

Unframing the frame: A content analysis of BBC's "Blood Parliament" documentary on Kenyan protests

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ABSTRACT

This article critically examines the BBC's Blood Parliament documentary on the fatal police shootings in Kenya during June 25, 2024, anti-tax protests. The objective of the study is to address the rarely discussed issue of how the international media continues to narrate political crisis in Africa through western lenses rooted in colonial legacies. The study adopted qualitative research design using critical content analysis and visual deconstruction. It evaluated the documentary's role in shaping narratives of state violence, protests and political legitimacy. Findings reveal that the documentary used emotional appeal at the expense of contextual complexity, and framed culpability narrowly by relying on exposure of junior security officers rather than systematic reform as a remedy. Findings also indicate that the documentary excluded Kenyan government and pro-government local voices. It also excluded the role of the colonial powers and skewed global economic systems in the political crisis in Kenya that resulted in anti-tax protests in June 2024. The study concludes that international media must recognize their ethical responsibility when narrating high-stakes political events in post-colonial Africa. It recommends conflict-sensitive journalism that is grounded on inclusivity, historical context and ethically-informed journalism. Furthermore, it calls on state institutions to develop robust legal, forensic and communicative capacities for self-accountability, and urges the implicated security officers to exercise their right of reply.

Keywords: Epistemic Justice, Media Framing, Narrative Power, Neo-Colonialism, Unframing the Frame

I. INTRODUCTION

Media content is thought to operate as a significant mechanism allowing for shaping public perception and fostering democratic accountability, particularly within emerging democracies (Wegmann & Evequoz, 2019). Such democracies thrive in institutional fragility and historical legacies which create an intricate relationship between state, media, and citizenry (Wegmann & Evequoz, 2019). Here, the narratives and stories created by media organizations, whether domestic or international, influence political discussion, frame perceptions of legitimacy, and push calls for reform or resistance. During crisis, the power of media framing to a large extent lies in the ability of the media outlet to define problems, dissect causes, judge morally, and suggest solutions (An & Gower, 2009). An understanding of how such frames are constructed and deployed is therefore central to assessing the role of the media especially in promoting or undermining state accountability.

Framing, according to Entman (1993), means selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of reality to promote particular interpretations and policy prescriptions. In doing so, frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Wherever crises unfold- especially in the cases of contested state action-media frames become cognitive shortcuts that structure how audiences understand what is at stake and who is to blame (Wicks, 2005). It is noteworthy that global media outlets are treated as more important especially on painting a picture of global political events. Such media organizations are largely British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Al Jazeera, or Cable News Network (CNN) which are armed with reputational capital and transnational audiences. Mutsvairo et al (2021) established that the international media outlets complicate local state-media dynamics by introducing alternative discourses, investigative methods, and global norms of accountability into national debates.

BBC Africa's investigative documentary *Blood Parliament* which responded to the events of June 25, 2024, when mass anti-tax protests erupted in Nairobi, presents a crucial basis against this background. In what was seen as a dramatic turn of events, Kenya's Parliament buildings were stormed by thousands of demonstrators, resulting in a violent crackdown by state security forces, including the military (Ajwang, 2024). Several demonstrators lost their lives during

the protests. Even as through open-source visual evidence, the documentary points at the argument that some of the fatalities were the result of deliberate shootings by security officers. The documentary has continually generated public discourse while at the same time drawing sharp criticism from the Kenyan government. Public screening of the documentary was reportedly banned by the Kenyan government with officials reported to have avoided substantive engagement with the documentary's findings (Citizen Digital, 2025).

Although the documentary has an impact both politically and culturally, there is scarcity in academic inquiry into how *Blood Parliament* constructs its narrative, represents Kenyan state actors, and engages in the forensic storytelling techniques, increasingly used in investigative journalism. In the same breadth, while framing theory has been widely applied to traditional journalism, its application to documentary studies, particularly those dealing with investigative content in politically sensitive environments, remain underdeveloped (Chibita, 2009). It is worth noting that documentaries operate not only as tools of reportage but also as aesthetic and ideological artifacts. The documentaries employ narrative arcs for progression of the story logically, visual elements to represent concepts beyond their lateral meaning, and emotional cues to guide audience interpretation, often blurring the boundaries between journalism, activism, and art (Nichols, 2017). A comprehensive understanding of ways in which *Blood Parliament* frames Kenyan state actors, constructs evidence, and appeals to both local and global audiences ultimately opens up important theoretical and empirical questions.

