse in its description of two ministers in the PNU side of the coalition who were set to quit the government.

With fears of a break-up of the feeble union and the spectre of mass action following threats by Prime Minister Raila Odinga’s ODM wing, matters seemed to degenerate rather quickly just a day after Gichugu MP Martha Karua dramatically quit

Government. (Text 17)

The former Justice minister – an able and stalwart defender of President Mwai Kibaki and the Constitution during the disputed 2007 elections – attributed her bold move to a “recall of her mandate” by the office of the president.

(Text 18)

In text 17, the ‘fears’ of a break-up of the coalition are attributed to no one in particular to give the impression that that the fear is shared across board. In the text, the writer also mixes two unrelated issues to show the political situation as not containable and portray the president negatively. The political differences between the PM and the president on one hand were completely different from those between the president and minister for justice, Martha Karua on the other hand. Yet in text 12, the two issues are captured in one clause as if they are related to justify the writer’s view of the political situation and the actors involved.

In text 18, the evaluative description of the Minister for justice as an ‘able and stalwart defender’ of the president serves to justify the view that the president is not right and that’s why even those close to him have left government. This text also exposes the hypocrisy of the paper in the positive presentation of the minister for justice. In the 2007/2008 post-election violence, *The Standard* had maintained the narrative that the election had been rigged in favour of President Kibaki. Martha Karua then, had fought for Kibaki. But in text 18, since she is about to quit the government, *The Standard*, for expediency, evaluates her positively. Another minister who also left the government is likewise evaluated as ‘another ardent Kibaki defender’. These evaluations serve to discredit the president and sustain the negative narrative.

3.4 International Criminal Court (ICC) Cases

After the formation of the Grand Coalition Government, the issue of International Criminal Court (ICC) played out significantly in the politics of the coalition. Six people, among them, deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta and former minister for Agriculture William Ruto were indicted for crimes against humanity by the ICC over the 2007/2008 post-election violence. In the following headlines and subsequent stories, the ICC reports were seen to be ‘political’ according to the sampling criteria used in this study.

Headlines

Headline No.	Date	Newspaper	Headline
11.	22/7/2009	The Standard	Which Nation will jail Kenya’s VIPs?
12.	14/3/2011	The Standard	Point of no return
13.	27/11/2011	The Standard	Cabinet tug of war
14.	11/3/2012	Daily Nation	Uhuru and Ruto ought to be in jail, says Raila

Headline 11 by *The Standard* appeared just before a visit by President Kibaki to Raila's home in Nyanza (Prime Minister's home area). By asking, **Which Nation will jail Kenya VIPs**, the guilt of the accused is presumed and the only question is the place of their incarceration. The question itself is designed to provide a rhetorical engagement with the audience. In the anticipated visit, the president was to launch some development programs and the visit was seen as way of forging some relationship between the two principals. The newspaper itself acknowledges this in the first paragraph of the story terming the visit 'a symbolic message to Kenyans they are united'. But the headline and an accompanying image of two wrists chained together complete with a jail identity tag brings out sensationalism and contradicts the written discourse. It would seem calculated to play down any seeming friendship between the two principals.

The kicker before the headline mixes unrelated issues in one clause to show that the visit did not mean much. The coordinator 'but' contrasts the lunch the president and the PM would have (and the accompanying aroma) with the 'smell' of Hague which could not be wished away.

MPs vow to kill local tribunal option, Kibaki and Raila head for lunch in Bondo, but The Hague is smelling near (text 19)

The whole of the top page is full of texts that have little bearing with 'news'. At the billboard at bottom, the paper squeezes in some texts:

ICC BECKONS

ZERO OPTION? With hopes of a local special tribunal diminishing, The Hague seems to be beckoning and with it the fact that prominent Kenyans found guilty would be jailed in other countries.

FOREIGN JAILS: If Kenyan suspects are tried under the ICC, any country that is a signatory to the Rome Statute would offer to jail the convicts.

