

# Fear Mongering and Appeal to the Name of God as Propaganda Techniques in the Kenyan 2013 Presidential Debate

John Wanyama Khaisie\*, Sheila Wandera Simwa and James Mayaka Gwachi  
Department of Literary and Communication Studies,  
Laikipia University, Kenya

\*Corresponding author: [jkhaisie@yahoo.com](mailto:jkhaisie@yahoo.com)

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**Abstract:** Politicians use different types of language to control and direct the way the electorate perceive political issues. The most commonly used is propaganda techniques. This work examined two techniques, Fear mongering and appeal to the name of God in the presidential debate of 2013. It sought to establish how they were used by candidates to validate their desirability to voters. The research was based on the Critical Discourse Analysis theory. The data was collected from statements that fitted in the category of fear mongering and appeal to the name of God. The analysis applied the knowledge of three approaches: qualitative, critical and content analysis. Results showed that there was the use of fear mongering and appeal to the name of God as propaganda techniques in the debate. The techniques were used by candidates for self praise, to malign opponents and to protect themselves from any malignment. They were also used with the intention of scaring voters against voting for certain candidates and positioning themselves as the right candidates. This work is a significant contribution to the study of Discourse Analysis and political communication in universities, colleges and schools. It is also important to the voters who consume the political messages that are normally generated during political campaigns. Another research on the use of other propaganda techniques, and a comparison done to establish the most preferred by candidates and why, is recommended.

**Key words:** Debate, Propaganda, Techniques, Fear mongering, campaigns, politics.

## 1. Introduction

According to Wikipedia (the free encyclopedia), fear mongering is the spread of frightening and exaggerated rumors of an impending danger, or the habit or tact of purposely and needlessly arousing public fear about an issue. Fear takes advantage of people's inadequacies to attract their attention. In this paper, it is used to mean, the way politicians pick on an issue that, in normal situations will scare people, blow it out of proportion, then spread it to instill fright in people with the hope that the people will come to them to seek help. In the process, they manipulate them for their political gain.

Appeal to the name of God or religion, according to O'Connell (2017), happens during a crisis. Politicians use it when opinion is falling, when a presidency is threatened or when the country's fate seems to rest on the resolution of a problem. It demands that people abandon reason in an

argument to apply faith. Usually happens when reason clearly leads to disproving the conclusion of an argument. It is the assertion that one must have faith in order to understand the argument. Politicians use the appeal to religion or God when they seek to convince people on matters that they have no other way to explain or when they want to touch their inner emotions.

Political campaigns give candidates an opportunity to sell their ideas to the electorate. The electorate is able to discover new knowledge about the competing candidates. Of countries that stage presidential debates, America has the longest history (Pekka 2011). Other countries that hold debates include Brazil, Australia and England. Kenya held its first in the year 2013.

Media, especially television, has played a major role in bringing a new approach to political campaign. It has professionalised presidential debates and this has been received with a lot of excitement among candidates and

viewers. However, some Kenyans have been heard complaining about the political leaders they elect moments after the general election. On the other hand, voters have been blamed of not electing leaders based on the leadership qualities they have.

Research has been done about themes and content of political campaigns, Benoit (2000). The aspect of language, especially political register hasn't received much attention. This is why this research has been done. It analysed the two propaganda techniques used by candidates in the Kenyan presidential debate of 2013.

## **2. Review of Related Literature and Studies**

Kuusisto, as quoted in Uvehammer(2005), studied rhetoric and how it was used by Western leaders to create a narrative against Saddam Hussein. He explains how language was manipulated and used as a weapon against political enemies. It was also witnessed in the language used to cause conflict between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina. It showed how important language can be in controlling and mis/leading people. This research however focused on Kenyan Presidential debate of 2013 analysing the use of two propaganda techniques, fear mongering and appeal to the name of God/religion.

Mesthrie (2000) explained that the most important aspects of propaganda is the use of emotive language, repetition and simplification of reality. These are commonly used by governments of developed countries when dealing with the third world countries. An example is how it was applied to further Nazism that was witnessed in Germany. This is closely related to the way propaganda is used in political communication but the difference is that this study dwelled on the Kenya presidential debate. It studied the use of two specific propaganda techniques.

