

The Language of Politics: A CDA of the 2013 Kenyan Presidential Campaign Discourse

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Abstract

This paper applies critical and descriptive methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze and unpack linguistic persuasive strategies, concealed meanings and ideologies in the presidential campaign discourses in Kenya leading to the April 4, 2013 elections. The author used both primary data (speeches, party manifestos and campaign video clips) as well as secondary data (newspapers and online sources) to critically analyze the rhetorical devices and strategies used by the main contenders for the presidency - Uhuru Kenyatta of the Jubilee Coalition and Raila Odinga of the Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD). The author argues, and demonstrates, that language is a powerful tool that politicians seeking political power use to not only communicate their policies and ideological positions, but also to create certain perceptions in order to influence and manipulate the voters with a view to gaining an advantage over their opponents.

KEY WORDS: campaign, CDA, discourse, discursive, language, ideology, metaphor, politics, power, rhetoric, semiotics

1.0 Introduction

Politics is essentially concerned with power and authority: how to obtain and appropriate it, how to make decisions and control resources within a jurisdiction, how to control and manipulate the perceptions, behavior and values of those who are governed, among other things. In order to do all these, politicians rely on one key resource - language. This means that politics is inherently dependent on language; hence the notion that “language is (an instrument of) power”. Complex relationships between the governed and those who govern them are enacted and mediated through language.

Since the reintroduction of competitive politics in Kenya following the repeal in 1992 of Section 2(a) of the constitution that had made Kenya a de facto single party state, several political parties compete for political power. General elections are held every 5 years and these elections are preceded by campaigns by various political parties and their candidates. These campaigns provide a platform for political candidates to market and popularize themselves as well as their parties. During these campaigns, more often than not, it is not only what the politicians say that delivers the message home; rather it is how they say it.

The run-up to the 2013 general elections was not any different. Indeed, these elections were arguably the most fiercely contested elections in Kenya's political history. These elections also came at a critical time; being the first elections under a new constitution and also the first elections after the disputed 2007 elections that precipitated the Post-Election Violence in which over 1300 Kenyans died (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

During the 2013 elections, two main coalitions emerged – the Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) led by its presidential flag bearer Raila Odinga and the Jubilee Alliance led by Uhuru Kenyatta. In an attempt to win the support of the Kenyan electorate, different players within and without these two main forces (or horses; as they were referred to as) used specific techniques to package their political speeches, policies and manifestos.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views language as “social practice” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) which means that the context of usage has to be considered in the analysis of discourse. Consequently, as a background to the analysis of campaign discourse in Kenya leading to the 2013 elections, it is imperative to explore some unique social and cultural characteristics of Kenyan politics. These characteristics inform the nature of the discourse that played out during the campaigns. Four distinctive features of Kenyan politics are worth noting.

First, Kenya has, perhaps, one of the most dynamic and competitive political environments in Africa. Since the reintroduction of competitive politics, several political parties have emerged and maintained an active presence on the Kenyan political scene. The competition for political power gets fierce and even dirty during the campaigns as candidates and their parties try to popularize themselves and attack their opponents. Politicians have come to realize that it is not what they say that will endear them to the public, but rather is how they say it. Consequently, they tend to be deliberate in their choice of words and rhetorical devices that will win them support from the electorate.

Secondly, Kenyan politics is inherently ethnic in nature and this is one of the factors behind the Post-Election Violence (PEV) after the 2007 elections. Consequently, political parties and presidential campaigns are organized along ethnic lines. Indeed, nearly half of the 1300 deaths that occurred during the PEV took place in the Rift Valley province that is predominantly inhabited by Kikuyu and Kalenjin ethnic communities (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Partly because of this, politicians campaigning for power tend to attack each other indirectly without naming individual politicians, parties or ethnic communities. Further, it is important to note that the two leading presidential contestants for the presidency in 2013 came from two ethnic communities that have consistently opposed each other since the mid 1960s – the Kikuyu and the Luo. In fact, Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga are scions of Kenya's most famous political families; being the sons of Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta and his former Vice President Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, respectively.

Thirdly, and related to the second feature above, the 2013 elections were being held under the new constitution which was promulgated in 2010. This constitution, among other things, sought to end the ethnic nature of Kenyan politics by requiring political parties to be more inclusive while at the same time criminalizing ethnic “hate speech”. The constitution created the Commission on

National Cohesion and Integration, which, among other tasks was supposed to prosecute politicians who engaged in “hate speech”.

Fourthly, Kenya is a multi-lingual society and this reality is often replicated on the political scene and in campaigns in particular. English and Kiswahili are the official languages as provided by the constitution and politicians could use either of these languages in their campaigns. English is especially preferred in formal speeches where politicians read prepared speeches to their audiences while Kiswahili is mostly preferred during public rallies since it is the *lingua franca*. Typically, however, many politicians engage in code-switching and code-mixing involving those two official languages. Sometimes, they even revert to their own native tongues especially when they have a coded message meant directly to their ethnic communities. In the final analysis, few politicians are comfortable communicating entirely in either English or Kiswahili during political rallies.

