

# **GLOBAL POLITICAL CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION: FRAMING ANALYSIS OF ELIZABETH WARREN AND JOHN MAHAMA'S PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ANNOUNCEMENT VIDEOS**

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## **Abstract**

This study offers a critical comparative examination of the presidential exploration announcement video of Elizabeth Warren (United States) and John Mahama's (Ghana) declaration of intent video during the presidential primaries of two leading democracies in Africa and North America in 2018. Ghana has often been touted as an exemplar of democracy in Africa while the United States is viewed as a paragon of western and global democratic practice. The present comparative analysis makes important contributions to national and international democratic studies by analysing the campaign communication of two major candidates in the presidential primaries of their respective parties in both countries. This international comparative framework expands the field of campaign communication research, presents potential lessons, while testing the scope of theoretical and practical applications. The research is grounded within the widely applied concept of communication framing and the functional theory of political communication. Textual analysis was used as the major methodological approach. Three major frames were identified in former President Mahama's video announcement: (a) "One Ghana agenda & infrastructural continuity, (b) "righting wrongs and ending suffering" and (c) "shared prosperity". The study also revealed four frames from Elizabeth Warren's video: (a) "Inspiration, American values and heritage", (b) "life story", (c) "economic justice", (d) "Fighter and Wall Street Sherriff".

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## **Introduction**

Presidential primaries are an essential and interesting aspect of many democracies. The primaries are the process through which political parties elect their candidates to stand for general elections (Bartels, 1988). The nominating process may be different across different countries, jurisdictions or democracies but no matter the form they take, primaries are fundamentally important for several reasons. First, they give voters and party members the opportunity to directly participate in the democratic process by electing the candidate to represent them in the general elections (Sikanku, 2018). Secondly they serve as a source of feedback for the candidates. Thirdly primaries enable citizens to learn more about the candidates and policy issues being advocated (Tedesco, 2001). Primaries also help political parties to recruit new voters, strengthen party loyalty as well as project the party's image, values and policies. Overall the presidential primaries help to strengthen the pillars of democracy in many countries (Miller, Andsager & Riechert, 1988; Benoi, Pier, Brazeal, McHale & Klyukovski, 2002).

America is one of the world's leading democracies with many countries worldwide taking inspiration from their long history of democratic practice. Ghana, though still developing, has garnered attention worldwide as one of the leading democracies in Africa. Primary campaign and elections have become one of the key features of Ghana's democratic system. The two countries have strong bilateral relations and maintain a similar election calendar spanning every four years. While Ghana's elections are held in December within the term limits (every four years), the United States of America holds its election in November usually in the same year for both countries. This presents interesting grounds for analysis from the two different democracies across different continents. The main purpose of this research is to investigate how two candidates aspiring for the presidential nominations of their various parties in Ghana and the

United States framed and constructed their introductory messages to the public.

The research examines the first video by Elizabeth Warren announcing her intention to seek the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party for the position of President and the video circulated by Ghana's John Dramani Mahama also declaring his intent to seek the presidential flagbearership of the National Democratic Congress. To be specific the study has three major objectives: (a) to unearth the major frames used by John Mahama and Elizabeth Warren in their respective videos (b) to ascertain the use of major elements of the functional theory of political communication and (c) to examine the nature of non-verbal cues present in their videos.

Literature suggests that communication occupies a central position during political campaigns (Holbert, Benoit, Hansen & Wen, 2002; Kenamer & Chafee, 1982). According to Trent, Fredenberg and Denton, communication is the "epistemological base of political campaigns" (2011: xi). Communication serves as one of the major methods or means through which campaigns conduct their activities. So much of what is done through campaigns hinges on messaging and communication. In other words, it is through the campaigns that we learn about the candidates, policies and participate in the campaign process. Studying the communicative aspects of campaigns including how messages are constructed or how they are framed and delivered is therefore critical to understanding how campaigns are conducted. This is especially rich and significant when done in a comparative manner. For Trent et al., examining the campaign communication "as a means of examining elective politics contributes appreciably to our knowledge of the electoral process" (2011:xi).

### ***John Mahama***

John Dramani Mahama is a former president of Ghana. He was sworn into office on January 7, 2013 and left office after losing the December 2016 presidential elections in Ghana. John Mahama is therefore a one term president. This means, under Ghana's two-term presidential rule, he still

has the chance to become president for one more term. It is under this context that he is seeking the presidency for the second time. This is the first time in Ghana a former president is standing for the position again after losing office.

Prior to his first term presidency, he held the position of vice president from 2008 under the administration of Professor John Evans Atta Mills. After President Mills died in office, John Mahama held the position of president briefly until he won the December 2012 elections. As a career politician President Mahama has a long history in Ghana's politics. Career. He has held several party and national positions spanning several decades. These positions include, minister of state, deputy minister, three-term Member of Parliament for Bole Bamboi constituency, minority spokesperson for communication, and Director of Communications.