Employing a content analysis to examine the narrative structure, thematic priorities, and representational techniques of *Blood Parliament* thus allows for interrogating ways in which the documentary frames the actions of state actors, constructs evidence, and communicates accountability to both local and international audiences. Through *unframing the frame*, this study lays bare the ideologies and assumptions which are embedded within the documentary, contributing to broader discussions about media influence, political storytelling, and the transnational politics of justice.

In recent years, documentaries have become essential mediums in political communication, offering compelling narratives with visuals that influence public opinion and frame issues relating to justice and accountability (Bekkers & Moody, 2014). The lens of forensic storytelling that attempts to answer the questions related to alleged state violence and political unrest in Kenya has attracted both local and global audiences with its critical view of state actors. However, limited scholarly attention has been given to the documentary with respect to its narrative construction, representation of state institutions, and investigative techniques. Most political communication research in Kenya centers on the role of local media during elections or ethnic conflicts (Ogola, 2011; Mäkinen & Kuira, 2008), with very few paying much attention to how global media intervene in domestic debates, much less instances of alleged state violence.

Although the framing theory has been vehemently applied to the local news media, very few studies had been undertaken on how documentaries employ one kind of visual and narrative framing to alter either the postcolonial African perception of governance or accountability (Entman, 1993; Nash, 2014). This paper fills this gap by analyzing *Blood Parliament's* narrative structure, thematic concerns, and representational strategies highlighting how it frames state actors and communicates accountability across transnational audiences.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To critically analyze the BBC documentary *Blood Parliament* with the aim of understanding how its narrative structure, imagery, and sourcing practices frame the June 25, 2024, anti-tax protests in Kenya.
- ii. To evaluate the implications of these framing choices for historical memory, justice, and global perception within a postcolonial context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

In numerous media studies analyzing how journalists play an important role in shaping public understanding of complex social and political events, the framing theory has long served as a foundational lens. Goffman (1974) first introduced the concept of frames as interpretive schemas that allow individuals to make sense of their experiences. Building on this, Entman (1993), explains that media frames select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in communication, in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Framing in political documentaries thus occurs not only through verbal cues but also through visual, narrative, and symbolic means.

Unlike conventional news formats, documentaries are said to mix investigative storytelling with highly emotive images to create a compelling narrative of an event (Bernard, 2012). This paper also works with the notion of forensic storytelling, or the method of reconstructing events from a combination of visual and testimonial evidence that seek to convince both legally and morally (Nash, 2014). Such storytelling has increasingly developed, particularly in the transnational media spaces where states seem to be so commonly questioned for issues of violence, impunity, and justice.

Bringing these theoretical perspectives to bear, the study interrogates how *Blood Parliament* frames state actors and constructs its narrative for holding power to account; and further considers how such frames may themselves be imbued with shorthand postcolonial assumptions that inform both local and global understandings of justice in Kenya. An examination of the concept *unframing the frame* is brought to the fore to deepen this analysis of how the documentary might question its own mechanisms of framing and the assumptions they carry.

2.2 Empirical Review

In political crisis reporting, the selective emphasis of certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicative context becomes especially potent, as the arrangement of facts, visuals, and voices contributes to the construction of political meaning (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). As per the theory of media framing, how issues are portrayed influences the public's perception (Goffman, 1974). The June 25, 2024 anti-tax protests in Kenya which saw state violence and international condemnation provide a basis for the theoretical lens allowing for the interrogation of the BBC's *Blood Parliament* documentary. An analysis of the documentary brings to light some broad trends in the ways in which international media adopt framing strategies when it comes to African crises.