Longe & Ofuani (1996), states that the aim of propaganda is to deceive, mislead and change facts in an argument or debate. This is normally done through exaggeration, asking rhetoric questions, giving vague statements and cunningly abusing opponents. The study is important to this paper because it shows how language can be used to manipulate people. The difference is that this work looked at how two propaganda techniques were used in the 2013 Kenya presidential debate

Irungu (1999) examined the use of name calling on leaders and opposition sympathisers. His work is useful to this analysis because it discovered that language can be used to deceive. However, Irungu did not handle propaganda techniques that this work did. Murungi, (2000) based his research on political discourse before 2002 elections. He showed how KANU party used language to disparage opponents. They called political rivals names like betrayers, political prostitutes and mercenaries. Murungi's work set a good background for

this paper on the use of language in political campaigns. However, this study considered the use of fear mongering and appeal to the name of God in the 2013 presidential debate.

Oduor, (2009), discussed how language is used to reveal power relations between leaders and the led. It explained how leaders use language to control, manipulate and rule citizens. Oduor's contributions assisted this research because, he too, sought to show how presidential candidates used language to manipulate and control voters so that they could vote for them. However, Oduor did not address the two propaganda techniques this paper addressed; that is fear mongering and appeal to the name of God.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

Critical discourse analysis was born in the 1990s during a workshop in Amsterdam. Teun Van Dijk Norman Fairclough, Gunter Kress, Theo Van Lecuwen and Ruth Wodak discussed how the theory could be used for textual analysis. It believes that every social act must be examined in depth. Language, as a social act, is critical in social interaction, (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). The theory identifies the importance of context in which language is used and analysed. It explains that organizations and people who compete for power use language to drive their agenda and to change beliefs of the society.

The theory identifies with the downtrodden in society and focuses on delivering them from the yoke of servitude. This can be arrived at through language. It explains how power is discussed and directed through discourse. It states that language plays a part in social and cultural change. Discourse produces inequality and exploitation in human relations. Explains that context is an important aspect in understanding discourse. Finally, it says that Critical Discourse Analysis involves identifying, explaining, interpreting and giving vivid examples.

Based on the underpinnings discussed above, the theory helped the researcher to analyse the use of fear mongering and appeal to gender as propaganda techniques in the 2013 presidential debate.

## **4. Research Methodology**

This was a descriptive research. In this type of research, a researcher identifies and describes issues or the problem of the research using the data collected, this is according to Oruodho (2003). Purposive sampling was used to get the necessary data. Patton (1990) explains that purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose data that can enable him to perform his work well.

Data for this research was words, phrases, sentences, statements and paragraphs that were uttered by candidates in the debate. They were those that fell in the category of

propaganda techniques of Fear mongering and Appeal to the name of God.

The analysis was based on three approaches; qualitative, critical and content approach. It involved the researcher answering to the following two questions:

1. How did candidates use fear mongering and appeal to the name of God in the 2013 presidential debate?
2. Which intended effects were targeted at the audience by candidates in the 2013 presidential debate?

## 5. Results and Discussion

The researcher analyzed the use of fear mongering and appeal to the name of God, as propaganda techniques in the 2013 presidential debate. He started by giving the meaning of the technique and its general use. He then discussed, using relevant excerpts from the debate, how each technique was employed by candidates in the presidential debate. He concluded by examining the intentions of the candidates in applying the techniques.

### 5.1 Fear Mongering

As a technique, fear mongering shows itself when a speaker aims to instill fear and perplexity in people so that they can make a decision that will benefit him politically. He identifies issues that are unpleasant to people, stresses them repeatedly to the level that affects the listeners. This technique can produce two types of outcomes; a positive and negative outcome. Depending on the way it is applied and received by the audience, the speaker can be viewed as a stable or unstable character.

This technique has the potential of working on people's psychology. Human beings have the natural tendency of fearing the unknown (Farlex 2012). When in fear, many people rush to think of steps they can take to alleviate or remove it altogether. They rarely sit back and wait for the situation to go away on its own.

Boyd, (2012) says that fear mongering enables users to arrest the attention of the audience. It is done so fast that it leaves people confused. In that state of confusion, they make wrong decisions and choices. It is morally and humanly wrong to use fear mongering for political or economic gain. It is arrogant to use fear to mentally control and manipulate people. It is deceit. It is a sign that one does not respect, care or mean well for them. It is also a way of misleading people by giving them false, unconfirmed and unverified information .