THE SUSPENSE: amid the growing anxiety, Parliament insists it would block new push for a local tribunal as Kibaki, Raila prepare for the Tuesday round of Cabinet talks. (Text 20)

In text 20, there is sustained sensationalization in the style of writing where the bold text sums up the debate in a particular and definite way. The squeezing of so much written and graphical information in one page can have the effect occupying the reader and keep him glued to the paper to make out the issues being raised. In the process, the reader may be persuaded to take the paper's stance. The whole story comprises details of possible incarceration of Kenyan culprits and the possible countries that could jail them with a paragraph stating that Swaziland is the only African country that can host a prison for ICC inmates "who may soon include Kenyan politicians".

In 2012, Uhuru and Ruto, the two main indictees of ICC, declared interest in vying for the country's top leadership. This was the backdrop against which The *Daily Nation* ran the story: **Uhuru and Ruto ought to be in jail, says Raila**. The use of the attitudinal modal 'ought to' gives the proposition a definitive meaning that their being in jail is the desirable thing. Use of modals in CDA is seen as a strategy by writers use to orient their readers towards some direction. Simpson (1993: 48) says that modality is a 'valuable analytical tool' for examining 'persuasive language' It is possible that the premier had not used the modal 'ought to' in his speech but the writer chooses to use it to persuade the reader that the opinion coming from the PM is the legitimate position. In other words, the paper is justifying or legitimizing the suggestion that the two indictees should be in jail. In so doing the paper, rather than being an observer and deliverer of news, becomes a site of political discussion and opinion, with its ideological stance easily discernible. In this particular case, the writer is clearly making political commentary. Bell (1991) argues that quotations from authorities in news usually merge with the writer's discourse and it becomes difficult to separate the two. By a process of embedding quoted views within the writer's input, the author integrates views of the quoted with his/hers and can still detach themselves from taking responsibility of the content in the quotes. While the headline is in reported speech, immediately below the headline and in big print, the paper places a pull quote from the premier to reinforce the headline.

Crimes against humanity are worse than murder yet the two remain free to transverse the country holding 'prayer meetings' while suspects of the lesser crime of murder conduct prayers only behind the walls of Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, says PM
(Text 21)

The pull quote is part of direct text by the PM on his view about Uhuru and Ruto and the ICC. The strategic placement of the quote at the front page may help to influence the readers on the matter and especially because of the political stature of the quoted personality. The writer also inserts quotation marks in 'prayer meetings' showing the paper's view that it doesn't believe they were prayers at all (after their indictment, Uhuru and Ruto held several rallies in the country which were characterized by prayers). The castigation of the two characters is evident as the story develops:

Since their indictment, the two suspects have been holding political rallies at which they have presented themselves as victims of persecution by powerful foreign forces through the ICC proceedings with the intention of killing their political dreams. In so doing, the two have resorted to hyperbole and hysteria and many in their communities have followed them.(text 22)

In this text, there is no attempt at subtlety and the negative evaluation of the two people is quite explicit. The writer, apart from reporting a story where the Prime Minister is proposing that the two characters should be in jail, evaluates the characters and explicitly expresses disdain at the apparent victimhood of the two. It is notable that the writer does not refer to them by name but

categorizes them as ‘the two suspects’. Hence, the identities of Uhuru and Ruto shift from being ministers in the government to suspects. Identities are created in discourse and the labels chosen for giving identities have social consequences (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002). By using ‘suspects’, the writer conjures up in the reader the related social associations of a suspect like ‘criminal’ and ‘dangerous’. Further, the use of the alliterative expression ‘hyperbole and hysteria’ is a persuasive rhetoric meant to demean and devalue the pair. As the story progresses, the writer engages in more evaluative structures:

Despite increasing odds against their possible candidatures,
the two men...maintained they would be in the ballot paper
regardless of the proceedings. (Text 23)

The foregrounding of the evaluative subordinate clause to the initial sentence position (Despite increasing odds against their possible candidatures) underlines the unsuitability of Uhuru and Ruto for country’s leadership and can influence the reader in sharing the view. The positioning of a piece of information in a clause determines its importance. Teo (2000) explains the relationship between structure and function and shows how racist views are reflected in syntactic ordering. Depending on the meaning intended, certain information will be foregrounded to make it prominent. The use of ‘increasing odds’ also presupposes that everybody shares in the view that the two candidates are not suitable to run the country. The creation of a consensual view of readers by newspaper is a common phenomenon where writers imagine ‘a community of readers’ (Hardman, 2008: 76) for their newspaper and proceed to create stories deemed to suit that community.

