

**LANGUAGE USE IN THE KENYAN NEWSPAPER
*SUNDAY NATION***

Reb

BY

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of Master of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Nairobi**

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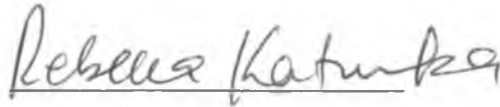
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DECLARATION

This dissertation is my original work and has not been presented for a degree to any other university.



REBECCA NAKALEMA KATUMBA

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.



MR. MAURICE J. RAGUTU



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To my family, thank you for your understanding, you have been very supportive.

DEDICATION

To my family and friends

ABSTRACT

This paper is the result of the study of language use in the *Sunday Nation*, a newspaper of the Nation Media Group, Nairobi, Kenya. Specifically, the paper was out to discover whether the *Sunday Nation* had a definable register, style, focusing on the level of language formality, and whether the newspaper had indigenised English. Fifty-three articles, including editorials and personal columns, from of the *Sunday Nation* were analysed. The articles, covering the period February to October 2003, were downloaded from the internet web page of the Media Nation Group. The study revealed that stock expressions, epithets, clichés, and special use of words, did indeed make up the register of the newspaper. It also revealed that the use of informal language permeated through editorials and personal columns. Informal words were not limited to any one category and the distribution between nouns, verbs and adjectives was found to be almost equal. Informal words occurred less frequently in the adverb category, at least in the data analysed. Indigenisation of English was clearly manifested in the text studied.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study: the *Sunday Nation* in the Brief History of Newspapers in Kenya

In Kenya, the history of newspapers can be traced back to the arrival of missionaries, 'explorers' and settlers starting from the 1890s. After Kenya was declared a British colony, the colonial government started the publication of the *Royal Gazette*. In Wilcox (1975:1) Professor Ali Mazrui says "it is not for nothing that the word for newspaper in Swahili is 'gazeti'. ...The Adam and Eve of newspapers in Africa were government gazettes."

In the new colony, thousands of British nationals made Kenya their home and soon 'settler' newsletters appeared. The settlers considered themselves an integral part of the British Empire and their newsletters provided news from home and the empire. They shared the same views with the colonial government, especially on appropriating land.

To provide cheap labour to build the Uganda Railway, the British imported Asians, mainly Indians. Within a short time, the Indians dominated commercial life and petty trade of East Africa. They too started newsletters to cater for their interests.

At the completion of the Uganda Railway from the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa to Lake Victoria in 1902, a Karachi-born trader, A.M. Jeevanjee, launched the first private newspaper in Kenya, *African Standard*. Jeevanjee then sold the paper in 1905 to two British businessmen, who changed the name to the *East African Standard* and in 1910 moved its headquarters to Nairobi, which became the capital of the British protectorate known as Kenya. In 1995, the *East African Standard* was acquired by the Standard Newspapers Group Limited.

In a review of the history of the press in Kenya, Hachten (1971:200) criticised the *East African Standard* which was the only national private newspaper, for showing little or no interest in the aspirations of the Africans. The Africans were affected by the colonial policies, especially land laws, which left many landless. The Africans started newspapers in their own vernacular to voice their grievances but, were proscribed under the declaration of the state of emergency. The government was empowered to prevent the printing of any material prejudicial to public order; any police or administrative officer had a right to search and seize any publication. The Emergency regulations lasted until 1960.

It was in this fluid situation that saw the launch of the Aga Khan's East African Newspapers in 1960 "to champion the interests of the African population in Kenya," according to the Nation Media Group mission statement. Nationalism was at its peak in the country and from the beginning, the Nation papers identified with African nationalist aspirations. The company started with Swahili publications, *Taifa Kenya*, a weekly, and *Taifa*

Leo, a daily. It was in October 1960 that the *Daily Nation* hit the newsstands and the following year, the *Sunday Nation* did. In 1978, the company was renamed Nation Printers and Publishers Limited. Today it is known as the Nation Media Group. It has five publications in the market: *Daily Nation*, *Sunday Nation*, *Taifa Leo*, *Taifa Jumapili*, and *Coast Express*. The Group also has radio and television stations, broadcasting to almost three quarters of the country.

Both the *Daily Nation* and the *Sunday Nation* referred to as the Group's flagship publications, have developed into authoritative newspapers and are considered to be quality papers. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), the Group publishes 250,000 copies of the *Sunday Nation* per issue.

1.2 Definition of Terms

1.2.1 Editorials

Miller (1976:100) defines a newspaper editorial as an article that contributes to a debate on a timely topic. It convincingly interprets the news, using various persuasive devices, making legitimate play on the readers' instincts and emotions.

Miller (ibid: 103-114) gives four types of editorials. An editorial can be explanatory, a discerning discussion of a topic that is timely and has a reader at heart. There is the argumentative editorial which adopts the point of view thought worthwhile to contribute to the current discussion. It adopts generic statements that are authoritative and sound knowledgeable. This type has a dominant tone of sincerity, anger, or humour. There is the type referred to as an editorial of refutation. The purpose is to destroy the argument advanced by the opposition in a news story, in an editorial from another paper, a letter to editor, or a vicious rumour in the country. An editorial can be formal or informal but he adds that for commercial newspapers, especially those that circulate among educated people, formal editorials are the most effective.

Editorials use 'we' instead of first person singular. Quirk et al (1985:341) explain that there are two types of 'we': the inclusive 'we' and the exclusive 'we' sometimes used for the first person plural pronouns which respectively include and exclude reference to the addressee. "We should in addition distinguish a special type of exclusive 'we' called collective 'we' which indicates a plurality of speakers /writers...one common use of authorial use of we is in serious writing like editorials"(ibid). This 'we' refers to the writer and the consensus of the editorial staff and/or management as the examples below show.

At the same time, those who have made careers of fleecing the national till must now face the music. The tax cheats, we presume, are well known. The tax authorities have no choice but to put their bills in the mail. (Crooks' forty days are over: Editorial, Sunday, February 16, 2003)

We are, therefore, encouraged to note that the newly established anti-terrorist police unit is proving equal to the task. That the officers had managed to arrest the suspects and were taking them to the local police station, when the grenade went off, is laudable. (Step up anti-terror campaign: Editorial, Sunday, August 3, 2003)

The inclusive 'we' is intended to involve the reader in a joint enterprise. It constructs a dual link propagating ideas and at the same time persuading readers that the ideas are correct. It also claims solidarity invoking consensus. Quirk et al (1985:342) say that the inclusive 'we' can also be referred to as rhetoric 'we' used in the collective sense of the 'nation'.

It does not. Instead, it causes injury and a sense of betrayal and reveals that though the US and Britain pay lip service to a coalition of nations massed against the evil of terrorism, we really are on our own. On top of which their actions will do incalculable damage to our country, a matter which they do not seem to regard as of any importance. (Watching our own back: Editorial Sunday, May 18, 2003)

What do we need, a truth commission or a government that is not shy to confront and punish evil-doers?

Are we doing it because we need it or are we doing it because South Africa did it? (Choose what works for us: Editorial Sunday, July 20, 2003)

Editorials employ modal auxiliary verbs in their structure to enable them to express opinions. According to Quirk et al (ibid: 147), from the semantic point of view, modal auxiliaries are often specialized towards the expression of certain speech acts, for example, giving advice (ought to, should), making promises or threats (will), giving orders (must, can) and so on. They give an utterance a force somewhat. This is also true in case of a text.

Hohenberg, (1960:474) advises that an editorial must end in a firm conclusion, clearly and reasonably stated, if it is to have any effect at all. The editorial should urge a course of action upon the reader.

We should mark this week by arriving at the determination that we have taken our environment for granted long enough. Let us set enforceable minimum environmental standards. For example, institutions, such as local authorities, which pump effluent into lakes and rivers must be prosecuted and the officers responsible jailed. In the meantime, plant a tree. (Sweep your own street: Editorial, Sunday, June 8, 2003)

1.2.2 Opinion Columns

Commenting on the advent of opinion columns, Hohenberg (1976: 475) muses that it is a new journalism that has developed out of the complexity of society. It is the journalism of analysis and comment. It dares to evaluate, to measure, to teach. Newspapers have to analyse and interpret news. Hohenberg (1976: 386) remarks that this interpretation adds the factor of judgment to what is called straight news which may or may not represent the truth.

So what the columnist does is to shade light on the meaning or possible meaning of a news event.

A columnist may not have proprietary interest in the newspaper but according to Hohenberg, (ibid: 476) “[i]n his most important manifestation, he is ... columnist with signed article that appears at regular intervals.... He has the privilege of stating his personal views on any subject...”

A columnist has to have deep knowledge of subject matter and is pre-occupied with questions such as why and what are the results. In a column there are usually comparison and contrast and ends with a conclusion often reiterating the point of view of the whole essay.

All this was crowned by a horrendous herding like cattle for slaughter of all dissenting individuals into the Black Holes of Calcutta to subject them to the Islamic third degree torture and murder.

I admit it: I may once have encouraged it and will ask for forgiveness when the time comes. (How did we allow this radical evil? Philip Ochieng, Fifth Columnist, Sunday, February 16, 2003

It is usually written in the first person pronoun and addresses the reader. It aims at substantial literary quality and fidelity to the truth as the writer sees it. It is writing that seeks to encompass aspects of life and culture that may lie beyond the grasp of other forms of journalism.

1.3 Problem Statement

1.3.1 The Nature of Newspaper Language

The *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines a newspaper as a paper that is printed and distributed daily, weekly, or at some other regular and usually short interval and that contains news, articles of opinion (as editorials), features, advertising, or other matter regarded as of current interest.

Every newspaper has its aims and format, and these influence the way the newspaper is prepared and finalized. Journalists are constrained by immediacy, importance of the story, and space. These together with the environment are some of the factors that affect the style of a newspaper.

Newspaper language is categorized as a variety according to the medium of transmission. Quirk et al. (1985:24-25) point out differences imposed on language when it has to be expressed in a graphic medium instead of the primary or natural medium of linguistic communication, speech.

The first difference is situational in that the use of a written medium normally presumes the absence of the person(s) to whom the piece of language is addressed.

This imposes the necessity of a far greater explicitness: the careful and precise completion of a sentence...As a corollary, since the written sentence can be read and reread, slowly and critically...writers tend to anticipate criticism by writing more carefully and elegantly than they may choose to speak. (Quirk et al. p.25)

The second difference (ibid, p. 25) is that the many devices we use to transmit language by speech, such as stress, rhythm, intonation, and tempo, cannot be represented by newspaper language; it is limited to conventional orthography.

Consequently, writers often have to reformulate their sentences to convey fully and successfully what they want to express within the orthographic system. That is why a good grounding in the language is a prerequisite for success in journalism.

Bagnall (1993:1) says that the language of journalism is nearer the spoken word than say, that of a bank manager or politician. He says that politicians may use words which sound grand; experts use obscure words and phrases to show that only they and their colleagues can understand them. "The journalist is the complete opposite. His or her task is to break down the shield and disclose what other may be trying to conceal". (ibid, p.2)

He suggests a news story should be purged of words which sound pedantic and oratorical when they have perfectly good equivalents in ordinary speech. Here below are examples of common words on the left and pedantic version in brackets adopted from Bagnall (1993:4):

answer	(respond)
have	(contain)
lit	(illuminated)
start	(initiate)
try	(attempt, endeavour)

To Bagnall (1993:12), a newspaper, unlike a specialist journal, should avoid jargon because "all jargon is more or less exclusive – only certain people will be able to understand it". The language used should be easily deciphered by the majority of the readers keeping in mind that it is a one way mode of communication because rarely do readers respond.

Newspaper language is also referred to as *journalese* which, according to McArthur (1992:552), is a general, usually non-technical term for the way in which journalists write, or are thought to write.

It is used neutrally (referring to newspaper style at large) and more often pejoratively (implying that such a style is stereotyped, vulgar, and inclined to debase the language).

For example, we have "ban", "curb", "slash", "clash", "drama", "crackdown", and the victim is always "rushed" to the hospital, and so on. Such words make whatever is described more remote from reality.

Bagnall (1993:21) says that certain conventions in news writing labelled *journalese* are necessary for the craft. *Journalese* is used when anonymity is requested or when journalists want to help readers distinguish between fact and rumour. He gives the following examples of *journalese* phrases: growing concern, it is believed, it is understood, I learn... In all of these, either the source prefers anonymity or there is no official confirmation of what is being written about.

1.3.1 The Nature of Language in the *Sunday Nation* specifically

At this juncture it is important to point out that the majority of the people who write in Kenyan newspapers are not native speakers of English. English is learnt at school and is continued to be used especially at work, as a sign of authority, or in elitist circles.

McArthur (1992:21) focuses on English in Africa, be it in creative writing or in the media. To him, continued English use in Africa has contributed to the emergence and recognition of what he calls African English. He posits that in an attempt to transcreate African cultures, African writers have found it necessary to adapt and indigenise certain aspects of the language, including both lexicon and narrative style.

McArthur gives the example of Chinua Achebe writing in *Transition* 18, 1965 where he said that “The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost.” (*Transition*, 18, 1965)

This adaptation of the language to accommodate the African cultural experience combined with the unconscious structural adjustment attendant on language contact and foreign language learning, accounts for the development of an English that is distinctively African. (McArthur (1992:21)

While grammar remains constant, the vocabulary changes and there is borrowing of words and phrases from the local language. In our data, there are words like *matatu*, *harambee*, *nyama choma*, *nyayo*, *mau mau*, *ugali*, *payuka*, *pilau*, and *muratina*. For the average and usual reader to the *Sunday Nation*, there is no need to translate such words in English.

At the same time, those who have made careers of **fleeing the national till** must now **face the music**. (*Sunday Nation* editorial of 16 February 2003)

I will, of course – in mitigation – plead that my contribution was more objective than subjective; that I never wittingly contributed to any official **rip-off**, assassination or human rights abuse. (How did we allow this radical evil? Phillip Ochieng, 16 February 2003)

Whereas it was quite **cute** and witty for the AG to interpret “status quo” to mean Kanu would remain evicted, we need to remember that this is the same kind of cynicism that allowed Kanu to perpetrate its dictatorship and persecute Kenyans. (We have become a Mafioso, Mutuma Mathiu, 2 March 2003)

But fate has a tendency of **screwing** (do ignore the pun) **up** things when least expected. (Unjustified grumbling from **coddled lot**, Gitatu Warigi, 2 March 2003)

In the four passages the verbs “fleecing”, “rip-off”, “cute”, and “screwing up” are categorised as informal by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. “Fleecing” and “rip-off” are common currency in Kenya newspapers, usually associated with stealing public funds. They also come up in discussions involving embezzling public funds.

McArthur (1992:516) defines ‘informal’ as a term in linguistics for a situation or use of language that is common, non official, familiar, causal and often colloquial, and contrasts in these senses with ‘formal’.

There is also curious usage of phrases to drive the message home. For example, “national till”: till usually refers to a cash register or drawer for money in a shop. Can one make fleecing of public funds into a career? Can it be as simple as taking money from a cash register? Babies are coddled for protection. Are some people treated the same way?

This kind of language use has not been met with protests and McArthur (ibid. p. 22) prophesizes that given time, the distinctness of the variety of English in this part of the world will become more evident and the variety more recognized as legitimate by both their own users and the rest of English-speaking world.

To the average newspaper reader, newspapers are viewed as the bastion of the language they choose to publish in. The reader would therefore expect to find formal language only, especially so when a newspaper is taken to be serious as the *Sunday Nation* is taken to be. But Berry (1976:235) says that in newspapers there is diverse but appropriate range of language in that the newspapers change style from formal to informal, it can be conversational, standard or local to fit the occasion.

It is in view of this diverse range that the present study aims at investigating the variety of language use associated with newspapers. The *Sunday Nation* is our area of study. The study attempts to study language use in the *Sunday Nation*, one of the most important papers in Kenya. The paper has a wide range of material, ranging from regular columns, and analyses of news and feature stories. The study focuses on editorials and three opinion columnists considered to be authoritative figures in the Kenya media, Philip Ochieng, Mutuma Mathiu, and Gitau Warigi. Their use of language has earned them respect among their peers as well as the reading public.

Our study is entitled Language Use in the *Sunday Nation*, an English language newspaper published in Kenya. English is a language used by millions of people spread across the world and, naturally, it is bound to break down into varieties. The newspaper is bound to use Standard English, a variety used by the educated speakers of the language, in official circles like courts of law, parliament, and in print, including newspapers.

The study will seek answers to the following questions:

1. Does the *Sunday Nation* have a definable register?
2. In language use, does the *Sunday Nation* use formal or informal language?
3. Does the language used in the *Sunday Nation* show indigenisation of English?

To the best of my knowledge, these questions have not been tackled in post-graduate studies at the University of Nairobi. It is hoped therefore that this study will contribute to the knowledge of newspaper language.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

1. The *Sunday Nation* has a definable register.
2. The *Sunday Nation* uses both formal and informal language.
3. The language used in the *Sunday Nation* shows indigenisation of English.

1.5 Literature Review

In *The Professional Journalist: A Guide to the Practices and Principles of the News Media*, Hohenberg (1969:3) points out that today, the impact of the journalist on public opinion is one of the strongest motivating sources in our society. He adds that apart from informing us of what is new, today's journalist seeks to explain, to evaluate as well as to measure, to shape and influence public opinions and attitudes, and to arbitrate in controversial issues.

And yet, there is limited academic work done in the past to analyse the language used in newspapers. Our problem is the scarcity of literature on newspaper language in Kenya.

Available relevant literature includes, Karanja (1993), which is a study based on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation television discussion programmes using the discourse analysis theory. The study examined the linguistic aspects of moderator/guest interaction during television discussions. She sought to establish among other things, how successive utterances are related; who controls the discourse; how the roles of the speaker and the listener pass from one participant to another; and the linguistic evidence in discourse units larger than the utterance. Karanja (ibid. p.41) found out that during the discussions, figurative language was used and that there was code-mixing. She attributed that latter to the socio-psychological factors related directly to the degree of language tolerance in Kenya.

Kiai (1996) used the same theory to analyse Kenya Broadcasting Corporation radio broadcast programmes for farmers. The study established that there was a better understanding of programmes when there was an interchange of the roles of speaker and listener from the expert to the farmer.

Mbugua (1997) investigated typology and ideology of the *Daily Nation* and *Kenya Times* discourse through headlines and first two paragraphs of editorials, news analysis and sports. The study established that while editorials attempted to influence the reader to a particular stance, news analysis aimed at interpreting and analysing news for the readers. Furthermore, with the juxtaposition of diverse categories ranging from news reports, news analysis, and editorials to sports, for example, Mbugua found out that in single newspaper, there could be several registers. From Mbugua we learnt that earlier on, Mzee's 1980 dissertation explored Swahili registers such as legalese and journalese.

Nyaringi (2003) investigated the interpersonal function of style in Kenyan newspaper advertisements. Using the systemic functional grammar, the study looked at the language from three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The study concluded that the advertising language was innovative; the language enjoyed some 'poetic licence' in that grammar rules could be broken without hesitation; and that the language was distinctive through the use of certain expressions, for example elliptical comparatives.

In studying journalism as a profession, the following publications have been invaluable to the study: Ronicki et al (2001) *Scholastic Journalism*, Miller (1976) *Modern Journalism*, Barton (undated) *The African Newsroom*, Berry (1976) *Journalism in America: An Introduction to the News Media*, Bagnall (1993) *Newspaper Language*, Hachten, (1971) *Muffled Drums: The News Media in Africa* and Wilcox (1975) *Mass Media in Black Africa*. *The Nation Stylebook* (1997) was studied for the publication's house style. It allows contractions, like 'it's', 'we'll', 'didn't', 'hasn't', for saving space.

Quirk et al (1985) *A comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* and Hocking (1978) *All What I was Taught and Other Mistakes* guided our grammatical analysis. McArthur (1992) *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* provided information on newspaper language and various aspects of English use in various parts of the world, including Kenya.

For information on various linguistics theories, we have used Malmkjær (1991) *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*, Trudgill (1998) *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* and Wardhaugh (1998) *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2004), *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary* (2000), *Random House Dictionary*, and *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* were used for reference purposes.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is concerned with language use in the *Sunday Nation*. We are investigating whether the *Sunday Nation* has a definable register, the level of formality, and

whether the paper has indigenised English. Broadly, we are studying language in relation to society which Malmkjær (1991:415) describes as sociolinguistics. She adds that

[m]any sociolinguistic studies are concerned with the way in which language varies according to the social context in which it is used and according to the social group to which a user belongs. It aims to describe this variation and show how it reflects social structure.

Trudgill (1995:84) describes language as a form of social activity which has to be appropriate to the user, be suitable for particular occasions and situations. He argues that the social context in which language is used keeps on changing so that different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes are always at interplay.

In our study, we are interested in linguistic varieties linked to occupation, that is, journalism. Trudgill refers to such as registers.

Registers are usually characterized solely by vocabulary difference: either by the use of particular words or by the use of words in a particular sense...Registers are simply a rather special case of a particular kind of language being produced by the social situation. (ibid. p.84-85)

He argues that other factors connected with the situation in which language is being used, over and above occupation will also have linguistic effect. He cites examples of written language being more formal than spoken; the kind of subject matter under discussion will have an effect, in addition to that of register, on the language produced. He adds that physical setting and occasion of the language activity will also have some consequences.

Linguistic varieties that are linked in this way to the formality of the situation can be termed styles, and can be thought of as being sited along a scale ranging from formal to informal. (ibid. p. 85-86)

In defining style, McArthur (1992:993) borrows Jonathan Swift's definition of style as "proper words in proper places". This definition allows for style to be evaluated and McArthur has two broad groups. One group can be said to be good, rich, elegant, refined, careful and precise while the other can be bad, poor, crude, vulgar, sloppy and slovenly. He says that the latter has tended to be associated with colloquial, especially dialect, speech. In the first group, we can identify formal language use and in the second, the informal use.

So, within the broad framework of sociolinguistics and the narrow ones of registers and style, we are to analyse language use in the *Sunday Nation*.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The scope of our study is focused on analysing language use in the *Sunday Nation*. Within the realm of sociolinguistics, we analyse articles for register and style. It should also be noted that the majority of writers and their readers are not native speakers of English and

we would like to find out whether there is mother tongue influence leading to indigenisation in language use.

The data comes from the *Sunday Nation* and covers editorials and personal columns of Philip Ochieng, Mutuma Mathiu and Gitau Warigi. These writers are held in high esteem by society, regarded as authoritative figures, well-versed in their areas of specialisation.

In analysing the register, we have used McArthur (1992) classification of journalese which includes stock expressions, epithet, clichés and special use of words. This has limited our study. Again for style, we have limited ourselves to level of formality only.

1.8 Methodology

The data of the present study is based on an analysis of random sample of 53 articles of the *Sunday Nation*. Articles were downloaded from the 'Search *Sunday Nation* Web', which enabled us to get articles between January and October 2003 and have an accurate word count.

This is the period when the new government was settling in after a gruelling political campaign. Had we chosen to study before this date, it probably would have been appropriate to investigate newspaper language and ideology. So, the articles reflect a 'normal' period in the country.

The articles studied are contained in annex I of the study. The average length is 700[^] except for Warigi whose articles are slightly over 1000 words. Some editorials are short and therefore where it is the case, two editorials of the same day have been studied.

The results of the study are presented in a tabular form giving the title of the article, number of words, target word or phrase and the percentage.

Mr. Philip Ochieng granted us an audience and extracts from the interview are contained in annex II of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: ASPECTS RELATED TO REGISTER IN THE *SUNDAY NATION*

2.1 Definitions

Wardhaugh (1998: 48) defines register "as sets of language terms associated with discrete occupational or social groups". He expounds his definition with a quotation from Ferguson (1994:20)¹. According to Ferguson,

People participating in recurrent communication situations tend to develop similar vocabularies ...and characteristic bits of syntax...that they use in these situations ... Special terms for recurrent objects and events, and formulaic sequences or "routines" seem to facilitate speed communication.

The definition ties in well with the present study, that is, its concern with the register of the occupational group that writes articles for the *Sunday Nation*. The register used by journalists is usually referred to as journalese. In describing newspaper language in 1.3.1, we briefly touched on journalese, a term classified as informal by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. It defines journalese as 'a hackneyed writing style supposedly characteristic of journalists'. And the *Random House Dictionary* defines journalese as "a manner of writing...characterized by clichés, occasional neologism, archness, sensationalizing adjectives unusual or faulty syntax, etc. used by some journalists, especially certain columnists, and regarded as typical journalistic style".

The Nation Stylebook (1997:70) defines journalese as "cliché-ridden style used by writers who are lazy, worn out or who have a poor grasp of language". It advises against using phrases such as 'a drop in the ocean' or 'a drop in the bucket', 'a veil of secrecy', 'a storm is gathering', 'a total of', 'all roads lead to', 'avoid like the plague', 'a neck and neck race', 'the hushed court', 'ill-fated', 'material day', 'on that fateful day' or 'on the day in question' or 'on the material day', 'as to whether', 'bated breath', 'beefed up security', 'completely destroyed', 'grind to a halt', 'groundswell of support', 'gun-toting', 'hive of activity', and 'murder most foul'. Indeed, going through the 53 studied articles, none of the above phrases were found.

Apart from journalese, epithets are part of the newspaper register. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines an epithet as "an adjective or descriptive phrase expressing a quality or attribute of the person or thing mentioned". Examples of various types of epithets are found in section 2.3.

This chapter will thus look at specific uses of journalese and epithet in the *Sunday Nation*.

¹ *Dialects, Registers, and Genre: Working Assumptions about Conventionalization*.

2.2 Journalese

McArthur (1992:552) says that the characteristics of journelese arise from the nature of newspapers, that is,

ephemeral sheets of paper printed and published to strict deadlines, kept resolutely up-to-the-minute, and designed to attract and stimulate readers whose attention spans, for various reasons, are likely to be short. The profession and the public share a certain cynicism about how this done.

He adds that “working to a deadline and rendering complex issues into reports of the right length and style,” journalists “produce their own structures, short cuts, and standards of excellence”. He identifies several types of journelese, including stock expressions, clichés, and special use of words. We will deal with each case of these in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 Stock Expressions

According to McArthur (ibid.), stock expressions type of journelese is manifested when the writer uses ‘colour’, that is, striking words or graphic details that attract interest. He notes that the use of stock expressions may be praised for its terseness or deplored, and described as inelegant. He adds that

it is, however, as deliberate in its own way and for its own purposes as Homer’s use of phrases like *grey-eyed Athene* or *cloud-gathering Zeus*. It provides ways in which people can be recognized and pigeon-holed.

He gives examples of stock expressions such as ‘bored housewife’, ‘broken-hearted clown’, ‘devout Catholic’, ‘distinguished surgeon’, ‘grieving widow’. In articles that strive for humour, remarks McArthur, words are used that relate to the characters or the occupations of the people concerned: when they face problems, teachers get ‘caned’, cooks are ‘browned off’ or ‘burn with rage’, doctors might be ‘sickened’, butchers might be ‘beefing about something’, or ‘giving it the chop’.

In the studied text, we noted that there were few stock expressions; we found them in only 12 articles out of 53 studied as shown in tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4. Editorials, written by different people, had the highest number of stock expressions. Perhaps low use of stock expressions as described by McArthur could be attributed to the fact that the authors were not native speakers of English.

2.2.1.1 Stock Expressions in Editorials

Table 2.1: Stock Expressions in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Stock expression		%
			Specific expression	No.	
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	-operational public property -eating soiree, an orgy of gobbling and grand larceny	2	0.36
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-well-connected individuals -murderers of Kamiti look like angles	2	0.28
End these dangerous rows	16/03/03	632	-intra-party warfare	1	0.16
A chance to end speculation	13/04/03	585	-sexed-up reports	1	0.17
Truth on age and marriage	20/07/03	324	-lonely game of waiting for death	1	0.31
Step up anti-terror campaign	03/08/03	561	-reeling under the adverse consequences	1	0.18
Total		3,378		8	1.46

In the first half of 2003, there were daily revelations of corruption and mismanagement of the economy by the just ended regime of President Daniel arap Moi and the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU). In order to put the revelations in perspective, the *Sunday Nation* came out with the editorial, 'Crooks' forty days are over'. To the publication, the KANU regime was not about the government of a nation but rather 'eating soiree, an orgy of gobbling and grand larceny'. The graphic expression gives a vivid description of a regime bent on destroying the country and the editorial ends the paragraph with a statement 'it is a miracle that the nation survived at all'.

In 'Truth on age and marriage' the expression 'lonely game of waiting for death' provides a way in which a widow can be recognized in our part of the world. Our society believes that a widow should not remarry, thus 'lonely' is the key word to her status. The editorial used such an expression to graphically show how widows live in our society.

The table shows we have a very low rate of use of stock expressions, the highest occurrence of two appears in two articles, 'Crooks' forty days' are over and 'Sabotage and punishment' making a total of 64 per cent out of 1.46.