Through the media framing theoretical lens, *Blood Parliament* yields delicate insights. A content analysis of narrative structure, visuals, and sourcing would provide evidence of this documentary following the international crisis reporting recipe. It develops a linear narrative of state brutality over a passive population, sporadically punctuated by emotionally charged imagery and carefully chosen testimonies. The documentary raises awareness about the violence perpetrated by state forces, but at the same time, it denies local agency and erases the convoluted political economy that lies behind the protests. In highlighting the suffering of the victims profitably without doing a comparative investigation on the systemic or historical conditions that gave rise to that state violence, the documentary might accelerate the neo-colonial discourse, which sidelines African societies as forever on the verge of collapse, inviting external gaze and moral intervention.

Considerable research has looked into media framing's role in shaping narratives and discourses during conflict, crisis, and political instability. In particular, studies have demonstrated that Western media tend to frame African events through what Fair (1993) and Hawk (1992) describe as a crisis lens (a persistent narrative mode that highlights violence, state failure, and humanitarian breakdowns). The negative lens that has seen numerous researches portray Africa has taken center stage in the framing of African states by international media as a well-documented phenomenon (Baah-Acheamfour & Lamptey-George, 2024). This framing often emphasizes conflict, corruption, and instability, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating a narrative of Africa as a continent in crisis. Often, this frame sidelines local agency and context, reinforcing longstanding categorization of African dysfunction and passivity (Baah-Acheamfour & Lamptey-George, 2024). Fair (1993) conclude that the implications of this representational pattern are of significance, as they shape both international public opinion and the global legitimacy of African governments.

Notably, visual media have become increasingly central to the whole process of frame production (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007). As Zelizer (2004) argues, images do not simply accompany journalistic narratives; they are narrative devices in themselves, offering emotional cues that can heighten affective engagement and moral urgency. An image alone has been argued to represent thousands of words as long as it is appropriately applied. Andén-Papadopoulos (2008) further demonstrates how edited sequences and photojournalistic conventions evoke specific affective responses that help structure audience perceptions of war, suffering, and injustice. Hariman and Lucaites (2007) introduce the concept of "iconic truth," where specific images come to symbolize broader social truths and historical judgments, often supplanting legal evidence or policy discourse in shaping public consensus.

Critically, the June 25, 2024 protests are presented primarily as a response to taxation policies, but little emphasis is placed on the historical role of structural adjustment, international debt regimes, and political patronage structures in producing Kenya's economic dilemma. This supports the tenets of a simplified causal story of the documentary's selected sourcing (Bernard, 2012). It is generally agreed that problems that are political in nature within the African context are mostly linked to global economic policies and historical marginalization (Mkandawire, 2010; Abrahamsen, 2000), both of which are completely missing from the *Blood Parliament* documentary. This absence is more than simply academic; it influences the foreign audience's perceptions of duty, agency, and justice.

The sourcing and voice of narration of the documentary remain a focus of analysis. While the documentary includes testimonies from families of victims and civil society representatives, the ultimate authoritative voice is that of the British journalist whose narration guides the moral and interpretive framework within which the viewer is positioned. Postcolonial scholars such as Murrell (2011) and Nothias (2018) have already argued against this premise that tends to cast the foreign correspondent as a neutral arbiter of truth while relegating local epistemologies and voices. The documentary thus marginalizes Kenyan journalists, analysts and activists who understand their political terrain by privileging external sources of knowledge and ethics. This reflects the numerous unending discourses aligned with the role of international media in national politics, with these issues most contested within postcolonial African contexts where sovereignty, representation, and legitimacy remain in dispute (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The implications of this type of framing extend far away into historical memory and international justice. The study's abstract stresses that the framing in the documentary may crochet future understandings of the events reaching out to June 25, 2024. By curating voices and images in a very selective manner, *Blood Parliament* may thus carry a narrative which gives prominence to international intervention rather than domestic redress, and trauma rather than resistance. Such representational imbalance has important repercussions in determining the standing of African states in world affairs and how their citizens organize for justice. This study therefore buttresses calls within media scholarship for more context-sensitive and accountable treatment of African stories. As Frère (2011) puts it, transnational media ethics must be attentive to power asymmetries and committed to representational justice. African crises must not be reported as spectacles for Western consumption but must be portrayed as complex events with histories of their own locally as well as in global entanglements. Thus, any effort that emboldens African voices, foregrounds contextual nuance, and undermines simplistic binaries becomes a step toward decolonizing international journalism.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Through a qualitative research approach founded on critical content analysis, this study delves into how *Blood Parliament* documentary by BBC Africa produces meaning using narrative, framing, and visual tactics. The study, through theoretical lens of framing (Entman, 1993) and narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008), interrogates ways in which the documentary influences perceptions and viewpoints of the public with respect to accountability, fairness, and power of the state. Visual analysis extrapolates this by deconstructing cinematic tactics and ideological signals. The research, grounded in a constructivist perspective, critically evaluates the role of the documentary in mediating political debate. Through systematic coding and theoretical triangulation depth and rigor is assured while at the same time adding to broader discussions on media influence and postcolonial justice narratives.

