

Ideological Framing of Somali Refugees' Repatriation in the News Reports in Kenya.

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the implications of ideological framing of Somali refugees' repatriation from Kenya in news reports in the Daily Nation and The Standard; as well as in the Guardian and Washington Post. This study was conducted using the comparative research design aimed at providing ideological framing of Somali refugees' repatriation from Kenya. The researcher used a comparative research design to identify and analyse differences and similarities between the arguments by recording outcomes without manipulation. This study's target sources of data are newspaper reports addressing the arguments about the Somali refugees' repatriation from Kenya as reported in the local and international print media. The researcher used news reports about the arguments of Somali repatriation from Daadab in Kenya as reported in the local and international print media by adopting the purposive sampling technique. In this study, data was collected from newspaper reports from both the local and international newspapers that have covered the arguments about the repatriation of Somali refugees from the Daadab refugee camp in Kenya. This study used a qualitative data analysis technique. The study concluded that the media should do more research to come up with an objective ideology from the refugees. Framing of stories based on the donors and government may not always show what is happening at the camp. It recommends that the ideologies that were portrayed strongly in this study are insecurity, sympathy for refugees, donor benefits, instability in Somalia and economic burden.

Key terms: Ideology, framing, repatriation, refugees, print media.

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INTRODUCTION

Ideology is simply a system of meaning that aids in defining and explaining the world and makes value judgments about that world. Ideology as a question of choice and how they project different interests is in the underlying argument that the media framing of issues, stories and sources is undeniably value-laden as it gives direction to the interpretation of issues. The ideologies that were portrayed strongly in this study are insecurity, sympathy for refugees, donor benefits, instability in Somalia and economic burden. An analysis of both the local and international press suggests that the Daadab camp has been a hub for terrorism. Deputy President William Ruto is quoted condemning the camp, saying that the Garissa and Westgate attack was planned there.

There exists evidence of push and pull between the Kenyan government and the international community at Daadab camp. On October 13, 2016, *The Daily Nation* wrote that the government had repudiated a report by MSF that claimed up to 86 per cent of refugees at Daadab do not want to leave. The government claimed that these findings are part of these organisation's self-interests to continue having a presence in Daadab and earn big salaries. The Daadab camp was formed to accommodate the Somali refugees who fled their country in the 1990s due to war. This instability has seen them live in Kenya and funded by international donors. Following attacks on civilians and disciplined forces on the Kenyan soil, the Kenyan government made a decision to repatriate Somali refugees insisting that it was a firm decision and they would not back down.

Since the start of the Daadab camp, United Nations and other organisations have come in to help the refugees. The donors participate in offering quality and affordable healthcare as well as stipends for their upkeep, given that refugees are not permitted to own property for development or leave the camp for employment in Kenya. However, on May 8, 2016, *The Standard* newspaper highlighted the decision by the government to close the Daadab camp. One of the stories headlined the then Foreign affairs CS Amina Mohammed said that the painful decision by the government to close the camp was driven by the high costs they incurred to keep the camp running. Further, the lack of international support had burdened the Kenyan government as part of the challenge.

Kenya's sudden decision to close and repatriate 388,000 Somali refugees from the Daadab camp in May 2016 attracted a lot of attention from both the local and international print media. Despite the wide attention by the media, no scholarly study has been done to show the geopolitical ideologies informing the framing of arguments about the repatriation of Somali refugees from the Daadab camp in Kenya. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the implications of ideological framing of Somali refugees' repatriation from Kenya in news reports in the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* and in the *Guardian* and *Washington Post*.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using the comparative research design aimed at providing a picture of the events as they naturally occur. This study's target data sources are newspaper reports addressing the arguments about the Somali refugees' repatriation

from Kenya as reported in the local and international print media. The researcher uses news reports about the arguments of Somali repatriation from Daadab in Kenya as reported in the local and international print media by adopting the purposive sampling technique. When choosing the sample, the researcher identified the framing of the arguments and settled on 3 news reports from each newspaper by looking at data that has comparable frames. During data collection, the researcher in this study uses data collected from newspaper reports from both the local and international newspapers that have covered the arguments about the repatriation of Somali refugees from the Daadab refugee camp in Kenya. In addition, this study used a qualitative data analysis technique. Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data hence making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen et al., 2007). Specifically, the researcher analyses the data through comparative textual analysis, a study technique used in communication and media studies and understood as the contrast among different macro-level units, such as world regions, countries, sub-national regions, social milieus, language areas and cultural thickenings, at one point or more points in time (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

To summarise these meanings of ideology, we refer to Croteau's (2011) definition of an ideology as basically a system of meaning that aids in defining and explaining the world and makes value judgments about that world. Ideology as a question of choice and how they project different interests is in the underlying

argument that the media framing of issues, stories and sources is undeniably value-laden as it gives direction to the interpretation of issues. For ideological analysis in this study, the key is the fit between the words and images in a certain media text and ideas of thinking about, even defining, social, economic, political and cultural issues.