2.2.1.2 Stock Expressions in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 2.2: Stock Expressions in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Stock expression		%
			Specific expression	No.	
Mind control to feed the queen bee	08/06/03	665	-(gobbled up) – lock, stock and Powell	1	0.15
Total		665		1	0.15

In 'Mind control to feed the queen bee' Ochieng admonishes the world for believing the United States of America's accusations against Iraq. The then American Secretary of State Colin Powell made a presentation to the United Nations Security Council during which he showed photographs of laboratories where weapons of mass destruction were supposedly manufactured. The accusations turned out to be false. Ochieng borrows the common idiom (swallow) 'lock, stock and barrel' to express his disgust. He relates the expression to Powell's efforts to convince the world of the dangerous weapons and, to Ochieng, the world did not only 'swallow' as the expression is usually used but rather 'gobbled up' that is, the accusations were believed to be true without any second thought. He makes a pun of the idiom 'lock, stock and Powell'. Ochieng like Warigi below has one stock expression.

2.2.1.3 Stock expressions in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Table 2.3: Stock Expressions in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Stock expression		%
			Specific expression	No.	
We have become a mafioso	02/03/03	770	-Danubes of thought	1	0.13
The ugly business of freedom	13/04/03	791	-all mouth -oily obsequiousness -love choir -clash of armour and mortar	4	0.51
G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden	08/06/03	767	-milk of kindness -rigged the international economy	2	0.26

Micro-managing the world	06/07/03	774	-democratic shores of milk and money	1	0.13
Total		3,102		8	1.03

Mathiu's article 'We have become a mafioso' supports a strong opposition political party to keep the government in check. He says governments "need criticism to force them to think and arrive at the best and most legal decisions". He warns that left to themselves, even the best governments slide off in the wrong direction and become know-it-all. He describes them with a metaphor 'Danubes of thought' meaning that like the Danube flows and never dries up, leaders tend to believe they are a well of knowledge with solutions to all problems and know what is best for everybody.

In the 'The ugly business of freedom' he chides the Iraqis for their poor showing in the war and acquiescing to American occupation without putting up any resistance despite the pre-war statements of defiance. He describes Iraqis idiomatically as 'all mouth' because from the many defiant statements made before the war, they were never brave enough to transform them into action. Mathiu describes the switching of sides from supporting Saddam to praising the American President George Bush for 'liberating them', as 'oily obsequiousness', trying hard to please the American President.

2.2.1.4 Stock Expressions in Gitau Warigi's Column

Table 2.4: Stock Expressions in Gitau Warigi's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Stock expression		%
			Specific expression	No.	
Bush and Americanism in Africa	06/07/03	1,070	-African tongue-twister names	1	0.09
Total		1,070		1	0.09

In 'Bush and Americanism in Africa' Warigi dwells on some of Mr. George Bush's weaknesses including lack of exposure. He points out his difficult with pronouncing names

including European ones. He wonders how he would fare with African names by remarking “it will be interesting to hear how he will pronounce what he refers to as ‘African tongue-twister names’ like Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdoulaye Wade”.

2.2.1.4 Summary and conclusion

There is lower rate of stock expressions than what I expected. We find the highest frequency of occurrence in editorials and Mathui’s column. Ochieng and Warigi have one stock expression each. Even the editorials with the highest rate, 1.46 per cent, they are found in seven articles out of the 13 studied. Mathiu has eight stock expressions in four articles. We attribute the high frequency of stock expressions in editorials to that fact that they are written by different people. The low frequency

2.2.2 Clichés

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines a cliché as “a hackneyed or overused phrase or opinion”. Clichés are another type of journalese found in newspaper language as classified by McArthur. To McArthur (1992: 553), clichés are “derived from or are favoured by newspaper writing, especially in relation to groups that be stereotyped”. For example,

the beautiful people (for the rich, well dressed, and occasionally good looking), *the ivory tower* (for the academic world: often concrete and plate glass), *the rat race* (competitive business), *the party faithful* (for loyal workers and voters for a political party), *mecca* (for any location attracting a particular group, other than for religious purposes, as in *fabulous, surfing mecca*).

Events and actions can be dressed with emotive or romantic words that add colour and are easily slotted into a report. They can be in form of phrases or certain syntactic forms that occur so regularly as to be clichés. McArthur’s examples of such clichés include nouns such as ‘burden’, ‘disaster’, ‘dream’, ‘fantasy’, ‘glamour’, ‘horror’, ‘nightmare’, ‘terror’; such adjectives as ‘amazing’, ‘bizarre’, ‘cataclysmic’, ‘devastating’, ‘heart-stopping’, ‘heart-warming’, ‘horrendous’, ‘moving’, ‘outrageous’, ‘scandalous’, ‘shattering’ and ‘staggering’.

He adds that close to such words are phrases such as ‘shock horror’ and ‘street of shame’, euphemisms like ‘confirmed bachelor’ (a homosexual man), ‘constant companion’ (a lover), ‘fun-loving’ (of a woman: sexually free-and-easy), ‘good-time girl’ or ‘party girl’ (a prostitute), ‘mystery girl/man’ (someone the press is trying to find out about).

He points out that there are also certain syntactic forms that occur so regularly that they fall into cliché group:

amid mounting (Amid mounting calls for his resignation, X has decided to tough it out), appositional *many* (firemen, many of them wearing masks; mothers, many with children in their arms), *that was once* (standing in the ruin that was once central Beirut).

Based on McArthur's analysis we studied the editorials and personal columns and in tables 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8 below are the clichés.

2.2.2.1 Clichés in Editorials

Table 2.5: Clichés in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Clichés		%
			Specific cliché	No.	
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	-shock revelations -grabbed public land -grabbed property -rat race -face the music	5	0.91
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-wreaked havoc -long suffering taxpayer -shakers and movers -moral duty -economic horror -empty-handed	6	0.83
End these dangerous rows	16/03/03	632	-faint-hearted -ruling party -grave risk -lance the boil	4	0.63
A chance to end speculation	13/04/03	585	-politically motivated -brought to book -public fallout -unravel the mystery -establish beyond reasonable doubt -transparent government	6	1.03
Keep your eyes on the future	27/04/03	668	-a dream long held -trauma of war -the fist of a dictator -dying years -power struggle	5	0.75
Watching our own back	18/05/03	683	-watching our own back -open for business -pay lip service -close ranks -take off the gloves -sweeping their dirty pasts under the rug -playing hardball	7	1.03
Our ambitions for the review	08/06/03	366	-scuttle the process -people's process	2	0.55

Sweep your own street	08/06/03	214	-power struggle -problem on their hands -not wake up one morning and walk away	3	1.4
The curse on our roads	06/07/03	299	-horror of our roads -life and limb -a nightmare	3	1
High price of boiled meat	06/07/03	373	-sour grapes-inspired -zero tolerance	2	0.54
Choose what works for us	20/07/03	309	-horrors of its own past	1	0.32
Step up anti-terror campaign	03/08/03	561	-anti-terror campaign -shocking but crucial developments -terror attacks -shed more light deserve the support of all Kenyans -in line of duty	5	0.89
Total		5,966		49	9.87

In Definition of Terms, 1.2, we pointed out that an editorial “convincingly interprets the news, using various persuasive devices, making legitimate play on the reader’s instincts and emotions”. Going by McArthur’s description of the various types of clichés, we note that there is widespread use of emotive words. For example, in ‘Crooks’ forty days are over’ we have ‘shock revelations’; whether it is public land or public property, the editorial describes it as ‘grabbed’ rather than stolen. In ‘The curse on our roads’, roads are described as

nightmare of drivers who shoot into roundabouts, careen from lane to lane in drunken incapacity, suicidal dives into main roads from side roads, cars dangerously left on the road by drivers in the urgent need to unashamedly be sick by the road side or in need of some other form of relief.

If the road is a nightmare, what else does one need to be convinced of the dangers on the road?

In the rest of the editorials studied, we have cliché nouns like ‘shock’ (appears two times), ‘horror’ (appears three times), ‘dream’, ‘trauma’, ‘terror’, ‘havoc’, and ‘power’.

There are also syntactic forms which occur regularly that they are in the cliché category, for example, ‘grabbed public land’, ‘grabbed property’, ‘long suffering taxpayer’, ‘pay lip service’, ‘scuttle the process’, ‘power struggle’, ‘zero tolerance’, ‘anti-terror campaign’.

There is stereotyping as well, for example, 'rat race', 'shakers and movers' and 'faint-hearted'.

2.2.2.2 Clichés in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 2.6: Clichés in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Clichés		%
			Specific cliché	No.	
How did we allow this radical evil?	16/02/03	666	-truth and reconciliation -utter horror -heart-rending -a horrendous herding like cattle -ruling party -horrifying investments	6	0.9
How they bear false witness against Islam	02/03/03	653	-bloodbath -age-old conceits -holier-than-thou	3	0.46
Mass killer posing as the saviour	16/03/03	767	-weapons of mass destruction -crystal-clear -superpower -in the twinkling of an eye -to arm to the teeth	5	0.65
A coalition's 105 days in perspective	13/04/03	682	-gift of the gab -multi-party democracy	2	0.29
What 'false pretences' by our MPs!	27/04/03	715	-keep death at bay -law became as an ass -irreparable damage -people-driven constitution	4	0.56
Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!	18/05/03	698	-intellectual Mecca -scuttle a constitution-making effort -invested back-breakingly	3	0.43
Mind control to feed the queen bee	08/06/03	665	-one-way traffic -hot air -weapons of mass destruction -Trojan horse -toe the US line	5	0.75
Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road	06/07/03	712	-horns of dilemma -political exigencies -galaxy of stars -pay lip service	6	0.84

			-Rift Valley mafia -Johnny-come lately		
Thank you a million, but no, thank you	20/07/03	696	-development aid -corridors of power	2	0.29
It's a heavy burden of stupidity	03/08/03	696	-heavy burden	1	0.14
Total		6,950		37	5.31

In 'How did we allow this radical evil?' Ochieng tries to win over the reader by using an ascending order of emotive words intensifying the degree of 'disagreeableness', ranging from horror, horrifying to horrendous.

We see – to our utter **horror** and dismay – a system in which individuals at the very centre of power systematically subverted the very pillars of their own state to channel huge public resources into their own pockets.

We see **horrifying** involvement of certain top military officers to supply rolling stock to such organisations, an extremely risky business because it could lead directly to an Idi Amin.

All this was crowned by a **horrendous** herding like cattle for slaughter of all dissenting individuals into the Black Holes of Calcutta to subject them to the cruellest third degree torture and murder.

By the time we get to the end of the quotation, we agree with Ochieng that indeed the victims were subjected to "the cruellest third degree murder".

Ochieng uses stereotyping clichés like 'superpower' 'intellectual Mecca', 'Johnny-come lately', 'galaxy of stars', 'Rift Valley Mafia', as well as syntactic forms which occur regularly for example, 'truth and reconciliation', 'weapons of mass destruction', 'irreparable damage', 'people driven constitution'. He also uses idioms like 'horns of a dilemma' and 'keep death at bay'.

2.2.2.3 Clichés in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Table 2.7: Clichés in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Clichés		%
			Specific cliché	No.	
We evicted the ancestral spirits	16/02/03	789	-living dead -twilight years -sole source of livelihood -better part of a century -putting bread on the table -overworked land -relentless march -inevitable disaster	8	1.01

We have become a mafioso	02/03/03	770	-Mount Kenya mafia -behind closed doors	2	0.26
Narc starts on the road to grief	16/03/03	775	-power struggle -Mt Kenya Mafia -dead set against -remove all stops -peeing in their drawers	5	0.65
The ugly business of freedom	13/04/03	791	-push comes to shove -paper tiger -mother of all battles -threw in the towel -weapons of mass destruction -chosen people	6	0.76
The devil is in the religion	27/04/03	783	-from cradle to the grave -quick and decisive action	2	0.26
Those who must suffer, bleed, die	18/05/03	738	-gift of the gaffe -true old fashioned bind -devastating blow -hot on the heels of -New World Order	5	0.68
G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden	08/06/03	767	-'Blek Men's' burden -hats-in-hand -weapons of mass destruction -alleviate poverty	4	0.52
Micro-managing the world	06/07/03	774	-banana republics	1	0.13
Should Moi face the music?	20/07/03	791	-face the music -heart of the matter	2	0.25
Great white elephant in the wild	03/08/03	710	-white elephant -living hell -wake-up call -nipped in the bud -unravel the mystery	5	0.7
Total		7,688		32	5.22

Mathiu's clichés are characterized by use of euphemisms, for example, in 'We evicted the ancestral spirits', people living in misery as said to be 'living dea[th]', rivers, streams and forests are not being destroyed but they are in their 'twilight years'. In 'The ugly business of freedom', the former Iraq ruler, Saddam Hussein is a 'paper tiger' since his words do not match his action. In the same article, Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations Mohammed Aldouri did not resign but 'threw in the towel' when he realized that his

government had lost to the American-led coalition. To Muthiu, the Ilasit Customs Complex near Emali is misplaced, an error on the part of the Government, but he does not write that it is useless he rather uses the euphemism, 'white elephant', which is also part of the article title.

There is stereotyping, for example, 'Mt. Kenya Mafia', 'banana republics' and 'chosen people', as well as syntactic forms that occur regularly that they are in the cliché category, 'weapons of mass destruction', 'remove all stops' and 'hot on heels'.

2.2.2.4 Clichés in Gitau Warigi's Column

Table 2.8: Clichés in Gitau Warigi's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Clichés		%
			Specific cliché	No.	
Torture chambers an enduring legacy	16/02/03	1,113	-savage torture -brutalising -utter horror -bizarre life	4	0.36
Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot	02/03/03	1,117	-rushing back -going real rough -cloud nine -withdrawal symptoms	4	0.36
Genesis of Bush's obsession with Iraq	16/03/03	1,064	-axis of evil -icing on the cake -devastating air strike -horribly agitated	4	0.38
An uneasy truce if ever there was one	13/04/03	1,039	-hatchets were buried -poured his heart out -Mt Kenya mafia -wishful thinking -wildcat strikes -weapons of mass destruction	6	.58
Put an end to this endless revelry	27/04/03	1,037	-shoe-string budget -wheeler-dealers -great burden -unsubstantiated allegation	4	0.39
The trouble with Murungaru's hasty style	18/05/03	1,068	-on the spot again -head or tail -security nightmares -terror act	4	0.37
The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga	08/06/03	1,073	-The truth will set you free -skeletons -the passage of time is a	6	0.56

			great healer of wounds -weapons of mass destruction -political expediency -civilising mission		
Bush and Americanism in Africa	06/07/03	1,070	-sea of change -American arrogance -level-playing field	3	0.28
Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home	20/07/03	995	-spot on -colonial master -charity begins at home -Johnny-come-latelies	4	0.4
Whose portrait should grace currency?	03/08/03	1,049	-Mt. Kenya mafia	1	0.1
Total		10,625		40	3.78

In order to give a clear picture in 'Torture chambers an enduring legacy', Warigi employs emotive clichés:

Actually, interrogation is a very prim word for the savage **torture** that went on there. The rooms were sound-proofed. The curtains were black.

The average Kenyan police station is known to contain one or two sadists who specialise in **brutalising** criminal suspects deemed recalcitrant.

We see – to our **utter horror** and dismay – a system in which individuals at the very centre of power systematically subverted the very pillars of their own state to channel huge public resources into their own pockets.

Through 'savage torture', the victim is 'brutalised' and the result is 'utter horror', an ascending degree of meanness which the author emotionally communicated to the reader. There are other emotive words and phrases like 'devastating', 'horribly agitated', '[security] nightmares', and 'poured his heart out.

Stereotyping is also reflected in Warigi's writing, 'Mt. Kenya Mafia', 'wheeler-dealers' and 'Johnny-come-latelies'. We also find syntactic forms which fit the cliché category, for example, 'cloud nine', 'axis of evil', 'hatchets were buried', 'weapons of mass destruction' and 'political expediency'.

2.2.2.5 Summary and conclusion

Apparently there is a high occurrence of clichés in editorials, 49 per cent, found in a total of 5,966 words compared to Mathiu's 32 per cent in 7,688 words. The use of emotive words is prevalent in editorials, Ochieng's and Warigi's columns as noted above. Mathiu on the other hand employs euphemisms. There is also stereotyping in the identified clichés. None of the clichés forbidden by the *The Nation Stylebook* has been found in the articles studied.

2.2.3 Special Use of Words

McArthur (ibid.) identifies another type of journalese which he calls special use of words. He explains that because journalists must be concise and make an immediate impact, they tend to use words in a novel way. He enumerates the various ways words are used thus.

1. Conversions. Nouns are often put to use as verbs. He notes many of the first recorded instances of such changes have occurred in newspapers, especially in the United States of America, for example, to 'interview', 'engineer', 'boom', 'boost', 'surge'.

2. Attributes. He identifies the use of nouns to qualify other nouns: death as in 'death car', 'death ride', 'death ship'; top as 'top politician', 'top referee'; rescue as in 'rescue workers', 'rescue party', 'rescue team'; community as in 'community leader', 'community problems', and 'community relations'.

3. Compounds. According to McArthur, certain patterns are commoner in journalese than elsewhere and may seem artificial because they are rare in speech: 'litterbug', 'holidaymaker', 'roadhog'.

4. Reduplicatives. McArthur says that such coinages often rhyme, lodge easily in memory, and sometimes become catch-phrases: 'the jet set' (the leisured class which travels frequently; 'brain drain' (exodus of academics); 'culture vulture' (someone who indiscriminately 'consumes' culture).

5. Archaisms. McArthur explains that certain archaic words survive in newspaper usage because they are short or perceived as popular: 'agog', 'foe', 'hustings', 'scribe', 'slay'.

6. Neologisms. He notes that journalists employ a variety of nonce and stunt forms, some of which are accepted in the language at large: 'new-look', 'see-through', 'lookalike', 'lensman', 'weatherman', and 'vocalist'.

7. Kinds of modification. McArthur (ibid.) identifies another type in which word combination often leads to strings of adjectives and attributive nouns,

a style which he says began with *Time* magazine in the 1920s, with the aim of providing impact and 'colour'. They may be relatively short (London-born disc jockey Ray Golding...) or long enough to become self-parodies, either pre-modifying a name (silver-haired, paunchy lothario, Francesco Tebaldi...) or post modifying it (Zsa Zsa Gabor, seventyish, eight-times-married, Hungarian-born celebrity...)

Tables 2.9, 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12 below contain special use of words in editorials and personal columns based on McArthur's definition.

2.2.3.1 Special Use of Words in Editorials

Table 2.9: Special Use of Words in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Special use of words		%
			Specific word(s)	No.	
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	-tax authorities -tax cheats	2	0.36
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-gag		0.14
End these dangerous rows	16/03/03	632	-ruling party -rough-and-tumble -backbenchers -backbench rebellion	4	0.63
A chance to end speculation	13/04	585	-top leaders -gunned -fingered	3	0.51
Watching our own back	18/05/03	683	-terrorism fears -suicide attacks -terrorism threats -terror attacks -terrorist links	5	0.72
Our ambitions for the review	08/06/03	366	-headed home	2	0.55
Sweep your own street	08/06/03	214	-power struggle -troop back -water bodies	2	0.93
The curse on our roads	06/07/03	299	-fun-loving culture -booze binges -homecoming -corruption principle	4	1.34
High price of boiled meat	06/07/03	373	-homecoming	1	0.27
Truth on age and marriage	20/07/03	324	-67-year-old lonely widow	2	0.62
Choose what works for us	20/07/03	309	-agemates -institutionalise	1	0.32
Step up anti-terror campaign	03/08/03	561	-terrorist attack -tourism industry -terror attack -tourist arrivals -terrorist cells -terrorist threat -security personnel	7	1.25

Total		5,622		34	7.64
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Nouns 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' are prominently used in 'Watching our own back' and 'Step up anti-terror campaign' to qualify other nouns, for example, 'terrorism fears' 'terrorism threats', 'terror attacks', 'terrorist attack', 'terrorist cells', 'terrorist threat' 'terrorist links'. There is conversion of nouns into verbs, for example,

...the flamboyant Tom Joseph Mboya, was **gunned** down in a Nairobi street.
 ...scientist David Kelly's apparent suicide after being **fingered** as the person who leaked to the BBC. (A chance to end speculation)

Narc will get to **institutionalise** the ethos of dialogue and negotiations. (Choose what works for us)

The use of nouns as attributes is more prevalent than any other form of special use of words in editorials.

2.2.3.2 Special Use of Words in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 2.10: Special Use of Words in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No. of words	Special use of words		%
			Specific word(s)	No.	
How did we allow this radical evil?	16/02/03	666	-whip up -governance premises	2	0.3
How they bear false witness against Islam	02/03/03	653	-life-and-death combat -thought-bromides -family matters -top military	4	0.61
Mass killer posing as the saviour	16/03/03	767	-war-formations	1	0.13
A coalition's 105 days in perspective	13/04/03	682	-pullouts -helter-skelter -torture chambers	3	0.44
What 'false pretences' by our MPs!	27/04/03	715	-Ufungamano pretence -"people-driven" constitution -present five-year tenure system	3	0.42
Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!	18/05/03	698	-constituency circus -thought[-]systems	2	0.29

Mind control to feed the queen bee	08/06/03	665	-animal greed -loudspeakers -slaughterhouse -service monsters -warheads -world government	6	.90
Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road	06/07/03	712	-party chairman -university job -lip service -guru -election machine -torture chambers	6	0.84
Thank you a million, but no, thank you	20/07/03	696	-mirror-image -British official -Nairobi editors -headlines -ruling class -Nairobi media -Third World leaders -blackout	8	1.5
It's a heavy burden of stupidity	03/08/03	696	-terrorist destination -terrorist targets -Arab blood -Western corporate money-making abroad -thirsted -violence court charge -shop-counter cash-mongering	7	1.01
Total		6,950		42	6.44

Unlike in the editorials, Ochieng's articles exhibit diversity in special use of words. There is conversion, "We reserved the right to try to whip up senior party..." (How did we allow this radical evil?); noun used to qualify another noun; "...kill thousands just to surfeit animal greed...", use of compounds, "...the world was being told to finance a slaughterhouse that would benefit only US industry..." (Mind control to feed the queen bee); reduplicative like "the helter-skelter from the eighties was among..." (A coalition's 105 days in perspective); neologisms, "[n]o, I am not interested in a constituency circus" (Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!); and word combination leading to a string of adjectives and attributive nouns, "[a]nd it does not run the risk of tracing terrorism to its real root – Western corporate money-making abroad" (It's a heavy burden of stupidity).

2.2.3.3 Special use of words in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Table 2.11: Special Use of Words in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No. of words	Special use of words		%
			Specific word(s)	No.	
We evicted the ancestral spirits	16/02/03	789	-do-or-die -corruption economy	2	0.25
We have become a Mafioso	02/03/03	770	-daydream -dynamo minister	2	0.26
Narc starts on the road to grief	16/03/03	775	-power struggle -holds-barred -peopled -public backlash -battlefield	5	0.65
The ugly business of freedom	13/04/03	791	-interviewed -body[-]bags -under[-]dog	3	0.4
The devil is in the religion	27/04/03	783	-insurance industry	1	0.13
Those who must suffer, bleed, die	18/05/03	738	-terrorist threat -battlefield -marshalled evil forces -imperialist embrace -imperialist motif -isolationist conservatism -Mau Mau war -imperialist power -concentration camps	9	1.22
G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden	08/06/03	767	-top countries -arms trade -manufactory -rubbishing	4	0.52
Micro-managing the world	06/07/03	774	-headlines -impunity agreements -banana republics -hurricane relief -military aid -impunity treaties	6	0.76
Should Moi face the music?	20/07/03	791	-jailed -tortured -exiled -to ballot -alley cats	5	0.63

Great white elephant in the wild	03/08/03	710	-living hell -potholed -border crossing -tarmacked -lo and behold	5	0.7
Total		7,688		42	5.52

Use of nouns as verbs is common in Mathiu's articles, for example, 'peopled' (Narc starts on the road to grief); 'interviewed' (The ugly business of freedom); 'rubbishing' (G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden); 'jailed', 'tortured', 'exiled', 'to ballot' (Should Moi face the music?); and 'potholed', 'tarmacked' (Great white elephant in the wild). There is also frequent use of nouns to qualify other nouns: 'corruption economy', 'insurance industry', 'terrorist threat', 'arms trade', 'hurricane relief' and 'alley cats'. He also has neologisms like, 'dynamo minister', 'marshalled evil forces', 'impunity agreements', 'impunity treaties', as well as archaisms such as 'manufactory' and 'lo and behold'.

2.2.3.4 Special use of words in Gitau Warigi's Column

Table 2.12: Special Use of Words in Gitau Warigi's Column

Title of article	Date	No. of words	Special use of words		%
			Specific work(s)	No.	
Torture chambers an enduring legacy	16/02/03	1,113	-torture chambers -outgoing -torture cells	3	0.27
Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot	02/03/03	1,117	-top officials -gang of 14 -security intelligence -government departments -me-too chest-thumping -24-year-old parliamentary staffer	6	0.54
Genesis of Bush's obsession with Iraq	16/03/03	1,064	-speechwriter -Bush administration theologians -rival intelligence-analysis unit -showdown -military action -American military planners	7	0.66

			-war-mongering		
An uneasy truce if ever there was one	13/04/03	1,039	-top hawks -executive power -wildcat strikes	3	0.29
Put an end to this endless revelry	27/04/03	1,037	-shoe-string budgets -victory party -holiday shirts	3	0.29
The trouble with Murungaru's hasty style	18/05/03	1,068	-tourism business -travel advisories -doomsday announcements -security nightmares -home-grown terrorist suspects -suicide bombers -security headaches -railroad -vaunted American security shield	9	0.84
The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga	08/06/03	1,073	-homeguards -hogwash	2	0.19
Bush and Americanism in Africa	06/07/03	1,070	-tongue-twister names -cottage industry -super-important -superpower -(genetically-)engineered	5	0.47
Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home	20/07/03	995	-State visits -overseas trips -Anglophile pretensions -foe -border skirmishes -train ticket -decree -communications infrastructure -education system -headstart	10	1.01
Whose portrait should grace currency?	03/08/03	1,049	-opinion survey -Kibaki administration -Kenyatta currency -decree -sports heroes -humour writer	6	0.57
Total		10,625		54	5.13

The noun 'torture' is used to qualify other nouns, for example, 'torture chambers', 'torture cells' (Torture chambers an enduring legacy); and with 'security' we have 'security intelligence' (Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot), 'security nightmares', 'security headaches' and 'security shield'. There are also other nouns used to qualify other nouns though not repeated, for example, 'tourism business', 'doomsday announcements', 'suicide bombers', 'cottage industry', and so on.

There are only two instances when Warigi uses a noun as a verb and the word is 'decree', "...would decree that the process of integration and ultimate union be logical and inevitable" (Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home) and "...we can safely decree our former presidents to remain out of our currencies" (Whose portrait should grace currency?). Archaism appears once in "...the prime foe to closer ties with Tanzania..." (Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home).

He uses neologisms such as 'gang of 14', 'me-too chest-thumping', 'Anglophile pretensions' as well as 'doomsday announcements' we came across earlier in another category. He has compounds, for example, 'homeguards' and 'hogwash' and tendency of using a string of words, for example, '24-year-old parliamentary staffer', and 'rival intelligence-analysis unit'.

2.2.3.5 Summary and conclusion

In Editorials, special use of words is reflected in the use of nouns as attributes qualifying other nouns, 'terrorist attack', 'tourist arrivals', 'tax authorities'. We also find conversion of nouns into verbs, 'gunned', 'fingered' and 'headed'. As noted above, Ochieng's articles exhibit a diversity use of special words. Mathiu is noted for his conversion of nouns into verbs as well as for neologisms. Warigi's special use of words is reflected in use of nouns to qualify other nouns, two instances of putting nouns to work as verbs and neologisms.

2.3 Epithets

As mentioned in 2.1 above, newspaper language is also known to contain epithets. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* categorizes an epithet as a noun defined as "an adjective to describe sb/sth's character or most important quality, especially in order to give praise or criticism..." It can also be "an offensive word or phrase that is used about a person or a group of people".

McArthur (1992:377) says that an epithet can be an expression added to a name as a characterizing description, before it as in 'glorious Devon', after it, in 'Richard Crookback', with a definite article, 'William the Conqueror'. He also has Homeric epithet, poetic epithet, a formulaic phrase containing an adjective and a noun, common in epic poetry: 'grey-eyed Athene', 'rosy-fingered dawn', 'the wine-dark sea'. Another type is a word or a phrase that substitutes for another: 'man's best friend' for 'dog', 'the water of life' for 'whisky'. McArthur has also another type used to abuse or dismiss, especially when used directly. It is mainly a four letter word, rarely used in a respectable newspaper or any family publication. It can also be in form of a description like 'the silly old cow'. It can also be a phrase such as 'that idiot of a lawyer' and 'a devil of a doctor'. He concludes by saying that it can be a plain adjective or other descriptive word.

Identified epithets in the text studied are found in tables 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 below.