2.0 Theoretical Considerations: Principles of CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis is not a homogenous theory or conceptual framework. Rather, it is a broad spectrum of several approaches of analyzing discourse. CDA encompasses different approaches, which engage in the social analysis of discourse, and these approaches “differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues to which they tend to give prominence” (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Teun van Dijk (1993) asserts that:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is obviously not a homogenous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but at most a shared perspective on doing linguistics, semiotics or discourse analysis. (Horváth, p.45)

However, different theorists agree that CDA is primarily concerned with language use as a socially constructed practice. Language is not used in vacuum but rather in particular social, political, cultural and psychological contexts. With this in mind, CDA seeks to explain the complex relationships between the structure of texts and their social functions especially when they are used to create and maintain differential power relations and structures. Therefore, there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and the social context in which it is produced whereby discourse is shaped by the social context in as much as it also shapes that social context.

Perhaps the most central tenet of CDA is its critical approach. CDA seeks to reveal concealed relations and causes between discourse and society most of which are not evident to the people involved in the discourse. According to Fairclough:

Relationships between discursive, social and cultural change are typically not transparent for the people involved. Nor is technologization of discourse. ‘Critical’ implies showing connections and causes that are hidden; it also implies intervention, for example providing resources for those who may be disadvantaged through change. (1992:9)

In summary, some of the specific principles of CDA that are relevant to this paper include the following principles (van Dijk, 1995).

- a. CDA offers critical approaches or methods of studying spoken or written discourse
- b. CDA is characteristically multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary

- c. CDA focuses on power, dominance and inequality and how these are reproduced or resisted by various social groups in their discourses (determined by class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.)
- d. CDA is not limited to verbal or written texts alone but studies other semiotic aspects including gestures, pictures, film, sound and music.
- e. CDA seeks to reveal implied or hidden social structures of dominance of one social group upon another as well their underlying ideologies. It focuses specifically on strategies of manipulation, legitimation and manufacture of consent used by groups such as the powerful elite or those in authority.

3.0 Analyses and Discussions

The CDA analysis of political campaign discourse will be conducted at the following levels: vocabulary/diction, grammar (referencing, nominalization, modality, sentence structure), semantics (paradigms of meaning including figurative language) and pragmatic strategies including implicature.

3.1 Diction and Vocabulary

Since the re-introduction of competitive politics in Kenya in 1992, two main ideologically opposed forces have dominated the political landscape. On one hand, there are politicians who are perceived to be pro-establishment and are keen to maintain the status quo from one regime to the next. On the other hand, there are politicians who seek a departure from the status quo and agitate for “change” in the political dispensation.

During the campaign leading up to the 2013 elections, this dichotomy was captured and expressed in various ways by the leading presidential campaign teams.

3.1.1 Two-Horse race

Despite the fact that a total of eight (8) politicians and political parties competed for the presidency during the 2013 elections, one of the leading contestants had earlier on declared that the elections were going to be a two-horse race and that the rest were “donkeys”. This politician’s claim came to pass as two main forces were in contest during these elections. Initially, two parties namely the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and The national Alliance (TNA) represented these two forces. Later on, these two “horses” formed alliances with other smaller parties (the “donkeys”) in order to come up with the Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) and the Jubilee Alliance; respectively.

It is instructive to note that the formation of these alliances was not as random as it would appear. Given the fact that Kenyan politics is essentially organized and contested along ethnic lines, it was expected that one coalition would coalesce around the Kikuyu candidate who typically enjoys support of the majority Kikuyu community and larger so-called “Mt. Kenya” communities that include the Meru and Embu. The other coalition was obviously going to back the Luo candidate who enjoys maximum support from Luo Nyanza and other smaller groups.

This duality can be explained historically dating back to the First Republic when the then President Jomo Kenyatta fell out with his former Vice-President Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Oginga Odinga went on to initiate opposition politics in Kenya in 1965 and since then the Luo have remained the face of opposition politics. Like his late father, Raila Odinga went on to carry the opposition tag and continued to resist the status quo especially during the Second Republic under former President Daniel arap Moi and spent several years in detention. In 2002, Raila supported Mwai Kibaki to victory against Uhuru Kenyatta who was Moi's preferred successor. However, in 2007, Kibaki defeated Raila in a disputed election that plunged the country into chaos. This is how Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga came to be the "horses" in the presidential elections.

However, the 2 "horses" knew that they could not rely on their respective tribal bases to secure the presidency - hence the need to bring in a few "donkeys" to form alliances with their respective parties. Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) brought in Kalonzo Musyoka's Wiper Democratic and Moses Wetangula's Ford Kenya) along with other smaller parties to form the Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD). Meanwhile, Uhuru Kenyatta's The National Alliance party brought in William Ruto's United Republican Party, Gideon Moi's former ruling party Kenya African National Union (KANU) together with other smaller groups to form the Jubilee Alliance.

