

NEWS FRAMING OF NELSON MANDELA AND THABO MBEKI IN SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

South Africa's first two democratically elected presidents, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, are portrayed very differently by the media. Since the 1999 transfer of the country's leadership to Thabo Mbeki, the two leaders were frequently compared by the media. Reports that appeared in the study period of 2002 to 2004 in mostly South African newspapers depicted former president Nelson Mandela as the "magic man" who is revered by celebrities and street children alike for his warmth, humanity and statesmanship. President Thabo Mbeki on the other hand was portrayed as the rather cold and distant "mystery man": the highly intelligent politician who plays clever word and political games. In this article a number of theoretical framing tools are developed to compare the apparent assumptions about, and portrayal of, as well as the hugely disparate public media images of, the character and personality of Mandela and Mbeki. Elements of literary characterisation, such as appearance, behaviour, and effect on others, are used to determine the frames of reference created by the media in their reports on the two men. These tools are universally applicable in the analysis of media personalities and may prove helpful to other researchers working in this field of study.

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INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela is no longer South Africa's president (1994-1999), but he continues to figure strongly in the mainstream South African media. In general, Mandela (also known internationally by his nickname, Madiba) has remained more than a respected political figure, he has attained icon status, ranging from international super-stars to even right-wing whites who "adore" him. With the 1999 transfer of the country's leadership to Thabo Mbeki, comparisons between the two leaders became rife in the national media. It is still being made. After more than six years, during which the country remained politically stable and with clear signs of economic growth, Mbeki has gained some national and international respect for his role in major foreign affairs issues (e.g. as champion for the African Renaissance). However, Mbeki has still not shed his media image as a "mystery man". His policy of "quiet diplomacy" towards Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, as well as his controversial stance on the issue of HIV/AIDS, makes him somewhat of an enigma to most of the South African media.

This article in essay format, will examine how two South African presidents – both black, both former freedom fighters, both members of the African National Congress, and both democratically elected by a vast majority of the country's voters – were portrayed by national and international media over a period of three years, from 2002 to 2004. It will show, *inter alia*, how Mandela was depicted as the "magic man", who is universally loved, a global icon, "father of the rainbow nation", ebullient, a reconciler, a democrat, and above all, a mensch. The article will argue that Mbeki on the other hand was portrayed as the "mystery man": intelligent, but inscrutable, a distant leader who plays with words and spins webs, an enigmatic political leader that "nobody really knows".

PURPOSE

Consequently, this article discusses the apparent assumptions about and portrayal of, as well as the hugely disparate public media images, of South Africa's first two democratically elected presidents, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. It is argued that these images were due to deliberate media framing on the one hand, but also due to a media reflection of the *de facto* personalities of the two men. A number of theoretical framing tools are developed in the process.

Framing

Framing is the numerous ways in which the media create the context within which the audience may "locate, perceive, identify and label" whatever is going on in the world. In other words, to make sense of events and happenings (Goffman 1974: 21). Without media frames, much of what happens and what is said in the world will remain "mere talk and incomprehensible sounds" (Tuchman 1978: 192). The largely unobservable frames help to organise the world for both journalists and their audiences (Gitlin 1980:7).

The different constituents of frames tend to agree with those identified in discourse analysis, and particularly narrative analysis, and may include story lines, myths, and metaphors, and epistemic notions, or ideas that organise people's perception of reality without them being aware of the existence of those ideas (Entman 1991: 11).

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Walter Lippmann (1922) argued that people carry pictures in their heads about the world they live in. These "pictures" include the story lines of reported news. Lippmann also argued that in order to rouse the interest of an individual, a news story must provoke feeling, "inducing him to feel a sense of personal identification" (Lippmann 1922: 10). Journalists create this feeling of identification by using traditional story element in investigative reports (Ettema & Glasser 1988).