2.3.1 Epithets in Editorials

Table 2.13: Epithets in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Epithets		%
			Specific epithet	No.	
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	-grand theft -gullible investors -hard-eyed profiteers	3	0.55
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-private developers	1	0.14
End these dangerous rows	16/03/03	632	-economic recovery -constitutional review process	3	0.47
A chance to end speculation	13/04/03	585	-flamboyant mutilated body	1	0.17
Keep your eyes on the future	27/04/03	668	-incomparable majesty -sacrosanct document -bicameral parliament -weighty, historic undertaking	4	0.6
Watching our own back	18/05/03	683	-fair weather friends -incalculable damage -festering Somali crisis	3	0.44

Our ambitions for the review	08/06/03	366	-thinly-veiled political ambition and irrelevancies	1	0.27
Sweep your own street	08/06/03	214	-great statesmen and nationalists -cloud of suspicion	2	0.93
The curse on our roads	06/07/03	299	-damaging fun-loving culture -death-inviting speeds -belly-up vehicles -laughingly inflated costs	4	1.34
High price of boiled meat	6/07/03	373	-populist slogan	1	0.27
Truth on age and marriage	20/07/03	324	-hypocritically sexist	1	0.3
Step up anti-terror campaign	03/08/03	561	-deadly and clandestine modus operandi	1	0.18
Total		5,981		25	5.66

Based on McArthur's description of types of epithets, we have found several types in editorials, for example, in 'Crooks' forty days are over', stealing public property has been characterised as 'grand theft', while buyers of the same property are dismissed as 'hard-eyed profiteers'. We also come across poetic epithet in 'The curse on our roads' when speeding drivers are said to be driving at 'death-inviting speeds' in pursuit of 'damaging fun-loving culture'. There are simple epithets of an adjective and noun, like 'hypocritically sexist', 'populist slogan' and 'private developers'.

2.3.2 Epithets in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 2.14: Epithets in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Epithet		%
			Specific epithet	No.	
How did we allow this radical evil?	16/02/03	666	-radical evil -delirious robbery -national-budget-size rip-offs -sadistic silencing	4	0.6
How they bear false witness against Islam	02/03/03	653	-intellectual wickets -American Christian	5	0.77

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fundamentalist jingoisms -age-old conceits -American Christian fundamentalism -flaming oil greed 		
Mass killer posing as the saviour	16/03/03	767	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -political state -destructive gadgets -growing military arrogance – nuclear, chemical or biological warheads 	3	0.39
A coalition's 105 days in perspective	13/04/03	682	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -single-party hegemony -abyss of poverty -Augean stable of corruption – national feloniousness, violence, cruelty, venality, greed, mannerlessness, absence of culture -seeds of rapacity and graft, crime and heartlessness -a ravaged economy, widespread managerial ineptitude, runaway crime and violence, intense administrative and judicial injustice -higgledy-piggledy transport system -outspoken tribal chieftains 	7	1.03
What 'false pretences' by our MPs!	27/04/03	715	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -false pretences -long-awaited messiah -precariously meagre livelihood -radical evil -marvel of democracy -sinuous car 	6	0.84
Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!	18/05/03	698	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -constituency circus -intellectual vacuity -sixth-lane Caucasian right-wingers -Marxist -anti-Communist scarecrow -appalling intellectual indolence -liberal propaganda texts -revolutionary liberalism -reactionary liberalism 	9	1.29
Mind control to feed the queen bee	08/06/03	665	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Huxleyan mind control -global moral leadership -animal greed -deadly nuclear warheads 	6	0.9

			-physical, chemical and biological weapons -hungry maws of America's corporate queen bee		
Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road	06/07/03	712	-erstwhile strongman -protracted hold -orbital launching pad -legal storm gathering around him -extraordinary moral fibre -astronomically costly considerations -morally conscientious person -permanently rigged election machine -Archangel Michel of Kenya's political history	9	1.26
Thank you a million, but no, thank you	20/07/03	696	-ruling class -natural or indigenous -cultural, economic, political and intellectual roots -patriotic fronts -genetic inability for democracy -earth-shaking story	6	0.86
It's a heavy burden of stupidity	03/08/03	696	-quagmire of race -liberal class -pedigree African -ethico-intellectual vacuity -psycho-pathological problem -structurally induced stupidity -peculiar American imbecility	7	1.01
Total		6,950		62	8.95

Ochieng has the tendency of using epithets made up of a string of words, for example, 'national-budget-size rip-offs'(How did we allow this radical evil?); 'American Christian fundamentalist jingoisms'(How they bear false witness against Islam); 'Augean stable of corruption –national feloniousness, violence, cruelty, venality, greed, mannerlessness, absence of culture', 'seeds of rapacity and graft, crime and heartlessness', 'a ravaged economy, widespread managerial ineptitude, runaway crime and violence, intense administrative and judicial injustice' (A coalition's 105 days in perspective); and 'Archangel Michel of Kenya's political history' (Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road).

Ochieng has also used collocations in a novel way forming epithets like 'radical evil', 'delirious robbery', 'constituency circus' and 'patriotic fronts', creating a humorous effect but at the same time persuasive language which can easily win over the reader.

2.3.3 Epithets in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Table 2.15: Epithets in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Epithet		%
			Specific epithet	No.	
We evicted the ancestral spirits	16/02/03	789	-a big, dusty slum -pre-capitalist simple-minded primitivity -the insult that the government calls a salary -dirt-poor black family	4	0.51
We have become a mafioso	02/03/03	770	-dynamo minister -segregationist American South	2	0.26
Narc starts on the road to grief	16/03/03	775	-a full-scale onslaught	1	0.13
The ugly business of freedom	13/04/03	791	-anti-climatic whipping of the under-dog -turbulent hearts	2	0.25
The devil is in the religion	27/04/03	783	-divine will -most fetid fount of indifferentism -filthy sewer full of heretical vomit -America Christian Right	4	0.51
Those who must suffer, bleed, die	18/05/03	738	-burly doctor -blasted war -glorious <i>Mau Mau</i> war	3	0.41
G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden	08/06/03	767	-relentless march of poverty	1	0.13
Micro-managing the world	06/07/03	774	-permanent, credible, competent and independent court -UN peacekeeping budget	2	0.26
Should Moi face the music?	20/07/03	791	-collective responsibility -cunning, aggressively	2	0.25

			greedy alley cats		
Total		6,978		21	2.71

Mathiu uses descriptive epithetic phrases to dismiss what he considers inappropriate, for example, ‘the insult that the government calls a salary’ (We evicted the ancestral spirits); ‘anti-climatic whipping of the under-dog’ (The ugly business of freedom); and ‘most fetid fount of indifferentism’, ‘filthy sewer full of heretical vomit’ (The devil is in the religion). In the first example he is empathising with public servants by indirectly accusing the Government to its insensitivity to the needs of the people. The epithets used to describe people leave little for imagination, for example, ‘dynamo minister’ refers to the late Karisa Maitha who was very active and ‘burly doctor’ refers to the heavily-built Murungaru, a government minister. He also has complimenting epithets like ‘glorious Mau Mau war’.

2.3.4 Epithets in Gitau Warigi’s Column

Table 2.16: Epithets in Gitau Warigi’s Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Epithet		%
			Specific epithet	No.	
Torture chambers an enduring legacy	16/02/03	1,113	-broken men -first-rate photo-journalist -the hell that was <i>Nyayo</i> House -Monument of shame	4	0.36
Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot	02/03/03	1,117	-coddled lot -lavish favouritism -freshmen MPs - <i>Mau Mau</i> hero	4	0.36
Genesis of Bush’s obsession with Iraq	16/03/03	1,064	-morbid obsession -Bush administration theologians -gung-ho defence secretary -damned Islamic terrorists -veto-wielding status	5	0.47
An uneasy truce if ever there was one	13/04/03	1,039	-silky optimism -we-are all-permanent-buddies-now	3	0.29

			-uninhibited looting		
Put an end to this endless revelry	27/04/03	1,037	-reckless abandon -village ruffian -free education policy	3	0.29
The trouble with Murungaru's hasty style	18/05/03	1,068	-tottering tourism business -doomsday announcements -home-grown terrorist suspects -security headaches -vaunted American security shields -rogue planes -foolish Middle-Eastern wars -self-styled liberators	7	0.66
The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga	08/06/03	1,073	-over-enthusiastic freelancer -self-proclaimed <i>Mau Mau</i> veterans -oddly mysterious chapter -barbarous and atavistic savagery -level-headed Englishmen -bestial atrocities - <i>Nyayo</i> House torture chambers -landmark legal suit	8	0.75
Bush and Americanism in Africa	06/07/03	1,070	-sweaty African traditional dancers -American prince -thriving global cottage industry -intellectually-challenged -genetically-engineered food	5	0.47
Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home	20/007/03	995	-hard-headed considerations -a giant supermarket for Kenyan manufacturers -a huge headstart -Dubai-sourced clothes	4	0.4
Whose portrait should grace currency?	03/08/03	1,049	-greatest athlete ever -steroids-driven robots or vapid, multi-millionaire glamourites	2	0.19
Total		10,625		45	4.24

Compared to the preceding tables, Warigi has a high number of epithets ranging from a simple adjective and a noun, 'American prince' (Bush and Americanism in Africa) to a

formulaic phrase described as Homeric epithet by McArthur, 'steroids-driven robots or vapid, multi-millionaire glamourites' (Whose portrait should grace currency). The latter is a descriptive epithet of the today's athletes; 'Monument of shame' dismisses Nyayo House, a prestigious Government building housing many important institutions, as a building with shameful past.

He also made collocations in novel way, for example, 'lavish favouritism', 'silky optimism', 'uninhibited looting' and 'rogue planes'.

2.3.5 Summary and conclusion

Despite the dictionary definition of an epithet as an adjective, we have found out that the *Sunday Nation*'s use of epithets is closer to the McArthur (1992) description of an epithet. As pointed out above, there is high occurrence of formulaic phrases as well as phrases substituting for others like stealing public property described as 'grand theft'. There is also collocation used in a novel way forming epithets dismissing some type of people or giving vivid description of others.

CHAPTER THREE: ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE USE RELATED TO STYLE IN THE *SUNDAY NATION*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we analyse the style used in editorials and opinion columns of the *Sunday Nation*.

According to Quirk et al.(1985:25), style like register is a term used with several different meanings. The differences include objectives and how the reader is addressed.

Quirk et al (ibid. p. 26) explain,

we recognize a gradient in attitude between formal (relatively stiff, cold polite, impersonal) on the one hand and informal (relatively relaxed, warm, rude, friendly) on the other hand. The corresponding linguistic contrasts involve both grammar and vocabulary.

In present study, our concern is with the choice of linguistic form that proceeds from the writer's attitude to the reader. We have not classified contractions like 'isn't', 'didn't', 'we'll' and so on because such contractions are allowed by the house style of the *Sunday Nation*.

A reader of the *Sunday Nation* does not have to think twice of the word 'fleecing' appearing in the 'Crooks' forty days are over'.

At the same time, those who have made careers of fleecing the national till must now face the music.

It is a common word used to describe stealing public money. Likewise, Mathiu declares "[w]e have no part to play in this blasted war!" in 'Those who must suffer, bleed, die'. The reader grasps his mood, the feeling of helplessness by the rest of the world in international politics.

According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* the verb fleece is an informal word meaning "obtain an unfair amount of money from". The same dictionary declares the word 'blasted' informal, categorized as an adjective "used to express annoyance".

McArthur (Ed.) (1992:516) defines informal as a term in linguistics for a situation or a use of language that is common, non-official, familiar, casual and often colloquial. The term or idiom contrasts the above senses with formal language. Formal style or usage is a relatively elevated and impersonal kind of language.

Newspapers are viewed as the bastion of the language they choose to publish in. The reader would therefore expect to find formal language only, especially so when a newspaper is taken to be serious as the *Sunday Nation*. Berry (1976:235) dismisses this notion arguing

that in newspapers there is diverse but appropriate range of language in that newspapers change style from formal to informal. It can be conversational, standard, or local to fit the occasion.

In tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, we have informal words or phrases in editorials and personal columns.

3.2 Level of Formality in Editorials

Table 3.1: Informal Words in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Informal word	Category No.		%
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	-fleecing -grabbing	verb verb	2	0.36
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-raking in -cronysts	phrasal verb noun	2	0.28
A chance to end speculation	13/04/03	585	-fingered	verb	1	0.17
Keep your eyes on the future	27/04/03	668	-fix it (AmE)	phrasal verb	1	0.15
Watching our own back	18/05/03	683	-hard-nosed	adj.	1	0.15
Sweep your own street	08/06/03	214	-fix it (AmE)	phrasal verb	1	0.47
The curse on our roads	06/07/03	299	-boozy drooling binges (Mungithi) joint	adj. adj. noun noun	4	1.75
High price of boiled meat	06/07/03	373	- bunch (of ministers)	phrasal noun	1	0.27
Total		4,098			11	3.6

Apparently, in editorials supposedly high quality pieces of writing, there is use of informal language including American English. The phrasal verb 'fix it' categorised as informal by the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* was used in two editorials, 'Keep your eyes on the future' and 'Sweep your own street'. There is a high number of verbs followed by adjectives and only two nouns. Apart from 'hard-nosed', that is,

...we must consider a hard-nosed diplomatic offensive with the aim of achieving three things...

none of the informal words or phrases are complimentary to the situation being described or the people. In 'Sabotage and punishment' we have economic saboteurs "raking in undeserved billions" by people editorial describes as cronyists, from cronyism, a derogatory noun referring to improper appointment friends and associations to positions of authority.

3.3 Level of Formality in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 3.2: Informal Words in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Informal word	Category	No.	%
How did we allow this radical evil?	16/02/03	666	-rip off (AmE)	phrasal verb	1	0.15
How they bear false witness against Islam	02/03/03	653	-nosiree (AmE)	exclamation.	1	0.15
Mass killer posing as the saviour	16/03/03	767	-grab -smithereens	verb noun	2	0.26
A coalition's 105 days in perspective	13/04/03	682	-romped home	phrasal verb	1	0.15
What 'false pretences' by our MPs!	27/04/03	715	-donkey's years -rip you off -grabbed	idiom phrasal verb verb	3	0.42
Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!	18/05/03	698	-duck	verb	1	0.14
Mind control to feed the queen bee	08/06/03	665	-hot air	noun phrase	1	0.15
Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road	06/07/03	712	-hit the road -Johnny-come lately - to ditch	idiom noun phrase verb	3	0.42
Thank you a million, but no, thank you	20/07/03	696	-wags -yap	verb verb	2	0.29
It's a heavy burden of stupidity	03/08/03	696	-bloke	noun	1	0.14
Total		6,950			16	2.27

Ochieng is also caught up in use of American English, 'rip off', a phrasal verb and 'nosiree', a typical American exclamation, a strong emotive expression. He has an adverbial phrase, 'donkey's years' otherwise, the majority of informal words or phrases are verbs, only three cases of nouns and no adjectives.

We have found no complimenting informal expression in his articles. Even when he talks of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) winning the elections in 'A coalition's 105 days in perspective' there is a hint of sarcasm as he puts it that they just 'romped home', that is, it was an easy win.

3.4 Level of Formality in Mutuma Mathiu's' Column

Table 3.3: Informal Words in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Informal word	Category	No.	%
We evicted the ancestral spirits	16/02/03	789	-palm-greasing	noun	1	0.13
We have become a Mafioso	02/03/03	770	-cute (AmE) -grab -grabbed -tangle	adj. verb adj. verb	4	0.52
Narc starts on the road to grief	16/03/03	775	-plum -chickening out -peeing	adj. phrasal verb verb	3	0.39
The devil is in the religion	27/04/03	783	-fleece	verb	1	0.13
Those who must suffer, bleed, die	18/05/03	738	-chuck -blasted	verb adj.	2	0.27
G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden	08/06/03	767	-junket -rubbishing	noun verb	2	0.26
Micro-managing the world	06/07/03	774	-cranked up (AmE)	phrasal verb	1	0.13
Should Moi face the music?	20/07/03	791	-buck -cronyism -clincher -mucked up	noun noun noun phrasal verb	4	0.51
Great white elephant in the wild	03/08	710	-daft (BrE) -scams	adj. noun	2	0.28
Total		6,897			20	2.62

Mathiu has two instances of American English use, an informal adjective and a phrasal verb, 'cute' and 'cranked up', respectively, but we also find a typical British English informal adjective, 'daft'. Mathiu's informality level is shared almost equally between verbs or phrasal verbs, nouns and adjectives. As found out from editorials and Ocheing's articles, the identified informal words are not complimentary, be it a situation or in describing people.

3.5 Level of Formality in Gitau Warigi's Column

Table 3.4: Informal Words in Gitau Warigi's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Informal word	Category	No.	%
Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot	02/03/03	1,117	-loo (BrE) -screwing up (AmE) -groping	noun phrasal verb verb	3	0.27
Genesis of Bush's obsession with Iraq	16/03/03	1064	-trashing -damned -give a hoot -sidekick -Brits	verb verb phrasal verb noun noun	5	0.47
An uneasy truce if ever there was one	13/04/03	1,039	-breezily (awarded contracts)	adverb	1	0.1
Put an end to this endless revelry	27/04/03	1037	-shoe-string -wheeler-dealers -bash -picked [up] the tab	noun noun noun phrasal verb	4	0.39
The trouble with Murungaru's hasty style	18/05/03	1,068	-railroad (AmE)	noun	1	0.09
The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga	08/06/03	1,073	-egg on the face -bona fides -in stitches -outfit -hogwash -hellish	noun phrase noun adj. phrase noun noun adj.	6	0.56
Bush and Americanism in Africa	06/07/03	1070	-unfazed -spat	verb adj.	2	0.19
Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home	20/07/03	995	-spot on -hassles -nitty-gritty	adj. noun noun	4	0.4

			-Johnny-come-latelies	noun phrase		
Whose portrait should grace currency?	03/08/03	1,049	-Brits	noun	1	0.1
Total		9,512			27	2.57

Warigi has the highest number of informal words and phrases; they range from verbs, nouns, adjectives to adverbs. He uses a typical informal British English euphemism, 'loo' meaning toilet. We have also identified use of American English at an informal level, 'screwing up' and 'railroad', the phrase is usually viewed with reservation in some quarters. The two are found in the same article, 'Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot'.

3.6 Summary and conclusion

Apparently, the *Sunday Nation*, a quality newspaper, use informal language in its editorials as well as in personal columns of journalists considered to be among the best in the country. The editorials have the lowest percentage of informal words, 11 per cent while Warigi has the highest, 27 per cent.

Berry (1976:235) says that in newspapers there is diverse but appropriate range of language in that the newspapers change style from formal to informal, it can be conversational, standard or local to fit the occasion. And this explains the use of informal language in the *Sunday Nation*.

It is curious that in the informal language use, the adverb category appeared only once, 'breezily'. Verbs or phrasal verbs are more common, a total of 32 in the studied articles, followed by nouns.

CHAPTER FOUR: ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE USE RELATED TO INDIGENISATION OF ENGLISH IN THE *SUNDAY NATION*

Barton, (non-dated:5) argues that an African newspaper should strive for “a distinctive African flavour and this will mean using the language in a novel, off-beat way”. He adds that the ‘African flavour’ should come as a natural, “even though cultivated, thing and not as a sort of third-rate of the original”.

McArthur (1992:333) describes the phenomenon as English taking its place as African language in the registers of politics, business, the media, and popular culture.

In the process of indigenising the language, the writers also use the style of foregrounding with the resultant aesthetic and thematic effects.

In the data, this phenomenon is manifested in loan words from local languages, extension of meaning of English and local language words. To understand the usage, one has to put it in the Kenyan context.

Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 contain indigenised words in editorials and personal columns. Once the word or phrase has been explained in the preceding table, it is disregarded in the following one.

4.1 Indigenised Words in Editorials

Table 4.1: Indigenised Words in Editorials

Title of article	Date	No of words	Target word	No.	%
Crooks' forty days are over	16/02/03	550	- <i>matatu</i> -grab -eating -national till	4	0.73
Sabotage and punishment	02/03/03	726	-private developers, directors, bankers, well- connected individuals, investors	1	0.14
The curse on our roads	06/07/03	299	- <i>Mugithi</i> (joint)	2	0.67
High price of boiled meat	06/07/03	373	- <i>nyama choma</i> (den) -homecoming	1	0.27
Truth on age and marriage	20/07/03	324	- <i>agemates</i>	1	0.31
Total		2,272		9	2.12

In terms of vocabulary, we found the following in the editorials, *matatu*, derogatory Swahili word for commuter vehicles other than buses; *Mugithi*, a Kikuyu traditional dance; and *nyama choma*, meat roasting on open charcoal fire, a Kenyan pastime especially in urban areas. We also identified several extensions of meaning, for example, 'grab', to steal public property or funds, 'eating' stealing public funds or property, any unmerited reward or outright corruption, 'national till', public funds (Crooks' forty days are over); 'private developers, directors, bankers, well-connected individuals, investors' veiled safe terms to refer to the powerful corrupt individuals (Sabotage and punishment); 'homecoming', victory party organized in the constituency for the sitting member of Parliament, phenomenon started by the current Government (High price of boiled meat).

We also identified a hybrid compound, 'agemates', a group of same sex that undergoes cultural rites at the same time, for example, circumcision.

4.2 Indigenised Words in Philip Ochieng's Column

Table 4.2: Indigenised Words in Philip Ochieng's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Target word	No.	%
How did we allow this radical evil?	16/02/03	666	- <i>siasa za kuchimbana</i> - <i>nyayo</i>	2	0.3
How they bear false witness against Islam	02/03/03	653	- <i>jihad</i> - <i>sharia</i>	2	0.31
Mass killer posing as the saviour	16/03/03	767	-grab -squeezing of a lemon:	2	0.26
A coalition's 105 days in perspective	13/04/03	682	- <i>matatu</i> - <i>nyayo</i> - <i>darasani</i> - <i>mashambani</i> - <i>mitaani</i>	5	0.73
What 'false pretences' by our MPs!	27/04/03	715	-grab	1	0.14
Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!	18/05/03	698	- <i>payukaring</i>	1	0.14
Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road	06/07/03	712	- <i>Kanu ina wenyewe</i> - <i>majungu</i>	2	0.28
Thank you a million, but no, thank you	20/07/03	696	-patriotic fronts	1	0.14
It's a heavy burden of stupidity	03/08/03	696	- <i>dukawallah</i> - <i>shifita</i>	3	0.43

			-Mau Mau		
Total		6,285		19	2.73

Ochieng does not hesitate to use a whole phrase or a sentence in another language if he believes it would convey his message better than English. He does not write politics of hatred but *siasa za kuchimbana*; *jihad* holy Islamic war, *sharia* Islamic law, *payukaring* blubbering, an interesting twist of events in that a Swahili word is anglicized by adding -ing; *dukawallah* shopkeeper; Kanu *ina wenyewe*: Kanu (Kenya African National Party) has its owners; *majungu* witchcraft; *shifita* bandit.

He extends meaning in English as well as any other language, for example, 'nyayo' means footsteps but when he writes

We see embarrassing investment in "development" programmes – "Nyayo this" and "Nyayo that" – designed only to surfeit the insatiable ego of one individual...

he is referring to every aspect of former President Moi's life. Likewise, *darasani* (*darasa* – class) now covers free primary education, *mashambani* (*shamba* – farm) extended to agriculture, *mitaani* (*taani* – town) extended to cover urban governance.

There is hybrid compound noun phrase, 'patriotic fronts' polite reference to protruding abdomens, especially for men in authority; a literal translation of an African saying 'squeezing of a lemon'; and *Mau Mau*, a reduplicative noun which can be used to describe Kenya's war of independence or to refer to the people who fought the war, known as freedom fighters.

4.3 Indigenised Words in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Table 4.3: Indigenised Words in Mutuma Mathiu's Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Target word	No.	%
We evicted the ancestral spirits	16/02/03	789	-appetite for land	1	0.13
We have become a Mafioso	02/03/03	770	-grab	1	0.13
The devil is in the religion	27/04/03	783	-sharia -kadhi	2	0.26
Should Moi face the music?	20/07/03	791	-posho -eating	2	0.25
Total		3,133		6	0.72

Appetite is usually related to the desire for food but Mathiu makes an exotic collocation ‘appetite for land’, the only way he could describe Kenyans desire to own land. We also find Swahili words *kadhi* an Islamic priest who doubles up as a judge; and *posho* maize flour.

4.4 Indigenised Words in Gitau Warigi’s Column

Table 4.4: Indigenised Words in Gitau Warigi’s Column

Title of article	Date	No of words	Target word	No.	%
Torture chambers an enduring legacy	16/02/03	1,113	-nyayo -Mau Mau	2	0.18
Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot	02/03/03	1,117	-nyayo	1	0.09
An uneasy truce if ever there was one	13/04/03	1,039	-manufactured (this war)	1	0.1
Put an end to this endless revelry	27/04/03	1037	-homecoming -pilau -ugali -muratina -harambee	5	0.48
The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga	08/06/03	1,073	-homeguards	1	0.09
Total		5,379		10	0.94

In order to convince the reader the cause of Iraq was, Warigi uses transliteration and foregrounding, “...Cheney has been among the top hawks who manufactured this war” meaning that Cheney was among the United States of America Government officials who planned and executed the war.

Warigi uses local words for food, drink and participatory development: *pilau* spiced rice, *ugali* traditional Kenyan staple from maize flour, *muratina* a Kikuyu traditional alcoholic drink made of honey and herbs and *harambe*, participatory development.

‘Homeguards’ were security apparatus during the Kenya war of independence but the meaning has over time been extended to include all those who collaborated with the colonial government.

4.5 Summary and conclusion

Names of traditional dishes and local brew are in the majority of the loan words, *pilau . ugali muratina posho*. Extension of sense has been made in the context of bad governance and corruption. Arabic words adopted by Swahili have also found place in the *Sunday Nation*.

As indicated above, Barton (non-dated:5) argues that an African newspaper should strive for “a distinctive African flavour and this will mean using the language in a novel, off-beat way”. He adds that the ‘African flavour’ should come as a natural, “even though cultivated, thing and not as a sort of third-rate of the original”. A newspaper produced in Kenya would be out of tune with the majority of its readers if it were to use the language of newspapers in London or New York. So by using Kenyan or Swahili words, the *Sunday Nation* is appealing to its readership.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the study, we set out to analyse language use of the *Sunday Nation* newspaper. In the broad framework of sociolinguistics, we attempted to investigate whether *Sunday Nation* had a definable register; whether the newspaper had discernable style; and whether indigenisation of English had manifested itself in the studied text. These were our hypotheses and yes, indeed they have been proven right by our findings.

Apparently, the *Sunday Nation* has a definable register. Indeed based on McArthur (1922), we established two types of register, journalese and epithets. Journalese can be subdivided into stock expressions, clichés and special use of words.

However, we have found out that there are no hard and fast rules to compartmentalise register. Types change according to the dynamics of the society. What is considered as stock expression can easily become a cliché or an epithet. The phrase, 'well-connected individuals', for example, could have started as a stock expression was overused, the phrase and even the idea became an epithet and ended up as cliché.

Though we did not study the grammatical categories of the words or phrases, a casual look through the data is indicative of widespread use of adjectival phrases and noun phrases. Phrasal verbs are common in special use of words where nouns are converted into verbs, for example, and adverbial phrases are rare.

Epithets are shared equally between the editorials and the personal columns. Most of the epithets are not complementary, they tend to criticise or dismiss altogether, 'hypocritically sexist', 'animal greed', 'the insult that the government calls a salary' and 'intellectually-challenged'.

In editorials and personal columns, the *Sunday Nation* we found two types of the use of 'we', the inclusive 'we' and the exclusive 'we'. There is no use of first person pronoun in editorials which is the opposite in personal columns.

We found language use ranges from formal to informal which is in conformity with Berry (1976). The informal grammatical categories are almost all nouns, adjectives and verbs but not adverbs. There is also American English which according to Mr. Ochieng is discouraged (see annex II).

The phenomenon of indigenisation of English was manifested mainly in words for traditional or Swahili dishes and local brew. From editorials to personal columns, the word *nyayo* is common currency, referring to any aspect of the former President Moi. Swahili loan words and extension of sense are more frequent in political or governance words and phrases.

From this study other issues came to our attention which we hope will be picked up by others for further research. Questions like the following arise: Do editorials, for example, use passive language? Form Miller's definition (1976:100), newspaper editorial as an article that contributes to a debate on a timely topic. It convincingly interprets the news, using various persuasive devices, making legitimate play on the readers' instincts and emotions. And according to *Wikipedia*²

"Passive statements convey a clear message. A writer uses passive voice to purposefully leave out the actor or subject of the sentence in an effort to sound more diplomatic. Active: "I decided that everyone must retake the exam." Passive: "It has been decided that everyone must retake the exam." The passive example takes the actor out of the sentence so that the audience cannot directly blame someone.

In this way, the editorial does not antagonise some of the readers opposed to whatever topic is discussed.

Another question is: How do readers of the *Sunday Nation* accept the use of 'indigenised' language, that is, to what extent would they prefer it to English English words? Or, are the readers happy with use of informal language which is manifested in serious articles including editorials?

We cannot however extend our findings to other newspapers but it would be interesting to know whether mainstream newspapers, *Daily Nation*, *East African Standard* and *Kenya Times* could confirm our findings.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Grammatical_voice

ANNEX I

ANALYSED ARTICLES FROM THE *SUNDA NATION*

Editorial

Sunday, February 16, 2003

Crooks' forty days are over

Hardly a day passes without shock revelations about corruption and grand theft in the Moi regime. Yesterday it was a controversy about tendering at the Kenya Pipeline Company where police say Sh115 million was paid in contravention of Treasury financial regulations. Earlier in the week there were reports of a group that attempted to cash government securities worth Sh760 million. The authorities are saying those government securities are suspicious because they can find no record of their purchase.

Equally, early in the week there was a compendium of grabbed property that the Mombasa Municipal Council is fighting to take back. The property included a *matatu* parking lot, a ferry parking space, a weather observatory, markets, a dump site, public toilets among a horde of other operational public property.

There is now evidence of what Kenyans feared all along: That the Kanu regime was not about the government of a nation, it was an "eating" soiree, an orgy of gobbling and grand larceny. It is a miracle that the nation survived at all.