3.1.2 Party and Alliance Names

The names given to the main political parties and the Alliances that that contested the presidency imply certain ideological orientations of those parties and alliances. On one hand, there are those names that suggest a reformist ideology while others suggest a nationalist, status quo ideology. Specifically, CORD Alliance regarded and referred to itself as pro-reform and pro-change while they sought to depict the Jubilee Alliance as anti-reform and pro-status quo. Purely on the surface level, the *Coalitions for Reform and Democracy* picked that name to communicate to the electorate their agenda for the country. The main party in the CORD Coalition; the *Orange Democratic Movement*, is thought to have gotten its name and inspiration from the Orange Revolution in Ukraine of November 2004 – January 2005 that was sparked as a result of a fraudulent presidential election between popular opposition politician Viktor Yushchenko and then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych. Ideologically, therefore, ODM and by extension CORD, was positioning itself as the agent of change from the established political status quo. It is also noteworthy that both ODM and Wiper Democratic Party have the "democratic" label on their names.

On the other hand, there was the Jubilee Coalition that implied a sense of continuity, stability and status quo. Coincidentally, the 2013 elections were carried out the same year that Kenya was marking its Golden Jubilee; its 50th year since independence from colonial rule. Therefore, it can be argued that the name *Jubilee* was specifically picked because of the symbolism it represented. The term *Jubilee*, carried not only Biblical implicatures (which will be discussed further later) but political ones as well. Jubilee has in it not just celebration but also continuity. The three main parties in the Jubilee Coalition – TNA, URP and KANU – had one thing in common: they had overwhelming support from communities that have produced all the three presidents that

have ruled Kenya since independence. In particular, KANU – led by Gideon Moi, former President Moi’s son, is Kenya’s independence party that was in power for close to 40 years (1963 – 2002); with Jomo Kenyatta (1963-1978) and Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002) being at the helm.

Furthermore, whereas the CORD coalition parties foregrounded their “democratic” values in their names, the Jubilee Coalition, on the other hand, emphasized nationalist and “republican” ideals as can be seen in their names - The National Alliance (TNA), United Republican Party (URP), Kenya African National Union (KANU). The “nationalist” and “republican” branding of the parties seems to suggest a sense of continuity and the maintenance of the status quo.

3.1.3 Contrastive Pairs

Whereas the distinction between the “horses” and the “donkeys” of Kenyan politics was the hallmark of election campaigns of 2013, there were other terminologies that were employed that were designed to distinguish the leading contenders to the presidency; particularly Jubilee Coalition and CORD.

3.1.3.1 Young versus Old Guard

The 2013 presidential election was contested at another level – that of age. The Jubilee Coalition presented a youthful team compared to that of CORD. Jubilee’s presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta is 52 years old and his running mate William Ruto is 46 years old. One of their campaign strategies was to consistently argue that they the time of the old guard is over; that it was time for young leaders to take charge of leading the country. Time and again, they argued that the generational transition was underway and that the Jubilee generation was the future of leadership in Kenya. The goal was to paint the old guard as lacking fresh ideas to propel the country forward. Raila Odinga, at 68 years old was repeatedly asked during the presidential campaigns to “retire” from politics; just as his co-principal in the Coalition government, Mwai Kibaki, was retiring from politics. Raila’s running mate, Kalonzo Musyoka is 59 years.

Moreover, Jubilee campaign argued that the old guard had served in government before (Raila as Prime Minister and Kalonzo as Vice-President) and was considered tainted with past failures in government, which they now criticized. On the other hand, Jubilee argued that they have not been given a chance to prove themselves.

3.1.3.2 Digital versus Analogue

Jubilee Coalition conducted their presidential campaign as the digital generation while depicting their principal rivals; CORD, as the analogue generation. The context of this contrast is that the Kenyan government had set a policy to migrate from analogue to digital television broadcasting in Kenya in line with international requirements and the worldwide analogue switch off on 17th June 2015. Indeed, government had set a deadline of 13th December 2013 for all television set owners in Kenya to switch from analogue to digital transmission. However, this deadline has been challenged in court leading to a delay in the switch.

On the presidential campaign stage, however, the tone had been set. The “analogue” politicians had to be phased out. Their generation, their priorities and approaches were painted as

outdated. As if to drive the digital message home, the Jubilee manifesto promised that if Jubilee won the elections, all class one pupils in Kenya's public schools will be given free laptops. It is instructive to note that the Jubilee government is keen to implement that promise even though the January 2014 beginning date seems unlikely.

3.1.3.3 Us versus Them

The use of indefinite pronouns and adjectives in political campaigns in Kenya is nothing new. However, during the campaigns for the 2013 elections, these pronouns became even more popular due to, among other reasons, the passing of a law that banned hate speech during political campaigns. Consequently, whenever a politician attacked rival candidates or parties, it was common to hear of "some" people, "us", "them", among others. In an ethnic-oriented political field such as Kenya's, the said law outlawed the denigration or insulting of other ethnic communities - hence the use of these indefinite references. Sometimes, it became difficult to know if the politicians were referring to "us" or "them" as political parties or ethnic communities.

One of the several constitutional commissions that were created by the Kenyan Constitution in 2010 was the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) whose mandate, among other things, included working towards national unity by fighting ethnic and uncivil discourses among politicians especially during political campaigns. Indeed, such ambiguous references like "us", "them" became desirable and even deliberate since they enabled those who used them to go around the hate speech law.