Vladimir Propp (1968) studied the narrative plot lines of fairy tales to identify the recurrent plot lines and characters, the most frequent being the story of the hero that goes on a quest, faces misadventure, overcomes the villain with the help of a magic agent provided by a donor, to ultimately win the princess. These stories have an enduring appeal: suppose the hero is Nelson Mandela, his quest is the liberation of his people, his misfortune is that he is captured and imprisoned, but he ultimately triumphs over the apartheid regime through sanctions by the international community, to become the first black president of his country.

However, Propp's formula does not explain why Mandela's story is so much more appealing than that of Mbeki, who also fought the apartheid government, who went into exile, worked very hard to convince the international community to impose sanctions that practically brought the National Party government to its knees, and stood by Mandela's side as the first vice-president of South Africa.

The reason for the above may be the resonance of the story with the ancient captivity myth: there is a damsel in distress (the black people of South Africa), a captor (the apartheid government), the hero (Mandela), and a dramatic rescue (Mandela's much publicised and televised release from prison). Mbeki, on the other hand chose to live in exile, and returned to the country without much ceremony. Also, Mbeki never was the hero of the "Struggle" narrative, but rather what Propp referred to as the "helper", as he was largely responsible for the orchestration of sanctions from his position in exile, and before they all lived happily ever after, he was not the magical "king", but still the rather mysterious "side-kick".

In order to examine these character types more closely, various media studies (e.g. Watts 1996; Parmelee 2001; Golan & Wanta 2002) were examined to find appropriate criteria, but to no avail. A preliminary study made it obvious that a wide range of character attributes was used to create the existing public image of South Africa's two black presidents as either the "magic man" or the "mystery man".

As studies on non-literary narratives did not seem to provide a set of attributes that is both applicable to the analysis of the indicated news frame as well as being universally

suitable for character analysis, the authors turned to literary narrative analysis, with specific reference to the highly regarded book of Janet Burroway (2002) which is already in its sixth edition.

The preliminary model for the framing analysis utilised in this article correspond strongly with the framework of characterisation as proposed by Burroway (2002). In this study, we used the six basic methods of literary characterisation to examine the construction of the personality frames of Mandela and Mbeki. These methods are divided into two groups, namely direct and indirect characterisation. Direct characterisation refers to authorial interpretation, in other words characteristics directly attributed by the reporter, such as “intelligent”, “cold”, “charming”, and “aloof”. Indirect methods deal with the character’s appearance (what does he look like and how does he dress?), behaviour (what does he do and how does he behave?), speech (what does he say and how does he say it?), thoughts (in this context it would include views on HIV/Aids and Robert Mugabe), and his effect on others (how do other people feel about and behave towards him?)

A Model for Framing Analysis

| <i>Direct</i> | <i>Indirect</i> | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| | <i>Appearance</i> | <i>Behaviour</i> | <i>Speech</i> | <i>Thoughts</i> | <i>Effect on others</i> |
| What does reporter say about the individual | Clothes, stature, age, health, hair, skin, eyes, even race | Social, emotional, activities, actions | What does individual say, how does individual say it | Political thought & policies, attitude, beliefs, values | What other people have to say about the individual |

These methods of characterisation were used to examine the “magic man” and “mystery man” character frames that have been created of the two South African presidents over many years. Illustrative examples were drawn from articles on Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki that appeared in South African newspapers between January 2002 and December 2004. A range of daily and weekly newspapers were included, namely The Star, Cape Times, Sunday Independent, Business Day, Cape Argus, Sunday Times, Daily News, City Press, Financial Mail, Eastern Province Herald, Sunday Herald, and The Mercury. Single foreign news articles were used to better illustrate a specific character attribute.

The advantage of using these characterisation attributes is that with slight adaptations (e.g. in the “thought” category), it is applicable to all people, public and private individuals alike. It is simple, user friendly and gives a clear indication of the character of a person. Its major disadvantage is that the selection process of newspaper articles needs to be carefully considered in order to prevent inadvertent framing by the researchers themselves.

Direct characterisation

Instances of direct characterisation in the framing of both former president Mandela and president Mbeki are common enough, as all and sundry seem to have something to say about the two men.