The former president was born on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1958 in Damango, Ghana. He has a first degree in history and a post graduate diploma in communications from the University of Ghana. He also received a post graduate diploma in social psychology from the Institute of Social Sciences. His pre-politics experience includes stints at PLAN International Ghana Country Office and the Japanese Embassy in Ghana where he was an officer of information, culture and research. As the Minister of Communications under Rawlings Administration John Mahama chaired the National Communications authority.

### ***Elizabeth Warren***

Elizabeth Warren is a United States Senator from Massachusetts. She was the first to officially announce her interest in seeking the Democratic nomination for president through an announcement video. She was born on June 22 1949. Warren has had a long career in academia with teaching appointments in schools such as the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University. At Harvard was the Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law at the Harvard Law School. She attended the University of Houston and Rutgers School of Law.

She is credited for her substantial role in the formation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Elizabeth Warren describes herself as a consumer advocate. Senator Warren's lifework straddles research and policy forays focusing on consumer protection, economic justice and social welfare. She has seen her profile rise due to her academic, advocacy and political work. She was a keynote speaker at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. She was made Vice Chair of the Democratic National Caucus after the 2016 elections. Under President Obama, Elizabeth Warren worked as the Assistant to the President and Special Advisor to the Secretary of Treasury on the consumer agency she helped set up (CFPB).

She first run for the Senate in 2012 against Republican Scott Brown occupied the seat after the death of Ted Kennedy. She won the race with 53.7% of the votes. Professor Warren became the first woman to be elected to the U.S Senate from the state of Massachusetts. After being elected to the Senate in the 2018 mid-term elections, Warren announced her interests in seeking the Democratic nomination in a video emailed to supporters on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

## **Political Campaigns in Ghana and the United States**

Political campaigns are an ever-present feature of democratic systems worldwide (Brians & Wattenberg, 1996). In both developed and developing democracies, the process for seeking the presidential candidature of a political party constitutes one of the central aspects of presidential elections (Benoit, 2007). Many parties are now adopting systems that allow for party members to have a larger say in electing their nominees. Ghana and the United States are two countries from different continents with steeped democratic practices.

In the United States, the primaries and caucuses officially kick in early in the year of the presidential election with the candidate being officially coroneted during the party conventions usually in the summer (June/July) of the election year. However the process leading up to the first caucuses and primaries in Iowa and New Hampshire respectively could start the year before or even earlier. For instance by January 2019, some candidates

seeking the Democratic nomination for president had already made official statements regarding their plans ahead of the primaries and conventions and the general election in 2020. The first caucuses are held in the state of Iowa, while the first in the nation primary is held in New Hampshire. After that several states get the chance to participate in the primaries depending on the calendar of the parties and the state of the race. Throughout the period of the primary season right from the start, candidates campaign and engage in efforts to persuade voters to vote for them. Communication and messaging is thus an important part of the primaries.

The primary process in Ghana also normally begins with candidates announcing their interest through various formats and channels (Sikanku, 2018). While some candidates do this through video announcements, other formats such as media interviews, speeches, social media are also employed. The party has a timeline where nomination forms are filled, candidates are vetted, campaigning continues and a candidate is elected at a party convention usually called the national delegates congress. Depending on the political party and the nature of the rules, the voting in the primaries can be open to members of the political party or selected delegates. During the 2016 presidential primaries for the National Democratic Congress in Ghana, the party opened up the voting process for all members of the party. However most times the flagbearer is elected through delegates elected at the district, regional and national level. Once the party opens up the nomination process candidates engage in all sorts of campaigning in order to perpetuate their personalities and policies. Here again the media and communication are central to the primary campaign.

In a continuously interconnected and globalized world, where technology and new media continue to shape social, cultural and political life, most candidates are learning new and innovative ways of conducting their campaigns from developed or dominant democracies like the United States (Chafee, Zhao & Leshner, 1994; Tewksbury, 2006). It has also been established that the primary and general elections in the US, tend to garner global attention. This research furthers political communication research by comparing the primary campaign announcement video of a US

candidate and a Ghanaian presidential aspirant. While election campaigns have been examined within national contexts, there is little research on primary campaigns and even fewer studies have done this from a cross-national or comparative perspective. This underscores the significance of this research

To be sure, research on presidential primary campaigns is also important because as Trent et al “ as candidates seek all possible arenas of political talk during the primary stage of the campaign, voters can see on a first-hand basis just how candidates handle themselves verbally and non-verbally. The information they receive aids in determining or readjusting their opinions. According to scholars such as Patterson, the first and early images and perceptions that voters form about the candidates can be crucial because they tend to last throughout the campaign. First impressions do count, after all in presidential campaigns too. This further illuminates the relevance of this research because the data being analysed constitutes the very first campaign communication roll out by the candidates in seeking the nomination for their parties from two different democracies.