In spite of the hate speech law, some politicians and campaign operatives managed to conjure and employ the ubiquitous denigrating references like "Mt. Kenya mafia" or simply "Mt. Kenya" to refer, pejoratively, to the Kikuyu community together with their "cousins" from the larger Meru and Embu regions. By using the "Mt. Kenya" label to refer to a block of ethnic communities, these politicians were cleverly propagating an ethnic agenda without the risk of prosecution. Other such demeaning references include "*jamaa wa nusu mkate*" which in Kiswahili means "that fellow of half-a-bread" - to refer to Raila Odinga and the fifty-fifty coalition government with Mwai Kibaki which in reality was anything but fifty-fifty.

The question of whether or not the NCIC will achieve its long-term objectives and mandate is contentious; but its mere existence made some politicians check their discourses during the campaigns and avoid references that would be construed to be discriminative either on tribal, gender or religious affiliations.

3.1.4 Metaphorical nominalizations: "Hustler"

The very nature of political discourse on the Kenyan competitive political scene is indirect and symbolic in reference. Perhaps the best illustration of this strategy was applied by William Ruto; the current Deputy President. During the campaigns leading to the March 2013 elections, Ruto introduced the concept of "hustling" and ultimately the nominalized form "hustler" to refer to those politicians like himself who were considered "outsiders" who "struggled" and "hustled" their way into the epicenter of political power.

Prior to its adoption into the political campaign discourse, the term “hustler” was commonly and colloquially used in Kenya to refer to someone who is struggling to make it in life; especially jobless youth who are trying everything to survive. During the campaigns, this term was politicized and popularized by Ruto to refer to youthful, aggressive and self-made politicians who have made it on their own; as opposed, perhaps, to others who made it to a political office owing to their being born into already established political families. Thus, Ruto the “hustler” became the manifestation and embodiment of this phenomenon.

In this context, the term “hustler” can be understood at two different levels. In the context of the two main political forces that were competing for the leadership of the country; namely Jubilee Coalition and CORD, this tag captures the spirit of the young energetic political player compared to, say the likes of Raila Odinga who was considered the opposite of that. It is a well-known fact that Ruto began his political career from the Youth for Kanu (YK 92); a political outfit created by the former President Daniel arap Moi to mobilize and fundraise for KANU – the then ruling party. On the other hand, Raila Odinga is the son of the former Vice President and “father” of opposition politics in Kenya, the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Comparatively speaking, therefore, Ruto is by-and-large a self-made politician and so the term “hustler” helps to clarify that distinction.

The second level is within the Jubilee Coalition itself. Ruto the “hustler” quite literally stormed into the Jubilee leadership on account of his political position as the “leader” of the Kalenjin nation; a huge voting block that Uhuru Kenyatta desperately needed in order to secure the presidency. Uhuru Kenyatta inherited the leadership of the Kikuyu nation from the then outgoing President Mwai Kibaki. But most instructively, Uhuru Kenyatta was literally born into power being the son of the first President of the Republic of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. His ascendancy to the apex of the populous Kikuyu and by extension GEMA nation (comprising of the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru ethnic block) was smooth and almost effortless. Ruto, on the other hand, owes his ascendancy to the leadership of the Kalenjin to his pursuit of his own political ambitions aggressively, tactfully and strategically. In this sense, his hustler deportment sets him apart and distinguishes him as well as his style of leadership from that of Uhuru Kenyatta who is more of a prince; the scion of Kenya’s first First Family.

3.1.5 Euphemistic Implicatures: Prayer Rallies

A common cliché in the Kenyan political discourse is that politics is a dirty game. Given their statuses in society, political leaders try to determine how the public perceives them as well as their intentions – including making attempts to sanitize those perceptions and intentions. Often, politicians vying for positions of power held many campaign rallies that they euphemistically referred to as “prayer rallies” in order to give the perception that the agenda for such rallies was holy and Godly when in actual sense the usual political bickering, name-calling, “character assassinations” were the main discourses. In other words, when circumstances dictate that political discourse is unsuitable in a given social context, politicians call for “prayer” rallies whereby they transact their usual business under a different name. This means that politicians not only possess the power to “name” or “rename” rallies and proceed to vary the agenda to suit their interests; they can

also vary their utterances from one discursive context to another in order to circumvent legal provisions and achieve their political goals.

For instance, on February 24th 2013, just a few days before the March 4th 2013 elections, the leading presidential contenders congregated for “national repentance prayers” at Uhuru Park – a park that symbolizes Kenya’ independence. One “prophet” David Owuor hosted those “repentance prayers” that were attended by Uhuru and Raila with their running mates as well as other presidential candidates. Standing at the podium hand-in-hand, they pledged unity and promised to remain “united” even as they “forgave” their “enemies” (to view the video clip click the following link: <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/choice2013/tv/index/2000063981>). Further, they promised to respect the outcome of the elections and work with the winner. No sooner had the rally ended than they got back to attacking each other with vengeance.

This means that politicians can project a certain image by virtue of their discourses; both spoken and unspoken for purposes of creating desirable perceptions among the electorate. The meanings of the words “repentance”, “forgiveness” and “unity” as used in these “prayers” as assigned by the political leaders and the “prophet” were at variance to the meanings that are commonly associated with those words from the perspective of the audience.