As a result of this "eating", the natural order of government, especially with respect to property held in trust for the people, has been completely upset. Former government officials have taken everything: Forests, roads, houses and buildings, research and other public land, not to speak of cash and other resources.

Even in smaller towns there has been extensive grabbing of public land set aside for vital facilities such as recreational parks and car lots. Such property is being developed or has been developed.

The fact of the matter is that a country can not exist without the resources that these common thugs individuals have grabbed. And since the supply of some of these resources, especially land, is fixed, it becomes inevitable that what has been taken irregularly must be reclaimed.

Which is where the problem crops up. Much of this land is not in the hands of those who grabbed it. It is in the hands of second or third owners, some of them gullible investors who did not know they were buying stolen property, other buyers were hard-eyed profiteers who sought to benefit at the expense of society.

We are entering a period of great pain. People are going to lose property they worked hard to buy, but the repossession of grabbed public land cannot be helped. There are those who will say that legally it is upon the buyer to establish the goods he is buying are not stolen.

Equally, there will be complaints of favouritism and tribalism once the hard patch is entered. But the government should not be deterred. Developments put up on operational public land must come down. Order and sanity must be re-established by making it amply clear that those who buy grabbed land will lose it irrespective of developments thereon.

At the same time, those who have made careers of fleecing the national till must now face the music. The tax cheats, we presume, are well known. The tax authorities have no choice but to put their bills in the mail.

For the only way to bring back honesty is by relentlessly and ruthlessly pursuing the crooked. That is what Kenya expects of the Narc government.

How did we allow this radical evil?

By PHILIP OCHIENG

If a truth and reconciliation commission is appointed, I will readily admit the part I played in the social crimes President Moi's Government committed. For, as editor of *The Kenya Times* – the print organ of that era's ruling party – I wrote for or allowed things into it that probably encouraged official felony.

I will, of course – in mitigation – plead that my contribution was more objective than subjective; that I never wittingly contributed to any official rip-off, assassination or human rights abuse.

But the law will retort, effectively, that ignorance is no defence. That I spent much energy defending the system, in its generality, will be evidence enough.

The law will ignore the fact that, where possible, I also tried to use the system's own newspaper to criticise it, in its specific activities.

Here I describe two separate things. The one is that Kanu's written basic governance premises looked excellent. The other is that things went wrong, but only at the level of their specific implementation.

It was our duty, we thought, to criticise specific activities by specific individuals and institutions in order, the more effectively, to defend the general premise.

We reserved the right to try to whip up senior party, Government and parastatal officials into line with a set of policies we had ticked as inspired. This was probably what kept later critics – like Mwai Kibaki – in that system for so long.

Yet it now turns out that we are very misinformed – not concerning the dichotomy itself, for, on paper, Kanu's policies look good even now.

Narc itself will admit that what it promises to scrap is not Kanu's stated policies – since these are almost identical to Narc's own – but only Kanu's *practices*. Looking at it from the vantage of 2003, this is what shocks.

For it transpires that these were not mere deviations from policy – not just "human errors", lapses of judgment, occasional pilfering, ordinary *siasa za kuchimbana*.

What we are now gazing at – with the much sharper lenses of hindsight – is something revoltingly hideous, radical evil.

We see – to our utter horror and dismay – a system in which individuals at the very centre of power systematically subverted the very pillars of their own state to channel huge public resources into their own pockets.

We are told of disgusting machinations by individuals close to the pinnacle of power to swindle certain public coffers of billions of shillings.

We seem to see a shameless official sanctioning of systematic looting of all statutory bodies by channelling all their capital into the pockets of certain powerful individuals.

Forensic merry-go-rounds

We see embarrassing investment in "development" programmes – "Nyayo this" and "Nyayo that" – designed only to surfeit the insatiable ego of one individual and to fatten the bank accounts of the *piranhas* around him.

We see heart-rending attempts to use forensic merry-go-rounds to prevent all the annual-national-budget-size rip-offs – like Goldenberg – from being subjected to any proper "due process".

We see appalling attempts to cling to power by, financing and arming criminal organisations – even those the Government itself had declared banned – to destroy all efforts to defeat that Government democratically.

We see horrifying involvement of certain top military officers to supply rolling stock to such organisations, an extremely risky business because it could lead directly to an Idi Amin.

We suspect state connivance in the assassination of certain individuals because of their real or imagined threats to the political careers of certain potentates.

We see two processes – delirious robbery of the public and sadistic silencing of all opposition voices – both taking a distinctly tribal line and both leading to national bankruptcy and subversion of the foundations of a state already desperately frail.

All this was crowned by a horrendous herding like cattle for slaughter of all dissenting individuals into the Black Holes of Calcutta to subject them to the cruellest third degree torture and murder.

I admit it: I may once have encouraged it and will ask for forgiveness when the time comes.

Society

Sunday, February 16, 2003

We evicted the ancestral spirits

By MUTUMA MATHIU

Africa is losing its mystique. In my patch of Africa, our mighty, ancient forests and our timeless rivers inspired the mystery upon which awestruck natives spun myths and breathless tales of spirits and the living dead.

Now my part of Africa is nothing but a big, dusty slum. I have written in this column that the rivers in my village are pure poison, and they are losing their volume, by my estimate, by about a third every decade. The clear mountain springs were of course the first to go. The rivers, streams and forests are in their twilight years.

A lake deep in the forest near my village used to be the centre of great mystery. Its beauty and the majesty of the forests and mountains inspired the belief that the lake was the home of our ancestors. My grandfather used to tell me that when we settled in our village sometimes in the middle of the last century, our ancestral spirits were heard drumming and singing: "We are moving out, we are going to Rinyuri." I don't know whether Rinyuri is in this dimension or is some place in the spirit world.

Because of our appetite for land, we evicted our ancestors. That appetite has multiplied over time and there is every possibility that we shall evict Africa itself – as a unique physical, spiritual and sociological concept – out of our lives. It always surprises me that the things that define us African peasants – our attachment to and veneration for our land and our system of beliefs – have all been dismissed as paganism and pre-capitalist simple-minded primitivity. It seems authenticity is no longer a good thing. We are all now counterfeit Africans who will destroy anything, including ourselves, for the sake of making a little money.

I have spent some time thinking about the danger that is posed by the change in our attitudes towards land. A peasant might eat from his land but for him working the land is not exactly a commercial event. It is a way of life. A farmer, on the other hand, works his land as an asset to create wealth. Africans have become farmers and the ruthlessness – driven by need – with which they have attacked it makes the rural agricultural system unviable beyond the next 20 years.

I have seen families whose sole source of livelihood is a quarter acre of land, land which has been viciously and relentlessly worked for the better part of a century. For such families, the act of putting bread on the table is a miracle of unsurpassed beauty and mystery. And those families have children who in the next decade or so will require a share of their father's quarter so that they, in turn, can become "farmers".

It occurs to me that the secret to our country's development, and the only hope for rural communities, lies in providing those "farmers" with something useful to do and getting them off the land. Our practice of dividing land equally among children might be fair, but it leads to inevitable disaster.

I have been saying that the way to beat poverty is to put more money in agriculture. But it now appears that the issue is much more complicated and requires a very radical perspective. What is the use of putting more money in rural communities which have no land? It may well be that the solution to making agriculture more productive in some areas is by investing in industry to soak up the excess "farmers" and relieve pressure on the system.

I am also beginning to view the old policy of discouraging the influx of villagers into towns as basically lazy and lacking in long term perspective. The rural areas cannot absorb any more people and desperately need to shed some of the population they now support. The only solution appears to be to provide better services – cheap housing and jobs – in the towns to lure the "farmers" away from their overworked land.

Such a deliberate policy would over time break the back of the do-or-die struggle for land which has led to the destruction of forests, the land itself and other natural resources. It would also free more land for production on a profitable scale.

But the mystique, I am afraid, has like the spirits of my ancestors been permanently evicted by the relentless march of modernisation.

After the crash of the corruption economy, a lot of police families are in crisis. The palm-greasing used to supplement the insult that the government calls a salary. Now it is no more. Will the government please give the cops a payrise? I hate to imagine what would happen if they are driven into desperation.

Sunday View

Sunday, February 16, 2003

Torture chambers an enduring legacy

By GITAU WARIGI

At times, the very legitimacy of a regime is put into doubt not because it can't feed its people, or can't provide them with security, or because it is merely autocratic. At the most basic level, the humanity of a leadership and of a government is divined, quite simply, on how it treats human beings.

Right now, Kanu's demoralised politicians are extremely agitated over their threatened ownership of the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in Nairobi. Were they to reflect more, they would perhaps understand that the biggest blow to the regime which is gone came when the gates to the Nyayo House torture cells were flung open.

Quite appropriately, the building is named Nyayo, like the outgoing regime itself. It houses several innocent government offices, like the Immigration Department and the Nairobi provincial headquarters. Then, of course, there was the Directorate of Security Intelligence, more commonly known as the Special Branch. Its premises were on the 10th, 15th and 25th floors. It was also responsible for the basement floor, where the notorious cells are. A lift which was located there could only stop on the 10th, 15th and 25th floors. The 25th was where the interrogations were conducted. Actually, interrogation is a very prim word for the savage torture that went on there. The rooms were sound-proofed. The curtains were black.

The blackened walls of the cells, the hose pipes, the whips, tell their own story. There was even a control box at the basement which regulated the flow into the cells of icy water, or to blow hot air into them, or cold air, or dusty air - the torturers had their pick.

The average Kenyan police station is known to contain one or two sadists who specialise in brutalising criminal suspects deemed recalcitrant. The government and the police hierarchy have always sought to defend themselves by insisting they do not sanction such malpractices, which they claim are the work of rogue officers in the field. Whether or not we believe them, they can be let off through what criminologists call "plausible deniability."

The Nyayo House phenomenon is different. This is the first time we were seeing evidence of a government building which was deliberately designed for the torture and degradation of citizens. The contractor who put up the building told a journalist that the explanation he got for the basement structures was that they were some kind of strong-rooms. Knowing how governments like being secretive plus the fact that they do have plenty of legitimate stuff they like keeping in secure storage, the contractor left it at that. If only he knew. Or did he?

Did the victims deserve the cruelties they suffered? The unequivocal answer is No. Not even the vilest crime justifies this kind of torture. Not even murder. The law brings its own punishments, up to and including hanging. The worst aspect of it all is that the Nyayo House victims were being brutalised over some amorphous thing which nobody has proved actually existed.

By the time the victims were brought to court, they were completely broken men, their eyes bulging in fright like caged animals. The magistrates and the prosecutors who handled their cases would assume a fake air of disinterest toward these wrecks brought before them, inquiring softly if they were guilty. Of course, by just looking at the victim, quite often brought on a stretcher, with sores all over his body, and the legs rotting from the prolonged stay in water-logged cells, the men of the law knew precisely what the answer would be. Hardly ever were the victims allowed defence counsel.

The typical victim, looking around him only to be met with the hard, cruel stares of his torturers who invariably would be full in the courtroom, would turn to the magistrate and whisper, almost inaudibly but with terrified urgency: "I am guilty." Better spend years in Kamiti than a day more at the Nyayo House basement.

I personally know some of the victims myself. Quite a number of them are artistic types who used to hang out at Nairobi's National Theatre. Save for a strand of idealism for which they can be forgiven on account of their calling or their ages at the time, they are pretty harmless souls. Their lives, and their dignity, were crushed forever right there through the bludgeon of the State.

I also know one Mr Wallace Gichere. He was once a first-rate photo-journalist. That was until he was flung out of his fourth-floor apartment window in Nairobi's Buru Buru Estate by people he identified as policemen. He has since been paralysed, and he has no secure source of income. He has been fighting to get his compensation which a court belatedly awarded him some years ago.

Many prominent Kenyans went through the hell that was the Nyayo House cells. Messrs Raila Odinga, Gibson Kamau Kuria, Willy Mutunga, Koigi wa Wamwere, George Anyona, Edward Oyugi; the list is long. Current Justice Minister Kiraitu Murungi might also have spent time there had he not fled in 1990 to the US.

The horror of those cells is harrowing. It should teach us, and our leaders, a lasting lesson. If there is any redeeming hope out of this sordid past, it is that such gross and evil abuse of the dignity of the human person must never ever again be allowed to happen.

The infamy of the place will endure, long, long after the ownership of KICC has been decided and the victims who suffered in those cells are dead and buried. Already the Narc government has said it will let the place remain undisturbed as a Monument of Shame. Too bad, this might turn out to be the only monument future generations will remember about the Nyayo era.

The Moi regime might be forgiven many things, but surely not this.

After watching the TV documentary about Michael Jackson's bizarre life aired last week, many people have concluded the guy is a freak. I think he is sad and pathetic creature. The manner he blew hot and defensive when questioned about plastic surgery and his face proved he has a lot to hide about this.

It was also depressing to see how slyly he was trying to steer the conversation to make it appear like his dad and his family are the cause of all his growing-up problems. What I pitied most were Mr Jackson's kids. They have to put on masks wherever they go. Reason: their father, believing he is such an idol, wants to keep their identities a secret, more so to paparazzi.

But even Bill Gates has kids, and they don't wear masks!

Editorial

Sunday, March 2, 2003

Sabotage and punishment

For a long time now, economic saboteurs have wreaked havoc in the lives of millions of Kenyans, causing untold suffering and poverty, totally wrecking a country's economy and putting its future in grave jeopardy.

They have survived and prospered, raking in undeserved billions, at the expense of pensioners, the consumers of health insurance, patients in hospitals, our children in schools, the long suffering taxpayer who has had to bear the full load of their vice; in a word they have held a country hostage and taken it to the very brink of bankruptcy.

In so doing, not only have they been egged on, supported, encouraged but also protected by the ironclad brotherhood of a corrupt Judiciary and the naked greed of the shakers and movers of government. Indeed, there might be a case in arguing that the government of the Republic of Kenya was for many years in the hands of economic saboteurs.

The Judiciary has played its role with sublime competence: It has built a battlement of astronomical libel awards, reinforced by the Judiciary's prickly sense of false dignity, around criminals and evildoers.

So Kenyans have been told in veiled, safe terms about "private developers", "investors", "directors", "bankers" and "well-connected individuals", while in actual fact the characters involved were common thieves, cronysts, saboteurs, economic terrorists and people defined by a sick, insatiable greed.

In Parliament, the House has gagged itself with inflexible rules, sacrificing public interest, the very moral duty of the Legislature, in the futile attempt to preserve ancient and in the face of the challenges and prerequisites of the day, totally useless, standing orders.

Thus, for 10 long, farcical, years, the House would not touch anything to do with Goldenberg because the matter was *sub judice*. And in so doing, the House became a cog in the machinery of economic sabotage.

On many issues, the corrupt learnt that the best way to kill discussion and exposure of their nefarious activities was to rush to courts under one pretext or the other and make sure that the cases were never determined.

That would gag Parliament, the media and everybody else.

Writing in the *Daily Nation* on Wednesday, Business Editor Jaiindi Kisero said that "Goldenberg is what has - over the last 10 years - forced the government to devote Sh30 billion (\$375 million) of the taxpayers' money to servicing of domestic debt".

The story is that early in the 1990s, a ring of individuals withdrew from the national coffers billions of shillings, representing a good percentage of the nation's income. And because donors had fled on seeing the economic horror that Kenya had become, the government was left empty-handed. It had no option but to raid the commercial markets and borrow at usurious rates.

A conservative guess at the cost of those "transactions" would be Sh300 billion (\$3.75 billion), but when you factor in other costs, including the compounded multiplier effect over a decade, not to mention court time and the cost of investigations, then it becomes clear that Goldenberg ranks as one of the most expensive set of "transactions" of all time.

What are Kenyans to do? Bury their heads in the sand and pretend that it never happened?

A second example is the bank now in the news; actually to refer to it as a bank would be to do the terminology some violence. This is an institution that had a peculiar one-way means of dealing with public money: Parastatals could put in their money as "deposits", but they couldn't get it out.

In the news yesterday was a graphic description of how bank officials destroyed records of "transactions" by smashing computers with hammers and dousing the debris in petrol and setting it on fire.

There is a latent violence in these acts that is not descriptive of a banker, but of a mind so premeditatedly evil that it makes the murderers of Kamiti look like angels by comparison.

Our thesis today is that, in the name of decency, enough is enough. An economic saboteur, by any other name, is as malevolent. There should be no more mollycoddling of evildoers, this ugly edifice of greed must be urgently uprooted with all its roots and appendages.

Not only should these saboteurs face the maximum penalty under the law, they must be forced to repay every cent that they have taken.

Comment

Sunday, March 2, 2003

Philip Ochieng' / FIFTH COLUMNIST

How they bear false witness against Islam

Because I often defend Muslims, some assume that I lean towards Islamic theology. Nosiree. I prefer no religion. I treat especially the theistic systems equally. It is the only way I can see them in their correct historico-human perspective.

Religions interest me deeply, but only as social phenomena. I want to understand them completely stripped of all the theological garb in which their priests wrap them to justify the horrible cruelties they inflict on one another.

I take sides, then, according only to what I see as the historical truth in each situation, not according to any "divine" prejudice.

For me, the truth cannot be "neutral", "disinterested", "detached" – that kind of liberal pretence at "justice".

The truth is always partisan and militant, engaged, since it is, in a life-and-death combat with the untruth, the inhuman, the socially ugly.

Minus their "godly" wrappings, how else, but as unjust, can such things as "the Promised Land", Joshua's rape of Canaan, the Jewish Holocaust, the Inquisition, Philip the Fair, Calvin and Zwingli or the Huguenots be seen?

How else to see the Crusades, the slave trade, the Amerindian extermination, King Leopold's bloodbath in Congo, apartheid, Palestine – all to the tune of "What a friend we have in Jesus"?

We now know that pure greed for power and wealth were what impelled all this delirium. Gods were ranged against gods merely as tools. Men were the true proposers.

Many Western historians of religion – including Malise Ruthven, Karen Armstrong, John Shelby Spong, Trevor Ling and Daniel Easterman – affirm that Christianity owes justice to Judaism and Islam much more than the other way round.

They know that, under theism, the custodians of the ruling religion – to defend their grotesque econo-political privileges – always latch onto something peculiar about the rival religion to denigrate and subdue it.

Consciously or unconsciously, the Church has always scared its billions with deadly misconceptions about such Islamic concepts as *jihad* and *Sharia*. I hope one day to explain these concepts myself.

Here they concern us only because, typically, Kenya's churches are again bearing false witness about them every Sunday.

Even the Catholic Church is preaching that certain proposals in the Draft Constitution seek to reduce Kenya to *Sharia* law. Nobody ever explains what *Sharia* is.

American Christian fundamentalism

All we get are the prejudices, stereotypes, thought-bromides and intellectual wickets of the Morris Cerullus, Reinhard Bonkes and Margaret Wanjirus.

We get only such, often racist, American Christian fundamentalist jingoisms as issue from Boston's Watchtower and something called Family TV – licensed by our own Government!

We get only the age-old conceits, arrogances and holier-than-thou dogmas with which the Church has always belittled Islam.

Does the constitutional proposal aim to make Kenya a *Sharia* state? It is true that *Sharia* has been abused by some Islamic states. But if you knew its real secular *Qur'anic* import, you would welcome it with both arms.

The fact, however, is that there is no such plan. The aim is only to make the Chief Kadhi's court – which is confined to family matters – more shipshape to handle such cases more effectively.

Yet, as usual, the unspoken lie is even more poignant. It is claimed that our statutory law, being "non-religious", is the ideal, whereas its Islamic sidebar, being "religious", is the aberration.

Utter nonsense! For our statutory law is also nothing but religious – the English Protestant's right of every individual to appeal directly to his god without the officious meddling of a hierarchy of Catholic priests.

The law is merely the juridical expression of the cult of this individual and his property. The individual pervades all the Christo-capitalist injunctions about tenure, appropriation, exchange, marriage, family, inheritance and crime.

The Church thus rules us – all the way from the living room to the High Court. Yet – in its usual imperviousness to injustice – it seeks to deny the Muslims even the little legal autonomy they enjoy at home!

Comment

Sunday, March 2, 2003

MUTUMA MATHIU

We have become a mafioso

I have become the butt of many a joke. In restaurants these days, my friends pass their bills to me, wondering if the Mount Kenya Mafia does not have a float to feed hungry Kenyans. Others have told me that at the conclusion of five years, when another mafia is hopefully expected to grab the reins, I shall be sent to Igad, like other "incompetent beneficiaries" of the outgoing regime.

Now this libel is being perpetrated by generally nice people and is meant purely in jest. But it drives home the fact that Kenyans don't see governments of individuals, they see governments of cliques, a lot of them ethnic.

My fear is that it also indicates an unsettling political development: That Kenyans are already disconnecting from this new government, sort of psychologically washing their hands of it. Anything that goes wrong from now on will be the fault of the Mt Kenya Mafia, anything that goes right will of course be credit to all "progressive" Kenyans.

This, to my way of thinking, is the best way to blow it. We are all members of the ruling mafia, every Kenyan who fought for change and who voted for Narc. We can not leave the government to any particular, smaller mafia, irrespective of its composition.

Which leads to another important position: The last two month have been spent in a daydream where we have applauded and lauded this or that decision by this or that minister. In that period, Kenyans, myself included, have tended to take leave of the fact that all governments are basically the same. They can be corrupted by power and what keeps them honest is not the magnanimity of the people in them – though this is important – but an involved public that will not take nonsense.

Governments need opposition, they need criticism to force them to think and arrive at the best and most legal decisions. Left to themselves, politicians become like rivers, taking the course of least effort and like Mr Moi, they get to believe that they are Danubes of thought who have all the solutions and know what is best for everybody else. It is the absence of opposition which makes good politicians bad.

And this is already beginning to happen, unfortunately. Take three examples: First, in the Kanu regime appointments would be done behind closed doors and announced over radio. Isn't the same thing creeping back? I read in the Press that Mr Justice Evans Gicheru learnt of his appointment as Acting Chief Justice from his daughter, who had heard it on radio.

Appointments must be openly done, there must be interviews, there must be proper communication of the merits of the appointee, the interviewing must be made public, in a word this system of appointing is totally wrong and cannot continue for much longer.

The second example is Attorney-General Amos Wako's interpretation of a court ruling on the Kenyatta International Conference Centre.

Whereas it was quite cute and witty for the AG to interpret "status quo" to mean Kanu would remain evicted, we need to remember that this is the same kind of cynicism that allowed Kanu

to perpetrate its dictatorship and persecute Kenyans. The AG must, at all times, not only obey but be seen to be obeying the spirit and the letter of the law. It doesn't matter that Kanu didn't. This is not a Kanu government. And two wrongs never made a right.

The third example involves dynamo minister for Local Government Karisa Maitha and the question of the Karura Forest land allegedly bought by an American claiming to want to put up a tourist hotel. The position of the government, if I have understood it well, is that all Karura land – as well as other grabbed land – is to be repossessed. For Mr Maitha to say that his ministry is ready and willing to allow the development of the forest land, perhaps because the government is unwilling to tangle with the Americans, is most revealing indeed.

It shows that ministers are prepared to take the easy option even if it is against publicly stated policy. Policy and the law must apply uniformly to all, American and Kenyan.

Take a deep breath and stay involved. You are all in the mafia now.

I was saddened to learn of the death of loud American Baptist preacher, Pastor E.V. Hill. I used to find his sermons on television, peppered with anecdotes about growing up in a dirt-poor black family in segregationist American South, particularly touching, a true testimony of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

Comment

Sunday, March 2, 2003

GITAU WARIGI / **Sunday View**

Unjustified grumbling from coddled lot

Could we be making too much of a fuss about the threat from a bunch of Kalenjin Kanu MPs that they will drive the Rift Valley Province to secession? Assuming they were told to go ahead - and even to print their own money with the face of one of their own, such as Mr John Serut on the notes - I'm ready to bet their intoxication would be short-lived. They would soon be rushing back pleading to be incorporated back into Kenya.

I have a five-year-old son, spoiled like hell, who will go into a tantrum because Daddy is not rousing himself from the magazine he is reading so as to go buy him a silly but beloved little drink called Bibo. It's up to me to buy the packet at my convenience, which I do rather depressingly often, but I know it won't do to let Junior imagine I'm at his beck and call whenever he wants any of his fancies indulged.

You don't do that by shouting at him. You simply pretend your ears are shut to the commotion he is causing. And if it doesn't cease, you call him and firmly lay down the law.

Since the group of 14 Rift Valley MPs are behaving like children, let's start by treating them as such. There is this misguided notion they have that their province is so crucial that Kenya would be unviable without it. Sometimes it helps to let such characters know that it is they who would find the going real rough if the rest of the country turned its back on them. Even if you build international airports in high-altitude areas wastelands, it won't help when they don't attract any flights or generate any business ₤ except, of course, in smuggled goods from the Middle East.

The self-importance displayed by the MPs arises, no doubt, from the lavish favouritism their region got from the previous regime. In the area of government appointments, especially,

which the 14 are now shouting are being skewed against their tribe, the Kalenjin were kept in cloud nine by the Nyayo regime which, quite appropriately, they saw as "their" government.

You don't need to go through the list of top officials in the former regime to understand that the new authorities would have faced a rebellion if they didn't bring some balance. Since the gang of 14 are keen to talk tribal, by all means let us talk the same language.

Before the Narc Government materialised, over a third of the total number of Permanent Secretaries were from the Rift Valley, as were over three-quarters of the chief executives of the more consequential parastatals. In the provincial administration and the security services, the numbers were simply embarrassing. Most of the provincial police commanders were Kalenjin, as were their counterparts in the CID and security intelligence. Their numbers at district levels, as with those of DCs and DOs, were and remain overwhelming.

That pattern is replicated in most government departments. Just about every other office deemed sensitive, be it in the Lands Office or the National Youth Service, had to go to an appointee from that most blessed of communities.

To argue, as the "14" are doing, that there is nothing wrong since these people are qualified is insulting. Since when did the Rift Valley become the reservoir of such a lopsided number of the most qualified personnel as to completely dominate the high-echelon staffing of the civil service? Besides, as somebody acidly remarked, if these chaps were so qualified, why then did this country end up sinking so low and stinking like a loo?

Somebody else has mentioned about the "withdrawal symptoms" people suffer when they are weaned from a powerful and addictive drug. This is a most apt characterisation of the present condition of the 14 MPs. Power is like a drug, and having it suddenly yanked away leaves leaves one confused and disoriented. Having got used to the bliss and pleasures of the previous era, these MPs are now struggling to adjust to reality.

The majority of them are anyway freshmen MPs. Their ignorance and inexperience tells. They think it is easier to sink roots and connect with their Kalenjin electorate by harping about their tribe being persecuted. It is a cheap tactic, much as it sells. Too bad that an experienced somebody like John Koech (MP, Chepalungu) allows himself to be part and parcel of this farce.

The silliness is compounded by the level they are prepared to go in picking trivial quarrels. Because some people are saying time has come to give Mau Mau hero Dedan Kimathi a fitting funeral, then the late Koitalel arap Samoei must get a state burial too, our good Kalenjin MPs reply. This me-too chest-thumping is something we rightly associate with children. And it has left the country saddled with many expensive but non-performing monuments, like that international airport somewhere.

I don't get what the MPs want to prove by moving around holding rallies in a pack. When you want to tell a politician who is fairly empty, a good measure is to look for those who travel in a flock, like sheep. A politician of conviction doesn't need the cover of a herd. He stands on his own as an individual and says what he believes in.

But fate has a tendency of screwing (do ignore the pun) up things when least expected. By a peculiar happenstance, one of their number is none other than Mt Elgon's John Serut, who has suddenly become the most (in)famous brand from Kalenjin-land following vivid allegations of a sexual nature touching on him. It is not one of those soothing thoughts to imagine as is being alleged - the elderly and grandfatherly Serut groping and panting beside a hysterical and unwilling 24-year-old female parliamentary staffer.

It's been quite an eventful year, of sorts, for Mr Serut. When the new government was being announced, Narc had appointed him purely by mistake to become an assistant minister. The oversight was corrected in a matter of hours. Amidst all the current allegations, his prospects look quite dim.

Some advice for Gideon Moi:

Please, please, do learn to speak to your constituents in a language they can easily understand. Isn't it ridiculous when you hold forth in St Mary's School English before some villagers in Bomet? The country watches you on TV and everybody is bemused.

Do invest a little time to learning Kiswahili, and also the local vernacular. After all, Mr Uhuru Kenyatta did. Prince Charles of England, who incidentally plays better polo than you, does a fairly passable job imitating the cockney slang of London's East End.

Editorial

Sunday, March 16, 2003

End these dangerous rows

Politics is not for the faint-hearted. It is for those who like to mix it up, to struggle, to strive, to excite and be excited, to be at the very top of a peculiarly vicious rat race.

There is, therefore, no tranquillity in politics, it is a roller-coaster of an industry, characterised by pits of depression and peaks of achievement and power. Anyone expecting our politicians to carry on business in a quiet, efficient and collegiate manner has little understanding of the psychology of the Kenyan politician.

However, the wrangling in the ruling party cannot be treated as the ordinary rough-and-tumble of politics. It cannot also be ignored because it risks destroying the hope Kenyans have nurtured for more than two decades: To have a government whose first priority is to do what it was hired to do.