The magic of Mandela, commonly referred to as “Madiba Magic”, is conjured up at any occasion. When “national icon Nelson Mandela” addressed South Africa’s newly elected parliament after the 2004 elections, they were treated to some “Madiba Magic” (Grobler 2004), which was, according to reports, also responsible for South Africa’s winning the bid to host the 2010 Soccer World Cup (The Star 2004), and even inspired Hillary Clinton to forgive her husband: “If Mandela could forgive, I would try,” she wrote in her book, *Living History* (Usborn 2003).

“Mandela radiates honesty, tolerance and humility. He epitomises an egalitarian spirit the world hungers for” (Naidoo 2004). He is also described as the world’s greatest statesman, their leader, a hero and an inspiration (Kgosana & Armstrong 2003), as well as an ordinary man: a gentleman, a father and a grandfather (Le Grange 2004).

Unlike Mandela, Mbeki has never been associated with anything magical (Mkhabela 2003a), although his ways seem mysterious to the public and the media alike.

Columnist Darrel Bristow-Bovey (2002) described him as “a remote and sometimes enigmatic figure” who “disappears into the machine and only the echoes of his voice are heard, channelled and scrambled through the broken telephone of his staff to a wondering public”.

He is nevertheless also described as “a responsible leader” and that despite his inexplicable silences about issues that the South African public feels is important (HIV/Aids and Zimbabwe), “no-one will be able to convincingly argue that Mbeki doesn’t care” (Michaels 2003:9). “Widely regarded as highly intelligent and a workaholic, Mbeki is also sensitive to criticism – especially that he is bound for very long midnight hours to the Internet and receives most of his ideas from cyber space - the aspect of his character that has drawn the most negative comment” (Independent Online 2004a).

Indirect characterisation

Appearance

The contrasting dress styles of Mandela and Mbeki further seem to frame them as either magical or mysterious. The tall, white-haired figure of Mandela in an amazing technicolour shirt conjures up the image of a wizard of sorts. Mandela started wearing his “bright, loose-fitting shirts” (Independent Online 2003a) after receiving one as a gift from a Cape Town designer on his release from prison. Unaccustomed to wearing a tie, the comfortable, colourful shirts became a Mandela trademark.

Another attribute of Nelson Mandela’s appearance that seems to dominate reports is his “6 foot 3 inch” stature. Recalling their first meeting in 1990, Jay Naidoo (2004) wrote:

"A tall, remarkably fit and energetic man, regal in bearing, emerged from one of the rooms, arms outstretched in a warm welcome", while it is reported that when South African beauty queen Vanessa Carreira was first introduced to Mandela, she cooed: "But you're so tall!" (Daily News 2002).

Increasingly, however, reports highlighted the former president's age and ailing health, which is a source of concern not only to South Africa and the South African media, but in media parlance, seemingly to the world as a whole.

During a visit of British Prince Andrew, a reporter noticed that Mandela was "severely limping" while he was informally chatting to reporters (Bulbulia 2002). A year later, after the death of Mandela's friend and mentor Walter Sisulu, Mandela was described as "frail-looking" as he talked to reporters (Nkuta 2003). In 2004 "the frail white-haired octogenarian" (Grobler 2004) was "looking increasingly dependent on a walking stick or a supporting hand" yet he showed "no sign of letting up his fundraising activities and campaigning" (Thomson 2004).

It seemed, however, that the constant attention the press gave to Mandela's stature and shirts irritated Mbeki. When compared to Mandela, Mbeki is reported to have replied: "What do you expect me to do? Must I grow taller? Must I go to prison for 27 years? Or must I start wearing strange shirts?" (O'Connor 2003).

The much shorter Mbeki has been described as "the perfectly proportioned president" (Trovato 2004), with a penchant for "tailored business suits (which) stood in stark contrast to Mandela's free-flowing brightly-coloured shirts" (Bernes-Lasserre 2004). For his inauguration, the "dashing" Mbeki, who looked like "he has shed a kilogram or two" wore "a dark suit, a striped shirt and a matching black-and-grey tie" (Rantao 2004:1).