In the text (23), the reference to Uhuru and Ruto as ‘two men ’is to show the pair as ordinary people and persuade the reader to think of them as such and reduce their stature. Making a choice on the kind of reference to use on political actors is a subjective evaluation of the characters and serves to reveal the underlying attitude towards the characters involved (van Leuween, 1996) In the text above, by using ‘two men’ the writer degrades the two characters and in the bigger political scene, reduces any apparent political value that the political actors may be said to possess.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the discourse strategies that news writers exploit to evaluate and interpret political action. The styles range from implicit nuances to explicit (de)legitimizing language. They include quoting authorities where the voices that favour the paper’s opinion will mainly feature in stories. There is also use of deliberately chosen lexicon, structural devices, and presupposition. Differences between *The Standard* and *Daily Nation* also came out. *The Standard* uses more explicitly (de)legitimizing language than *Daily Nation*. This is seen especially in the stories covering ICC cases where written texts were combined with graphics to convey the paper’s stance. The texts on Muthaura’s appointment also reveal discourse that goes

beyond reporting news, as seen in the discussions, to explicit evaluations of the political actions taken regarding the issue. Ideological influencing in framing of news stories is evident. Hence, the media is not a neutral conveyer of happenings but an institution seen as trying to push through certain agendas as they report on political matters in the country.

References

- Bell, A. (1991). *The Language of News Media*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman.
- Chilton, P. and Schaffner, C. (2011). 'Discourse and Politics'. In: van Dijk, T. (ed) *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage pp. 303-330
- Develotte, C. and Rechniewski, E. (2001) 'Discourse Analysis of Newspaper Headlines: a Methodological Framework for Research into National Representations' *The Web Journal of French Media Studies* 4 (1)
- Hardman, D. (2008). *Political Ideologies and Identity in British Newspaper Discourse* Ph.D. thesis
- Hedberg, N. (2000) 'The Referential Status of Clefts'. *Language* 76: 891-920
- Jorgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd
- Lee, F. and Lin, A. (2006) 'Newspaper Editorial Discourse and the Politics of Self-censorship in Hong Kong'. *Discourse and Society* Vol 17 (3) 331-338
- Mc Gregor, S. (2003) 'Critical Discourse Analysis- A Primer' *Kappa Omicron Nu* vol 15, 1
- Oddo, J. (2011). 'War Legitimation Discourse: Representing 'Us' and 'Them' in Four Presidential Addresses'. *Discourse and Society* 22, 287-314
- Prince, E. (1978) A Comparison of Wh-clefts and It-clefts in Discourse. *Language* 883-906
- Reyes, A. (2011). 'Strategies of Legitimation in Political Discourse. From Words to Actions.' *Discourse and Society* 22, 781-807
- Simpson, P. (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge.
- Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the News: a Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reporting in Two Australian Newspapers. *Discourse and Society* 11, 7-49
- Van Dijk, T.A. (1995). 'Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis in' C. Schaffner & A. Wenden (eds) *Language and Peace* (pp 17-33) Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing
- Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). 'The Representation of Social Actors' In C.R Caldas –Coulthard (eds) *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* pp 33-70. New York: Routledge
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2007). 'Legitimation in Discourse and Communication'. *Discourse and Communication*, 1 (1): 91-112
- Van Leeuwen, T & Wodak, R. (1999). 'Legitimizing Immigration Control: A Discourse- Historic Analysis'. *Discourse Studies*, 1 (1) pp 83-119