Examples in the debate:

*I think this is a very delicate matter for the people of Kenya ... One of the things that we must figure out is that, as we try to come to the next election, what is the destiny of the Kenyan nation? This is absolutely central when we are conducting ourselves and*

*conducting our politics... The point I'm trying to make here ... is that there are definitely implications on how Kenyans will conduct their vote. This is something we have to grapple with ... we are seeing dangerous signals that need to be thought through by the Kenyan people. (Signals from the International community)*

Mudavadi, Round 1 (0:55:00)

The statement from Mudavadi is related to the ICC case that was facing Kenyatta at the Hague. He is one of the six Kenyans who were prosecuted following the post-election violence 2007. A number of Kenyans lost their lives while several others were displaced from their homes. The issue being discussed is whether a suspect - Kenyatta- ought to have vied for presidency. There were those who argued that the issue should have been left to the electorate to decide at the ballot. Others were of the view that it was morally and legally wrong and would send bad signals to the International Community.

Mudavadi is one of the candidates who was opposed to the Kenyatta candidacy. Though it was likely that Mudavadi's claims had some iota of truth, what came out clearly was that he used the ICC case to put fear in Kenyans so as not to vote for Kenyatta. He hoped that this would benefit him. He cautions Kenyans to really think hard as they go to the ballot. He warns them not to make the mistake of voting for Kenyatta, because, according to him, Kenyatta would spend most of his time at the Hague attending to his case at the expense of serving Kenyans.

There was also the claim that if Kenyatta got convicted, there would be a new round of election. This was a situation that Kenyans did not wish to see because of the cost and time of conducting another election. Then there was the small issue of the International community that funds our country. Already they had started raising their voices against Kenyatta candidature with what became a common refrain "choices have consequences." It was feared that if Kenyans voted for a candidate whose repute was in question, then as a country, we would lose out on aid and be put in bad books. This issue was a concern to Mudavadi. By talking about it again and again, he aimed to gain out of it. He wanted voters to fear Kenyatta as a candidate. He wanted Kenyans to see disaster in Kenyatta. For him

He adds:

*I would like to appeal to Kenyans out there that this is not a laughing matter at all. This is indeed a very serious matter and a serious decision has got to be made because once we get to the ballot...you must ask yourself, is your vote a vote that is being cast for Kenyan people, for the nation, or is it simply*

*a vote that you are casting for a particular Individual?*

Mudavadi, Round 1 (1:09:43)

Mudavadi wants Kenyans to take his claim with the seriousness it deserves. They should not be led by selfishness in their choices. He knew that Kenyatta had a big following. These are the voters he was targeting. He begs them to consider their stand. Asks them to ensure that they cast their vote for the good of the nation and not an individual. He advises voters to vote for prosperity. It would be foolhardy to cast a vote that takes one into a ditch. He assures that in his candidacy, Kenyans will find quality leadership, stable economy, good relations with the International Community and respect of the nation.

He opines:

*This is not the time to gamble ... There must be a clear position here, that are we voting for stability? Are we voting for security? Are we voting for predictability? We offer that security, that predictability. We are the safe pair of hands for the Kenyan people.*

Mudavadi, Round 1 (2:00:08)

He tells Kenyans that a disaster is in the offing. They must run fast to higher grounds before they get swept by the raging flood that is Kenyatta's presidency. The haven is in Amani National Congress- his party. This is not the time to play cards. He promises political stability, national security and predictability.

Another politician, Dida adds salt to the wound:

*The outside world is speaking, Kenyans are speaking. Unless a leader (Kenyatta) is saying, "I have numbers in my community, I will look for another community, if I add the two whatever the world says I will make it..."*

Dida, Round 1 (1:06:53)

To Dida, Kenyans should be worried. Even after the voice from the International Community, even after complains from a section of Kenyans against his candidacy, Kenyatta doesn't care at all. For Dida, Kenyatta is not mindful of the peoples' welfare but his own. He is not interested in the so called 'small tribes'. He believes that with his 'big tribe', he will get another big tribe of his running mate, put them and win the election. The rest of Kenyans can do whatever they want. By this, Dida fashions Kenyatta as selfish, mean and carefree to the interests of the wider community. Kenyans should have a reason to fear.