3.2 Study Location

Kenya provides the study setting, since the *Blood Parliament* documentary revolves around political developments, accountability of the state, and alleged violence involving state actors. While the debacle could have been tailored for an international audience, the story, characters, and themes are deeply rooted in Kenya's sociopolitical landscape. The analysis focuses on how the realities of Kenyan politics, especially in regards to political contests and issues of governance and justice, are mediated through the global investigative journalism view.

Given that the Kenyan situation serves as a geopolitical environment referenced in the study, also analyzed is the scenario in which the documentary events and representations take place. In light of the events following 25 June anti-tax protests, and ensuing relations between the state and its citizens, this forms the socio-political canvas behind which *Blood Parliament* constructs its narrative. While the documentary was distributed worldwide, its implications, themes, and consequences bear in direct relation to Kenyan society, media discourse, and governance.

3.3 Data Processing and Analysis

The *Blood Parliament* documentary serves as the primary unit of analysis. The full recording was viewed multiple times to facilitate close reading and visual deconstruction. The analysis concentrated on four interrelated domains: (1) narrative structure, including the sequencing of events and character development; (2) framing devices such as language choices, visual emphasis, and editing patterns; (3) visual sequencing and imagery, particularly how shots are composed, ordered, and repeated to produce affective or evidentiary effects; and (4) the exclusion or marginalization of alternative perspectives, especially from state officials or dissenting publics. These components were coded inductively and then refined through a theory-driven lens.

In a bid to deepen the interpretive scope, the study also engaged in triangulation with contextual materials. These included public statements from the Kenyan government officials in response to the protests and the documentary, contemporaneous news coverage from both local and international media, and user-generated content on social media platforms such as Twitter (now X) and Facebook.

The provided supplementary sources broaden the understanding of public reception, interpretive controversies, and the general circulatory field surrounding the documentary. Therefore, triangulation functioned both as a safeguard for the analytic trustworthiness as well as a strategy for situating the cultural resonance of the documentary.

The interpretation of the documentary is framed primarily with Entman's (1993) four part model of framing which outlines media frames as serving four fundamental functions: problem definition, cause attribution, moral evaluation, and suggesting solutions. This model made it possible to *Blood Parliament's* constructions of its claims regarding state responsibility, representation of protestor grievances, and claims regarding its own evidentiary authority. Special focus was placed on the convergence (or lack thereof) between the visuals and the narration of the audio track. In addition, how the various assertions were made to portray a narrative of state violence was analyzed.

This methodology, which combines structural analysis with ethical and contextual reflection, is designed to account for both the internal mechanics of the documentary and its broader political significance (Nichols, 2017). It recognizes that *Blood Parliament* not merely a media artifact but a politically charged intervention situated within contested fields of justice, memory, and legitimacy in postcolonial Kenya.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

In its pursuit of accountability, the *Blood Parliament* documentary is meticulously crafted as a narrative, deeply politicized and attempts to unveil “the violence of state power”. The tale about people is brought to the fore: families that are mourning, injured demonstrators, and a nation trying to make sense of the deep divide between its democratic aspirations and violent realities. Due to its framing choices, the documentary does not only create an interpretation of the events that transpired on June 25, 2024, but also generates an idea of state authority, justice, and silence. In the study, the results of frame analysis uncovered six primary frames that determine the meaning and impact of the *Blood Parliament* documentary.