## **Framing Theory**

One of the best known theories employed in the academic study of communication messages is framing. Robert Entman (1993), defined framing as the process of selecting “some aspect of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in a way that can promote a certain definition, interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). Thus framing is employed by both the media and politicians in their communication, articles and messages. During campaigns for instance, political actors are constantly presenting messages in order to frame themselves and policies.

Framing is concerned with how communication messages portray issues, events or personalities (Hertog & McLeod, 2001; Gitlin, 1981; Downs, 2002; Entman, 1991). In this research, media frames refer to how political candidates select some aspect of “reality” and use it to build their identities, the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of their identities and the various ways in which such messages are constructed (Entman,

1993; Esser & D'Angelo, 2002, Sikanku 2013). In framing certain devices help in the construction of framed messages and identities. These devices include key words, quotes, metaphors, historical references, ideologies, catchphrases, graphics, descriptions, contexts and visual images (Gamson, 1989; Dimitrova, Kaid, Williams & Trammell, 2005; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This is relevant to the current study because it will help to unearth the key frames messages and narratives contained in the campaign launch videos by John Mahama and Elizabeth Warren.

In political campaigns one of the important ways through which politicians set themselves apart is through well-crafted communication events and messages that seek to shape public attitudes about their persona and what they stand for. Carragee and Roefs (2004:17) alludes to this when he asserts that "...frames construct particular meaning concerning issues by their pattern of emphasis, interpretation and exclusion". Bateson (2006) also applied the concept of framing to non-verbal messages through his explication of how actions, cues and other non-verbal behaviour can signify meaning within the political, social and cultural space. Thus by using certain non-verbal cues such as background images, gestures and other body movements. Taken from a broad perspective framing is a relevant concept that helps to understand the construction and presentation of self, image and policies in communication and media messages. The concept will be combined with another key theory in political communication (functional theory of political communication) to help analysed the messages contained in the campaign videos being examined.

## **Functional Theory of Political Communication**

Research in political communication has often used the functional theory of political communication analyse campaign messages and communication products (Benoit & Harthcock, 1999, Sikanku, Boadi, Aziz & Fordjour, 2019). The theory sets out certain functions of communication during campaigns: acclaims, attacks and defences. Messages can also be evaluated on policy (past deeds, general goals, future plans) and character (personal qualities, leadership abilities and ideals) components. The underlying assumption of the theory is that campaign messages are functional in nature with the key goal of shaping voter

perceptions of candidates and persuading them to garner votes (Cho & Benoit, 2005, Borah, 2016).

In arriving at the core category of functions of campaign messages, the theory lays forth certain assumptions: first that in elections voters make comparative decisions as they decide who to vote for, second that candidates standing for office try to distinguish themselves from their opponents positively, third that generally campaign messages offer candidates the chance to offer contrasting views of themselves, fourth candidates persuade the audience through acclaiming, attacking and defending and finally that campaign discourse can broadly be categorized into policy and character messages (Cho & Benoit, 2006, Benoit, 2014a, Benoit, 2014b).

Acclaims are statements that project the candidate in a positive light in order to enhance their image in the minds of voters. This includes stating achievements or accomplishments of the candidates (Benoit & Hartcock, 1999). This is normally considered the safest choice. Attacks are used to making the opposing candidate less desirable for voters by highlighting their weaknesses. This can be either on a policy issue or character issue. Defence statements are used when candidates want to respond to attacks, restore their image or address a perceived weakness and general control damage the candidate may have suffered (Fordjour, 2014, Sikanku, Boadi, Aziz & Fordjour). This theory is thus appropriate for the examination of campaign messages in the current study. While past research has examined campaign communication within various countries, the study hopes to expand research in political communication and language studies by applying an established and widely used theory within a comparative context.

## **Methodology**

This study employed textual analysis to analyse the data on campaign communication for two leading candidates from two different democracies. Ghana is often recognized for its trail blazing credentials in Africa's democratic march and the United States is seen a paragon of global democracy. Textual analysis is a key methodological approach used

to analyse language, discourse and most forms of communication to find out the major frames or underlying themes and how the text or speech is working to construct identities or establish narratives (Sikanku, 2013, Lindlof, 2002, Sikanku, Boadi, Aziz & Fordjour, 2019). According to Fairclough texts can be seen as “social events” performed through speech or writing. Most scholars perceive textual analysis as a methodological tool to help researchers understand how people makes sense of the world (Fairclough, 2003; Sikanku & Amoakohene, 2014).

This is relevant for this study because politicians are constantly constructing reality and projecting their interoperations of the society to the masses (Pauly, 1991). Such a method will therefore help to understand how political actors are painting reality, projecting images, shaping perceptions, producing meanings and expressing standpoints or propositions. The analysis of the video will also be observed for any meaningful non-verbal features. For instance what kinetic (gesture, body movement, and physical activity) or non-verbal actions are both candidates using to frame themselves, their policies, ideologies and messages? According to McKee (2003) “whenever we produce an interpretation of something's meaning—a book, television programme, film, magazine, T-shirt or kilt, piece of furniture or ornament ± we treat it as a text. A text is something that we make meaning from” (p.4). The analysis that follows will therefore employ such an approach to interpret and understand the various elements of the campaign announcement video by both John Mahama and Senator Elizabeth Warren to help analyse their social construction of reality.