During his last election campaign, Mbeki who has never relied on kissing babies to win office, tried hard to shake off his image of an intellectual out of touch with the people. "Dressed in jeans and a bright yellow T-shirt, Mbeki hugged and kissed many of the elderly residents who approached him, leaving others giggling over how friendly he was" (Adams 2004a: 6). On another occasion Mbeki has "donned a blue workers' overall on a visit to several schools south of Johannesburg on Wednesday morning, signalling his commitment to rebuild disadvantaged schools" (Adams 2002). Somehow, these appearances seemed to be stage-managed, casting him in a negative light in terms of the next character attribute, namely behaviour.

Behaviour

Descriptions of the behaviour of Mandela and Mbeki further enhance their respective character frames. Mandela is described as an open, warm, approachable person, and to some he is almost a Santa Claus. Mbeki, on the other hand, remains an enigma, whether he stays in character as the naturally reserved intellectual who dislikes small talk and is uncomfortable with children, or whether he suddenly starts to deliver mail, hugging grannies and kissing babies along the way.

Ever since his release from prison, Nelson Mandela charmed the world with his smile and his capacity to forgive. During the 2002 to 2004 period studied, one of his most extraordinary acts was a visit to the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. When Mandela “ventured on hallowed Afrikaner ground”, it was surprising, but not as astounding as his tribute to a renowned war hero of his former enemy. “He described Boer scout commander Danie Theron as a brave and patriotic warrior”. He further invoked the ire of former struggle comrades when he invited the widows of former Nationalist premiers, including Betsie Verwoerd, widow of the arch-apartheid builder Henderik French Verwoerd, to his official residence for tea (De Wet 2002).

Although Mandela is now “officially retired from retirement”, he continues to pour his energy into the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Mandela Children’s Fund. “He has raised millions, if not billions, of rands to fund programmes that include the building of schools and clinics and bursaries for disadvantaged but academically deserving students” (Vapi 2004).

President Thabo Mbeki, conversely, does not like children all that much, “he abhorred the common touch. Give him an opportunity to empathise with the poor and sick and he would retreat into technocratic jargon. Give him a baby and he would plop it into the nearest lap” (Carroll 2004). During the run-up to the 2004 elections, though, Mbeki mystified – and delighted – his country-folk by appearing on street, knocking on doors and playing games and dancing with children.

People who knew Mbeki before 1994 say he was a “charmer who loved Monty Python and Not the Nine O’clock News, whose camaraderie and intellect convinced Western governments to impose sanctions, and white Afrikaner leaders to accept the unsustainability of apartheid”. Pieter-Dirk Uys, a foremost South African satirist, was “hugely impressed by his intelligence, his sense of humour. I don’t know what happened after 1994. I don’t think any of us know him” (Carroll 2004).

Therefore, when Mbeki “steps out of character” as he did when visiting hundreds of pensioners in Surrey Estate, he is, in fact, being himself. “The normally staid leader left supporters agape when he did the jig while apologising for being more than half an hour late, saying he was meeting with finance officials. ‘That’s why I look so smart,’ he grinned, stepping forward and almost, but not quite, doing a little presidential pirouette in his dark suit and bright yellow chequered tie” (Adams 2004b).

Similarly, when a sensational sudden death golf play-off between Ernie Els and Tiger Woods for the 2003 Presidents Cup ended in a controversial tie between the Jack Niklaus’s American team and Gary Player’s International Team, Mbeki was so excited that he danced a jig with golf legend Gary Player at the closing ceremony of the tournament (Reeves 2003).

The media did report on these “lighter” moments of Mbeki, but not enough to cast him in the same frame as Mandela. Furthermore, his words, as illustrated in the character attribute of speech, often belie this apparent lightheartedness.

Speech

Reporting on what people say and how they say it, is a strong tool in the establishment of a personality frame.