The media has been prompt to interpret the information regarding the arguments of the Somali refugees from the Daadab camp in Kenya by focusing attention on certain events and then placing them within a field of meaning. The selective processes and news judgments of journalists play a significant part in shaping the news agenda. It is possible that news values and selective processes have an even more important role in the specific reporting and framing of each individual issue (Weaver & Elliot, 2012).

In her thesis to determine how the print media in Kenya reported on the repatriation process of Somali refugees from Kenya, Chemutai (2017) indicates that framing and gate keeping in the Somali case or refugee problem as a whole is attained partly through the use of certain vocabulary and labelling. For example, stories that utilise the famine view are often told by independent journalists and aid agencies that work with the Somali refugees. Similarly, some of the angles also include the fact that terrorists hide in the camp and then attack innocent Kenyans, a view that portrays the refugees as a problem that can be dealt with through repatriation.

It is important to note that Chemutai's study is different from what this researcher seeks to do. Chemutai (2017) studies how the print media in Kenya

reported on the repatriation process of Somali refugees from Kenya. She does not make comparisons with the international media as in this study but goes on to draw on the agenda-setting, priming and gate keeping theories as a guide in order to establish how the print media covered repatriation of refugees from Daadab. Chemutai's study objectives included determining the frequency of the coverage of the refugee repatriation exercise, where she uses the Agenda-setting theory to explain emphasis being put on certain news reports. The researcher in this study does not look at the frequency of reportage; rather, she analyses the implications presented by ideologies informed by the framing of arguments about Somali-refugees' repatriation in the Kenyan and western print media. As in this study, Chemutai assesses the framing of stories on the refugee repatriation exercise. However, she does not analyse the geopolitical ideologies informing the framing of arguments about the repatriation of Somali refugees from the Daadab camp in Kenya and their implications.

The newspapers go beyond mere reporting as they use different rhetoric, linguistic and visual styles, as well as presentations for specific topics and specific audiences (Denham, 2010), which is to identify modes of presentation or frames that journalists use to present information. When the media makes a choice to focus on the opinion of the public on certain topics, they change the perceptions available for the audience, therefore, forming judgments.

Communication would never be able to happen between the media and audiences of ideology and discourse did not exist. Yet, ideology is ever-present in the mass media. Croteau (2011) uses the framing

theory to find out what the intentions and other characteristics of communicators are, detect the existence of latent propaganda or ideology, reflect cultural patterns of groups and describe trends in communication content. This is only an example of how to examine media in our society.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) use the agenda-setting theory to explain how the mass media interacts with and affects the public it targets by emphasising certain issues. The concepts of ideology and discourse are necessary for understanding the media and the relationships of power within society. The discourse helps us to further understand the ideology in the media. It helps us to understand how media texts are made and how they are used. Understanding the discourses is significant in understanding ideological approaches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ideologies that were portrayed strongly in this study are insecurity, sympathy for refugees, donor benefits, instability in Somalia and economic burden as discussed below;

Terrorism Hub/Insecurity

An analysis of both the local and international press suggests that the Daadab camp has been a hub for terrorism. Deputy President William Ruto is quoted condemning the camp, saying that the Garissa and Westgate attack was planned there.

According to an article written by *Daily Nation*, on May 8, 2016, terrorists have taken advantage of Daadab's population and are either "complacent" or directly facilitating activities by terrorist group al-Shabaab. The

refugee camp was home to about 388,000 refugees, most of whom escaped the post-Said Barre wars in Somalia since 1990. Desperate youths born at the camp with nowhere to turn to have become easy targets, and Daadab has become a “fertile ground for recruitment for al-Shabaab” and “where operatives organise youths to join the group”, the government.

The Guardian published a news report on May 11, 2016, in which they held an interview with refugees. The refugees urged the Kenyan government to identify the criminals and not charge all refugees by returning them to Somalia, which they cited as unsafe. The refugees further said that they had raised three generations at Daadab and therefore did not know any other home apart from Kenya. Despite appreciating Kenya's efforts by hosting them, they said that it would be an offence to take them back home while they felt it was not safe for them.

Sympathy for Refugees

There exists a push and pull evident between the Kenyan government and the international community at Daadab camp. On October 13, 2016, *The Daily Nation* wrote that the government had repudiated a report by MSF that claimed up to 86 per cent of refugees at Daadab do not want to leave. The government claimed that these findings are part of these organisation's self-interests to continue having a presence in Daadab and earn big salaries.