This research can be placed within the context of an exploratory study interested in comparing democratic campaigns between two countries that are often viewed as leading democracies in their various continents. Moreover there is no denying the leading role American democracy has played worldwide. This research presents an important opportunity to compare political campaign communication or messaging because such exercises can enhance understandings of campaigns within countries while illuminating any similarities and differences to enhance democratic practice. There is definitely something to be gained from such analysis

from theoretical, academic and practical standpoints. According to Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) “...comparative studies more than single-nation studies have the potential to provide an antidote to naive universalism, to enhance the understanding of one’s own country by placing its familiar characteristics against those of other systems” (p.400).

## **Results**

### **Functional Analysis of John Mahama’s Presidential Primary Announcement Video**

As delineated in the functional theory of political communication, acclaim is usually the most applied function by political actors (Brazeal & Benoit, 2001, Benoit, 2007). Consistent with this, an analysis of John Mahama campaign video found that acclaims were used more than any other function by John Mahama. The theory states that acclaims are the functions with the most benefits and least negative connotations. Politicians therefore use this function mostly use acclaims in order to portray themselves in a positive and palatable manner to the voters. In introducing himself John Mahama spoke about his previous work in government emphasizing that the work that was started in his administration was aimed at “positioning Ghana as a true middle-income country by modernizing our dilapidated social and economic infrastructure”.

John Mahama is acclaiming his previous work in government by asserting his contributions to Ghana’s middle –income aspirations. This is related to Ghana’s economic aspect of national development. John Mahama’s projection of his previous work and economic capabilities is by way of providing the social and economic infrastructure to support the economic system compared to Elizabeth Warren who believes that addressing income inequalities within the economy, fighting for economic justice and providing a level playing field will help to address the economic problems citizens face in her country.

In the next form of acclaim John Mahama articulates his desire to seek the presidency again as a response to popular support, religious duty and personal introspection.

I've taken into consideration the groundswell of support, the never-ending calls and encouragement from a large section of our party Elders, members of our party, supporters and Ghanaians from diverse backgrounds. I have prayed diligently about task ahead. And I believe I owe a duty to God and my country to take our great party back into government.

This can be viewed as an act of acclaim because Mahama tries to portray himself as the people's person, a man of reflection and religious devotion. Thus he brings to fore a critical aspect of Ghanaian political campaigns—the attempt by candidates to foreground religious cues as a possible way to connect with the audience within the public sphere. There is very little of any such religious frames present in Elizabeth Warren's video announcement.

However in the same statement where John Mahama talks about responding to popular calls and engaging in prayers, he admits in the same breath that he might have committed certain errors in his previous term which he hopes to correct if given the chance again. The former president makes what can be classified as both a defence and attack statement when he says he hopes to bring his party back into power to “to right the wrongs of the past and put an end to the cries of the people under the current dispensation.” It's an attack statement because there is implicit attribution of blame on the current administration's governance which Ghanaians need to be rescued from due to their “cries”. It appears then, that the former president while admitting his own errors from the past attempt to guise or reduce the effect of his admission by using noticeably strong and emotional language to describe the current administration from whose hands Ghanaians need to be saved.

There are other examples of acclaims. John Mahama's statement that "the 2020 election presents our party the NDC with a great opportunity to offer yet again visionary leadership..." shows that Mahama is laying claim to the mantle of visionary leadership. This acclaim is apparent to readers or listeners because of the preceding words "'offer yet again" meaning it is a claim that the former president is making in relation to his previous leadership efforts.

## **Framing Analysis: John Mahama's Announcement Video**

### **One Ghana Agenda: Continuity and Infrastructural Development**

While the statements in the announcement videos can be analysed using the functional theory of political communication, another common way to assess political statements is through the approach of framing (Sikanku & Amoakohene, 2014). Political information such as these can be analysed to ascertain the dominant frames. The first frame that is observed is that of continuity and infrastructural development. John Mahama, is basically making the case that a vote for him will enable him to continue with the infrastructural development he started during his time in office. He lays the foundation for this by employing a subtle, almost unnoticeable statement on the current "socio-economic" state of the country and the fact that he sees a "clear path" for his chances. The former president then says his goal is to help position Ghana as a "true middle-income country by modernizing our dilapidated social and economic infrastructure". In the same sentence he talks about "gradually inculcating in the Ghanaian a sense of patriotism, self-belief and commitment to a one Ghana agenda". There is no further explanation as to how he hopes to achieve it or any elaboration on the "one Ghana agenda". Certainly, one would wonder the semantic difference between the "Better Ghana" agenda of the Mills administration during which was Vice president and the current proposal for a one Ghana agenda.