What Nelson Mandela says and how he says it, paints a picture of a charming, kind, man who does not take himself too seriously, but who is committed to his principles, no matter what friend or foe think about it. In recent years, Mandela's most memorable utterances have been less political and more people-centred. Recently, he received back two black-jacketed notebooks that he used to write down his thoughts while in prison on Robben Island, but which were confiscated by the prison authorities. When retired police officer Donald Card handed him the books, Mandela joked: "What you have just witnessed could be described as one old man giving another old man two old books" (Independent Online 2004b).

On a personal level, Mandela astounded his (white Afrikaner) personal assistant Zelda le Grange soon after he first met her. "He stopped to shake hands with her and spoke to her in what she initially took for a foreign language. 'My first thought was he was speaking to me in Bulgarian or something,' she said. 'But then I realised it was Afrikaans.' It had not been his accent that was the difficulty, but the notion that he was speaking to her in her home language. This broke down all barriers" (McLellan 2004). Considering that Afrikaans is the language used by the people that imprisoned him for 27 years, this was a noble and very touching thing to do. (The second author experienced a similar situation when he first met with Mandela, then president of South Africa. As a member of a South African National Editor's Forum to have a breakfast meeting with Mandela in 1995, the second author was "tongue-tied" as Mandela moved through the group, greeting each one personally in English. When he came to the second author, Mandela took his hand and forearm in a typical soft personal way, and asked in Afrikaans about his guest's health his family, whether he had a safe trip to Pretoria, and actually turned around "sternly warning" that one should be aware of a particular dangerous stretch of road back home. The meeting with Mbeki could not have been more different: aloof, not making personal contact and mainly speaking through a spokesperson, staring into a void.)

This ability to reach out and touch people with his words is confirmed by champion golfer Ernie Els. "He speaks to you like he's known you forever" (Independent Online 2003b). Former colleague Jay Naidoo (2004) agrees, saying that Mandela always amazes him by the way that he remembers "the smallest details of his encounters with people. Whenever he met my wife, he'd inquire in his booming voice: 'Hello Lucie, and how is your mother, Louise?'"

A very tender personal moment was between Mandela and actress Charlize Theron (an Afrikaner woman from humble and a traumatised background) when she visited her country after receiving an Oscar for best actress at the 2004 Academy Award ceremony. "With his arm around Charlize, Mandela said: 'She has put South Africa on the map. Even those ignorant of South Africa now know about us.'" The actress "appeared

moved as Mandela continued to praise her. He told her that while the international community sometimes associated South Africa with apartheid, Charlize had shown that this was no longer the case - and 'I am grateful to you for that'. As she started to cry, Charlize turned and embraced the old man. 'I love you so much,' she said. 'I love you, too,' Mandela responded" (Gifford 2004: 3).

While president Thabo Mbeki was equally taken by South Africa's "golden girl", his comments were true to his public persona. "Mbeki congratulated Charlize on clinching the Best Actress Oscar for her performance as serial killer and prostitute Aileen Wuornos in the film *Monster*. 'Well done, excellent, we are very happy,' he said. 'The whole country is very proud'" (Zeilhoffer 2004: 1).

Because Mbeki is still president, much of what he has to say is of a political nature. He stunned many with one of his most controversial comments in recent years, aimed at the media: "When he attributed the vilest of motives to critics of the arms deal ("scandal" with numerous undertones of corruption), calling them 'fishers of corrupt men' who believe that Africans are inherently 'corrupt, given to telling lies, prone to theft and self-enrichment by immoral means; a people that is otherwise contemptible in the eyes of the 'civilised'" (Pillay 2003). Asked columnist Pillay: "Does ascribing vile racist motives to your critics, without identifying them or providing specific evidence, illuminate the problem? Or does it inflame emotions on all sides?"