4.0 Grammatical strategies

4.1 Modality

Modality deals with both relational and expressive values in grammar and it is concerned with the truth-values of propositions made in a discourse. Fairclough (2001) states as follows regarding modality:

Modality is to do with speaker or writer authority, and there are two dimensions to modality, depending on which direction authority is oriented in. Firstly, if it is a matter of the authority of one participant in relation to other, we have *relational modality*. Secondly, if it is a matter of the speaker or writer’s authority with respect to truth or probability of a representation of reality, we have *expressive modality*, i.e. the modality of the speaker/writer’s evaluation of truth. (p.104)

In this discussion, our focus shall be on the expressive modality as overtly represented in the different auxiliary modal verbs like may, might, must, should, can/cannot, ought to, should, would, will, shall, among others, and how these communicate a speaker or writer’s attitude, confidence and/or commitment to a proposition. Modality can also be expressed in other grammatical elements including certain types of main verbs, adjectives, adverbs and nominalizations (Lillian, 2008; Fairclough, 2001) which shall not be discussed here. Writers or speakers will thus communicate attitudes of obligation, possibility, ability, desirability, advisability, necessity, probability, and so on, depending on their choices of modal verbs.

An analysis of both Jubilee Coalition and CORD manifestos reveals contrasting discourses in terms of expressive modality. The table below shows a tabulation of eight of the most commonly used modal auxiliaries, their communicative functions and their frequency of usage in the CORD and Jubilee coalition manifestos.

Modal Verb	Function	Incidence in CORD Manifesto	Incidence in Jubilee Manifesto
Must	Obligation Strong belief	1	15
Will	Show willingness Make a promise	32	126
May	Possibility	2	0
Should	Expectation Desirability Moral Duty	0	13
Would	Desirability Advisability	0	10
Can	Possibility Ability	2	22
Could	Past ability Possibility	0	1
Shall	Future suggestion	0	4
TOTAL USE OF MODAL VERBS		37	191

Table 1. Incidence of modal verb usage in CORD and Jubilee manifestos

Regardless of the fact that the Jubilee manifesto was much longer than the CORD one (72 pages versus 17 pages), the contrast in the use of modality is quite significant – whereas CORD used 4 different modal auxiliaries 37 times, Jubilee employed 7 modal auxiliaries 191 times. In other words, Jubilee’s strategy was to be more emphatic, willing, determined, authoritative and capable than their CORD counter-parts.

One interesting incidence is that of obligation by the use of the modal auxiliary “must” especially in emphasizing what Jubilee government “must” do (not just will do):

- a. The Government **must** act to keep Kenyans safe.
- b. ...discrimination and hatred among our many communities **must** be finally stamped out altogether.
- c. Kenya **must** continue to provide leadership in East Africa...
- d. Our hospital services **must** be improved...
- e. This means that we **must** improve our infrastructure..
- f. Besides, power **must** be decentralized..

This in effect makes Jubilee’s promises appear more than mere proposals to suggest realities that must be achieved once Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto ascend to power. Similarly, the Jubilee manifesto uses the modal auxiliary “will” 126 times and in the process expresses a great sense of not just possibility but especially willingness of the political leaders to deliver on those promises.

4.2 Slogans

A slogan is a brief catchy and memorable phrase used by a political party or movement to express its motto. During the campaigns for the 2013 elections in Kenya, the two leading coalitions – CORD and Jubilee used their slogans to rally their supporters. Instructively, both of them crafted their slogans in Kiswahili. This was perhaps designed to ensure that those slogans reach the population in the “grass roots” where Kiswahili is more widely used; compared to English. At the same time, Kiswahili naturally brings out a nationalistic identity for a political party or coalition than any language.

The CORD slogan was *Tuko Tayari* (We are Ready). The pronominalization (we) implies a collective preparedness of both the leaders and their followers to undertake a particular task. At the same time, *Tuko Tayari* is also not only vague and ambiguous but also inclusive enough to just about any political activity or programme including “being ready” to lead the country.

The heading on the CORD manifesto proclaims that CORD is ready (*Tuko Tayari*) to unleashing Kenya’s potential:

**CORD
MANIFESTO
2013**

Unleashing Kenya’s potential

The interpretation is here is that certain obstacles (such as tribalism and corruption) are restraining Kenya’s potential. The implicature is that CORD will eliminate these obstacles to unleash that potential. “Unleash” is a powerful verb that suggests an instantaneous and strong release; which denotes a revolutionary political ideology for social and political change.

On the other hand, Jubilee Coalition used its own Swahili slogan *Kusemana Kutenda* (To Talk and to Act). This slogan not only captures the motto of Jubilee; it also seems to attack the competitors who probably just “talk without acting”. Indeed, this slogan was crafted and popularized by the United Republican Party of William Ruto, soon after Ruto defected from Raila Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement. The slogan was used by the Jubilee to offer a wide range of promises to the electorate, which could be implemented once the coalition took power.