4.1.1 Framing Victims as the Moral Center

The documentary is extremely well put together, especially due to how it centers on the victims’ narratives. Each man and woman’s voice, stare, and reminiscences are highlighted not as passive victims of a calamity, but rather as people whose lives were traumatically disrupted. Achieving focus on human beings serves two primary functions. It might awaken some degree of compassion from viewers unfamiliar with Kenya’s troubling history of protests, whether domestic or international. It goes against the draconian official accounts which claim participants in the protests are devoid of logic and act with mindless violence. Though this is effective, it’s also limited, as it ignores certain aspects, like the possibility of criminals and provocateurs infiltrating protests, which add layers of ambiguity to the explanation of the violence. Highlighting victims as the moral focal point paves way for the documentary to strip viewers of alternative interpretations, forcing them to adopt a singular emotional response.

4.1.2 The State as an Unyielding Force

In the documentary the Kenyan state is presented, as a coordinated, repressive machine through particularly its security forces. Security officers, often shown in militarized gear and armored vehicles, are portrayed as unleashing unprovoked violence. Through media footages and on-the-ground cellphone videos, the officers are captured brandishing guns and firing live bullets, tear gas, and rubber pellets into unarmed crowds. The lack of government voices, despite a stated claim that interview requests were denied, reinforces the image of an opaque and unaccountable regime. It is noteworthy that this framing ignores the role of colonial powers in the political and economic crisis in Africa, while at the same time it is tandem with a broader postcolonial critique: the state is a continuation of colonial repression, which uses violence not to guard citizens but to preserve interests of the elite in society. While this portrayal augurs too well with the lived experiences of many Kenyans, there is a risk of oversimplifying the complex intersection of law enforcement and civil unrest. At the same time, it raises ethical concerns: should the absence of official voices be interpreted as evasion, or might the filmmakers have done more to include pro-government perspectives? More importantly, while the documentary focused on state corruption as playing a key role in the economic crisis in Kenya, it excluded the role of the post-colonial global economic set-up that does not favor Africans.

4.1.3 Technology Framed as Truth

An analysis of the documentary establishes that it leans heavily on digital forensics, using image metadata, mapping tools and open-source intelligence to link officers to acts of violence in a move that presents such tools as precise and revealing. To trace the movement and actions of specific officers such forensic tools and open-source investigative techniques are utilized. Our analysis established that in framing this data from the digital forensics as irrefutable proof, the documentary blurs the line between investigative journalism and legal evidence. That notwithstanding, without scrutiny in the courtroom or the right of reply, such framing easily unfairly implicates individuals, and the end result is that it can undermine both legal due process and the ethical standards that ought to guide public storytelling. It should be pointed out that in a society where due process is fragile, framing technology as infallible risks eroding public confidence in formal legal channels even as it also raises broader ethical concerns about privacy, digital surveillance, and the media’s role in public adjudication.

4.1.4 Blame Placed on the Visible, not the Powerful

A subtle but significant frame in *Blood Parliament* is its focus on officers in the field, the ones captured on camera, in uniform, with guns drawn. Some of these men’s faces now circulate across screens, named and shamed

without public defense. Captured candidly are their actions with the documentary paying far less attention to the chain of command that authorized these operations. Little investigation is directed at policy-makers, ministry heads, or commanders who shaped the tactical response.

The perspective of the visible over the powerful inadvertently scapegoats lower-ranking personnel while at the same time leaving systemic accountability unaddressed. Needless to say, in a postcolonial society such as one in Kenya, where institutional hierarchies often shield the ruling class, such framing risks reinforcing cycles of impunity and misuse of power. Real justice requires identifying and confronting those at the top, not just those caught on camera

4.1.5 Reigniting Pain in a Wounded Nation

The timing of the documentary, ten months after 25 June 2024 events, acted as a reawakening of the national trauma that resulted from the anti-tax protests. For some, it was a long-overdue confrontation with truth while for others, especially families of those targeted in the documentary; it brought fresh fright, anger, and confusion. It's framing alone invites anti-government sentiments, but offers little space for reconciliation, healing, or dialogue which is crucial for society to thrive. Largely absent are religious leaders, trauma counselors, or community elders, potential voices for healing. The documentary thus stares at being seen not just as a tool for awareness, but as an accelerant for national division.