International print media outlets, *The Guardian* and *Washington post* highlighted the call of refugees calling on the government of Kenya to reverse plans on the settlement closure, saying proposals for Somalis forced to return to their war-torn country is

likely to amount to a mass death sentence and a breach of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which protects asylum seekers and refugees from being returned to places where their freedoms and lives could receive threats.

The following intermediaries pleaded for sympathy for the refugees claiming that the repatriation is forceful; “We urge #Kenya to reconsider its statement on refugee camp closures. This decision risks the lives of hundreds of thousands of people,” said MSF organisation. “Reckless closure of world's biggest #refugee camp in #Kenya will put thousands at risk,” Amnesty International USA noted, as reported by *Washington Post* on May 9, 2016.

Instability in Somali

The Daadab camp was formed to accommodate the Somali refugees who fled their country in the 1990s due to war. This instability has seen them live in Kenya and funded by international donors. Following attacks on civilians and disciplined forces on the Kenyan soil, the Kenyan government made a decision to repatriate Somali refugees insisting that it was a firm decision and they would not back down.

In their news reports dated May 11, 2016, for *Washington post* and September 15, 2016, for *The Guardian*, they emphasise that Somalia was a conflict zone, faced with security, famine and lacks basic amenities. The refugees are quoted in *The Guardian* claiming that they were suffering a lot due to a lack of health facilities and schools since the country has not stabilised. The refugees stated that they were better off in the Daadab camp since they benefited from the donations and the Kenyan government-provided

health and education facilities. They further stated that Daadab was like home since they have raised three generations from 1992.

In an article by *The Standard* on May 8, 2016, Somalia protests against Kenyan plan to close refugee camp, calling it inhumane since they had no place to stay nor food to eat as they returned. They also complained that there are no education systems to support the children. The majority of people being returned are women, children, and the elderly or disabled, "the most vulnerable sectors of society," in accordance with the American Refugee Committee. This aid group provides healthcare and child protection in the camps. In addition, they accused Kenya of dumping refugees without support.

Donor Benefits

Since the start of the Daadab camp, United Nations and other organisations have come in to help the refugees. The donors participate in offering quality and affordable healthcare as well as stipends for their upkeep, given that refugees are not permitted to own property for development or leave the camp for employment in Kenya.

These benefits have helped the refugees over the years such that they have been comfortable away from their war zoned country. According to the *Daily Nation* report dated October 14, 2016, the refugees were comfortable and wanted the Kenyan government to let them in fully as Kenyan citizens. This is because they wanted access to the Kenyan job market. But in his response during an interview on *The Guardian* news report dated May 11, 2016, Deputy

President William Ruto said that the Kenyan youth are also in a challenging situation due to lack of jobs.

On the other hand, the NGOs that work in Daadab have been at the forefront in refuting the repatriation of refugees. The Kenyan government was firm, claiming that the organisations are benefiting from the donations and a large amount of salaries they receive, hence supporting the Daadab camp's existence; a case in point, the MSF as reported in the *Daily Nation* dated October 14, 2016. On the one hand, Kenya is fighting insecurity threats which they state are aided by the presence of the camp, but on the other hand, the Daadab refugee camp provides a lifeline for a group of people, not only refugees but also the staff who have been there since its inception.

Economic Burden

On May 8, 2016, *The Standard* newspaper highlighted the decision by the government to close the Daadab camp. One of the stories headlined the then Foreign affairs CS Amina Mohammed said that the painful decision by the government to close the camp was driven by the high costs they incurred to keep the camp running. Further, the lack of international support had burdened the Kenyan government as part of the challenge.

On the same day, on May 8, 2016, *Daily nation* framed their story with the headline stating, 'The state maintains refugees must go amid criticism'. Here, the nation newspaper presented the arguments based on the human rights organisations versus the government. In addition, the reportage captured the CS speaking of the high cost of running the camp.

On May 25, 2016, *The Guardian* wrote that the Kenyan government is urging the UK to resettle the refugees. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Deputy President William Ruto emphasised shared responsibility among countries to ease the refugee burden from Kenya. The paper further states that a lot of pressure was put on Kenya to retain the refugees and give them jobs, but this was impossible. The UK government said they would go to Kenya for talks with the Kenyan government on their decline to return the refugees. This story presented the argument of shared responsibility and the camp becoming a burden to the Kenyan government.

The ideologies that were portrayed strongly in this study are insecurity, sympathy for refugees, donor

benefits, instability in Somalia and economic burden. For ideological analysis in this study, the key is the fit between the images and words in a specific media text and ways of thinking about, even defining, social, economic, political and cultural issues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: The ideologies that were portrayed strongly in this study are insecurity, sympathy for refugees, donor benefits, instability in Somalia and economic burden.

Recommendation: The media do more research to develop an objective ideology from the refugees. Framing stories based on the donors and government may not always show what is happening at the camp.

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