Jubilee’s manifesto promises to be ideologically distinct from that of CORD. Unlike CORD, which is revolutionary in approach, Jubilee seems to adopt a transformative approach to change. The heading says:

**TRANSFORMING KENYA
SECURING KENYA’S FUTURE
2013 - 2017**

Jubilee promises to be transformative rather than revolutionary; futuristic rather than instantaneous. Moreover, Jubilee’s manifesto was a long-term (5-year) plan; something that CORD did not do.

5.0 Rhetorical Strategies

Political campaigns in Kenya are interesting and unique in many ways. Political rallies have become theatres where the actors come to entertain their audiences and seduce voters. Indeed, political rallies in Kenya have over time grown become more and more entertaining in so far as the rhetoric techniques that politicians use including riddles, proverbs, allegories, metaphors and storytelling.

5.1 Riddles

A riddle is a statement or question crafted and told in such a way that it will require the audience's ingenuity to decipher its intended meaning. Riddles are effective tools of communication if used well because they provoke and engage the audience as much as they are puzzling and entertaining. Political riddles in the Kenyan political campaign scene are mostly associated with the former Prime Minister Raila Odinga so much so that his opponents in Jubilee sarcastically refer to him as "*yule jamaa wa vitendawili*" (Kiswahili for "that guy who speaks in riddles"). Characteristically, Raila liked communicating during the campaigns by using the riddle technique, usually in Kiswahili. This is a pragmatic and powerful technique that is also safe and humorous from the point of view of the audience.

In an interview he gave to the *Sauti Zetu Show* in Dallas, USA, Raila says that during his campaign rallies, the audience expected and even demanded that he uses a riddle. He argued that riddles enabled him to drive the point home in a manner that "is closer" to his audience and which ensures effective communication. For example, a few weeks to the 2013 general elections, Raila used this riddle in Kiswahili: *Mbwa wangu anapenda kubweka lakini haumi* (My dog likes barking but cannot bite). This was a coded attack on a government officer who was attacking Raila on behalf of his (the officer's) boss who happened to be opposed to his stab at the presidency.

5.2 Metaphors

Various types of metaphors were used during the campaigns. In particular, Raila Odinga routinely used this technique to pass his message in a more colorful way. One popular type of metaphor he employed was the football commentary metaphors.

Football metaphor and commentary was, perhaps, Raila's most favourite rhetoric strategy that he used to work up and excite crowds that attended his rallies. A self-proclaimed lover of football, Raila Odinga usually used this strategy to illustrate the political contest between him and his team (CORD) and the opposing team led by Uhuru Kenyatta.

The structure of the football narrative will include announcing the line-ups of the two "teams" and their respective positions including the goalkeepers, defender and forwards. Instructively, Raila Odinga himself played the position of a striker. In his hilarious commentary of the game, Raila will have the CORD team outplay their opponents with deft moves that leaves them dazed and falling all over the place. The climax of the commentary will see Raila get a pass from Kalonzo Musyoka (his running mate for the Presidency), which he (Raila) will skillfully drive home to score the goal. This will usually draw roaring cheers from the crowds.

This football imagery and commentary served several pragmatic functions. First, this metaphor was meant to create the perception that Raila is a team leader and team player.

Moreover, it passed the message that like in football, one cannot score a goal (i.e. capture the presidency) by playing alone. Secondly, the metaphor projected victory for Raila and his CORD team in the elections as symbolized by the “goal” that Raila scored. It is worth noting that even after Raila lost the contest for the presidential election, both in 2007 and 2013, he still manages to use the same football imagery to claim that he scored a genuine goal only for the referee to rule him offside. This is an indirect reference to his conviction that his victory was stolen courtesy of the existing governments through the electoral body.

It is not just Raila Odinga who liked using football metaphors. Musalia Mudavadi, another presidential contender in the 2013 elections, called himself the Messi of the Kenyan political game. Football fans around the world know Lionel Messi, the Argentinian and Barcelona FC super star. He is famous for his clean but tactful footballing skills that have seen him break goal-scoring records. Mudavadi projected himself as the Mr. Clean of the Kenyan politics with no skeletons in the closet. He presented himself as the leader who would sanitize the otherwise dirty Kenyan political game. During the presidential debate, Mudavadi called he a “safe pair of hands” that Kenya so desperately needed; implying that both the Jubilee and CORD coalitions were dangerous propositions.

Whereas Mudavadi called himself Messi, Raila Odinga variously saw himself as Pele and Fabregas; in reference to the legendary Brazilian (Pele) and former Arsenal FC and Spanish footballer Cesc Fabregas. That Uhuru and Ruto did not venture into these football metaphors is not by coincidence. Raila and Mudavadi come from football loving communities in which Kenya’s most popular football clubs (Gor Mahia and AFC Leopards) have their bases. Therefore, communicating in “football language” brought the message home more powerfully.

Other metaphors other than the football metaphors were also used. In a number of occasions during the campaigns, Raila Odinga spoke of the CORD campaign in terms of River Nile. He could say that the flow of the Nile towards Egypt was so strong that nothing or nobody can stop it from getting to Egypt. In fact, anything that would attempt to stand in its way will be swept away. In this case, Raila was comparing his political movement – CORD - to the River Nile. The message was that CORD with its reformist agenda was going to sweep away those opposed to it on its way to power (Egypt). Obviously, the outcome of the 2013 elections suggests that there were considerable obstacles that must have diverted the river’s course.