Odinga takes up the same argument:

He states:

*Fellow Kenyans! Our country today stands at a cross road. The decision we are going to make on the 4th of Next month is going to decide whether we are going to continue with the status quo or change. Our coalition stands*

*for change and reforms. We want Kenyans to come together. This economy, we moved it from the Intensive Care Unit through to the High Dependence Unit. Now it is in the general ward. We want to discharge it from the general ward and get it going. We have the ways and the means to do so. That is why we are talking about jobs! jobs !jobs!*

Odinga, Round 2 (1:44:05)

Odinga uses the metaphor of a patient to explain his point. That the coalition government that he led with retired president Kibaki, struggled to move the economy from the High Dependence Unit to ordinary ward and is on the way to full recovery. But he warns that if he doesn't get elected, there is the risk of going back to the former state of weak economy. This is fear mongering. He cautions that it is the voter who will save himself on the day of voting. It is the voter who will save himself/herself from this dilemma bad economy, lack of jobs for the youth and polarization being witnessed in the country. The solution lies in the CORD coalition.

Fear mongering, as a technique, can be used by a political candidate to point out issues that can threaten people's future wellbeing. He/she can do that by warning them against sitting pretty in the face of impending danger. Mudavadi, Dida and Odinga did this by cautioning and warning Kenyans against voting for Kenyatta. By these claims, each got an opportunity to attack Kenyatta and acclaim themselves.

There is danger in this though. If not handled well, it can boomerang. The audience may view the speaker as a coward and an untrust-worthy leader who cannot remain steadfast in the face of a storm. People expect their leader to be firm and hopeful in his/her leadership. Voters consider many factors before deciding on which candidate to vote for. It is likely that what some candidates may consider as important may not be so to the voters. Again, attacking a candidate in a campaign may attract sympathy for him from voters. This may turn out to be counter-productive to the attacker.

## 5.2 Appeal to the name of God/ Religion

This is where a candidate uses the name of God or appeals to religion to attract voters and acclaim himself. He can do this directly or indirectly. The candidate can associate himself/herself with a certain religion that is thought to have a large following or to show that he is a follower in order to win votes from members.

Religious and godly issues are matters of the heart and have the potential of getting emotive. They can easily arouse emotions among people. It is likely that there are people who vote on religious lines. Therefore, given a chance, they will likely go for a candidate with religious

leanings. Such candidates are normally seen as being in a better position to defend the rights of the religion they ascribe to compared to those who don't belong to it. Because of this, any candidate who shows signs of being against a certain religion, or being in the opposing religion, may, most likely lose out on the votes of that religion.

According to Jennings, (2015), appeal to the name of God or religion in a political campaign can have various effects depending on the level of religiosity of the followers. Though some people may believe that it is a good idea to appeal to religion in a political campaign, there may be others with an opposite view. They propose that politics should be separated from religion because politics can defile religion. It is also claimed that the use of the name of God in political campaigns may tear the nation along religious lines. This is especially where there is a multiplicity of religions. It may also cause strife and tension, which can turn out to be a threat to peace. There are far many good qualities to look for in a candidate other than just religion. It is imperative for campaigners to come out as candidates of all people, religious and non religious. Every voter matters. Each person's rights to belong or not to belong to a religion must be respected.

Examples:

While contributing to the debate on security, Dida says:

*I don't know why people run away from God. God has designed and He knows who will be the president of this country. God knows the present, the future...if you get it then it is God who has realised that you are qualified, and if you do not get God has seen that you are not qualified. Accept the defeat.*

Dida, Round 1, (1:56:22)

Dida uses the name of God to sell his candidature to the electorate. Through this statement, he conveys several points. He indicates that he is a man of God, he recognizes God's ability, believes leaders come from God, and that the same God knows the abilities of each candidate. Lastly, he says, a candidate that believes in God should be ready to accept the outcome of an election. Through this, he manages to foreground his credentials before the voters. He depicts himself as a good candidate who loves peace and wouldn't like to see chaos after elections. He promises to respect the decision of the majority because he believes leadership comes from God. He challenges his competitors to follow suit.