This intra-party warfare has put in question very important aspects of the national agenda. The first one, and the most crucial, is economic recovery. This is a country in which 17 million people live in poverty; they do not have the money to meet the basic needs of life. Another two million are available and willing to work, but they cannot find a job.

A key plank of the economic recovery plan is to restore donor relations so that the country can borrow cheaply and invest to create jobs and build incomes to defeat poverty. Such restoration would also be a signal to investors to take a keener interest in our economy. But those relations cannot be re-established before laws relating to corruption are passed by Parliament.

These laws have been drafted and taken to Parliament but one has been withdrawn temporarily because of fears of sabotage by Narc backbenchers. The backbench rebellion appears to be the most active front in the war in the coalition.

The second agenda is the constitutional review process. All parties, other than Kanu, were elected on a platform of reform. Kenyans have wanted a new constitution for more than 10 years. Billions of shillings have been spent on the process, what is remaining is the shorter bit. But now it seems that because of power politics within the coalition, no one can stand up, without running a grave risk of contradiction, and say that Narc is united in its desire to review the Constitution at the soonest possible moment.

The sum total of this unacceptable set of circumstances is that the country is sliding back to where it was under the Kanu regime: Politics within and between parties is taking precedence over the national agenda.

The time has come for Narc to lance the boil. Let them sit down at whatever forum, whether the Narc Summit or some such other body, and take a decision whether they want to govern this country or indulge in the leisure of political intrigue.

If they find that they cannot stop their internal squabbles from interfering with important national issues, then they shouldn't waste the nation's time and resources. They should declare the coalition unworkable and refer the matter back to the electorate for arbitration.

During the election, the then opposition convinced Kenyans they were willing to sacrifice their own ambitions and interests for the sake of putting the country on the road to recovery. So far, there has not been much evidence of that.

Let the more sober minds in Narc, if there are any left, be animated by the urgent need to restore the coalition's credibility and commitment to the important things that require attention. Let all Narc politicians try and see whether it is possible to view issues through a prism other than tribe and political power.

Kenyans accept the exuberant nature of politics. They do not expect agreement and acquiescence on every issue. Only on the important ones.

Fifth Columnist
Sunday, March 16, 2003

Mass killer posing as the saviour

By PHILIP OCHIENG

On Saddam Hussein, the world seems agreed on two things. One, he has amassed "weapons of mass destruction" and, two, it is wrong to brandish such weapons. Why doesn't anybody see how strange those accusations are?

Of course, the Iraqi leader has had such weapons. Even a child might be puzzled by the senselessness of mentioning it. More surprising would be if the Mesopotamian state were not armed to kill. For exactly which state does not have "weapons of mass destruction"? Kenya?

Armament is the definition of the political state. A state is an organism which thrives - and can only thrive - on the flesh of other states. Therefore, a state without an army and an array of destructive gadgets is a contradiction in terms.

As Mao Tse-tung knew, all political power springs from the barrel of the gun. The "comity of nations", then, is merely a balance of war-formations. Under the system, there can be no disarmament. Thus there can be no world peace except in the form of this extremely delicate balance, which we maintain by means of diplomacy.

Diplomacy is the tool - short of war - by which states seek to grab their self-interests from one another. Diplomacy is the recognition that, momentarily, you might injure your own self-interest by pursuing it violently.

It thus becomes crystal-clear that "weapons of mass destruction" cannot be the problem in Baghdad. For George Bush and Tony Blair, the problem, rather, is the man wielding such weapons or, more pertinently, the geo-political direction in which he might push the button. But this is truistic.

If the possibility of destroying humans en masse is what is paining the consciences of Washington and London, they would make even more noise against a state right next to Iraq which has weapons a hundred times more deadly. With overwhelming US assistance, Israel has accumulated thermo-nuclear, bio-chemical and other weapons of mass destruction that can pulverise a thousand Iraqs in the squeezing of a lemon.

Armament is the only way

Five victories by Israel over a whole bloc of Arab states should long ago have told those states that armament is the only way to deal effectively with Israel's growing military arrogance. Anything else, like "abstention" - even offer of bases so that Israel's superpower sponsor can ride roughshod over the only Arab state that tries to defend itself - is suicide or permanent surrender.

It is the reason the Levant cannot enjoy the armed balance that I speak about. Anybody can see that the US is the chief enemy of that balance.

Anybody who disturbs it is the enemy of the only form of peace possible in the global state system. For that is exactly why the US is demanding that an Arab state should be divested of certain - outmoded - weapons while, at the same time, arming Israel with the latest weapons of mass destruction.

Yes, the US has weapons of mass destruction that can reduce this planet to smithereens in the twinkling of an eye. And only children can be impressed by the argument that Iraq cannot be trusted with such weapons because it has used them against neighbours.

Only nincompoops can swallow the argument that the US, Britain and Israel can be trusted with such weapons because they are "democracies". For Israel commits more mass destruction every hour than 10 Iraqs can do in a year.

Did "democracy" prevent America from hurling nuclear, chemical or biological warheads on Hiroshima, Korea, Vietnam, Latin America, Slavic Europe, Libya and Somalia?

Who does not know that mankind is threatened with extinction precisely because America's war research system once upon a time released into the human habitat a mass killer monster called HIV?

Ever since the collapse of its Soviet foil, the US has reserved the right to disarm all states that stand in its way to the world's strategic resources - like oil - and to arm to the teeth those states that serve as conduits to those resources.

Thus, for flaming oil greed, it has no qualm about hurling unprecedentedly lethal weapons on millions of Arab children while the world watches cheerfully!

Society

Sunday, March 16, 2003

Narc starts on the road to grief

By MUTUMA MATHIU

The message that is wafting from the ruling party is that the coalition is deeply divided.

And there are serious fears among those in the know that this widening chasm, unless it is urgently bridged, is going to blunt Narc's ability to deliver the promises it has made to Kenyans and cause a lot of disappointment. It is also not inconceivable that it could tear apart the coalition and possibly bring down the government.

Dissent is good. It sharpens up a party and keeps it honest. But there is a great difference between dissent and a power struggle. What is going on in Narc is not just a difference of opinion, it is a full-fledged, no holds-barred conflict which is bubbling over into such crucial areas as the floor of the House.

The grievance is an old one. And it is that after the election, the President did not honour the Memorandum of Understanding between his National Alliance (Party) of Kenya and the Liberal Democratic Party.

It is the feeling of LDP that the President has peopled the government - both at the Cabinet level and in senior government and parastatal appointments - with the so-called Mt Kenya Mafia and the LDP, and especially the Luo, have been shunted from the mainstream of power.

They also feel that the Democratic Party faction, which they regard as having taken all the plum jobs, is dead set against constitutional reforms because a new constitution would bar President Kibaki from seeking another term and would also pave way for Roads minister Raila Odinga to become prime minister.

There is also the question of the fact that the draft constitution envisages a basically ceremonial presidency with executive authority vested in the prime minister. In terms of

strategy and power politics, therefore, if the new constitution is implemented as-is it will have the effect of transferring executive authority in government to the LDP faction.

Which is why there may be some credibility to LDP fears that some very powerful forces in Narc are anxious to apply the breaks to the review process. Assistant Minister Mwangi Kiunjuri's views last weekend that the draft constitution is unfair in attempting to bar people aged more than 70 from seeking the presidency is most probably being seen in LDP as a weather balloon, floated to test the waters in readiness for a full-scale onslaught to make sure that the way is left open for a second Kibaki term.

Conversely, and since this is a matter for the control of the government itself, it seems that the LDP, or sections of it, have decided to remove all stops in their quest for the full implementation of the MOU, especially after the constitution is reviewed.

Thus, the government, which has a full 132 MPs in the House and in some issues can count on the support of Ford-P as well as the fringe parties, can not confidently introduce a constitutional amendment because of fears that its own MPs could sabotage it.

What this means is that though the two sides are keeping things more or less under wraps for fear of a public backlash, the government programme is slowly being edged from the centre stage and the power struggle is replacing it. Soon, Kenyans should not be surprised if Narc is preoccupied full time with its power struggle, one side fighting for survival, the other side battling it to remove it.

The resumption of aid and crucial government projects are becoming the battlefield in this emerging political reality.

The ruling party still has an opportunity to unite and get to work before it loses the goodwill it now enjoys. My advise is: Take it.

Governments have a duty to inform their nationals travelling abroad of possible dangers to their safety. When such governments have information on possible attacks, especially by terrorists, they have a duty too to inform the targeted nations, and in that way help to defeat the evil designs of the terrorists.

On Friday, the British government issued a travel advisory on Kenya. Our government seems not to have any specific information of any threat, either from the British or its own sources. One is reminded of New Zealand's chickening out of a cricket game in Nairobi. I remember one evening, when the New Zealanders were peeing in their drawers, seeing Baroness Amos, the British minister for international development at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. She looked happy and well rested after a couple of days in our fair country.

The credibility of some of these warnings is beginning to look a little frayed at the edges.

Society

Sunday, March 16, 2003

Genesis of Bush's obsession with Iraq

By GITAU WARIGI

Recently, a fellow called David Frum, who was employed as a speechwriter for George W. Bush when he came to power, published a book on his recollections when at the White House.

An interesting thing he remembers is that when it came to drafting Bush's first State of the Union speech, a superior instructed Frum quite shamelessly to write into it "a justification for attacking Iraq." The fellow wracked his brains, but could come up with nothing better than a phrase about Iraq becoming an "axis of hatred" towards the United States. The phrase was reworked by higher-ups to read "axis of evil" (so as to sound more "theological," Frum was told). Beside Iraq, Iran and North Korea were also added to the list.

The snippet shows the extent of the Bush administration's morbid obsession with Saddam Hussein. The obsession is such that the Bush administration theologians have been working frantically to implicate the Saddam regime with Al-Qaeda, never mind that America's own CIA reportedly isn't convinced there is much of a connection. Undeterred, Bush's gung-ho defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, decided to set up a rival intelligence-analysis unit with the apparent intention of trashing the CIA's picture of events.

In short, war against Iraq is inevitable, unless a pure miracle happens. Chances of a miracle happening, however, are as remote as the possibility of Bush figuring out where and what the heck Mt Kilimanjaro is, or what in the Lord's name is Jupiter or Pluto. He might think it is a new weapons system developed by a military contractor, in which case he would instruct Rumsfeld to buy the stuff and target it against those damned Islamic terrorists.

Make no mistake, there are going to be no winners from this showdown. The fate of poor Iraq goes without saying. Eerily, the sheer tragedy awaiting thousands upon thousands of hapless Iraqis who are going to die in the hail of bombs Uncle Sam will soon unleash is getting buried in the impersonal debates about weapons inspections and whether or not a fresh anti-Saddam vote in the UN Security Council is necessary.

The other big loser will be the UN. America has made it abundantly plain that it doesn't give a hoot which way opinion there goes. Saddam must be hit. Even if the Security Council, which is supposed to authorise military action, balks, and even if France, Russia and China cast their vetoes in the Council, America has said loud and clear that it is going to war, damn the rest of the world.

The long and short of it all is that the UN is destined to become worthless. The charter paper the UN was written on - ironically under the direction of the Americans - will not be worth the spit the White House is throwing at it once Bush is through with his war.

One might as well ask what's the point of having the Security Council? Why not simply abolish the shop and let America be the sole entity on the earth with the power of veto? Since France and Russia and China (or anybody else for that matter) cannot stop America despite their veto-wielding status, what's the use of having these so-called "Big Powers" sitting in the Council?

Britain is going to be a big loser too, much as Tony Blair is waxing enthusiastic for the privilege of being designated America's sidekick in the coming conflict. Sidekick is a rather generous description of British involvement, whose inconsequence was illuminated in a recent revelation that American military planners had yet to come up with a precise and formal role for the British contingent. Clearly, the Brits are being tolerated simply for show, to deflect criticism of America acting solo.

Last week, Britain was hugely humiliated when Rumsfeld casually remarked that the US did not need British help to fight the war. Humiliating as this was, it is nonetheless perfectly true. If the Brits retained any pride, they would have pulled out their troops, or at the very least demanded an apology. But sidekicks have no power, and so they suffer their indignity in silence.

The only beneficiary out of this war is going to be America, and not just by pummelling Iraq, which everybody expects will be over in a matter of days. People who imagine America is going into this thing in a bumbling and blind way as has been its norm are mistaken. There is an ambitious plan in place to impose total American dominance over the Middle East, and from there the rest of the world is expected to get the message. The era of *Pax Americana* is set to be given a radically new imprint by Bush the Second.

The icing on the cake is Iraqi oil. The country has the second largest reserves after Saudi Arabia, which is tightly in America's sphere of influence. Saudi Arabia is also Osama bin Laden's birthplace, though I have heard people say Bush imagines Osama is Afghani.

France has displayed rare courage in standing up to America's war-mongering. But the effort is futile. Still, the Americans don't have to be petty and crude in the manner they have taken

to demonising the French. Last week, some American lawmakers in the House of Representatives ordered that the reference to "french fries" be erased from the menus in the House cafeterias. The name was changed to "freedom fries," a rather silly term if you ever heard one.

If anything, the episode indicated that the phenomenon we have come to know as George W. Bush has many replicas in that country, especially among politicians. It was totally lost to the esteemed Congressmen that "french fries" are actually not French. Their origin is Belgian.

Saddam is only the first victim in Bush's designs. The next target - and mark this - will be North Korea. It is not going to be a full-scale invasion, *a la* Iraq, not with China lying next door. But don't rule out a devastating air strike against that country's nuclear facilities, or even a scheme to eliminate the North Korean leadership.

In a recent interview with Bob Woodward (of Watergate fame), Bush reportedly got horribly agitated when the discussion turned to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il. The startled journalist thought the President might jump up from his seat, frothing in the mouth.

Editorial

Sunday, April 13, 2003

A chance to end speculation

Nothing excites passions, conjecture and rumour among Kenyans and elsewhere as much as murders perceived to have been politically motivated. And the longer they remain unsolved, the more the public gets fixated with them.

The various failed attempts to establish who killed former Foreign Affairs minister Dr Robert Ouko in 1990, and why, for instance, remain intriguing subjects of political discussion, innuendo and speculation. Unless the real killers are brought to book, this is a matter that will never die. In 1969, another Cabinet minister, the flamboyant Tom Joseph Mboya, was gunned down in a Nairobi street. A suspect was promptly arrested, put on trial and convicted. However, many Kenyans remain unconvinced that even if he was the killer, he plotted the murder all alone.

Then there was the case of former Nyandarua North MP JM Kariuki, whose mutilated body was found at Ngong on the outskirts of Nairobi. A parliamentary select committee investigated the killing and to this day, his killers have never been brought to book.

Most recently in the United Kingdom, scientist David Kelly's apparent suicide after being fingered as the person who leaked to the BBC information indicating that the Tony Blair government may have "sexed up reports" to justify the war on Iraq, has been big news. And, for the first time in Mr Blair's tenure, the incident sparked calls for the government's resignation. In fact, this would rank as one of the roughest patches in Mr Blair's otherwise smooth two-term administration.

Back home, in the past two weeks, the word "assassination" has been on the lips of many people, following the murder of university lecturer and constitutional affairs official Crispin Odhiambo-Mbai. It is this talk of a possible political motive in the murder that almost put the Government in a rather awkward position.

Even an attempt by one of the key politicians to absolve the Government of responsibility, arguing that even individuals are capable of assassinations has been hardly convincing. The public fallout among the top leaders over the possible motive of the Mbai killing has not helped matters, either.

It is for this reason that we welcome the speedy investigations into the murder. That three suspects have already appeared in court charged with the university lecturer's murder is commendable, indeed. It is the best indication, so far, that the police are following up strong leads and, given time, they will be able to unravel the mystery.

The Dr Odhiambo-Mbai murder story is one that will be keenly followed by the public. Death is irreversible, but the best thing that can be done in his memory now, for the benefit of his family and the nation, at large, is to establish beyond any reasonable doubt who killed him and why.

Also of great significance this week is the Government's pledge to fully support the latest round in the attempt to solve the Dr Ouko murder. Attorney-General Amos Wako not only assured the parliamentary committee investigating the death of the Government's total co-

operation; he also presented it with various reports containing the names of suspects who should be investigated.

We cannot help but echo Mr Wako's appeal to anyone who has any information on the Ouko death to present it to the committee. This group has a sensitive assignment which will greatly benefit from such assistance.

Narc has promised Kenyans a transparent government that will not only pursue national economic prosperity, but which will also solidly uphold and promote human rights.

"Mysterious" deaths cannot be part of such an environment.

Fifth Columnist

Sunday, April 13, 2003

A coalition's 105 days in perspective

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

Using comparison as a useful tool of analysis, you must set out on both sides of the scale at least the main comparable elements. How do President Kibaki's first months in office and President Moi's in 1978 compare?

The dailies supplied the answer in pullouts they carried on Tuesday to mark Narc's first 100 days. It was that President Kibaki's system is much less purposeful, much less rhythmic, much less focused, much less together. Quite. It is serious obscurantism to pass judgment on the first phase of Kibaki's rule without contrasting the circumstances in which the two rose to the apex of power.

Mr Kibaki assumed office in a far more difficult situation. Mr Moi had inherited a single-party hegemony which faced almost no challenge. Kenya was among the Third World's healthiest economies. We were not yet in the abyss of poverty. Crime had not spiralled. The Augean stables of corruption belonged to the future. The *matatu* "industry" did not yet personify our national feloniousness, violence, cruelty, venality, greed, mannerlessness, absence of culture.

Of course, the Moi regime was not solely responsible for this precocious senescence. All the seeds of rapacity and graft, crime and heartlessness, tribalism and bucolic rust - and the tyranny necessary to maintain them - had been planted under Jomo Kenyatta.

Mr Moi simply intensified them. And - not endowed with Mzee Kenyatta's gift of the gab - he rapidly stripped them of all the charm of gibberish and abracadabra and lay them naked in all their grotesqueness. The helter-skelter from the eighties was among its hideous consequences - Mwakenya, the concentration camps, the torture chambers, the tragi-comedy paraded as "multi-party democracy".

This, then, was what Mr Moi bequeathed to Mr Kibaki - a ravaged economy, widespread managerial ineptitude, runaway crime and violence, intense administrative and judicial injustice, a sheer slump in educational standards, a higgledy-piggledy transport system.

Narc itself had - only a few weeks before last year's General Election - been hastily wangled from extremely independent and unstoppably outspoken tribal chieftains (not to mention Queen Candace of latter-day Cush). Narc was thus bound - as soon as it romped home (thanks mainly to the profound public animus for the Moi Government - to plunge into just the kind of internal squabbling it is now embroiled in.

Profoundly anarchic implications

This deep sense of autonomy within a coalition is clearly the root of independent and often mutually contradictory actions by such ministers as Karisa Maitha, Amos Kimunya, Charity Ngilu, Raila Odinga, John Michuki, Martha Karua, George Saitoti, Ochillo Ayacko, Kipruto Kirwa.

Their profoundly anarchic implications are scary. They give the unsettling impression of poet W.B. Yeats' "gyring" things which "fall apart" because the centre can no longer hold.

Yet who can say that these things don't have a plus-side? Who wants to go back to the Nyayo days when one individual made all the decisions even for the remotest party cell, administrative village and civil service unit?

Who wants to return to the Moi era when no minister (or permanent secretary) could risk taking any initiative except on pain of career death?

With a bureaucracy which trundles like Mzee Kobe, what could George have achieved *darasani*, Amos on lands, Raila on the road, Kipruto *mashambani*, Ochillo on oil, Charity on health, John by telephone, Martha on water, Karisa *mitaani* or Chris on the beat?

True, the actions strike us as anarchic and dangerous. But the social results are clearly a net gain. Here are liabilities being turned into assets. Here are no mean achievements in 105 days.

Yet the liability of method can be carried too far, become an end in itself, get out of hand and easily destroy the social gain. Yes, to get things done - to build ministerial traditions - ministers must continue to take their own initiative.

But without the impression of a "mission control centre", a nation feels like it stands on a sand foundation. President Kibaki needs to emerge every so often to reassure Kenyans that he is the prefect, that everything is under control.

Comment

Sunday, April 13, 2003

The ugly business of freedom

By MUTUMA MATHIU

The Iraqi have been liberated, but I think they have lost the respect of the disinterested observer.

It turns out they are all mouth, but when push comes to shove, there is little resolve and little evidence of conviction. There is an oily obsequiousness among the Iraqi which is really most dishonourable.

The same people who were waving kalashnikovs and shouting: "Something, something Saddam, something something", are now screaming, between raiding offices and other installations and carting away everything: "Yes Yes Bush!" The Iraqi love choir.

A favourite soundbite on the BBC in the early part of the week was a man, overcome with the liberation, intoning: "Thank you miste-rrr Bush". These were the same people who had streamed back to their country from abroad, to defend it against the "invaders". The speed with which the people on the street, at least those interviewed by the Western media, have changed sides reminds me of the title of one of Isaac Asimov's short stories, *The Inconstant Moon*.

Saddam Hussein too, like in 1991, has lived up to his reputation of a paper tiger. You remember in 1991, hunkering in his bunker in the rain of smart bombs, he promised the Americans "the mother of all battles" in the ground war phase. The Americans went in, expecting to meet an army. There was nothing, just a 100-hour massacre of freeing, demoralised, hungry and scared youths.

This time too, Saddam was threatening to fill American body-bags by their thousands. But other than for a few terrorist style attacks, the picture that we have formed from Western media reports is that of a mopping up operation. I expected battles lasting days between the Republican Guard and the Americans, an organised war, a set piece, a clash of armour and mortar. I remember catching a glimpse on TV of men dressed in green throwing down their rifles and jumping into the Tigris. The Iraqi talk so tough and fight so little.

Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations Mohammed Aldouri has been hailed by the coalition as a "decent man" after he, so to speak, threw in the towel and said it was all over. Mr Aldouri

will be remembered, not because of his "fluency in French and French literature", but because of the way he would command attention at the UN with his denunciation of the US and its allies. He has left the US, finding it objectionable to stay in a country that is occupying his own. Would I be surprised if tomorrow I saw him on TV chanting: "Yes miste-rrr Bush"?

The war in Iraq has been an anti-climactic whipping of the under-dog. The coalition was not going to lose, of course, but after all that talk, the world was expecting the Iraqi to put up a fight. They haven't.

But maybe the war was the easier bit. What comes next – the anarchy, the political instability and the almost inevitable balkanisation of Iraq – will provide the real test. Already, the rhetoric from Washington is changing. My understanding was that the coalition was going into Iraq to "liberate" it and destroy weapons of mass destruction.

I don't know why Washington would want to "invest our political capital and life and treasure", as Secretary of State Colin Powell phrased it, to liberate Iraq. If Washington was to invade every noisy dictatorship in the world, the Pentagon would be a very busy place. Perhaps the Iraqi, like the Israeli, are a chosen people. Quite probably their oil is.

As for weapons of mass destruction, I think they have found a white powder of indeterminate potency. They have also found a few drums of a non-weaponised chemical used in the manufacture of fertiliser and shot up a truck, which they say may or may not have been used as a mobile bioweapons laboratory.

The Kurdish peshmerga have taken Kirkuk and Mosul and the excitement of independence must be beating in the turbulent hearts of every Kurd. If the US is hoping that the Kurds will lay down their rifles and melt back to their villages, to live happily under whatever government the coalition cobbles together, well, that may not be the right thing to think. The Kurds want, and have always wanted, an independent Kurdistan, drawing pieces from Iraq, Turkey (a very nervous country), Syria, Iran and I don't know where else. The aspirations of the Kurds will not be easy to quiet.

And the Shi'tes, do they too want their own theocracy, married to Iran? And Kuwait, what security guarantees will it require? And the coalition, how much control – and oil – will it require for the "reconstruction"?

Maybe the Iraqi should have fought harder. Freedom is going to be very ugly business.

Sunday View

Sunday, April 13, 2003

An uneasy truce if ever there was one

By GITAU WARIGI

When you talk to many of the Narc MPs who went on retreat to the Mt Kenya Safari Club in Nanyuki last weekend, they all gush how wonderful and how worthwhile the meet was. The insistent message is that there will be no more clashes and fights in the coalition. All the hatchets were buried, or so you will be told, over and over again.

Never again will you hear Cabinet Ministers Kiraitu Murungi and Raila Odinga circling each other like gladiators, so goes the spin. You will be reminded how the former poured his heart out at the gathering by swearing that his support for the campaign to edge out Mr Odinga from the leadership of the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Review arose out of an unfortunate misreading of his colleague's intentions. One honourable member remarked, none too casually, that they went to Mt Kenya to look for and exorcise those ghosts called the Mt Kenya mafia. "But we didn't find any," he added.

There could be something suspicious when everybody oozes this kind of silky optimism. In fact, a more sober appraisal came from an MP who is not actually in Narc who saw the Nanyuki conclave as marking, like in war, a temporary truce in hostilities. In this case, the

truce has to do with the ongoing struggle for power being waged by different factions within Narc.

There are two broad camps in this struggle. On one hand are those among President Kibaki's confidantes who are uncomfortable with proposals which encroach on the President's executive power, be it by empowering the body called the Summit or through a resolution of the constitutional review which dilutes that executive authority. On the other hand are the enthusiasts of a speedy conclusion of the review which introduces devolution and the creation of the office of Prime Minister.

There is a view that both sides are too deeply entrenched in their positions as to render any notion of we-are-all-permanent-buddies-now illusory and naive. There is too much at stake anyway for anybody to expect there is now going to be enduring peace in the coalition. Sooner or later, the battle will be renewed. And the most likely platform for the coming showdown will be on the question of the outcome of the constitution review. Eventually, there is going to be a winner. And a loser.

We are all indulging in wishful thinking when we keep moaning about the rifts and the fights going on in the Narc coalition. There is no use pretending that such differences can be quelled in a coalition of this nature. But again, it is too cynical to scoff that the whole Narc thing is doomed and that such parleys as the Nanyuki one are ultimately useless. Something can be done in between which will ensure the rifts don't go to the extreme and bring the whole edifice collapsing.

That is why, I think, the Nanyuki meeting was important. Essentially, it is through such encounters that Narc will get to institutionalise the ethos of dialogue and negotiations. If we agree that infighting in Narc is there to stay, then it becomes necessary to create mechanisms for managing that infighting.

Basically what is going on is that one side feels disadvantaged and wants to bargain for a better deal in the government. It all boils down to a question of ethnic and regional calculus, particularly on the fiery matter of appointments. It is inevitable that one or the other group will feel short-changed. Naturally, they are going to make hell about it.

It is important to remember that other institutions such as the trade unions are in a mess in this country because a lot of people have lost faith in the idea of negotiations and bargaining. That is largely why industrial relations between employer and worker have broken down and wildcat strikes have become the norm. The authorities, rather than forcing dialogue, are content to order workers to simply return to work unconditionally.

The previous regime was famous for imposing political orthodoxy throughout the country. Under Narc, that is no longer possible, or desirable. But it is far easier to impose orthodoxy than to creatively manage factional battles. A very critical test for Narc will come when the National Constitutional Conference is held at Bomas of Kenya.

Just wait for the uninhibited looting of Iraq now that war is over. Even before a so-called interim administration has been officially set up, American oil companies are being breezily awarded contracts in the Iraqi oil sector. One such company, Halliburton, which has bagged a \$1 billion deal to "clean up" southern Iraq's oil wells, used to have as its CEO none other than US Vice-President Dick Cheney. Not coincidentally, Cheney has been among the top hawks who manufactured this war. Many more firms are queuing up. All are American. Embarrassingly, the ever-loyal British have so far got nothing.

The looting will be effected under the guise of "reconstructing" Iraq. It is sad when you think what this entails. First you destroy the country, infrastructure and all. Then you saunter in, and take over the oil resources. These will be used to pay your companies which you bring along to do the "reconstruction."

This is a wonderful way of earning a living. I knock your house down, then plunder your savings to pay myself for building you another. And don't be too sure I won't come back to demolish it when my cash begins to run out.

Apparently no "weapons of mass destruction" have been found yet. Like Saddam himself, they are nowhere to be seen. Instead, we now hear a lot about war crimes trials for members of the ousted Iraqi leadership. The infamous gassing of the Kurds in 1988 is top on the list. Nobody, though, expects the inquisitors to remember America's use of napalm and Agent Orange against Vietnamese civilians in the late 1960s and early 70s. But the world remembers.

Talking of war crimes, this stupid war has ignited a growing debate that the brutal bombing of cities and civilians with warplanes and missiles against a country with virtually no airforce or air defences constitutes a war crime.

Editorial

Sunday, April 27, 2003

Keep your eyes on the future

Tomorrow's National Constitutional Conference is the culmination of a long struggle and a dream long held: An occasion for neighbours, compatriots, rivals, Kenyans to sit down with the purpose of determining the shape of our national destiny.

Unlike in many countries where this special event takes place in the shadow of the trauma of war, or with the fist of a dictator in the face of the congregation, our own conference takes place in the context of great freedom and conviviality.

It is an occasion whose incomparable majesty, beauty and significance is impossible to exaggerate. Which is why it must not be taken for granted.

But even as delegates stream into the meeting, we would like them to be aware of the terrible mistake that has always attended Kenya's efforts to make a good constitution. As a matter of fact, this constitution process is itself partly the child of such a (necessary) mistake.

As in everything else, Kenyans have never been able to divorce this sacrosanct document from personalities. It is an undeniable fact that the constitutional agitation that started in the dying years of the 1980s had as one of its purposes the expulsion of retired President Moi from power.