Prior to the elections, Raila Odinga had predicted a political “*tsunami*” – a metaphorical reference to an election landslide victory that he was to score at the presidential elections. Ironically, however, the “*tsunami*” prophecy did not come to fruition.

5.3 Allegories

An allegory is a story or narrative that conceals a political or moral meaning. This technique, was again, perfected by Raila Odinga. In one such instance, Raila began to engage the crowd at a rally with a riddle by saying “my hump is my store; who am I?” When the crowds could not solve the puzzle, he offered the answer; “It is a camel”.

Using the same metaphor of a camel, Raila went on to tell a story of a man who had built a tent in the desert. Then a camel came along and requested to share the tent but the man pointed out that the tent was too small. The camel pleaded to be allowed to at least have his head in the

tent to shelter from the hot sun and the man obliged. Only for the camel to say that his neck is so hot and asked to be allowed to shelter his neck as well. After the man allowed the camel's neck into the tent, the camel claimed that the fat in his hump is boiling from the heat. Before, long the whole camel was inside the tent, which could hardly hold both of them. So the camel said the since the tent is too small for both of them; it was time for the man to leave the tent.

The symbolic message that was coded in this allegory is that Raila nurtured and mentored a certain political leader only for that politician to turn against him. Such rhetoric strategies are left for interpretation since the speaker avoids naming individuals by name and often many individuals could easily be the ones targeted by such narrative techniques. Ultimately, such strategies deliver the message in a powerful way that also avoids direct criticism.

5.4 Proverbs

A proverb is a short, pithy statement that contains a general truth, maxim or piece of advice. Political discourse in Kenya, especially, during campaigns, is usually bilingual whereby candidates tend to use both English and Kiswahili. Kiswahili is especially preferred when it comes to communicating well-known maxims and words of wisdom. The contesting forces in the presidential elections in 2013 made efforts to draw from the sages various proverbs, which they used to drive their arguments home.

One motif that ran through most of Raila Odinga's campaigns was betrayal. He, time and again, asserted that despite his now famous "Kibaki *Tosha*" (Kibaki is the Leader) proclamation that galvanized support for Kibaki leading to his ascendancy to the presidency in 2002; Kibaki went against an MoU which they signed prior to the elections. The 2007 elections were, of course, fiercely contested and the disputed results led to the Post Election Violence where over 1300 Kenyans lost their lives and more than 65,000 were displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

Despite all these instances of betrayal, Raila Odinga often told his supporters that "*yaliyopita si ndwele, tugange yajayo*" (bygones and bygones; let us focus on the future). Raila Odinga uses this Swahili proverb that emphasizes forgiveness to portray himself in that particular respect; as a forgiving politician who can sacrifice his own ambitions for a broader cause. However, the flipside of it is also presents a tenable argument - that by promoting the maxim that bygones are bygones, Raila Odinga was weak politician and a perpetual election loser who was not learning from history as a consequence of his alleged "stolen victories" at presidential elections.

William Ruto, on the other hand liked to quote a maxim often attributed to Bob Marley popular song *Buffalo Soldier* when he could say "You can fool some people sometimes, but you can't fool all the people all the time". This could be interpreted in different ways but since their greatest competitor was CORD's Raila Odinga; this could have been targeted at him and his insistence that his victories get stolen one election after another.

5.5 Biblical Allusions

Kenya is a predominantly Christian country. Political leaders often like to present themselves as God-fearing and faithful in order to appeal to the electorate. Indeed, Kenyan political leaders use religious forums to project these "holy" images of faithful leaders by turning up in churches or

other religious functions to congregate with their followers. In such scenarios, these leaders promise not to talk about “politics”. But once they get to speak, often they do not finish their speeches before sending coded political messages.

As noted earlier, the Jubilee Coalition, which was formed several months to the March 4 2013 elections, picked its name strategically. Kenya attained independence from the British colonialists in 1963 and so on December 12, 2013 Kenya marked its Golden Jubilee (50 years of existence as a nation). Secondly, with their ages averaging at around 50 years, Uhuru and Ruto considered and marketed themselves as the digital Jubilee generation that would take Kenya forward.

Third, the name Jubilee has Biblical significance that was appropriated by the politicians. In the Bible particularly in the Book of Leviticus, Jubilee is proclaimed as the year of liberation; it shall come after “seven weeks of years, seven times seven years” when “you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout your land to all its inhabitants (Leviticus, 25: 10 – 11). It is not surprising; therefore, that during the campaigns leading to the 2013 elections, some sections of religious leaders claimed that Uhuru and Ruto were “anointed” by God to lead Kenya. Obviously, such Biblical references and proclamations were designed to appeal to the Christian voters.

CORD and in particular its presidential candidate also used this strategy. Raila Odinga would talk of Kenyans as the Children of Israel whom he needed to deliver into Canaan. During one of his campaign rallies, Raila said that when he delivers the Israelites into the promised land, he will ensure equitable distribution of resources. He said that “In the Bible, Joshua divided Canaan’s resources according to the 12 tribes of Israel and similarly when we cross to Canaan next year, we will share this cake equitably among the 42 tribes” (*Standard*, December 11, 2012).