Apart from using the statement to campaign for himself, he uses it to attack his opponents. He paints them as people who are not godly, who are selfish and ready to use any available means to grab power. Dida understands that the issue of not being ready to accept results was among the causes of 2007 clashes. So,

indirectly, he is attacking such kind of leaders. He also wonders why some people run away from God. Here, he doesn't mean running away literally but not obeying Him. He attacks candidates who follow their selfish desires without involving God in their plans. He wants the voters to consider this as they prepare to vote.

Example two:

*I agree with the Indian Monk who put in the newspaper that one million Kenyans should write to God for the best decision. I'm not asking you to vote for me, vote for the best.*

Dida, Round 1, (2:05:19)

A Monk is normally believed to be holy and very close to God. By mentioning him the way he did, Dida shows that the best political decision can only be done by involving God through prayer. That is how Kenyans can end up with a good leader; may be, a God fearing leader. This by extension, will guard them against giving themselves leaders who are deceitful, immoral, corrupt and who don't respect their rights. He shows that he respects and obeys God and he is never led by selfishness. He implores on Kenyans that, if by any chance, they think he is not worthy the position who is running for, they should not hesitate to reject him at the ballot. They should give themselves a leader whom they feel will serve them well. He portrays himself as selfless and godly just like the Indian Monk.

Dida adds;

*I take this opportunity to congratulate Kenyans for their patience and endurance. I would like to congratulate the lady with hope, who pulls her son and daughter to school with the hope that life will improve. I congratulate the patience of a young man who pushes a cart which is two times taller than him. When he feels like it is a hard task, he remembers problems at home and he gets patient. I also want to apologize for bad governance, what leaders have done for us. My simple message to them is, "God doesn't sleep and doesn't slumber! He knows us in, out, right, left, centre. You have a God who loves you more than the parents. You have a God who cares for us. Consult God for the right decision. May God guide us to the right path.*

Dida, Round 2, (1:42:30)

This statement raises several issues. There are Kenyans who live in abject poverty but with a lot of tolerance and patience. There are mothers who suffer a lot of pain in their search for daily bread. Young unemployed people are forced to do hard and risky jobs in order to fend for themselves. Life is so difficult. All these, according to Dida, are as a result of bad leadership. On behalf of the bad leaders, corrupt leaders, selfish leaders, he apologises to Kenyans. He reminds people

that God is aware of their suffering. He asks them to return to God and ask for His direction so that they can elect a good president.

Though Dida does not say it directly that he is the one who qualifies for the seat of president; even if he doesn't say he is the only one who can deal with all the problems bedeviling the people, it comes out openly when he states that Kenyans should pray to God to show them the right direction to follow. He feels he is the most deserving for the position, and if they pray over it, God will direct them to him.

Dida used this technique to attract voters, especially those with religious leanings. With this, he expected to touch them in a way that arouses religious emotions. By this, he targets to control and direct their way of thinking and in the process get them in his political camp. However, there is the risk of Dida losing the votes of those who think he is not a member of their religion. It is advisable for aspirants to come out as leaders for all. They should be ready to serve everyone without any form of discrimination. In the same breath, politicians are supposed to run their campaigns devoid of religious undertones, otherwise they risk dividing the electorate. Religious issues, if not handled with care, can cause disharmony among citizens.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper identified the use of fear mongering and appeal to religion/name of God, as propaganda techniques, in the presidential debate of 2013. Fear mongering was used with the aim of working on the psychology of the voters. Candidates aimed at making the electorate panic because of the candidacy of some people. The users of this technique showed the voters that if they elected certain candidates they would suffer the consequences. It was meant to push people to make quick and unthought out decisions that would benefit the candidates. Appeal to name of God/religion was used by candidates to appeal to religiously inclined voters. They sought to depict themselves as God fearing, religious, moral and politically clean. Candidates explained that they were straight forward candidates who are capable of handling and solving problems bedeviling the nation. They mostly targeted the religious voters. The intended effects were to develop rapport, love and attraction to the voters. They also targeted to create enmity between competitors and the electorate. They wanted to deny competitors votes through painting them as weak, unfaithful, and rudderless people. The researcher recommends an analysis of other propaganda techniques in the debate and established the ones that were more preferred and why.

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