Down the line since 1963, our Constitution has been amended on countless occasions to suit the President in power, his party or his cause in a power struggle. This misuse of parliament and abuse of the Constitution has resulted in the constitutional patchwork that we now have, a Constitution that gives the President farcical powers, a document that has been interpreted to deny Kenyans their fundamental rights.

There is no doubt that Kenya's current constitutional order is a crime against our nationhood. Happily, we are now doing something about it, we are meeting tomorrow to fix it.

The great danger, and a great shame too, is that the constitutional conference might make the same old mistakes. Attempts have been made to explain that the constitutional process should not be tied to particular events or persons. But there is no evidence that the lesson has been learnt.

Kenyans are aware that to win the election, the National Rainbow Coalition signed secret agreements sharing out positions. Those positions do not exist and the hope is that the constitutional review will create them for the designated persons.

It follows, therefore, that some delegates are going into the conference with the aim of creating offices for specific people. This is no way to make a constitution, a document that is meant to outlast us all and to serve a nation for generations.

On the other hand, there are those who view the necessary rationalisation of the powers of the President as an assault on the current holder of that office. They may, therefore, oppose important measures in a misguided effort to protect Mr Kibaki. This is not the way it should be.

Delegates must do their utmost to be objective. They must also not focus their minds on today, tomorrow or the next election. Their eyes should be on 10 years or 20 years from today; what kind of future do they want for this country?

As for the draft itself, there is a lot in it that is good, desirable and visionary. But there are also things which are unrealistic and unworkable. It is an unwieldy document whose biggest failure is that it tries to define everything in black and white. The conference's main job will be to distil it to its essence.

Equally, key constitutional issues require a lot of thought and reflection. Why do we need a prime minister? Why do we need a bicameral parliament? Is it realistic to nominate 90 MPs? What do we value as a nation, hard work and industry or a lazy expectation that the government will provide?

This is a weighty, historic undertaking. Kenyans pray that the delegates will have the diligence, honesty and wisdom to do a good job – for the sake of the future.

Fifth Columnist
Sunday, April 27, 2003

What 'false pretences' by our MPs!

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

Five years is a very long time for a nation desperately struggling to keep death at bay. Yet a monster suddenly invades it and the people find they can do nothing about it for the next five years.

The monster is doubly inimical. For you allowed him into your homestead just because he posed as the long-awaited messiah. Yet once inside, he dropped all pretences at salvation. During the very first week, he grabbed your already precariously meagre livelihood, leaving you writhing in hunger and thirst much more rasping than hitherto.

And now - behold! - you are stuck with the Ninth Parliament. There is exactly nothing you can do till 2007. For the Constitution ordains it. And the Constitution is as sacrosanct as the Ark of the Covenant.

The MPs persuaded you through what the courts claim to be "false pretences" - I have never yet met any other kind! They vowed to cleanse the whole country and lavish wealth on you. You thronged the voting kiosks with overwhelming excitement. Yet the very first law they made was to attack your very umbilical cord.

They cut off your life support and condemned you to the cruellest death by the thousand. And they did it by denying priority to - or altogether rejecting - all proposed legislation that might have translated itself into food, medicine, housing, clothing, knowledge and leisure for you.

If they can perpetrate such cruelty in just one week, think of what radical evil they will do to you for the next five years! But I remind you: it is all legal.

Like Jehovah Elohim, the Constitution wot! All it did it just by indulging in a bit of its own "false pretence". It alleged that you, the voter, has a right to "recall" your MP if he fails to discharge the tasks for which you have sent him there.

It was there, a whole judge once admitted, that the law became "an ass". For the fact is that you cannot "recall" that demon at any time you feel he has let you down. You have to wait for donkey's years, by which time he will have done you irreparable damage. He will have overturned all your ideas of the "natural" order of things.

What "false pretence" it is to say the MPs are your employees when they have usurped all your powers and are using them to fix their own pay and pension and - if you protest - to legislate torture chambers and concentration camps?

Mutually exclusive ideas

Your MPs are but grubs who will gorge themselves all the way till the next General Election while you look on, totally helpless. What will be the use of "recalling" them in five years' time after they have reduced you to pulp?

True, you will vote a lot of them out. But who told you that the next lot will not be equally insatiably ravenous? The Ufungamano pretence that such "representation" can ever amount to a "people-driven" constitution is just that - vile in its "falsity".

Rousseau knew long ago that democracy and representation are mutually exclusive ideas. Sovereignty cannot be represented except at the expense of democracy. He allowed that, because the state has become so large, the whole people cannot govern itself directly.

But it means that the only thing you can call democratic in the liberal representation that ensued is voting. What happens between any two General Elections is systematic robbery and tyranny. Our MPs do it again and again with total shamelessness while yelling "democracy" to beguile you.

You are absolutely powerless to recall them whenever necessary. Why? Because they have bewitched you into thinking that the present five-year tenure system is a marvel of democracy.

The constitution-makers could at least enable you to recall an MP at any time he offends you, as when yours voted to rip you off to buy a sinuous car.

The Constitution can be made to force an MP to resign - and thus precipitate a by-election - whenever constituents demand it through a certain number of signatures. Knowing my people, many would be powerfully tempted to abuse such a clause. But it is an idea and I call upon you to offer your own.

Society

Sunday, April 27, 2003

The devil is in the religion

By MUTUMA MATHIU

Every pressman knows never to get involved in a disputation on religion. For the simple reason that a religious argument is, to borrow a phrase, like a milking a billygoat into a sieve: You end up annoying everyone and convincing nobody.

But we are kicking off the last phase of writing a new constitution tomorrow and my take is that religion - rather than those other disagreements to do with devolution and presidential age limits - is going to cause a lot more trouble than any other issue.

I do not know how we ended up here, reducing constitutional discussion into a religious contest between the so-called Kenya Church on one hand and the Muslim Consultative Council and the Supreme Council of Muslims of Kenya, on the other.

People of strong faith are the worst constitution makers in the world, for they are intoxicated with their own sense of right and compromise appears a defiance of the divine will. Faith and free will and freedom of choice are, when you boil everything down, antithetical. In Islam, the reason for being is to serve the will of Allah.

In 1832 Pope Pius IX described the freedom of conscience as a madness, religious freedom as the product of the "most fetid fount of indifferentism" and the freedoms of the press, worship and education as a "filthy sewer full of heretical vomit". The position of the Church may have changed, but that is its tradition.

A good part of the Church will arrive at the constitutional conference informed by a simplistic hatred of Islam imbibed from the American Christian Right. On their part the Muslims are quoting the Qur'an: "Never will the Jews nor Christians be pleased with you till you follow their religion", and threatening, "We would be happy to join any Kenyans in deliberate efforts to uphold the majesty, power and authority of God over our lives. We are not sure it is worth our while to join all Kenyans in open and clear rebellion of God in order to qualify for protection by Kenyans".

The position of Muslim leaders appears to be that secularism is un-Islamic and anti-Islamic. Islam is a way of life, from cradle to the grave, it governs every facet of life, including government and jurisprudence. The Sudanese have debated this point for 40 years and come to no agreement.

If my understanding of the position of Islamic leaders is right, then their position is that Kenya's secularism is a "hoax", it is a Christian state. Number two, they are not interested in creating a secular state, they want an "ecumenical state" in which there are two judicial streams: An Islamic stream in which Sharia is implemented to the hilt and another for non-Muslims.

The Christian radicals on the other hand, since Christianity does not have the elaborate equivalent of Sharia, merely want Kenya declared a Christian state (since 80 per cent of its people are allegedly Christians), they also want God mentioned a couple of times in the document, the 60 references to kadhi courts removed and no constitutional provisions for Islamic courts.

How, in the name of all that is rational, are we going to arrive at a peaceful consensus?

The Americans have experimented with secularism more diligently perhaps than any other nation. I believe that is why they are able to guarantee to such an extent religious freedoms. Personally, I believe that is the way to go. Writing the statutes for the state of Virginia in 1786, Thomas Jefferson, as good a constitution writer as any, stated: "Be it therefore enacted by this General Assembly that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry...but that all men shall be free to profess, and by arguments to maintain their opinions in matters of religion *and that the same shall no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capability.*"

That is what we all want, or at worst, what we should want, the freedom to practise our religion without that freedom affecting our enjoyment of any other rights.

How do we get rid of the fanatics so that we can lay the foundation for a country in which all freedoms – including religious and cultural freedoms – are guaranteed? Think about it.

We congratulate the authorities for their quick and decisive action on the insurance industry. The Association of Kenya Insurers maintains that it is not a cartel and that the peculiarities of the business make collective action inevitable. Well, that may or may not be so. I have never known a cartel to stand up and say: " We are a cartel. We fix prices to fleece our customers."

Sunday View

Sunday, April 27, 2003

Put an end to this endless revelry

By GITAU WARIGI

Anasa is the Kiswahili word meaning the enjoyment of pleasure, and with reckless abandon. Our MPs may not be totally reckless, but they have shown an alarming fondness for the good life. Within the first 100 days of Narc being in power, party MPs have been partying like there will never be a tomorrow.

Start with the "homecoming" parties which have become obligatory for every new MP to host. They are turning into something of a phenomenon, with large groups of MPs moving from

constituency to constituency celebrating each other's success in the last General Election. Even the unfortunate air crash in February that cost Minister Ahmed Khalif his life as he and other ministers were returning from a party hosted by colleague Moody Awori did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the partygoers.

It would be interesting to know how much these parties are costing. But you can rest assured they are not being held on shoe-string budgets. Dozens of goats and cattle are being slaughtered. Mountains of *pilau* and *ugali* are prepared. Soda and beer flow merrily. At one party hosted by a Nyeri MP, the food was ferried in trucks for the 5,000-plus crowd. The *muratina* had been stored in several large drums. One well-fed participant even recalled the loaves and fishes bash Jesus Christ conjured up for a similarly-sized multitude.

At another party hosted by a Cabinet minister, a village ruffian managed to wangle his way to the high table reserved for dignitaries as they were queuing up for the buffet and made off with 15 sparkling cell-phones. Rumour has it that one of the stolen phones was none other than the Vice-President's.

Some of the parties are understood to be financed by shady wheeler-dealers who are after something crooked in return. Whatever the case, the parties are symbolic of the kind of wastefulness and extravagance we wish to put behind us.

It is all right to make merry and to celebrate, but this should be done with a sense of proportion. The MPs don't really need to be reminded that there is pressing business ahead of them of getting this country working again. It would have made more sense if they were staging these functions as part of a larger campaign to get to know their constituents and their problems.

The Kibaki administration eased a great burden for MPs when it put brakes on the unending activity of Harambees. The MPs can now utilise this welcome respite by taking time to tackle the urgent problems in their constituencies. Rural folk require such things as boreholes, more classrooms, better access roads, and the like.

Nobody is telling the MPs to finance these things. All that is needed of them is to mobilise the constituents so that they take advantage of their situation, including in such matters like Narc's free education policy. The MPs can also come in handy in preaching the eradication of illicit and dangerous village brews. This does not require them to cough up any money. All it asks of MPs is to give a little of their time and their mobilisation skills.

One disturbing thing about the "homecoming" parties is that they have been turned into occasions where the VIP revellers end up making some pretty weird utterances. There was the recent declaration in Emuhaya of a so-called Western Kenya Political Alliance at the victory party of area MP Kenneth Marende. At another such function in Butere, Assistant Minister Andrew Ligale made the extraordinary accusation that the Kenya National Union of Teachers leadership were stooges of Kanu and hence needed to be removed.

Earlier, there was National Security Minister Chris Murungaru at the Embu party of cabinet colleague Peter Ndwiga, where he made the unsubstantiated allegation about unnamed billionaires who were seeking to destabilise Narc. Some of the victory parties, especially those hosted in Western Kenya, are being turned into platforms for roasting the same government the partygoers are supposed to be a part of.

The excitement extends beyond hosting victory parties. One uncomfortable thing the MPs have displayed is a love for expensive retreats, like at Mt Kenya Safari Club in Nanyuki. Last week they retreated to the aptly named Leisure Lodge in Diani, Mombasa. They were all sporting bright holiday shirts. A German Foundation had sponsored the Nanyuki gathering. It is not clear who picked the tab for the Diani one.

Pray, isn't it possible for the honourable gentlemen and ladies to hold serious deliberations elsewhere other than in fancy locations? How about the KCCT facility at Mbagathi, or the Kenya School of Monetary Studies at Ruaraka? Or could it be that this weakness for revelry has something to do with the fact that a good number of the new MPs are from the NGO

world, where workshops and seminars and long convivial evenings in luxurious lodges are a way of life?

For quite some time now, Narc has been a house more or less at war with itself. A section of the party MPs cannot hide their disdain for the President and have uttered some pretty rude words about him. Yet when he invited the MPs for lunch at State House recently, the invitation was received with unalloyed delight. It was enough for them to put aside their bitter divisions – temporarily.

Tena Estate next to Doonholm in Nairobi has become a dangerous place to live. As early as 7 o'clock in the evening, it is quite unsafe to venture outdoors. Murders and robberies are an almost daily occurrence. Last week, the proprietor of an estate pub was shot inside his premises. Several other murders and violent robberies have been reported this month. A popular barber-shop has been raided countless times.

Estate residents say the crimes are being committed by a gang of youths who are about 18 to 22 years in age. Police patrols are infrequent, more so now when the previous practice when police would move around exacting "tribute" from late-night bars seems to be fading.

There is a well-known police reservist who operates around, but he seems to have other things on his mind. Buru Buru police station, whose brief extends to Tena, needs to do something fast.

Editorial

Sunday, May 18, 2003

Watching our own back

For people who live outside Kenya, recent actions by friendly nations may have created the impression that this is a country that has been shut down by terrorism fears.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Kenya is open for business. Thousands of visitors are pouring in every day, to enjoy a good holiday, attend a conference or transact business in safety and convenience.

There is no fear on the street; people are carrying on with their lives in the greatest of confidence. Sure, there is plenty of anger against Britain and the United States of America for what ordinary Kenyans see as their desertion, in the truest tradition of fair weather friends, at the slightest hint of trouble.

This is not to deny that the terrorism threat exists. The suicide attacks in Casablanca on Friday night is ample evidence that extremists pose a great danger to lives and property throughout the world. What we deny is the implication that the threat is any greater in Kenya than other parts of the world. The US, after all, has suffered the worst attacks.

The perception that the US is better able to defend itself than Kenya is all true, of course. It has more resources and greater expertise. The question on the minds of Kenyans is: When Britain suspends its flights to Kenya and the US warns its citizens to stay away because they doubt our ability to stop terror attacks, does that advance the war against terrorism? Does it create a spirit of confidence and partnership in this war which requires the contribution of every society?

It does not. Instead, it causes injury and a sense of betrayal and reveals that though the US and Britain pay lip service to a coalition of nations massed against the evil of terrorism, we really are on our own. On top of which their actions will do incalculable damage to our country, a matter which they do not seem to regard as of any importance.

This being the case then, Kenyans and their government have little choice but to close ranks and acknowledge a basic reality: The fear of terrorism and the consequent actions of our so-called allies portend a great and a most urgent threat to our country. Secondly, we must take the lead in sorting it out in our own interest and basically in our own way.

And the place to start is by placing terrorism among our budgetary priorities. Reforming our security services to empower them to meet this new threat will require perhaps more money than we can afford and time, but it can't be helped. We must provide a timeframe within which to create the best – in intelligence, investigation and reaction terms – anti-terrorism crack squad in Africa.

Secondly, there is need to take off the gloves; the government must do what it must in tracking down local terrorist links. If there are sensibilities and conveniences that must be sacrificed, then so be it.

Thirdly, we must consider a hard-nosed diplomatic offensive with the aim of achieving three things: The resolution of the festering Somali crisis and its terror breeding grounds, putting terrorism at the top of the agenda of multilateral and continental fora and convincing those nations who are not fully living up to their obligations to do so.

More particularly, we demand that nations which have had a hand in the genesis and sustenance of Al Qaeda to stop attempting to sweep their dirty pasts under the rug.

It has been reported that Al Qaeda are the remnants of militias put together by certain countries to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Such countries have the primary responsibility of cleaning up their own mess and must be prepared to accept part of the blame for the actions of Al Qaeda.

Then there those which have been accused of funding terrorism, under the guise of charity. We must insist that such accusations be investigated by an authority of international competence and action taken against the guilty.

Everybody is playing hardball and watching their own backs. Why shouldn't we?

Comment

Sunday, May 18, 2003

PHILIP OCHIENG / **Fifth Columnist**

Argue, don't shout, my dear MPs!

Let me repeat it. It is tyrannical for voters to have to wait for five years before they can call their MPs to account. Thus I am flattered by the proposal that if, at any time, 30 per cent of an MP's voters formally express dissatisfaction with his performance, he must resign to face a by-election.

By their vehemence, the MPs who oppose this do not seem to know that they are just giving us additional ammunition to demand such a rule. First, they claim that the proposer is motivated by "malice". That's a straight jab at me because I was the first proposer. But if malice was what impelled me, then I must be interested in someone's seat.

Is it Otieno Kajwang's Mbita, where my parents were born, or Ochillo Ayacko's Rongo, where I was born, or Paul Muite's Kabete, where I attended high school and now live? But why should I propose such a sharp departure from liberal practice just for a single seat? No, I am not interested in a constituency circus.

If so, why should I be accused of malice to the 200+ other members of the national circus? The answer: "Malice" is just a subterfuge for intellectual vacuity.

For I raised specific questions about legislative representation. I said exactly why the five-year tenure cannot be called democratic in its present form.

What I expect are cogent answers, not *payukaring* (blubbering) of the kind some MPs displayed at Bomas. Like Julius Nyerere, I refuse to be brushed aside with juggled phrases.

In the post-Azimio days, when Dar es Salaam was Africa's intellectual Mecca, Mwalimu had an effective rebuke for all such swaggerers: "Argue, don't shout!"

Many had formed the habit of trying to win an argument by merely hurling ideological epithets at their interlocutors.

From the left flank thundered familiar "revolutionary" stock phrases: Reactionary! Imperialist! Neo-colonial lackey! Ñ words which, uttered out of context, are as meaningless as Lin Piao's Little Red Book.

These oral missiles were usually hurled from beer counters. And one day, I angered my left-wing colleagues when I dismissed them as "counter-revolutionaries"!

I still get e-mail from certain sixth-lane Caucasian right-wingers living in Nairobi who hope to score intellectual marks by branding me a "Marxist".

Appalling intellectual indolence

"Marxist"? Why not? But much more useful than the epithet is whether my ideas are right or wrong. That is what you should go on to show.

To hope to intimidate readers by merely brandishing anti-Communist scarecrows as old as the hills is appalling intellectual indolence.

That is my answer to those ready to condemn as devilish certain thought-systems even though they have never read a single line from the authors but have met those terms only in liberal propaganda texts.

You can never differentiate between revolutionary liberalism from reactionary liberalism until you have read *The Rights of Man* (Tom Paine) against *The Road From Here* (Paul Tsongas). To peep into Hitler's mind, you must read *Mein Kampf*.

But our leaders want to keep us in total ignorance. Thus Lawry Herron, an educated mind, enraged President Moi when the Australian envoy urged Kenya's youth to read widely - including Paine, Gandhi, Jesus (sic!) and *Marx*.

Thus whenever serious accusations are levelled at MPs, they should reply with educated words. They cannot duck by simply giving labels to the accusations.

If they are unable or unwilling, that is precisely the point. Intellectual and moral accountability is what we demand from those who claim to represent us.

That is why we demand a mechanism enabling us to "recall" an MP whenever he falls short of our expectation.

In the absence of any cogent reply Ñ but merely to babble about "malice" and "abuse" Ñ you just reveal that self-survival as an MP is what motivates your opposition.

Your worry is simply that, if the proposal becomes law, you will be the first to go. But if you know that such a just law cannot touch you, why do you fret so?

Why do you threaten to scuttle a constitution-making effort in which a whole nation has invested back-breakingly? For how long can Kenyans continue to tolerate this lechery?

Comment

Sunday, May 18, 2003

MUTUMA MATHIU / **Society**

Those who must suffer, bleed, die

Minister with the Gift of the Gaffe, that is the sobriquet

Dr Chris Murungaru, the National Security boss is fast earning himself, by the facility of his somewhat prolific mouth.

But I appreciate that the burly doctor is in a true old fashioned bind. On the one hand, he is bound by prudence – and the consequences are unspeakable if he does not – to go public with what the security services might consider a credible terrorist threat, however scanty the information.

When he does so, the result comes very near to shutting the country down in as far as our allies are concerned. Witness what happened in the week: Dr Murungaru announces, and quite rightly in my view, that a terrorist has sneaked into the country and security was being beefed up. Hot on the heels of that, the Americans issue a travel warning, noting darkly that Kenya may not be able to prevent an attack. Then the British deliver the final devastating blow, taking the precipitate and unprecedented step of stopping flights.

Dr Murungaru's predicament is a reflection of our national quandary. We are pawns – and the battlefield – in a war which we are too weak to fight: Powerless to make a convincing effort at battling the marshalled evil forces of Al Qaeda, too feeble to chuck the imperialist embrace of the Americans, and the West in general, whose vassals the fanatics consider us to be. That Kenya is not particularly popular nor considered any more vital an ally than any hundred of other small poor countries is of course a matter upon which the warriors of terrorism would prefer not to dwell.

And a distinctly imperialist motif is evident in the discourse on the relations between America and the world it dominates. I remember reading the argument in one of the US news magazines that America is reluctant to acknowledge its imperialism but is in actual fact imperialist in the traditional mould.

I am not smart (or interested) enough to make the connection between what we simple foreigners view as the isolationist conservatism of the Republicans and Mr Bush's interventionist agenda. I can't help but think of a quote from Pat Buchanan: "Most of us "neo-isolationists", a disparate, contentious lot, are really not "neo" anything. We are old church and old right, anti-imperialist and anti-interventionist, disbelievers in Pax Americana. We love the old republic, and when we hear phrases like "New World Order", we release the safety catches on our revolvers."

I have also read that Condoleeza Rice is so conservative in that mould that she thinks "international community" is a myth; she only sees US interests.

All this, in my mind, does not sit well with sending troops out to "liberate" Iraq. Nevertheless, when a country deploys troops to impose by force of arms its view of "good", "liberation" and "civilised", in other words, when a powerful nation sheds blood and stakes its fortune on "improving" another collective of humans (with more than glimmer of economic advantage in the background), that is as good as a working definition of imperialism as any.

Which brings us to the other side of the equation. Al Qaeda presents itself as a resistance to this American (and Western) imperialism, which it views as a threat to freedom, culture and Islam.

We are bleeding and suffering economic ruin in the resolution of this conflict and we ask ourselves: "Why us? We have no part to play in this blasted war!" We will not save ourselves by convincing the terrorists of the American view. Nor the Americans of the terrorists'. We are caught between the terrorists' bombs and an enraged imperialist power.

There are certain uncomfortable parallels with our own experience. In the Mau Mau war, the real casualties were not the combatants - the Mau Mau died, of course - but proportionately, it was the civilians: They were rounded and herded into concentration camps and occasionally slaughtered by the Mau Mau who accused them of collaborating with the colonialists. It mattered little that on their own, these individuals had little influence over neither the Mau Mau nor the colonial government. Their role was to suffer, bleed and die.

Exactly the same position where we find ourselves, with Dr Murungaru right at the pith. But in the glorious Mau Mau war, there was freedom and the destiny of a nation at stake. And in this one?

Comment

Sunday, May 18, 2003

GITAU WARIGI / Sunday View

The trouble with Murungaru's hasty style

National Security Minister Chris Murungaru is on the spot again. This time he is being censured for sounding off too loosely about the alleged presence of a suspected Al Qaeda terrorist in the country. He actually took the trouble of releasing a photo of the said suspect.

The barrage against Dr Murungaru, mainly, is because he talked without first considering the wider implications of his utterances, especially with regard to the tottering tourism business. Worse, his statement seems to have been taken as the cue by Britain and the United States to issue those controversial "travel advisories" of theirs to their citizens to avoid Kenya. Britain went a step further and cancelled British Airways flights to Nairobi.

Basically, Dr Murungaru's problem is the way he approached the matter. He is in charge of an elaborate police and investigative network which is there to ferret out such terrorists. Fighting crime or terrorism is supposed to be done through quiet, steady, persistent police work. You don't suddenly go public with doomsday announcements when you haven't even been able to corner the threat. You merely cause panic.

In fact, what will happen is that you alert the suspect to go underground, unapprehended. It would have been smarter for Dr Murungaru to wait until the security forces had got a handle on the threat, then emerge to announce to the country that the plot or whatever it is had been neutered. He would now be getting applause rather than the condemnation he is receiving.

The same must be said of the British and Americans and their travel advisories. In fact, much as Dr Murungaru miss-stepped, it is these two countries that are the cause of all this mess. It is all very well of them to sound high-minded about how their people's lives are precious and why they have an obligation to issue warnings regarding perceived threats, but it is basically pointless when they don't come up with specific information which a host country can use to untangle the threat. Vague advisories that have no head or tail are of no use to anybody.

The simple fact is that terrorism has become a global threat. For this, we have to thank the Americans and the British for pursuing policies in the Middle East that have invited this phenomenon. All of which is unfortunate since innocents like ourselves get sucked in for no other reason than that the prime targets of the terrorists occasionally hop through our land.

If by the Americans and their cousins deferring travel to Kenya will mean safety for our people in the face of the terrorist threat, so be it. In fact we should be thankful. That is why, I think, we should not be protesting too much if the Westerners chose to keep off our beaches and game parks. On that, I am willing to agree with Dr Murungaru. Where I can't is when his statement reeks of having been goaded by the same countries who are actually causing him these security nightmares.

I am sure Dr Murungaru is aware of how the Americans have been fussing about how, supposedly, the Kenyan authorities have been "inept" in combating home-grown terrorist suspects, especially at the Coast. We are now hearing similar denigration of Saudi Arabia, where suicide bombers killed Americans last week. But much of this criticism is arrogant and misguided. There was one particular case where the FBI went into a rant because the Kenyan police had decided to release some suspects when they found there was nothing really they could pin on them.

If America no longer gives any quarter to terrorist suspects, especially of the Muslim variety, it is important they are told there are other countries like Kenya where you can't railroad people who are citizens or hold them indefinitely if you have no legal case to do so. The key word here is that these are citizens, not the temporary foreign immigrants who are giving America security headaches at home. Every country has its laws, as I am sure the Americans understand.

The other notion that we are incapable of combating the terrorist threat on our own without the supervision of these Western Big Brothers is nonsense. So what if we (or more precisely Western interests on our soil) have been targeted by terrorists several times? Were the World Trade Centre Towers and the Pentagon building sited in Africa in September 2001 when Osama bin Laden's minions struck them? Where was the vaunted American security shield when the rogue planes were roaming the skies wreaking havoc? Once we appreciate that anybody is vulnerable, we will be going somewhere.

Dr Murungaru, in fact, should be wary of the praise he is getting from the Americans. Such praise is unhelpful, and could actually carry a risk, which is something we must try to avoid at all costs in these perilous times. Let him do his work quietly without being told how to do it by foreigners whose interests are alien to ours. Above all, Dr Murungaru should endeavour to fight terrorism without making the fight appear like a vendetta against particular minorities in the country or a certain race from a particular region of the globe. So far he has not done that. But the same cannot be said of the countries busy now praising him.

Terrorism does not just flourish in a vacuum. It has antecedents, much as the forces being targeted try everything in the book to avoid confronting this fact. Foolish Middle-Eastern wars such as the Iraq one are not going to enhance the security of Americans a whit. That is common sense, and Americans must realise that when they allow their leaders to go into warmongering excursions, there is going to be a price to pay. George W. Bush promised them a safer world with the elimination of Saddam Hussein. Are they getting it? No. It is most unfortunate that last week's terrorist action in Riyadh could be only the beginning.

Why, you might ask, are the self-styled "liberators" of Iraq having to hunker behind barracks and not behave as true liberators confidently do, which is to move openly and mingle with the people?

As it were, the Americans and the British have been proved badly wrong about where the next terror act was set to unfold. It was not Kenya. It was Morocco.

Editorial

Sunday, June 8, 2003

Our ambitions for the review

The constitution-making experience has been something of a disappointment. The National Constitutional Conference was in danger of degenerating into a chaos of bickering over allowances, factional fights, spurious and thinly-veiled political ambition and irrelevancies. Perhaps Kenyans were a little naive in expecting the conference to be a genial congregation of friends and neighbours where intellect and reason as well as good intentions would guide us in writing a constitution for our children and their children. Certainly, we were half-hoping that the conference would reveal great statesmen and nationalists, whose contributions and elasticity of mind would establish them as great Kenyans to be feted down the ages. However, this country remains united in its desire and determination to come up with a constitution better than what we have. There will still be great opportunities, when the conference reopens in August, as it must, for great minds and great nationalists to step forward.

In the meantime, the delegates have headed home for a well-deserved reunion with their families. Our call to them is to use the time well. They should reflect on the proceedings of the first session, inform their neighbours of their deliberations and have a debate on pertinent issues and come back with a clear way forward.

Equally, politicians and the Constitution of Kenya review Commission should use this time to dissipate the cloud of suspicion which hung over the conference like a poisonous pall. Unhappily, many delegates went home fearful that powerful figures in government would take advantage of the break to scuttle the process.

The fact remains that the review is not a governmental process, it is a people's process.

Neither the government nor powerful figures in it can stop it.