Raila went ahead to challenge the Jubilee to return stolen property as it was said in the Bible:

In the Bible, Jubilee means fifty years and during this time, prisoners and thieves were freed while those who had stolen were asked to return. So, we are asking our colleagues in the Jubilee alliance whether they are ready to return stolen property. (*Standard*, December 11, 2012)

6.0 Song and Dance Performances

Political campaigns in Kenya have become a performing arts competition; especially so for presidential candidates. Watching and listening to the song and dance that took place at political rallies addressed by the leading presidential candidates during the 2013 presidential elections, one would be excused for thinking that some huge competitions for performing artists were underway. Before addressing political rallies, politicians set the mood with song and dance to various catchy tunes purposefully selected to communicate some political messages.

CORD politicians led by Raila Odinga are thought to have popularized the art of performance campaigns beginning from the 90s. One politician who stands out when it comes to political song and dance is Otieno Kajwang (a former ODM Member of Parliament and currently Senator). Kajwang’s performance of his trademark tune “*Bado Mapambano*” (“The Struggle Continues”) best exemplifies this feature. This particular song is popular within the ODM party that is part of the CORD coalition as it carries with it the message that the struggle against the status quo is on until change is achieved – *a luta continua*.

Most Kenyan politicians now know that crowds cannot turn up at campaign rallies to be given dry, boring speeches on the such issues as party manifestos and economic recovery blueprints. In fact, entertainment is now an integral ingredient of campaign discourse in Kenya; it is a universal aspect of public engagements since this is a “language” that everyone understands.

7.0 Semiotic Features

Semiosis refers to the process of signification in language and includes a variety of social practices that go beyond the linguistic “text” to include social (and political) activities, relations, objects and instruments, spatial and temporal contexts (Fairclough, 1997; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Apart from the verbal and textual discourses, unique symbolic features of paralinguistic nature defined political campaigns in Kenya during 2013 elections. Symbols such as party colors and flags, party dress codes and branded outfits including clothes, caps, buses and even helicopters were all part of the wider political discourse. Initially, various parties had distinct colors that identified and set them off from the rest of the competition. For instance, the party colours for the main parties included orange for the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), red for Uhuru Kenyatta’s The National Alliance (TNA) Party and yellow for William Ruto’s United Republic Party (URP). All these elements constructed a particular identity of the political parties and their ideologies. For instance, the “orange” is thought to have originated from the Orange Revolution in Ukraine while red for TNA was perhaps an extraction from KANU, which used the red cockerel as its symbol. URP was registered as a political party barely a year before the general elections of March 2013 and its party colours were yellow and black. It is important to note that as political grounds shifted and party coalitions began to take shape; the coalition colours mutated accordingly.

However, even when the URP colours were yellow and black, the party leader William Ruto almost always wore a distinctive outfit; a baseball cap that is branded with the colours of the national flag. This can be seen as Ruto’s attempt to construct his own, unique identity even within his political party and alliance. Ironically, it was clear that despite donning a cap with national colours, Ruto’s political agenda was not solely nationalistic. Indeed, whereas Ruto wore the cap to project a national image of himself, he, by and large pursued a sectarian ethnic agenda that propelled him to the leadership of the Kalenjin “nation” and ultimately to the second most powerful political office in the country – that of deputy presidency. During the on-going cases at the ICC, one prosecution witness claimed that Ruto’s cap carried a coded message for his Kalenjin followers. Even when it is not clear what coded message that was, it is safe to argue that the national colours on Ruto’s cap contained a hidden meaning than what was outwardly represented. It was meant to manufacture and sustain an identity that camouflaged the actual political strategy that was at play - playing an ethnic political card as a way to ascend to national political power.

8.0 Conclusion

This paper analysed the unique nature of political language especially as applied during the presidential campaigns that preceded the March 4, 2013 elections. It sought to demonstrate that politicians have developed unique ways of using language that deviates from “normal”, everyday discourse. The paper discusses the various rhetorical and semiotic techniques that communicated

concealed messages to potential voters. Possible explanations of such coded communication techniques were offered and these included avoiding contravening provisions of the constitution and the attendant legal challenges, presenting a “national” image (rather than the real “ethnic”) identity, disguising party ideologies and generally attempting to keep the peace – especially after the previous elections in 2007 brought about violence in the country. Moreover, other leaders used some popular “discourses” like football commentary, *vitendawili* and song and dance to reach out and “connect” with the so-called “common *mwananchi*” (ordinary citizen).

Overall, this paper argued that the usage of such a diverse range of rhetorical techniques; be they metaphors, symbols, riddles, parables and various grammatical and lexical devices makes the Kenyan political scene rich, interesting and entertaining. In particular, owing to the unique nature of the 2013 elections; coming only after the violence events that followed the previous elections in 2007 and the (year of) Jubilee of Kenyan independence celebrations, the 2013 elections provided rich and colourful repertoire of discourses never seen before in the country.

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