## **Righting Wrongs and Ending Suffering**

Embedded in John Mahama's announcement video is the idea that his aspiration for the presidency is both a response to the "groundswell of support, the never ending calls and encouragement from a large section of our party". John Mahama is framing his comeback as a clamour from the masses. He also uses religious cues to frame his comeback as a spiritual and divine duty saying "I have prayed diligently about the task ahead. And I believe I owe a duty to God and my country..." This association with religion is not surprising as religion and spirituality has been a common aspect of Ghanaian cultural and political life. It is also consistent with the concept of framing where scholars posit that speech or communication is often constructed in such a way as to resonate with previously embedded cultural, social or religious attitudes already embedded in the minds of audiences (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1991). Frames become powerful tools of political communication when political actors establish a link between already embedded or establish cultural, religious or social cues and values and the messages they communicate. However the religious reference is broad and not as specific as it may have been probably in a democracy like the United States where specific issues with religious connotations such as abortion, marriage and family values are closely tied to Christian religious beliefs.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this frame is his admission that being president again will enable him to "right the wrongs of the past..." Certainly this is an admission of failings and wrong doing during his first term in government although there are no specifics. This is a big deal particularly because politicians are not always likely to admit fault. In fact, it is quite a prominent gesture particularly in African politics, where the idea of an all-powerful "big man" politician hardly leads them to such periods of supplication, however subtle.

In establishing this frame, there is once again a subtle attack when the former president says he is seeking to be president again in order to put "an end to the cries of the people under the current dispensations." We would also have to acknowledge the references to "party elders". This is because from a contextual perspective, the limited involvement of

mainstream, grassroots and establishment party elders was one of the recurrent themes that came up in public discussions and analysis regarding his party (the NDC'S) loss in the 2016 general elections. It was therefore important that the former president name-checked this constituency as he announced his candidature.

### **Shared Prosperity**

John Mahama framed his ideological position as grounded in “shared prosperity”. There are no further details to this but the former president speaks on “visionary leadership driven by commitment to create opportunities for all...” In framing analysis, the use of key words or phrases is one means through which frames determined. The use of the key words “collective”, “shared” and the repetitive use of “all”, are key to deciphering or constructing his frame of collectivism or ‘shared prosperity’ (Entman, 1993). However it must be said that the use of the phrases, labels and ideological position is without any key source or reasons for motivating such positioning or grounding. There are also no further elaborations or further details on this ideological framework. In addition there is a reference to being a “servant leader but here again, there are no further elaborations or enough data to analyse this labelling into details.

## **Framing Analysis: Elizabeth Warren’s Announcement Video**

### **Economic Justice**

Elizabeth Warren couched her policy frame in terms of economic justice characterising economic conditions in America as unequally divided. The introductory sentences in any communication material is extremely significant as it foregrounds or puts forth the most significant assertions or ideological viewpoints. Right from the beginning of the video Senator Warren states: “In our country if you work hard and play by the rules you ought to be able to take care of yourself and the people you love. That’s a fundamental promise of America. A promise that should be true for every.”

As a former University Professor and leading scholar on America's economy, Warren's decision to weave her presidential campaign around this theme is not surprising. Warren ensconces this frame around the idea of America's promise stating that many families have slipped "into disaster, calling it "terrifying". Here he is clearly using fear appeals to rouse the economically disadvantaged. To a greater extent than John Mahama, Elizabeth Warren does not shy away from using such strong and emotive words stating that "America's middle class in under attack.... Our government's supposed to work for all of us. But instead it has become a tool for the wealthy. And well-connected. The whole scam is propped up by an echo chamber. Fear and hate designed to distract and divide us race people who will do or say anything to hang on to power."

Against this background, the data above provides enough grounds to decipher a frame of economic equality and justice among Americans. From an ideological viewpoint, Elizabeth Warren's statement are definitely populist in nature with economic fairness serving as the main issue around which such a frame is constructed.

## **Life Story**

Elizabeth Warren's announcement video is also dominated by a personal narrative made up of her family story and history. As with most American speeches or communication messages, there are references to her father's middle-class status and her mother's low income job earnings. Attention is also paid to how they worked hard to provide her with an education and her path from such modest beginnings to a senate career:

After my older brothers joined the military and I was still just a kid my daddy had a heart attack and couldn't work. My mom found a minimum wage job at Sears and that job saved our house and our family. My daddy ended up as a janitor but he raised a daughter who got to be a public school teacher. A law professor and a senator. We got a real opportunity to build something. Working families today face a lot tougher path as my family did.

The presidential announcement stage of a campaign is an important time to frame and construct one's political identity. Warren seizes this opportunity to frame her political persona by showing how her personal upbringing, education and experiences will help her to address what she considers to be a fundamental problem in America: economic inequality. In the data analysed, it is clear that Warren is not just introducing herself or announcing her ambitions but quickly takes the opportunity to construct her identity with the hope of connecting to voters by identifying with them. The most significant interpretation of this frame is that as people see themselves in her story and in her construction of America's social (discrimination) and economic (hardship/inequality) reality they tend to identify, warm up or be sometimes energized by the candidate and her message. Major support for this aforementioned frame construction is seen in the example below: "And families of color face a path that is steeper and rockier a path made even harder by the impact of generations of discrimination. I've spent my career getting to the bottom of why America's Promise works for some families but others who work just as hard. Slip through the cracks into disaster. What I found is terrifying."