On the other hand, Kenyans must not be unduly carried away by these suspicions, which could easily be the by-product of the power struggle in the ruling coalition and which the

opposition parties are only too happy to whip up. We urge these warring politicians to avail themselves of the benefits of this break to reconcile for the sake of the reforms. When the delegates troop back on August 17, Kenyans will expect a more focused, less-tense conference.

Editorial

Sunday, June 8, 2003

Sweep your own street

Lest the World Environment Week slips by without notice, the public ought to remember they have a problem on their hands.

Kenya's forests are depleted, posing a direct and urgent threat to the economy and way of life, our rivers, especially those in cities, are choked with filth, some towns are pumping raw sewage into fresh water bodies from which they draw their water and the country is dirty and generally polluted.

All these problems will not wake up one morning and walk away. People will have to apply themselves and sweat to solve them. Kenyans have generally distanced themselves from finding solutions for the environmental mess with the argument that since they pay taxes, then it is somebody else's job to fix it.

Since self-respecting people cannot continue living in filth, taxes or no taxes, ordinary people have to take up the broom and clean their own streets and actually take pride in it.

We should mark this week by arriving at the determination that we have taken our environment for granted long enough. Let us set enforceable minimum environmental standards. For example, institutions, such as local authorities, which pump effluent into lakes and rivers must be prosecuted and the officers responsible jailed.

In the meantime, plant a tree.

Fifth Columnist

Sunday, June 8, 2003

Mind control to feed the queen bee

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

Our world's greatest peril is Huxleyan mind control by means belonging to a few corporations in the North Atlantic.

The most effective are VOA, CNN, Time, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, the BBC, Sky News, *The Economist* and *The Times of London* – all Anglo-Saxon.

Thus, on Iraq, in a truly one-way traffic, they aimed caressing tendentiousnesses, innuendoes, silences, prevarications and pure lies at our most desperate desires.

Where "freedom", "democracy" and "human rights" have been thrown to our faces cynically for so long, why can't we recognise these for what they are – hot air rising to caress us into slumber?

Why can't we see that the US and Britain have never fought an international war to benefit anybody but their corporate families?

The answer is that we genuinely pine for these commodities. That is why we fall for their fake counterparts like Gideon's shibboleth. So we gobbled up – lock, stock and Powell – the Anglo-American bait about invading Iraq to "liberate" and "democratise" it.

First, Saddam Hussein had "weapons of mass destruction". Second, he was aiming them directly against mankind as a whole.

These lies – which the world "knew" only through the blinkers of CNN and the BBC – became even more monstrous when their unspoken versions emerged. First, there were no such weapons. Second, Saddam was a "threat" only to extremely narrow British and US interests. The leaders of two states which claim global moral leadership told pathetic lies to overthrow a government and kill thousands just to surfeit animal greed.

Through loudspeakers, the world was being told to finance a slaughterhouse that would benefit only US industry.

Of course, some of us knew the lie. UN inspectors had corroborated. And Bush and Blair had produced "evidence" into which any child could pierce a hole.

However, if Saddam had no such weapons, didn't there remain his internal tyranny? But the US will never spend so much money to topple a regime on that basis alone.

Not the same US that once created or buttressed in its service monsters like Duvalier, Battista, Franco, Caetano, Vorster, Pinochet, Park, Mobutu, Pahlavi, Zia, Sharon – the list is too long!

Trojan Horse in the Middle East

If weapons of mass destruction were the problem, then the US would itself be its personification and we would have seen it try to invade Russia, Britain, France, Turkey and Israel.

No. Weapons of mass destruction are dangerous only if you oppose strategic US interests in your region. With US assistance, Lisbon and Pretoria once ranged precisely such weapons against Africa's liberators.

In the seventies, self-interests even allowed Israel – Hitler's "accursed Jews" – to assist a Hitlerite Pretoria regime to acquire deadly nuclear warheads.

With overwhelming US funding, Israel has physical, chemical and biological weapons which Iraq's could never match.

Self-interest of a different kind, then, was what impelled action against Iraq. One was to annihilate all perceived threats to Israel – the Anglo-Saxon world's Trojan Horse in the Middle East.

But a Trojan Horse is necessary only for securing more tightly one Middle Eastern commodity on which US industry desperately depends, oil. It is the only threat that any Arab radicalism, like Saddam's, poses.

The upshot is that – in the absence of a Soviet foil – if you live near Israel and you have oil, you had better toe the US line. What the US has created, then, is a precedence for toppling all dissenting states.

That would not be so bad if world freedom, human dignity and, above all, economic equity were its driving motor.

What the US has launched, however, is a process towards a world government in which all parts of the world exist only to feed the ever hungry maws of America's corporate queen bee. And, in that service, the US media – which make the greatest noise about correct information freely flowing in all directions – have willingly assumed the role of reducing all of us to a *Brave New World*.

Society

Sunday, June 8, 2003

G8: The 'Blek Men's' burden

By MUTUMA MATHIU

Every year, leaders of Africa's "top countries" form a beeline for the G8 meetings. This year they went – hats-in-hand, of course – to Evian, France, where the Big Boys were deliberating on matters of pith and moment, such as the global economy, weapons of mass destruction and Iraq, in that order.

The African leaders were hoping to come away with all manner of things, among them aid and a fresh commitment for more investment.

The French had hosted what is being called an "expanded summit" by inviting a host of Third World leaders who joined the beeline with a list of their own dreams on what the world's richest should do to make the world a better place for the human race.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, aware of relentless march of poverty despite past "commitments" to fight it, was pressing for an increase in aid from the current \$57 billion a year, to \$100 billion.

Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva wanted the rich ones to create a fund to fight hunger, and even proposed the money could come from a tax on the international arms trade.

At the end of it all, Mr da Silva enthused: "This meeting marks a new stage in relations between rich countries and developing countries. There's no going back." He was lying.

Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade – am I the only one who thinks this guy is a weasel? – joined in: "You have to be realistic. We have succeeded in getting ourselves heard by the

richest countries in the world. That can only be helpful for the interests of Africa." He had to stay something to justify the junket, didn't he?

Mr Thabo Mbeki, the South African President and a very businesslike man, was even more creative. He announced that the G8 had made a financial commitment to Africa – for a 15,000-strong African peacekeeping force, to be formed by 2010.

The truth of the matter is none of the guests went home with anything. G8 summits – outside the core strategic economic and other interests of the eight nations in question – are a manufactory of words; 26,966 were produced in the Evian Summit, if the news services are right.

On Africa alone, 7,848 words emerged from the meeting, and little else. Charities which work to alleviate poverty, especially Oxfam, were appalled. It described the G8 statement on trade as "vacuous".

The African – or the "Blek Men", as former President Moi would have phrased it – is interrogating the international political and economic system with his elbows. He is going to Evian to ask the rich nations what their milk of kindness can do for him. The African is reluctant to think and work for himself. He looks up to others for aid and direction. This is the catastrophe of modern Africa.

How did we come to convince ourselves that we cannot stand on our own feet, shaky as they may be? And do we ignore the evidence of our own eyes, the experience of half a century, that this approach does not and will not work?

I think Mr Wade and his friends should stop wasting time in European capitals hanging around corridors for aid. Let them sit down with other African leaders and figure out what we can do for ourselves, on our own – improve regional trade and investment, stop the little wars and cannibalism in such places as the the DR Congo and lean on the Somali to form a government and quit playing anarchists.

The rich nations have rigged the international economy in their own favour. We are asking the dairy farmer in Mogotio to compete with a multi-million dollar concern which, along with its mates, are sharing a billion dollars a day in subsidies.

If Africa wants to form beelines, it should be on the way to demanding a fair playing field – not begging for aid.

Eldoret North MP William Ruto is of the opinion that President Kibaki's tough call to Kenyans to get back to work, showed disrespect for the unemployed. If I got his views right, his opinion is that the unemployed must be helped to get jobs, before they can be upbraided to work hard.

Perhaps Mr Ruto is playing clever politics, the kind that involves rubbishing everything – good or bad – that your opponent does or says, but the truth is Mr Kibaki is doing the nation a great favour. For decades Kanu cultivated laziness, dependency, handouts and looting, all in the name of "helping". See where it got us.

I'd rather be a citizen of the working nation.

Sunday View

Sunday, June 8, 2003

The shame and lessons from 'Mathenge' saga

By GITAU WARIGI

Mercifully, Mr Ato Lemma Ayanu is back in Ethiopia, ready for the planting season. The "General Mathenge" affair is one the Kenyan media will want to forget quickly. Nothing in recent times has left so much egg on the face of our newspapers like this.

Quite simply, the failure to dig into the bona fides of a certain Kenyan based in Addis Ababa who reportedly was instrumental in peddling this story was embarrassing. One member of the media fraternity who was too eager to believe in the tale has had his career tarnished beyond repair.

But the Government, too, has come out smelling very bad. Somebody in it believed the story about Mr Ayanu being Stanley Mathenge. He arranged for him to be flown in, conveniently on the Madaraka Day Eve. Kanu has rightly been in stitches ridiculing the Government and wondering why it had to go seeking for heroes in a foreign land.

Governments should not fall for tall tales so easily. The machinery at their disposal, both from the Kenyan end and the Ethiopian one, should have been sufficient to establish beyond doubt

who Mr Ayanu really was before he took his flight from Addis. Going by the sole word of an over-enthusiastic freelancer is not befitting of a government.

Subukia MP Koigi wa Wamwere and others who rushed to embrace Mr Ayanu as the long lost Mathenge must, too, learn to think before they leap. They hopefully have gotten a useful lesson from this. So, presumably, did everybody else who watched the stream of self-proclaimed Mau Mau "veterans" and assorted self-promoters who rushed to Mr Ayanu's hotel to declare that this truly was their old comrade.

If there is any redeeming thing about this affair, it is that it has allowed us to revisit the oddly mysterious chapter of our history called Mau Mau. This is a chapter that we are very hesitant to confront even after 40 years of Independence. But as a country and a people, we will not be honest with ourselves until we do it. The Bible puts its case more powerfully: "The truth shall set you free."

Debating Mau Mau was almost impossible at Independence. A lot of those co-opted into authority then had a lot to hide that was extremely deplorable. Just think of those homeguards and what they did before they went up the ladder. Even now, many in the current government, and in the Opposition parties as well, live with those skeletons.

However, the passage of time is a great healer of wounds. I think the country now is ready to come to terms with the Mau Mau past. So let us all tell the Narc Government: "It is time."

The first order of business should be to put up a proper documentation centre containing the names of all the genuine Mau Mau fighters. This will identify the true heroes from the pretenders who roam the country seeking publicity and handouts. Has it ever occurred to you that for an outfit whose strength of active fighters at its peak is estimated at having been not much more than 20,000, the number of characters masquerading as "generals" is almost as big? What kind of army has more generals than infantry?

To the British, Mau Mau represented "barbarous and atavistic savagery." They were supposed to have a congenital defect in their psyche and possibly the genes. Anglo-Saxons are horribly efficient in demonising the people they go to war with. It doesn't matter whether most of what is put out is hogwash. Just think of the recent war in Iraq, and the false propaganda about weapons of mass destruction which were imaginary.

For the British and their settler kith, demonising Mau Mau this way served their purposes perfectly. It was their way of trying to obscure the legitimacy of the grievances the Mau Mau were fighting for.

To level-headed Englishmen like Fenner Brockway, the settlers' lurid descriptions of Mau Mau did not quite jell. The Jomo Kenyatta he knew who had lived and married in England and who the Kenyan white settlers had deemed to be the Mau Mau leader did not quite fit the image of "atavistic savage" the settlers sought to portray.

Sadly, both the post-Independence governments of Kenyatta and Moi were guilty of treating Mau Mau most disgracefully. Certainly Kenyatta should have known better than do this, knowing full well the rightfulness of the Mau Mau struggle. To me personally, Kenyatta's neglect of the freedom fighters is the biggest blot on his legacy.

President Moi never really cared for the Mau Mau, though he was not averse to parading some so-called "veterans" around himself when political expediency required it.

Once the veil on the Mau Mau story gets lifted, as I am sure one day it will, the world will be jolted to the truth that the people who were supposedly on a civilising mission in Kenya could have been the real savages. An excellent English documentary called *White Terror*, which was aired recently by a local TV station broached the painful topic of the bestial atrocities the British subjected Mau Mau prisoners. The full story, however, remains to be told.

There were the concentration camps like Hola. There were the mass graves on the forest edges of the Aberdares and Mt Kenya. And in all fairness, the experience of those who went through the Nyayo House torture chambers was mild compared to what captured Mau Mau fighters were subjected to. Some of those cruelties are so intimate and harrowing that only the wives of the victims can testify to them.

Hundreds of thousands of people suspected of having Mau Mau loyalties were also herded into concentration camps and put through a hellish routine of forced labour. Years ago, I encountered one old survivor in a town called Kangema. He showed me an expansive public stadium laid on quarried rocks which Mau Mau detainees built with their bare hands.

Recalling the forced ordeal, I saw the old man quietly weep.

Lawyer MP Paul Muite is understood to be preparing a landmark legal suit against the British Government so that they answer for these atrocities. I think it is about time. But you may brace for the usual blithe British excuses that all that happened a long time ago.

So did the Holocaust, and its victims continue to get compensated up to today.

Editorial

Sunday, July 6, 2003

The curse on our roads

If you want to see the extent to which Kenyans are willing to push their damaging "fun-loving" culture, venture into the horror of our roads on Friday night.

On the second thoughts, and for the sake of life and limb, that would be inadvisable. For Friday night at the end of the month belongs to intemperance, excess and a peculiar boozy madness that appears to grip a good part of the good people of this country.

Cars packed to impossible extents with drooling teenagers driven at death-inviting speeds by drivers of highly questionable competence, mothers and fathers, drunk beyond the capacity to stand, hopping from Mugithi joint to nyama choma den; vehicles full of drunk people driven by people so inebriated that they shouldn't, for the sake of public safety, be allowed out of bed.

The roads are a nightmare, of drivers who shoot into roundabouts, careen from lane to lane in drunken incapacity, suicidal dives into main roads from side roads, cars dangerously left on the road by drivers in the urgent need to unashamedly be sick by the road side or in need of some other form of relief.

It is a miracle that many more people are not maimed and killed in these booze binges. As conspicuous as belly-up vehicles on the roadside on Friday night is the total absence of the law. When the police condescend to leave the bars and the safety of their homes, it is to set up road blocks where a drunk driver is not even frowned upon.

If Kenyans, by the advice of their own conscience, will not end this dangerous and highly irresponsible behaviour, then the law will have no choice but to take some time off the bar and knock sense into them.

Editorial

Sunday, July 6, 2003

High price of boiled meat

A bunch of ministers who accompanied President Kibaki for his recent homecoming tour of Nyeri are in the middle of a hilarious – and apparently sour grapes-inspired – "scandal".

They are being accused by an MP who was recently sacked from the government of having been "wined and dined" by a contractor whose company they should not keep because of his connections with the Kanu regime.

The whole sorry incident demonstrates the petty extents to which politicians are willing to go to splash mud on each other.

It should also serve as a lesson for inexperienced ministers. However bored they are in their hotel rooms, they have to be careful whose boiled meat they eat. Appearances do matter, especially in politics.

The incident deserves to be placed in a more serious context. It does not mean that we disbelieve those ministers who have explained that they did not know where they were going, or those who say that they saw no harm in the visit.

What we are saying is that the picture of senior figures in this government cavorting with contractors must be placed in the context of where we are coming. Kenya is a very corrupt country. Nowhere has the damage of this corruption been more debilitating than in infrastructure: Roads, built at laughably inflated costs which do not last more than a season, airport repairs which cost more than building a new airport, astronomical bills against which no work was done – the list is painful and endless.

As we speak, there is a judicial investigation of very serious fraud, involving sums of money so huge that they are impossible to conceived by the average mind.

One of the key pillars of the Kibaki administration is its promise to fight corruption. The zero tolerance for corruption principle is not just a populist slogan, it is the mother of the government's credibility and the determinant of its continuation in power. If Narc's commitment to zero tolerance for graft is ever shaken in any convincing way, then the Narc revolution will surely and truly have come to an end.

Given what is at stake, would it be too much to ask the ministers to forego a spot of boiled meat?

Uhuru has to tell Moi to hit the road

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

Uhuru Kenyatta is on the horns of a dilemma. To achieve his presidential ambition, he must choose between gratitude to benefactors and political exigencies.

His present political posture looks guided solely by his loyalty to Daniel arap Moi, a profound sense of debt to the erstwhile strongman.

For he owes to the retired president everything he owns in Kanu. It was Mr Moi who, a year ago, bypassed a whole galaxy of stars to handpick and hoist him from nothing to the party's pinnacle.

If President Moi had not insisted that Mr Kenyatta be his successor and the ruling party's presidential candidate, the youngster would not today entertain any dream so lofty.

The debt, then, is heavy. Sure, Kanu went on to lose its protracted hold on power and Mr Kenyatta his bid for State House. But it took him to Parliament and, as Leader of the Official Opposition, to an orbital launching pad for the 2007 campaigns.

If, therefore, the debt is what governs his graciousness towards the old man, he might score some ethical marks as a person who does not sacrifice creditors on the altar of Machiavellian needs.

It is what might explain the vanguard role he is playing in Kanu's spirited defence of Mr Moi against the legal storm gathering around him, his children and associates.

It is what can lend rationale to Mr Kenyatta's own apparent reluctance to step lively into the former President's shoes as party chairman.

Yet only extraordinary moral fibre can impel a presidential hopeful to encumber his own chances with astronomically costly considerations about loyalty and gratitude.

Hence the question: Is it really ethics at work here? This is most difficult to affirm because, in the same breath, Mr Kenyatta makes certain utterances which do not add up.

How can a morally conscientious person stand in the agora to proclaim for all to hear that Prof George Saitoti is not fit to be a leader just because the present Education Minister was once a pauper?

True, Prof Saitoti was also moulded by hand – catapulted from a humble university job to the vice-presidency. But Mr Kenyatta should be the last person to cast aspersion on handpicked people.

If the former don is now rich, isn't there at least one sense in which we can say he earned it? Wealth did not fall into his lap like manna from "the Lord" – unlike some people.

Mr Kenyatta, then, is no moral paragon. So why doesn't he see the glaring need at least to pay lip service to the poor? His own guru – Mr Moi – knew it from the very Chair of Politics at the University of Life.

Even from the safety of a permanently rigged election machine, Mr Moi would never have uttered in public such incredible disdain for the poor.

Morality, then, does not enter the equation. In liberal politics, in any case, morality and ambition are mutually exclusive imperatives.

What seems at work here is only extraordinary naivete. Only deep poverty of political savvy can allow a serious presidential candidate to insult the electorate in this way.

However, Mr Kenyatta's unwillingness to tell Mr Moi to get out of the way could have a another equally important factor. As Mr Moi himself used to say, *Kanu ina wenyewe*.

And *wenyewe* are none other than Mr Moi's own "Rift Valley mafia". Mr Kenyatta is a Johnny-come-lately. And his value – as a bait for Kikuyu votes – may have dwindled to nothing after the polls debacle.

It is probably the mafia's idea to retain Mr Moi as chairman, defend him against the due process and market him as the Archangel Michael of Kenya's political history.

But, even for the mafia, it is completely self-defeating. To be effective, Kanu must renounce its past: the torture chambers, rigged elections, looted parastatals, crumbled infrastructures, illiterate leadership.

In the public's eye, these evils revolve – rightly or wrongly – around one name – *Moi* – a name which can no longer benefit anybody even through *majungu*.

That's why Mr Kenyatta must convince the mafia to ditch Mr Moi with speed. We need Kanu to keep the already limping Narc on its toes. How can it do it with all the muck still surrounding its own name?

Society

Sunday, July 6, 2003

Micro-managing the world

By MUTUMA MATHIU

I have nominated myself the person who brings you the issues which are not exactly in the headlines but which affect you and the future of your country more than those that are.

Many Kenyans believe that because they elected a good government, that we will automatically develop, that we will all be better off, our standard of living will improve, that these will be democratic shores of milk and money. Over time, I intend to provide evidence that that is an optimistic evaluation of our condition. Remember, there is an ogre out there, waiting to eat you.

Your country is today under some considerable pressure – along with other developing countries – from the United States of America to sign what the international human rights lobby is referring to as impunity agreements. Many countries, including Tanzania have lost US military aid because they have not signed the so-called Article 98 bilateral treaties. But let me tell this story in a more systematic fashion. Since the Second World War, the world has been putting on trial those who commit crimes against humanity in sort of *ad hoc* international courts and tribunals. There were the Nuremberg trials where Nazis were tried and punished for the Holocaust. Similar courts are sitting in various parts of the world today, in Arusha for the Rwanda genocide, in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity there and at the Hague for Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

It makes sense, therefore, to form a permanent, credible, competent and independent court to try these animals on a continuous basis, since they seem to be constantly with us. The treaty to establish such a court, the International Criminal Court, was adopted on July 17, 1998, with 120 countries voting for it. Sixty countries needed to ratify the treaty for the court to be established, more than 90 have and the court is up and running. Judges have been appointed and last April a prosecutor was hired.

Seven countries opposed the court right at the outset, among them China, Israel, Iraq – and the US. The US, which prides itself for its freedoms and democracy, wanted a court that would be under the authority of the UN Security Council, of which it is the most influential member, or an outright exemption for its officials and nationals from the authority of such a court.

The Bush Administration's approach was more direct. In 2001, it ceased participation in the process establishing the court. On May 6, 2002, it "unsigned" the Clinton Administration's signature on the statutes setting up the court. Washington has cranked up the pressure, including the passage of American Service members Protection Act, to exempt American nationals from the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Another plank has been the bilateral Article 98 treaties which it insists must be signed by those countries which have ratified the ICC treaty. And Washington isn't being very nice about it.

And what does the US fear? That political prosecutions will be brought against its officials and military by its many enemies. Of course no one can deny that there are many nations which would love to put US officials on trial, and not all of them for violation of laws.

The defenders of the ICC argue that enough safeguards have been built into the system and there is ample protection against political prosecutions. The US is unconvinced.

Washington is taking very "firm" action to ensure exemption for Americans. It threatened a veto of the UN peacekeeping budget to obtain a one-year exemption for Americans serving in UN missions.

The toughest measures have been taken against banana republics and poor countries. I have seen cases quoted by the pro-ICC lobby about the US ambassador to Bahamas warning that country that unless it comes through, aid for paving and lighting an airport would be withheld. An example has also been given of Caribbean countries which were told that unless they did something on the dotted line, they would lose hurricane relief and aid for a rural dentistry and veterinary programme. And no military aid for countries which refuse to sign, including our sister Tanzania.

The developed world has not signed these impunity treaties, not even Washington's closest allies Britain and Australia. As a matter of fact, the European Union has said it will not. Kenya has signed the ICC treaty, but it has not been ratified by the House. That takes off the pressure for the time being. Reports from Washington say the government has promised to sign an impunity treaty, but has not actually done so yet.

What are we being asked to endorse? Should we?

Sunday View

Sunday, July 6, 2003

Bush and Americanism in Africa

By GITAU WARIGI

George W. Bush is making his first African tour from Tuesday. You may not believe it, but he visited Africa once before, as part of an obscure American delegation to Gambia (or was it Senegal?) when his father was President. I think I read it somewhere in the *New Yorker*, an American periodical.

It transpires that Bush's first encounter with Africa was not a nice one. What is most remembered was a tense moment when his bodyguards cordoned him off from a group of sweaty African traditional entertainers who danced too boisterously close to where he sat. They just wanted to please him, but Bush got very agitated. Britain's Princess Anne, whose travels take in all sorts of weird ceremonies and tribal cultures, sat unfazed next to the American prince.

Bush had actually made only a couple or so trips outside America before becoming President. He sounded inordinately pleased about this embarrassing lack of exposure during his presidential campaign. Aside from that unmemorable West African jaunt, he had visited Europe once, or twice. His only other foreign trip was to Mexico, just across the border from the Texas state which he was running as Governor. Through the Mexican connection Bush learnt to speak some Spanish, of which he is very proud. Still he cannot manage to pronounce properly the name of the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar. Bush calls him A-n-z-a-r. It will be interesting to hear how he will pronounce African tongue-twister names like Olusegun Obasanjo and Abdoulaye Wade.

I once heard that Bush has a reading disorder called dyslexia. The condition makes the sufferer mangle words and phrases unintelligibly. Consider this: "We're working hard to put food on your family." It is a typical Bush-ism. There is a thriving global cottage industry about this Bush manner of speaking.

Were he the type to notice things, Bush would sense a sea of change in the continent's mood towards America since the last time Bill Clinton visited. President Clinton's behaviour with young White House interns may have caused him trouble in America, but the guy was genuinely liked in Africa, even when he came with nothing concrete to offer. It is true Bush is going to spend a sum of money (\$15 billion, to combat HIV/Aids) surpassing any his predecessors committed to Africa, and yet he will never be liked on this continent.

Bush's singular achievement has been to make America resented in Africa - and elsewhere - to an unprecedented degree. America's unilateralist behaviour under Bush has messed up much of the goodwill America used to enjoy here. Nelson Mandela's declaration that he does not expect to meet Bush during the tour should be taken as an important signal.

In Kenya especially, America has become a dirty word. It may be just as well that Bush will not be visiting our country, never mind that this view could be taken by Americans as a case of sour grapes. The term "American arrogance" has become a by-word everywhere you go in this country. I am inclined to believe Americans get rather flattered when they hear that. It makes them all puffed up with that feeling of being powerful and super-important. They rationalise everything with the argument that being disliked by lesser mortals goes with the territory for a superpower.

As usual the Americans, an otherwise straightforward people whose only weakness is their naivete and self-centredness, are missing the point. Nobody has any problem with power, as long as it is used responsibly. Power vested in a country that has no idea of the harm it does everybody when it behaves recklessly is not something to be admired. As it is, Africans, like everybody else, roll their eyes in disbelief at the fact that Americans, in their wisdom, thought it fit to elect into such a powerful and consequential office somebody who is so obviously intellectually-challenged.

Africans respect power, of course. But there is something they respect more. Wisdom. They are not sure what they are seeing in the White House represents anything close to that. Especially not when it comes to the circle of advisors Bush keeps. People like Dick Cheney, or Donald Rumsfeld, or even that pitiable African-American, Condoleezza Rice. Probably with the sole exception of Colin Powell, the rest of the Bush team is made up of extremists. Sure, we are poor. Yet all we demand is a little respect. Bush already has a nasty spat with Europe over genetically-engineered food, which he wants to give away to Africa. Trouble is, much of the rest of the world has doubts over the kind of food manufactured this way. Bush has no qualms about Africa taking it, though he has no clue that Africans understand all too well he is not doing this out of charity but to benefit American corporations that have invested in the technology of engineering food genetically.

There is a misconception American leaders have that Africans are only after alms. That is not true. Africa needs a level-playing field when it comes to international trade. It needs better prices for its primary products. It needs better access to global markets. It doesn't want to be looked at only through the prism of terrorism.

These are the issues Bush will be hearing when he stops in Senegal, Nigeria, Uganda, Botswana and South Africa. He will be surprised to discover that the leaders of all these countries are a lot smarter than he can imagine. But from what we know of this man, it is too much to expect that anything lasting will register in his mind from this tour. It is the same story all the time with American Presidents when they visit.

As he was preparing to fly out to Africa, Bush gave an interview to journalists about his tour. When one of them brought up the issue of terrorism, Kenya immediately sprung to his mind. And he had that smug expression he gets when he is asked something on a topic he imagines he knows well. "Kenya is a great country," he said. "It's a place where there's been threats. Everybody knows that. Not only threats, there's been an attack in the past. And the government of Kenya has been very responsive. And we've been helping them."

I could imagine him sitting back after this with a gleam of satisfaction in his eye.

Welcome to Africa, Mr Bush.

Editorial

Sunday, July 20, 2003

Truth on age and marriage

Mrs Wambui Otieno, former Mau Mau fighter - and most times just a fighter - has bucked the trend, rebelled against the common values about age and marriage.

She has done so not just by taking a husband 42 years her junior, but being thoroughly pleased with herself when the social norms suggest that she should be hanging her head in mortification. But this is not just the story of a 67-year-old lonely widow reaching out in search of affection and attention.

It is a mirror to society and its values about age, sex and marriage. In our African traditions, a 67-year-old woman is supposed to have retired not only from work but from life. Hers is a sad, in the case of widows, lonely game of waiting for death; a dependent and basically useless existence.

But these are the values of a young population, a society made up of young people whose outlook in life is basically ageist: That it is only the young, energetic and beautiful who have a right to happiness and life.

As Kenyans discuss and pass judgment on Wambui and her young husband, their eye must stray to the clock: Our population must age, there will increasingly be more affluent and liberal people in their 60s and 70s. These are independent people who want to retire from neither work nor life.

Equally, society is hypocritically sexist. When an elderly man marries a young girl, the eyebrow is only ironically raised. In truth, the man is the object of his agemates' secret admiration and the younger men's jealousy, but rarely is the union regarded as repulsive or unnatural. Is it really sustainable to have one rule for men and another for women?

At the end of the day, everyone is entitled to their own views. Just like Wambui and her husband have a right to live their lives in a fashion of their own choosing.

[Comments\Views about this article](#)

Editorial

Sunday, July 20, 2003

Choose what works for us

Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize winner and head of South Africa's peace and reconciliation commission is in Kenya to lend his experience to our own efforts for a similar exercise.