On occasion, Mbeki had left audiences gasping, like when he raged: "I, for my part, will not keep quiet while others whose minds have been corrupted by the disease of racism, accuse us, the black people of South Africa, Africa and the world, of being, by virtue of our Africanness and skin colour, lazy, liars, foul-smelling, diseased, corrupt, violent, amoral, sexually depraved, animalistic, savage - and rapist" He continued to say that he had previously cited two instances of people who "have written that our cultures, religion and social norms as Africans condition us to be rampant sexual beasts ... unable to keep our legs crossed, unable to keep it in our pants" (Karen Bliksem 2004: 8 - Satirical columnist of the Sunday Times).

While his foes are sure to receive a tongue-lashing, his friends know well that they too should toe the line: "No genuine member of the NEC (ANC National Executive Council) can claim that he or she has a right to set themselves up as outside critics and opponents of the ANC and the NEC," Mbeki wrote in his weekly on-line publication, *ANC Today News Letter*: 'In the event that such persons feel that they have irreconcilable differences with the organisation, they have the obligation to resign and then act as outside critics and opponents,' the president said" (Matisonn 2002).

The image that is created of Mbeki on the basis of such political thoughts is once again in stark contrast to that of the warm, caring attitude attributed to Mandela.

Thoughts

In the context of a character frame analysis of a political figure, thoughts as tool of frame construction will only include the individual's views, or "political thought", as it is obviously impossible to read and analyse another person's mind.

As Nelson Mandela is already strongly enshrined in the nation's psyche as the "miracle man", his policies are seen as attributes that fit into that frame. No longer a politician in the full sense, and virtually above criticism, whatever policy statements he makes is generally seen in that light.

When Mandela first criticised American president George W. Bush about Iraq, saying at the time Bush "cannot think properly", and later for bypassing the United Nations and overthrowing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein by force, the general reaction was in the words of deputy Foreign Affairs minister Aziz Pahad, that "Mandela's comments did not amount to a diplomatic faux pas. 'Madiba is a senior citizen and he has expressed his view. It does not affect foreign relations in any way. He has always been forthright on this and many issues. That is the greatness of Mandela'" (Munusamy 2003).

Mandela is also working tirelessly for the HIV/AIDS cause. "This is a war. It has killed more people than has been the case in all previous wars and in all previous natural disasters. We must not continue to be debating, to be arguing, when people are dying ...' While stopping short of directly criticising President Thabo Mbeki and the ANC, Mandela said he was talking to the ruling party about its position on AIDS and believed it would listen to sound advice. "I have no doubt that we have a reasonable and intelligent government, and that if we intensify this debate inside, they will be able to resolve it" (Munusamy 2002).

Meanwhile, Mbeki's stance on the disease reaffirms his "mystery man" frame. He is accused that his "know-nothing obstructionism to a dynamic AIDS-prevention strategy has killed many times more South Africans than apartheid ever did. South Africa has 5.5 million HIV-positive people, and today another 1800 will become HIV-positive, and another 1800 tomorrow ... Mbeki has not devoted a single public speech to the disease, except to say from time to time that drugs which delay its onset are bigger killers than the disease itself ... Incredibly, Mbeki told the UN General Assembly last September: 'Personally, I don't know anybody who has died of AIDS,' even though he has attended the funerals of three members of his government who succumbed to the disease, and there are members of his government on drugs to delay its onset" (Sunday Herald 2004).

Mbeki's policy of "quiet diplomacy" towards Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe is also contentious. "In the South African case we said that in order to solve the problems of South Africa, South Africans must talk and resolve things among themselves. That's what we did. I really do hope that the Zimbabwean leadership will do the same" (Independent Online 2003c). Former Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu has attacked Mbeki's stance on Zimbabwe, saying that what is happening in Zimbabwe "is totally unacceptable and reprehensible" and that 'for the sake of the South African government's credibility, Mbeki should say so" (Barbier 2004).

The way both Mbeki and Mandela are reported to think about the situation in the country and the world as a whole has a direct impact on the last character attribute, namely the what people think and say about them in return.