### **Wall Street Sheriff and Fighter**

Elizabeth Warren projects herself, under this frame, as a fighter against a constituency she considers partly responsible for economic disparity and inequalities—Wall Street. One of several voiceovers in her video reads: Elizabeth Warren apparently not afraid to tangle with Wall Street with Warren is heading into the lion's den. Warren goes to Washington. We created America's first consumer watchdog to hold the big banks account.

For a long time Elizabeth Warren has researched and worked in the area of economy inequality and consumer protection. She was instrumental in the creation of the consumer protection bureau under Barack Obama. In this frame Warren is representing herself as a core protagonist for consumers and the economically disadvantaged. Within the context of a presidential primary we can make a few observations. That the economic considerations will be a major site for political contestation particularly within the Democratic Party. Due in part, to the Democratic Party's loss in the 2016 election and also a desire to appeal to the populist elements of

the party, it is not surprising that Warren adopts such an economically populist and aggressive tone in order to appeal to primary voters. She does this energetically, forcefully and aggressively taking on the image of a fighter or perhaps a “fighting economic populist” stating that: “to be able to work hard play by the same set of and take care of the people we love. That's the America I'm fighting for. And that's why today I'm launching an exploratory committee for president. But the outcome of this election.”

## **Inspiration and American Values**

There's a pattern of inspiration and a nod towards American values in Elizabeth Warren's campaign launch video:

We can make our democracy works for all of us. We can make our economy work for all of us. We can rebuild America's middle class but this time we gotta build it for everyone no matter where you live in America. And no matter where your family came from in the world you deserve a path to opportunity because no matter what our differences most of us want the same thing.

Charisma, rousing rhetoric and highlighting historical America values has been a long held trope or narrative in American politics. These cultural and symbolic artefacts of communication allows Warren to tap into underlying aspects of American political culture while connecting emotionally with voters away from the policy, facts and figures. Warren further achieves this through the use of parallelism as a rhetorical strategy to connect to voters on an emotional level: “To protect the promise of America. And here's what. If we organize together if we fight together if we persist together. We can win. We can and we will.”

In political communication language is significant in the sense that it used to achieve certain ideological, cultural and political ends. Politicians use words and rhetorical devices to establish mythological, emotional and psychological templates to connect with voter sentiments beliefs, feelings and attitudes. Warrens repetitive use of the word “us”, her reference to

“the promise of America”, and use of “together” all help to establish some connection with voter sentiments on different levels.

## **Functional Analysis of Elizabeth Warren’s Video Acclaims**

Similar to John Mahama’s video Elizabeth Warren’s exploratory launch video contains mostly acclaims and attacks but with no defence statement. Elizabeth makes claims about how her career and upbringing are well suited to address America’s economic crisis:

I've spent my career getting to the bottom of why America's Promise works for some families but others who work just as hard. Slip through the cracks into disaster. What I found is terrifying. After Wall Street crashed our economy in 2008 I left the classroom to go to Washington and confront the broken system head on. Elizabeth Warren apparently not afraid to tangle with Wall Street with Warren is heading into the lion's den. Warren goes to Washington.

Warren deftly brings up what she sees as fundamentally wrong with America’s economy and then at the same time presents herself as being rightly suited to solve the situation. Few would disagree with the fact that in many respects the campaign announcement video us an early opportunity to begin constructing one’s identity in the most preferred manner. Most of these images might last long with voters. The campaign announcement video is therefore an important and critical part of the primary stage because it can have far reaching consequences. It is therefore not surprising that Elizabeth Warren presents herself in a forceful manner as the best placed candidate to address the economic needs of Americans. An important aspect of presidential campaigns is the self-image that one presents to the audience. Acclaims grant candidates the opportunity to do this as we see again in this example below:

We created America's first consumer watchdog to hold the big banks accountable... I never thought I'd

run for office not in a million years. But when Republican senators tried to sabotage the reforms have run me out of town. I went back to Massachusetts and ran against one of them. And I beat it.

Yet again in this example candidate Warren is presenting herself as a reformer, reminding voters of her role in forming the consumer watchdog protection agency, the role played by Republic Senators, in her view, by obstructing or sabotaging the process and her personal efforts in being part of the political system by running for office and winning. To a large extent, these acclaims by Elizabeth Warren also demonstrate the nature of American political campaigns and political culture. The importance of directly and forcefully stating one's achievements is quite striking here compared the Ghanaian political and cultural system where such upfront assertions may be deemed too direct, aggressive or pointed.