4.1.6 A government Response that Amplified the Frame

An area of concern in the documentary paints a view that rather than meeting it with facts or an alternative narrative, the government chose to suppress it. Cancellation of screening, discouragement of public discussion and muted or vague official responses only reinforced the documentary's framing; a government unwilling to face scrutiny but more concerned with controlling the documentary than correcting the record.

4.2 Discussion

The analysis of BBC documentary *Blood Parliament* reveals how international media framing has a strong bearing in shaping public debate surrounding accountability of states in transitional and young democracies like Kenya. Applying Entman's (1993) four-part framework, the findings reveal that even as the documentary achieves narrative clarity and emotional resonance, it privileges certain interpretations of events while marginalizing others.

In the first place, the findings indicate that *Blood Parliament* pieces together the central problem of the June 25, 2024, anti-tax protests as a case of unlawful state violence. Evidently, through using slow-motion footage, synchronizing gunshot sounds, and lingering shots of soldiers in combat stance, visually and narratively, the documentary emphasizes the shooting of unarmed protesters as its focal crisis. With such framing viewed as powerful and evocative, it selectively narrows the broader socio-economic context that precipitated the protests, leaving out the global economic set-up that does not favor African countries, which, among other issues like corruption, led to widespread youth unemployment, inflation, and the introduction of regressive tax legislation. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) support this view by insisting that framing involves not only inclusion but exclusion where certain facts are spotlighted while others are backgrounded or avoided. The failure by the documentary to fully situate the protests within these wider grievances results in a framing that risks decontextualizing the violence, presenting it as a discrete violation rather than a symptom of deeper systemic discontent.

The documentary focuses more on the security officers on the ground and not the state. The responsibility of civilian death in the documentary is centered on identifiable individuals, specific soldiers shown wielding rifles or captured in amateur video footage at the moment of gunfire. Overlays of visuals, comparisons of photos, and pixelated zoom-ins allow for the documentary to build a coherent story of perpetration by particular actors. Such attribution is consistent with Gitlin's (1980) *bad apple* narrative. In this narrative, abuses by institutions are framed as the result of individual misconduct rather than failures in the system. Keeping an eye on individual security officers allows for the documentary sidestepping crucial questions concerning the extent to which action by the security officers was legal and taking into account the chain of command, and what policy decision-makers such as politicians do in authorizing the crackdown. As per Bennett (2012), such a move not only limits the scope of critique but also is in line with longstanding patterns in media coverage that personalize blame while leaving structural factors unexamined.

Only two options are presented as the only possible solutions to the complex intersection of victims and perpetrators. In instance, grieving relatives, chaotic crowd scenes, and emotional interviews, set against a haunting soundtrack, are used to establish a frame of suffering and injustice that leaves little interpretive ambiguity. As Andén-Papadopoulos (2008) found out, these techniques are not inherently manipulative; indeed, they serve an important function in bearing witness. However, as Zelizer (2004) cautions when images are positioned as definitive proof, they can bypass legal standards of evidence and due process. It has been established that emotionally charged visuals easily produce "iconic truth," ultimately mobilizing moral outrage but stares at the risk of condensing symbolic meaning with empirical certainty (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007). In this case, the result is a form of visual adjudication that implies guilt

without legal resolution, a phenomenon that raises ethical concerns about trial by media.

There is an implication in the documentary insinuating that exposure can serve as a remedy for the violence. An identification of alleged shooters and reconstruction of the scene allows for the positioning the documentary itself as a vehicle for truth-telling. An inner look shows that the documentary stops short of advocating for systemic reform, policy change, or institutional accountability. Within the documentary, there is no suggestions for the way forward, like an explicit call for a parliamentary inquiry, judicial review, or any other mechanism; remedies that might sustain long-term democratic oversight. This reflects a recurring tension in investigative journalism between narrative closure and political action (Carlson, 2016). With the documentary succeeding in making visible what might otherwise be ignored, there is a question on its reliance on spectacle rather than policy which diminishes its capacity to serve as a catalyst for institutional reform. This is supported by an argument that visibility does not guarantee justice; it must be connected to mechanisms of accountability and redress (Chouliaraki, 2013).