Effect on others

Much has been written about what other people – politicians, celebrities, and ordinary citizens – have to say about the two presidents. Almost without exception, people succumb to Madiba's magic, while Thabo Mbeki is regarded as a "Darth Vader" of sorts: dark, mysterious, intelligent, a strong leader, unloved to an extent, yet with his humanity shining through when he talks about the plight of Africa, the need for Africa to take her place amongst the nations of the world.

Mandela's personal assistant Zelda le Grange insists that he "is neither a god nor a saint. He's got vices and virtues... like any other person. He's a human being" (McLellan 2004), but many other do not agree. "I've met politicians, presidents, prime ministers, people all over the world," Tiger Woods said, "but I've never met anybody like that" (Independent Online 2003b).

Mandela was even described as "a beloved national hero to all (our italics) South Africans ... a national treasure and an icon to millions of people across the world" by South Africa's opposition party leader Tony Leon (Independent Online 2004c).

Shekhar Kapur, director of the film *Long Walk To Freedom* in which Morgan Freeman played the role of Mandela, said "He is a spiritual hero like Gandhi. He does not need to fight a bloody battle to win" (Independent Online 2002).

Children were – and still are – especially charmed by Madiba. A black columnist tells how people told stories about Mandela while he was still in prison "and you could not help but wonder if they were talking about a movie they had seen. I remember how one of my primary school mates became the butt of many jokes when, during the then never-ending argument over whether Clint Eastwood was a more prolific gunslinger than John Wayne, he confidently shouted: 'Mandela can beat them both'" (Msomi 2004). That admiration endures and is maybe best summarised by Mzwangile Makaula, an ordinary man except for the fact that he is the father of seven children: "Christmas without Mandela cannot be Christmas" (Osondo 2003).

Some reporters give the impression that Thabo Mbeki is unloved. "For the democratically elected leader of a country it was a strange motto but Thabo Mbeki seemed to relish it: no one likes me, I don't care ... He never articulated it so bluntly, of course, but the evident disdain for what others thought of him shone through. Whether addressing the ANC party faithful or captains of industry, there would be no jokes or effort to connect, no projection of personality" (Carroll 2004).

Mbeki is lauded for his "extraordinary job as a peacemaker and diplomat and a marketer of the African continent", but at the same time accused of "becoming a Jan Smuts (a South African premier and one of the founders of the United Nations), spending his energies externally while internally things are going horribly wrong.

Mbeki's party and its leadership are rotting underneath him, morally speaking, while he is negotiating deals in Africa and Europe" (Du Preez 2004).

During the last election campaign in 2004, Mbeki appeared, according to media reports, to be a changed man. "Mbeki is responding to criticism that the ANC has become too elitist for ordinary folk and he is too aloof and cannot be understood by the masses," according to political analyst Dumisani Hlope (Esipisu 2004). "South Africans have glimpsed another leader, one who cares what they think, and for that they seem to like him. The shame is he could have endeared himself long ago if only he had cared enough - or had confidence enough - to try" (Carroll 2004).

Apparently, one man had enough confidence in him. "He is in fact the best president in Africa," according to Nelson Mandela (The Sunday Independent 2003).

CONCLUSION

In this essay on a framing analysis of Presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki a number of framing "tools" were used, as it developed out of the literature regarding media framing.

The authors are very much aware of the scientific pitfalls of such an endeavour, not the least the requirements of objectivity, (the socio-scientific) rules for validity and reliability. A major criticism against the way this essay, based on framing theory, was constructed, was that the choice of examples from the media to underscore framing elements might have been rather ad hoc. We are aware of this, but we also believe this was a fair reading of literally hundreds of reports, the same reports that would to a smaller or larger degree not only have been read by the people forming their opinions of the two leaders based on media framing, but, we aver to say, also the kind of reports that would have been utilised in a more research stringent analysis.

Whichever way, we would suggest that the tools developed to interrogate the media framing of the two media personalities could in a heuristic way perhaps be utilised by other researchers working in this field in South Africa.

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