## **Attack**

Whereas politicians normally attack opponents, as we saw in the John Mahama video, one striking thing about Elizabeth Warren's video is that her attacks are focused on corporations, the financial system and politics or politicians in general. Warren thus tries to appeal to the independent voter by not sounding too partisan. This approach also allows her to amass some amount of authenticity as it's quite different from the normal political attacks.

These aren't cracks that families are falling into their traps. America's middle class is under attack. How do we get here? Billionaires and big corporations decided they wanted more of the pie. And they enlisted politicians to cut them a fatter slice that crippled unions. So no one could stop to turn the base loose.

In the examples that follow, we see further support of attacks by Warren, not necessarily on political opponents but on "corruption", "politicians"

and “big insurance companies”. She thus succeeds in engaging in a balancing act where she is able to register the angst and antipathy of voters while not sounding overly partisan. It leaves Warren as practical, authentic and relatable. Here is another example:

Today corruption is poisoning our democracy. Politicians look the other way. While big insurance companies deny patients lifesaving coverage while big banks rip off consumers and while big oil companies destroy this planet. Our government's supposed to work for all of us. But instead it has become a tool for the wealthy.

### **Analysis of Non-Verbal Cues**

According to scholars non-verbal or stylistic elements are a major part of political communication. They contribute to shaping the message or information that politicians tend to convey to their audiences. An analysis of these elements help to present a more complete picture or big picture of any communication product or message. The literature identifies non-verbal elements as constituting elements such as the background or setting, kinesics (gesture, body movement, and physical activity), appearance and tone of the speech. According to Trent, Friedenberg and Denton (2011) non-verbal or stylistic aspects of communication include “...aspects of communication—including physical behaviour, sound of the voice, body shape and movement, appearance, clothing, and choice of settings—that operate as symbols to create meanings we infer from the transaction” (p.70).

Along these lines, certain non-verbal indicator were identified to aid in the analysis. They include the following: (a) physical behaviour, (b) demeanour (c) appearance (d) setting and (e) structure/format. The table below further explains these indicators. The non-verbal cues will be analysed according to these elements.

### **Analysis of John Mahama’s Non-verbal Cues**

In terms of physical behaviour, former President Mahama was confident and relaxed. He sat throughout the video and had appropriate gestures with

his hands. Though Mahama looked relaxed the fact that he sat behind a desk and later throughout the video projected a laissez faire approach. It didn't make him look energetic. The presence of a desk and use of the computer can sometimes be a barrier symbolically. It could paint an image of formality, authority, power or bureaucracy. Perhaps that was the point of the video to show the former president as serious and competent within an official scene.

He wasn't overly exuberant, goofy and jittery. Given his long experience in politics, it is not surprising that Mahama appears quite comfortable with the medium. In terms of demeanour he is calm, has an even disposition and well in control of his emotions. He doesn't look angry. There is some serenity, peacefulness and steadiness about him in the video. The third non-verbal cue has to do with appearance. The former president chose to wear a traditional Ghanaian shirt. This was his signature attire when he was president. The attire symbolized nationalism and patriotism through his showcasing of a made in Ghana shirt. To the extent that framing involves how one presents or represents himself, we can say that the use of a locally made attire readily connects him to lots of Ghanaians and the common man because it evokes feelings of nationalism. The setting is composed of a large flag of Ghana and Mahama's portrait. The flag, clearly, is indicative of a love for Ghana or patriotism. The background could have worked perfectly with just the flag. In terms of the overall structure or format of the video, it wasn't long and overly boring. It went straight to the point and the NDC anthem was sure to evoke some emotional feelings among party members. However former President John Mahama could have interested the video with scenes showing him in action. He could have employed the use of more graphics instead of him sitting behind the desk the entire time. A tabular representation of the analytical instrument used for analysing the non-verbal cues is presented below:

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Description</b>
Physical Behaviour/kinesics: gestures, body movement, eye gaze	This includes, positioning, hand, body movement, mannerisms
Demeanour, tone, temperament, mood, delivery	The facial appearance of the person, general mood or temperament of the candidate (For example: well composed/presidential, dull/laid back; forceful, energetic, persuasive, compelling?). What do all of this signify?
Appearance/Clothing	Physical attire won by the candidate and what it is signified.
Choice of settings/background	The scene or set up of the video and what it conveyed. Any signs or symbols present should be considered
Discourse practice: structure and workability of language/rhetorical strategies	Overall format and presentation and its workability. Choice of words and language used.

In terms of the structural presentation, a few other things were noticeable. First was the foregrounding party over national elements. The video begins with the NDC logo and the NDC anthem playing at the background. The privileging of the NDC symbols and music is worth noting. Here, the party signifiers are privileged over national symbols. These symbols serve a functional role in terms of connecting with partisan supporters. In the partisan world these elements help to frame the candidate as a party chieftain which is important particularly in a presidential primary. The words “The Mahama Declaration” are written on the background once John Mahama makes his first appearance in the video. The explanation that renders itself most plausible at this point will be that in a party primary the candidate considered the target audience—which was the NDC party members—as his major focus.