Our human rights record is obviously nowhere near the South African experiment with a dehumanising – for the oppressor and the oppressed – attempts to institutionalise racism and make it respectable. The transition from racism to democracy in South Africa must rank as one of the greatest achievements of the African continent.

That success owes a great debt to Bishop Tutu's commission: The commission led the South African nation by hand through the horrors of its own past, it held the nation's hand as it cried, repented and healed. For the rest of the world, it was a prime example of the power of forgiveness over revenge and retribution.

In Kenya, there is no unanimity on the need for such a commission. Yes, there have been violations of human rights since and before independence. But are they on sufficiently wide a scale that specific cases cannot be investigated and dealt with?

What do we need, a truth commission or a government that is not shy to confront and punish evil-doers?

Are we doing it because we need it or are we doing it because South Africa did it? The constitutional review demonstrated Kenyans' attachment to foreign models – there was talk of the Tanzanian model, the French model, the Ugandan model.

Somehow, it got lost in the debate that there could be a Kenyan model, too.

However, there is a definite need to look at our past and get over it. Whether that involves a truth commission is a matter for the public to decide, but let us take pride in going primarily for what works for us rather than what has worked for other people.

Fifth Columnist

Sunday, July 20, 2003

Thank you a million, but no, thank you

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

As is often said, the media are only a mirror-image of what official society, including the Government, is doing. It is no wonder, then, that Kenya's media attach such importance to whatever a British official may say of Kenya. Thus when so many Nairobi editors go to town with a statement that a British envoy has given the Kibaki Government so many marks, they are only echoing the same political class which gives them their headlines.

Why is the African ruling class so keen to be praised by European officials? Why are African statesmen so desperate for a good press in London, Paris, Rome or Washington DC?

Because it is only an artificial class. It has no natural or indigenous cultural, economic, political and intellectual roots. It has been moulded literally by hand in the colonial and neo-colonial classroom in the image and service of other societies.

For its survival, the African state depends precariously on those other societies. Their whole budgets are predicated on Western "aid". It is from this "aid" that members – most of them parvenus as avaricious as a piranha – develop the paunches which wags call "patriotic fronts".

And this "aid" hinges on "conditionalities" which add up to surrender of sovereignties that Lancaster House already made fictitious. Persistent failure to behave can be fatal.

In *The Dogs of War*, Frederick Forsyth shows that many of the *coups d'etat* attributed to Africa's genetic inability for democracy are plotted and funded by Western billionaires anxious to put in the hands of trusted political groups their huge stakes in the given African countries.

Soon it might emerge that the *eminence grise* in Africa's latest coup is one of the Western transnationals vying with others to exploit the oil riches beneath Sao Tome and Principe.

This permanent sense of insecurity – from internal rootlessness and external dependence – is the chief reason African states are so sensitive to criticism and so quick with repressive measures.

Despite its central role in it, the official West is the most scathing critic of the thin skin and the tyranny it occasions. Yet, being its creator, it is also the most committed to its survival,

demanding merely that its embarrassing protuberances be chiselled out and "democracy" achieved – with the crucial intrusion of "development aid".

This is the source of official Africa's incurable fixation with its image in Western newsrooms and corridors of power. An African government will often rush to a foreign correspondent with crucial information it has just denied a local journalist.

Thus many African media think it is an earth-shaking story when a mere envoy praises an African Government. British officials abroad know it very well. So, even without any expertise or *locus standi*, they yap all the time with know-it-all "advice". For they know they will get a headline in the local Press.

Thus a number of Nairobi media made it the lead story in their bulletins when the British High Commissioner purported to tell Kenyans how their Government was performing. It was thoroughly self-demeaning of these media to do so.

First, like Mr Edward Clay, they live right here in Nairobi. And it is their job to find out and inform their clients how the Government is performing. They do not need anybody else – much less a foreigner – to tell them.

Second, despite his conceit, Mr Clay has no special certificate for judging governments – none, that is, except that he is a Caucasian and represents a power that can confer preferment on Third World leaders.

Do I mean that our Press should give envoys the blackout on such subjects? No. I only mean that we should look at it with a keen sense of proportion. We should ask ourselves what size of headline – if at all – our envoy in London will get whenever he habitually sits in arrogant judgment of Whitehall.

Experience should long ago have taught our editors that, during a crisis, whenever an Anglo-Saxon official extols an African leader – whenever a US official pours fulsome praise on any Chris Murungaru – our first question should be what service the African leader has rendered to London or DC.

Society

Sunday, July 20, 2003

Should Moi face the music?

By MUTUMA MATHIU

Gado, our editorial cartoonist, is a commentator whose eye for the politically absurd is as unerring as the marksman's finger on the trigger.

His cartoon in the Friday edition of our sister title, the *Daily Nation*, cut through the garbage to the heart of the matter: It showed a motorist who had driven into a post protesting to the police, "But Moi made me do it."

It is a perfect exposition on what I call the Kenyan Malaise. The mass of this country does not like to accept responsibility for its actions. That is why it suffered retired President's increasingly dictatorial rule for 24 years. If it can blame someone else for messing up the country, it is happy to suffer humiliation and impoverishment.

I always quote one of Queen Elizabeth's New Year messages, I forget which because it was a while ago, and which in my view rates as the most accurate, commonsense explanation of democracy I have ever heard.

Liberty and democracy, she said, do not depend on institutions. They rest in the hearts of ordinary men and women who, to paraphrase, refuse to take nonsense from those who rule them.

Our country almost became a failed state because we failed the test of democracy. We did not stand up and question stupid decisions. And we did not stand up in defence of those who did. So they were jailed, tortured, exiled and brutalised in every way imaginable because they were doing what the duties of citizenship demand.

I hold Mr Moi responsible for all the things that went wrong during his rule. But that is only in as far as the buck stops with the big chief. When Mr Moi says that his juniors must carry their own cross, he is failing the biggest test of leadership, just like Mr Bush fails the test when he unloads the bloomers of his own war-mongering on the CIA.

In Chinese politics – at the time of Chairman Mao, at least, on which I have read – there was a system of cronyism that went like this: A big man would cement his own strength by putting his proteges in certain jobs. They would be absolutely beholden to him and completely obedient, giving their mentor tremendous power over various arms and instruments of both party and government. But, and this was the clincher, if they mucked up, their mentor lost

face too and suffered the consequences. He would be sent for rehabilitation through labour and to re-establish contact with the proletariat – a nice way of defining a gulag – along with his brood of proteges.

That, I think, is collective responsibility at its starkest. But responsibility is distributive too, and this is where I am coming from. When a man stands for election and offers himself to lead a nation, he accepts responsibility for the destiny and fortunes of that nation for as long as the consequences of his rule are felt.

At the same time, when peasants line up in the morning to ballot a buffoon into office, what they are saying is: We have evaluated this person, we are taking a decision to put him in charge of our lives and on the basis of the trust we place in our judgement accept responsibility for all his actions. That is the ideal. In reality, the average voter cares more for a bag of *posho*, tribal arguments, fatuous promises and the prospect of "eating" than a rational evaluation of ability and competence. But the argument holds: Shouldn't a population suffer the consequences of its weak brain? It is only fair that it should.

The point I am inching towards is that the question of whether the responsibility for the corruption, abuse of human rights and the shaming of the Kenyan nation rests with Mr Moi must be answered in three layers.

Morally, and perhaps in other respects, it is his. It was his watch, it was his rule. He cannot abstract himself from it and pretend that it his ghost that was governing.

But it is our responsibility too, for we elected him and we suffered him and his government even when excesses were blindingly manifest. The Kenyan nation is not a victim, it is an accomplice.

Finally, Mr Moi's proteges were not empty vessels or zombies reacting to the snap of fingers. Many were cunning, aggressively greedy alley cats. They deserve a share of the muck when the unmentionable hits that rotating thing.

If we want to restore sanity in the business of government and atone for our part in the bad old past, we should allow the due processes of retribution and justice to take their toll with the same ruthless clarity as that cartoonist's eye.

Sunday View

Sunday, July 20, 2003

Spot on, Kibaki, charity begins at home

By GITAU WARIGI

Symbolically, it was good of President Kibaki that his first State visits were to Tanzania and Uganda, our immediate neighbours. I say symbolically because one could sense a deliberate shift from the Euro-centric focus of previous regimes in the matter of foreign policy.

Former President Moi's first overseas trip was to Britain, our former colonial master. He followed that with a flurry of visits to France, Germany and other countries in Europe.

Tanzania's turn only came six years later, in 1984, and this looked like it had something to do with Mr Moi rightly wanting to tell off Mr Charles Njonjo, who had just fallen from grace. This former Grand Vizier with Anglophile pretensions was long regarded as the prime foe to closer ties with Tanzania and even the concept of East African integration itself.

Mr Moi was indeed a far better integrationist than Mr Njonjo, though I am not sure he was able to conceptualise the idea in all its scope the way, say, Uganda's President Museveni can. Mr Moi was in charge when a spate of border skirmishes, sometime in the 1980s, broke out with our western neighbour. To his credit, though, he ended his term when the process of reviving the East African Community was well and truly underway.

Hard-headed considerations make President Kibaki's regional focus laudable. Uganda is Kenya's leading trade partner (note: it's not Britain). Tanzania is not very far from there. Comesa, the regional grouping Kenya and Uganda belong to, is the largest market for Kenyan exports (note: it's not the European Union). For Kenya, giving primacy to relations with our immediate neighbours is a matter of plain common sense.

As it is, the political will for East African economic integration is not the problem. At least not when it comes to the highest level - the Heads of State. The problem crops up in the bureaucratic organs. Tanzanian negotiators are acknowledged to be an especially tough lot in this regard. Their understandable fear is that a completely unfettered flow of goods and services across the border will turn Tanzania into a giant supermarket for Kenyan manufacturers. Uganda shares the same concerns to some degree. But beyond the

differences in the nitty-gritty of tariffs and such, there is general agreement across the three governments that integration is the way to go.

Like President Museveni, Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa is a committed integrationist. They have now been joined by President Kibaki, whose own background and upbringing suggest his integrationist impulses could be even stronger.

Kibaki is an economist. He no doubt understands the economics of integration better than most Heads of State. What is more, he came of age at a period when the region was fully integrated. He knows well where we have come from. He probably remembers the time he was at Makerere and could make the journey by a single train ticket from Karatina to Kampala. He didn't have to change currencies at the border or carry a passport or a yellow fever vaccination certificate. He surely knows people who then worked for East African Railways and Harbours, or East African Posts and Telecommunications, who could shift work stations from Kisumu to Morogoro to Jinja without the hassles of bureaucracy or translocation. Letting the old Community die as it did in the 1970s was the worst mistake our politicians ever made. Kenya, I believe, had a lot to blame for it. If it is true, as the late Robert Ouko once claimed, that Mr Njonjo had told him that he (Mr Njonjo) had toasted the Community's death with several glasses of champagne, then Mr Njonjo should forever be ashamed of himself. The Community we had was ahead of everybody, even the EU. While the EU is only now coming around to having a single currency, we East Africans had that in the 1950s, thanks to our shared colonial heritage. This historical background, in fact, gave our three countries a unique set of commonalities that, to any sensible mind, would decree that the process of integration and ultimate union be logical and inevitable.

Besides the currency, we had a common communications infrastructure, a common and integrated education system - indeed almost a common everything. On top of the English *lingua franca* of the colonial power, we had our own indigenous tongue universally spoken in East Africa: Kiswahili. Those were advantages not even the EU had started with, never mind the Johnny-come-latelies like Ecowas, the Maghreb Union or SADDCC. Not even, dare I say, Nafta of North America.

Retracing those steps will be easier for our three leaders because they and their generation acutely understand what the Community represented. They have a clear model to work with. A full-fledged political union could be some way off. But a common market can be recreated. Already a lot has been achieved in that direction. Moves to liberalise trade and ultimately zero-rate tariffs within the three countries are probably now irreversible.

Institutionally, we now have again a strong EA Secretariat. We even have a nascent EA Legislative Assembly as well as the rudiments of a regional court, the East African Court of Justice.

There are sticking technical problems, of course. There is the long-running question of "assymetry", whereby the Tanzanians and Ugandans worry that Kenya has a huge headstart in industrial development. At the same time there are differences over external tariffs, which each of the three countries charges on countries they trade with outside the Community. By virtue of Uganda and Tanzania having liberalised their economies faster (under IMF and World Bank pressure) than Kenya, the two countries' external tariffs are marginally lower than ours. That is why Kenyans find it cheaper to buy Dubai-sourced clothes from Kampala rather than in Nairobi.

Once we work out a Customs Union and eliminate internal tariffs within the three countries, it will be the last hurdle. The issue of an agreeable common external tariff will sort itself out.

Editorial

Sunday, August 3, 2003

Step up anti-terror campaign

The incident in Mombasa on Friday, in which a terrorist suspect detonated a hand grenade, killing himself and two policemen is a shocking but crucial development in the campaign against terrorism. In a rather grim way, it further demonstrates the fact that there is, indeed, a grave problem that needs to be tackled with all the seriousness and the resources at our disposal.

The police must throw everything they have into tracking down the suspect who got away. And the job will be made even easier if the people of Mombasa assist the police by

volunteering information that will lead to the suspect's arrest. His arrest and interrogation is likely to shed more light on who these people are, and what their intentions were. It will also act as a warning to other would-be terrorists that their activities will not be tolerated.

Almost every Kenyan knows only too well about the heavy cost in human and financial terms that has been inflicted on our country by terrorists in the recent past. When the American embassy in Nairobi was bombed in 1998, the majority of the more than 200 people killed were Kenyans. Again, last November's terrorist attack on the Paradise Hotel on the North Coast, claimed more Kenyan casualties among the 10 or so people killed.

The tourism industry is still reeling under the adverse consequences of the American and British government travel advisories imposed in response to fears over possible terror attacks in Kenya. Although the British have lifted theirs and allowed British Airways and other United Kingdom-registered carriers to resume flights to Kenya, the decline in tourist arrivals cannot be reversed immediately.

Also, as long as would-be visitors perceive Kenya as an unsafe travel destination, many will continue to shun our country, hampering the recovery of the tourism industry. It will be recalled that at the peak of the travel ban, the industry was operating at less than 10 per cent, making it extremely difficult for the operators to stay in business.

We are, therefore, encouraged to note that the newly established anti-terrorist police unit is proving equal to the task. That the officers had managed to arrest the suspects and were taking them to the local police station, when the grenade went off, is laudable. The fledgeling unit is facing a real tough challenge, knowing the deadly and clandestine modus operandi of terrorists. The unit deserves the support of all Kenyans to be able to make a difference.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that National Security minister Chris Murungaru, the man charged with ensuring the safety of all Kenyans, has described the incident as a major breakthrough in the campaign against terrorist cells. The officers need adequate resources and plenty of encouragement as they grapple with this monster.

As we mourn the two who lost their lives in the line of duty, there is no time to relent in the pursuit of these few misguided people. All Kenyans deserve the right to live in peace and their enjoyment of this natural right must not be curtailed in any way by people motivated by ideologies that ran counter to what we, as a nation, dearly believe in.

The terrorist threat is very real, hence the need for the security personnel and all Kenyans to join hands in the campaign to rid our country of this menace.

Fifth Columnist

Sunday, August 3, 2003

It's a heavy burden of stupidity

By PHILIP OCHIENG'

The reason Kenya is a compelling terrorist "destination" is that we have turned our country into a backyard of states that are prime terrorist targets. But the burden we carry for the US and its allies is much more onerous than bombs. We have allowed that state to fob off to us a deadly virus of chauvinism peculiar to it.

More than any other society, the US is stuck in the quagmire of race. It weighs down on its psyche like the universe on Atlas' shoulder. Yet it is the intelligentsia that stokes its fire? Why?

Because, as Raymond Williams says in his *Keywords*, the liberal class is not given to intellectual rigour. It has a penchant for simplistic solutions and – like H.G. Wells' *Man Who Work Miracles* – "assertive argument".

Though terrorism has a complex global taproot, liberalism often reduces it to a simple matter of race. The American media consumer is convinced that it resides in the Arab blood.

This explanation has two virtues. It does not divert the brain from the task of making money. And it does not run the risk of tracing terrorism to its real root – Western corporate money-making abroad.

In colonial Kenya, this racial stereotyping thrived on a stockpile on which the white occupied the top, the brown the middle and the black the bottom. Among the browns, the Arab was lower than the Asian. Yet the thin Arab lacing in his blood raised the Somali a notch higher than the pedigree African.

In 1952, for challenging the economic basis of the stockpile, the Kikuyu sunk to the lowest African rung. Colonial literature thus heaped on the community the most pejorative of epithets.

In *Land, Freedom and Fiction*, David Maughan-Brown exposes the ethico-intellectual vacuity of Elspeth Huxley, Ian Henderson, Margery Perham and others who dismissed the rebellion as a "psycho-pathological" problem.

Robert Ruark attributed Mau Mau to "unseen evils... moving in the forests..." Said Ione Leigh: "...they are fighting not for self-government... but because it is... part of their native characteristic..."

The Kikuyu had rebelled – not because of the white robbery, oppression and denial of all channels of democratic protest – but because they thirsted after white blood. Their aim was to destroy "civilisation" and Christianity. Eric Wolf has called it "structurally induced stupidity". Writes he in *Peasant Wars in the Twentieth Century*:

"They lose their ability to respond to social cues from the affected population. Instead they couple economic callousness with a particular kind of *structurally induced stupidity* which ascribes to the people themselves responsibility for the evils to which they are subject. Defensive stereotypes take the place of analytical intelligence..."

Thus whenever a Kikuyu faced a violence court charge, the white settler media went out of their way to point out that the accused was a *Kikuyu*.

And these colonial idiocies were structured to produce strange reactions from Africans. We came to hate Asians, Arabs and Somalis much more than our real slave drivers, Europeans.

For the European was not a *dukawallah*. At a time when shopkeeping was the only urban economic activity to which an African could aspire, the Asian monopolised shop-counter cash-mongering. The African thus naturally saw the Asian as his only barrier to material progress.

Thus long into independence, we, in the Press, still gave adjectival prejudices to "brown" individuals. Whenever an "Asian" or "Somali" murdered or robbed, we rushed to point out his race or tribe.

Up to the eighties, a "bandit" (Somali: *shifita*) was still usually a Somali armed to poach, rob and terrorise. Even today, a Goldenberg reporter is likely to describe Kamlesh Patti as an "Asian" and a sub-editor may not notice the impropriety.

After terrorists hit Nairobi in 1998, some Kenyans told FBI operatives that they had seen "Arab-looking" characters linger heinously near the US embassy. How fatuous! Isn't an "Arab-looking" bloke called Colin Powell the US Secretary of State?

What our own Government has done to citizens of Arab-Muslim extraction shows how deeply we have fallen victim to this peculiar American imbecility which enabled George Bush to sell his barbarism against Iraq as a war on "Arab terrorism".

Society

Sunday, August 3, 2003

Great white elephant in the wild

By MUTUMA MATHIU

There is a road, all 105 kilometres of it, which is living hell, kilometre after kilometre of dust, rocks and ruts, from Emali on the Nairobi-Mombasa Highway to Ilasit on the Kenya-Tanzania border.

I think, unfortunately, I have become the kind of person who believes that every major town – with the exception of those in Northern and North Eastern Kenya – is linked to the next by a paved road. That is wrong of course.

Many major centres are cut off, their hinterlands remote and undeveloped and likely to remain so, because there are no roads. People from central Kenya, or Western or other parts of the country complain because either their main roads are potholed or there are no roads into the interior.

But there are Kenyans who can't own a vehicle because the only type that can get to their towns is an off-roader modified for the Paris-Dakar Rally. Interestingly, the road from the Ilasit border crossing to Oloitokitok is tarmacked for 12km or so. Oloitokitok itself is unpaved and is therefore an uncommonly dusty town.

Locals told me that in the books, the Emali-Ilasit road is tarmacked; on the ground, only 12km is. And they would like Roads and Public Works minister Raila Odinga, if he could be so kind, to supply them with a couple of facts: Who was the contractor, how much was he paid for the road, how much of it was he supposed to do and when the hell is he going back to finish the job?

As a matter of fact, locals have other questions, too. At the border crossing is another great wonder of the Republic. On the Tarakea side in Tanzania, the Customs establishment is small, the staff houses just a couple of simple perhaps three-roomed houses.

On the Kenyan side, lo and behold! the Customs complex is a marvel of brand new multi-storied flats, parking lots and other amenities enough, in my estimation, for a 1,000 workers. Why did we spend hundreds of millions on this massive complex to house a handful of Customs officials? There is so much in this country which makes no sense.

If we didn't know better, we would think that the former regime was made up of daft people. But we do know better, don't we? My worry is that we allowed it all to happen and I keep asking myself, would we allow excesses of this nature to take place today?

The reason we allow things to go wrong is because of our particularly self-defeating and stupid selfishness. So long as the road on my street is paved and clean, why should I care, we ask. Yet, a good, successful and democratic country is not just about your street, it is also about your neighbour's street.

This selfishness is the mother of tribalism for tribalism is nothing but a crude attempt at exclusivism. It is a strategy in the competition for power, jobs and resources. No one is so stupid in this day and age to believe that a person's psychology is determined by his tribe.

However, I hope we are wiser now and that the auditing we shall subject this government to will be thorough, demanding but fair. And this should serve as a wake-up call to Narc.

The political fights, the incipient scandals – from sugar importation scams to allegations of briefcases bulging with bribes – must be nipped in the bud.

You don't want to be distracted by scandals, neither do you want to lose the public's goodwill. Keep it clean and whatever you do, it must make sense.

In the meantime could Finance Minister David Mwiraria and Mr Odinga help the people of Oloitokitok unravel the mystery of the Emali-Ilasit road and the Great White Elephant in the Wild, the Ilasit Customs complex?

I would like, on behalf of all the desk drivers of Nation Media Group, to thank 'MM' and the staff of Outward Bound Centre at Oloitokitok for their kind welcome and their attention to our heads and atrophying muscles.

Next time we come there we will climb Mt Kilimanjaro – both peaks – and bring down all the snow and pile it up on Kimathi Street, just to show you what tough guys we are.

Sunday View

Sunday, August 3, 2003

Whose portrait should grace currency?

By GITAU WARIGI

My amazement, and learning experience, with the power of football continues. This time my curiosity was pricked by an Associated Press dispatch indicating that a third of all Britons would favour the picture of David Beckham, a footballer, gracing their bank notes. That is according to an opinion survey showing the Brits would prefer staid historical figures like Charles Darwin or Charles Dickens be replaced on currency notes with modern celebrities.

Bekcham, I have come to learn, is one such celebrity.

As the Brits agonise whether to substitute graybeards like Darwin with movie and sports stars on ten-pound notes, here in Kenya we have been having a somewhat inconclusive debate over the same thing about who to put on our currency notes. The prevailing situation is where Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Moi notes are circulating concurrently.

Of course, this being Kenya, presidents must for some reason be on the currency. The Kenyatta notes soon replaced Queen Elizabeth's once the Union Jack disappeared. Likewise, after Mzee Kenyatta died, the Moi notes and coins were promptly put into circulation.

The Kibaki administration has so far displayed a peculiar timidity in not following suit, though this could be merely a temporary phenomenon. I distinctly recall a social encounter earlier in the year with a functionary in this administration who casually floated the suggestion whether it was opportune to put Kibaki's likeness on the currency. I didn't think so, much I didn't pretend that the Treasury would be guided by my views.

As it makes up its mind, the Kibaki administration has reverted to the Kenyatta currency even as it sends signals that the Moi notes could be on their way out. Finance Minister Daudi Mwiraria actually indicated that the phasing out was imminent, though he left it unclear whether this would mean staying on with the Kenyatta notes in perpetuity.

A little imagination here could be in order. We don't have to have the same face in all the currency notes. For sure, I don't quite think we have reached a stage where we can safely decree our former presidents to remain out of our currencies. Mr Mwiraria has anyway said the Moi currency will go, though some future leader might deem it worth resurrecting, unless the Goldenberg and other simmering inquiries really knock down Moi's reputation beyond repair.

African countries with delicate histories like Uganda or Burundi obviously have a problem. You don't want oddities like Idi Amin appearing on the currency. Such countries go around this problem by featuring something else, be it monuments or symbols. In Uganda it is the crested crane, the national symbol. For Kenya, the *Jogoo* has become a non-starter because it's linked too intimately with Kanu.

Or perhaps we could decide that only dead Heads of State should be on the currency. In that case Kibaki would have to wait. America has an admirable tradition of only having its greats - like Washington or Madison or Jefferson - on the dollar bills. Founding fathers tend to have a

head-start over others. That is why we are likely to be stuck with Kenyatta for a long time to come.

We could get more imaginative still. Do we really need to have only presidents, whether dead or alive, on all the bank notes? Can't there be some room for different national heroes as well? Post-war Germany has done very well by mining its vast array of great figures from its history, like Goethe and Beethoven, to put on the currency. And if somebody like Beckham can come under consideration in Britain, perhaps it's not entirely outlandish for us doing the same, some time in the future, with a figure like Kipchoge Keino, Kenya's greatest athlete ever, who is remembered for his simplicity and honour at a time when sports heroes had not become steroids-driven robots or vapid, multi-millionaire glamourites.

The problem is that our intensely ethnicised and regional-based rivalries will always intrude whenever we seek acceptable faces to honour. Once you mention a freedom fighter like Dedan Kimathi, expect to be countered with other names like Samoei Koitalel or the coastal heroine Mekatilili.

Compelling national landmarks like Mount Kenya are probably not going to be controversy-free either, much as it obviously makes sense to have them on the currency (in fact the mountain is featured in the background of the Kenyatta hundred-shilling note). The functionary who had wondered aloud about Kibaki being on the currency had in the same breath ruefully noted how some people would read it if the visage of Mount Kenya dominated the currency, that of course being at a time when talk of a "Mt Kenya mafia" was all the rage.

Some pity, though, since Mount Kenya expresses more than a geographical region. This country of ours actually got its name from this landmark. It was a Kamba guide who pointed to the 19th century German traveller Ludwig Krapf the mountain known to the Kamba as *kiinyaa*. And thus the name Kenya was born.

Despite his obvious popularity, I don't believe Beckham is going to be gracing any currency notes soon. The fad about him will fade once he can no longer score goals or he gets into the usual bad habits rich celebrities are prone to.

Fr Dominic Wamugunda, the University of Nairobi chaplain, gladdened many hearts on Friday with his inspired sermon at the requiem Mass for humour writer Wahome Mutahi at Nairobi's Holy Family Basilica. He rightly turned what was a mourning occasion into a celebration of the writer's life. That is as it should be, for the sadness that came with his demise is not going to obscure the light Wahome lit in many people through his work and friendship.

It was less pleasing to hear that a certain parish priest from Wahome's native Nyeri had earlier tried to bring complications by asserting that he would not officiate at a Mass for a person he claimed was not a regular church-goer. One might as well ask, who is? Requiems are not occasions to harp on the perceived frailties of the departed, and priests of all people should know that. Besides, who is anybody to cast the first stone?

It was nice that Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki found time to grace the Friday requiem Mass.

Annex II

Extract of the interview with Mr. Philip Ochieng

Q: Does the *Sunday Nation* a definable register?

A: The Nation Media Group has a style book, *The Nation Stylebook*, as our guide. But we do not follow it all the time...some of the parts grow out of date because language is not static, it grows. But we discourage use of NGOeses, stock phrases like empowering women, strategize, and prioritize, and so on. We don't always succeed and some get into the newspapers. We also discourage EAeses (East African) or Kenyaneses that is, English words whose sense has been extended and are perfectly understood in the region but not outside. Consider words like 'grabbing', 'eating', a phrase 'like you are lost' or 'falling into things'. They don't make sense outside the region. This is important because we have on line editions of our English publications and if we can't write proper language, we won't be able to communicate. Having said that, during the last 10 years there has been intense political struggle which has produced its own words and phrases, for example, 'stakeholders', 'transparent mechanisms', 'people-driven development' and so on. We should not forget that language is a tool of society; society produces language to suit the situation while it sheds off some. New ideas or concepts come with new words.

Q: Does the *Sunday Nation* have a style?

A: Our policy is to use Anglo-French rather than American English. We don't use 'z' where 's' should be. But again, we don't manage to control everything. We consider ourselves a family newspaper so we don't use four letter words or words that are violent. Headlines such as 'hit at' or 'attacked' are euphemised. If it is a verbal attack we say 'criticise', for example. We don't show pictures of mangled bodies nor do we print pornographic photos.

Q: Does the language used in the *Sunday Nation* show indigenisation of English?

A: We have formalised some Swahili words, and even other languages so that when they appear in text, we do not italicise, for example, 'shamba', 'chapati', 'ugali', 'muratina', just to mention a few. We however need to translate such words for the online edition. We have a problem that some of our staff can't think in English but rather in their mother tongue. This affects the quality of the newspaper in that thinking is done in the mother tongue and translated into English for the newspaper. We all don't come from the same ethnic society and therefore and the reader may not understand the concept which affects communication flow. There is even a more serious problem. We have in Kenya today people who are neither efficient in their mother tongue nor in English. They are 'tongueless', there are 'inorate', they suffer from speech illiteracy. If somebody tells me "you're lost", I immediately shoot back that "that is not English". To come back to your question, English, like any other language, branches out through local experience and after a while, the local word takes over the function of the English word.

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