The reported reaction by the Kenyan government, whereby public screenings of the documentary were blocked and minimized official comment continues to inadvertently reinforce the narrative constructed. From the *unframing the frame* perspective, the failure by the state to provide counter-evidence or engage in public discourse has resulted in a creation of an informational vacuum, one that the BBC's framing fills unchallenged. Instead of utilizing the mentioned legal tools or public testimonies in an effort to offer an alternative narrative to the documentary's claims, the government has opted for repression and silence (Citizen Digital, 2025). According to Branch (2011) and Nyamnjoh (2005) this strategic non-engagement strengthens the perception of institutional complicity and impunity, which is consistent with patterns observed in other postcolonial settings in which silence of the state becomes an implied confession of guilt. In addition, the absence of an official narrative to counter the documentary undermines the credibility of state institutions and erodes public trust, deepening Kenya's accountability crisis.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Within the *unframing the frame* point of view of the study, the *Blood Parliament* documentary depict a dominant case of ways in which international media can interfere with national political crises, particularly within postcolonial democracies struggling with weak institutions and questionable narratives of state legitimacy. Through strategically using visual evidence, selective framing, and emotionally packed storytelling, the BBC constructs a persuasive account of state violence during Kenya's June 25, 2024, anti-tax protests. While impactful, this account is however riddled with limitations. First, it privileges clarity and emotional appeal over contextual complexity; secondly it frames responsibility narrowly, and ultimately proposes exposure rather than institutional reform as a remedy. An illumination of ways in which media shapes public understanding through the framing theoretical lens; sees defining of problems, attribution of blame, making of moral judgments, and proposing of solutions is evident. In *Blood Parliament*, this process results in a compelling moral narrative that surrounds state culpability but leaves the broader socio-political grievances that led to the protests. It also suffers from failure in meaningfully addressing the legal, procedural, and institutional dimensions of state violence. Put together, such omissions, while perhaps necessary for narrative coherence, they risk simplifying what would have otherwise served as a crisis into a binary of victims and villains, with little space for ambiguity, complexity, or due process.

While many countries like Kenya operate within a postcolonial context, where media legitimacy, state power, and civic agency are all deeply contested, such calls for engaging the documentary constructively while not rejecting international scrutiny. As indicated in the study, not only does silence and suppression reinforce external narratives, it also misdirects public trust to foreign entities. Instead, states are required to develop institutional capacities; which involve legal, communicative, and forensic, that allow for transparent self-accountability. The international media is not left out either as it must recognize the ethical responsibilities associated with investigative storytelling in high-stakes political environments, particularly where some sections of the public do not have confidence in state institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings and discussion of the analysis opens room for the following recommendations; first, there is need for international media like the BBC to practice conflict-sensitive journalism when reporting on critical events such as Kenya's June 25, 2024, anti-tax protests. As seen in the *Blood Parliament* documentary, privileging select narratives distorts memory and reinforces neo-colonial frames. Responsible reporting demands that there are inclusive viewpoints, visuals that are contextualized and telling the story in an ethical manner so as to avoid sensationalism and uphold accountability in politically charged environments. Since there are dangers of entitling selective narratives and sidelining local voices, in a move that risks neo-colonial misrepresentations, ethical reporting requires that inclusive journalism safeguards historical integrity and promotes informed, balanced understanding of local political struggles.

For the Kenyan government, there is need to establish an independent forensic inquiry to either accept or contest

the narratives established in BBC's *Blood Parliament* documentary, through empirical tools; ballistic analysis, chain-of-command records and eye-witness testimonies. The Kenyan government further needs to establish robust crisis communication infrastructure, to ensure timely, evidence-based public engagement during national emergencies.

For security officers who were implicated in the documentary, they need to exercise their right of reply through legal and institutional channels, including public statements and cooperate with independent investigations to clarify their roles, reinforcing individual accountability within institutional frameworks. Officers are advised to refrain from direct media engagement without official support to prevent misrepresentation and uphold due process protections. These steps ensure transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity.

Conflict of Interest

None Declared

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