## **Analysis of Elizabeth Warren's Non-Verbal Cues**

An analysis of Elizabeth Warren's video shows quite clearly a distinct difference in terms of their non-verbal cues compared to former president Mahama's video. Warren's physical behaviour, body movements or kinesics are substantial evidence of appropriate and effective application of non-verbal communication. She gets it right by standing instead sitting. This makes her energetic and engaging. It renders her body movement less boring and presenting her as agile. It's a departure from former President Mahama's video where he sits throughout his video presentation. While Warren is excitable, Mahama's physical behaviour is a bit muted.

Elizabeth Warren's second scene has her performing some motherly duties; specifically she is bathing a child. That's vastly different from sitting behind a desk. It portrays Warren as warm, caring and as someone who engages in everyday homely tasks. Her physical behaviour tends to reflect or affect her demeanour. She is pleasant, relatable and well measured. In addition Warren is seen as active, passionate and immediately engages the audience with the video. Her appearance therefor matches her message of economic equality for the everyday person and her general demeanour. The fact that she is not wearing a suit or anything formal adds to this presentation of herself as quite "ordinary".

Elizabeth Warren's most poignant non-verbal cues has to do with her settings or background: a kitchen with cabinets, microwave and utensils in the scenes. She stands in a kitchen which portrays a homely scenario and representative of a working class home. The video is interspersed with gentle music or sound tracks. She intersperses her video with stand ups, voice overs, sounds on tape or soundbites and pictures to represent her message instead of using just her image throughout the video. It's an effective piece of videography. Where she needs to be angry we see it in her expressions especially when she says "these aren't cracks that families are falling into, these are traps...America's middle class is under attack." The anger and seriousness is seen in her face and so it works very effectively to convey her message or the depth of the situation she's describing.

## Conclusion

This research makes important contributions to the field of comparative political communications research. The research had three objectives: to ascertain the functions of political communication present in the campaign announcement videos of John Mahama and Elizabeth Warren, the frames employed in the video and finally to analyse the usage of non-verbal cues. One of the core findings of this research is that acclaims was the most used function of political communication by John Mahama. He made claims which sought to portray him in a positive light when he spoke about his achievements of his administration particularly in terms of infrastructure. He also touted himself as a visionary leader. Three major frames were identified in former President Mahama's video announcement: *One Ghana agenda & infrastructural continuity*, *"righting wrongs and ending suffering"* and *"shared prosperity"*. This shows a president who is staking his claim to presidency on his previous record, admission of certain pitfalls during his previous term, a view that the administration of Akufo-Addo was not delivering and finally that his next term would be one inclusive rather than limited prosperity.

Non-verbal cues were examined along the following indicators: They include the following: (a) physical behaviour, (b) demeanour (c) appearance (d) setting and (e) structure/format. In terms of physical behaviour John Mahama was more laid back, sat throughout the video and used gesticulations, particularly his hand quite a bit. Elizabeth Warren, stood for most part of the video and gesticulated quite a bit too. In terms of demeanour, John Mahama was less gussy and energetic, he looked a bit relaxed. Elizabeth Warren was energetic, forceful and brazen in her video. John Mahama, looked formal in his appearance, wearing traditional Ghanaian clothing. Elizabeth Warren looked less formal and more pumped up in her video. The settings were also palpably different. While John Mahama sat in an office setting with a desk, laptop, bookshelf and Ghanaian flag present, Elizabeth Warren's setting conveyed a humane less formal setting of a kitchen linking it to her economic theme of kitchen table issues. The structure or format of both videos presented some differences too. Elizabeth Warren's video employed the use of graphs, moving video from the past and present, a lot more voice over clips and

moving footage. John Mahama's video was very placid and the structure was just quite narrow. It should John Mahama sitting and delivering his message.

Comparative and international research always presents useful lessons in terms of political and international communication (Sikanku, 2016; Sikanku 2013). John Mahama could have appeared less formal and more relatable. He could have privileged national symbols even more than he did. He could also make his video more compelling exciting by interspersing it with biographical footage. He could also employ the use of more graphics and moving images. Elizabeth Warren could also learn by including some kind of party symbols since this the video is to appeal to primary voters. In terms of culture as well, because traditional clothing is very popular in Ghana, it gave John Mahama a means to demonstrate his symbolism through traditional wear, something that was missing from Elizabeth Warren's video in terms of her wardrobe. Warren was also more engaging and energized. She also hit a home run with the background or setting of a kitchen environment which was a powerful technique in framing her as humane and relatable than the official, formal and top-down power gulf dynamic as we saw in John Mahama's video.

Overall, this research has broadened our understanding of international comparative political communication by analysing campaign videos from leading candidates within two leading democracies from different continents. It helps us understand the framing mechanics, the functional role of political communication and the non-verbal cues that underpin the process of communication in an every changing world of politics within the international democratic space.

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