



Volume 5	Issue 3	March (2026)	DOI: 10.47540/ijqr.v5i3.2624	Page: 275 – 286
----------	---------	--------------	------------------------------	-----------------

## Discursive Scenographies and Narrative Regimes of Trump’s Leadership in African News Media

Léon Martin Mbembo Likongo

Université Catholique du Congo, Congo

**Corresponding Author:** Léon Martin Mbembo Likongo; Email: [leon.mbembo@ucc.ac.cd](mailto:leon.mbembo@ucc.ac.cd)

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* African News Media, Discursive Scenography, Leadership Legitimacy, Mediatized Politics, Narrative Regime.

*Received* : 18 February 2026

*Revised* : 23 March 2026

*Accepted* : 27 March 2026

### ABSTRACT

This article examines how African news media construct Donald Trump’s leadership during the first year of his renewed presidency (20 January 2025–20 January 2026). Drawing on a qualitative, multi-site design, the study analyzes a multilingual corpus of nine African outlets using a two-track framework that combines discursive scenography and narrative regime analysis. The findings identify six recurrent scenographies—Executive Mediation, Sovereign Restoration, Conditional Supervision, Strategic Deterrence, Institutional Negotiation, and Ambivalent Disruption—and six narrative regimes, including Escalation–Resolution and Security–Protection. Results show that leadership legitimacy is stabilized when enunciative centrality aligns with coherent narrative closure and becomes conditional when monitoring and uncertain aftermath dominate follow-up coverage. The study concludes that African media do not passively reproduce Western frames but actively recontextualize global leadership within mineral geopolitics, sovereignty concerns, and security priorities. By articulating scenography and narrative regime, the article advances a transferable framework for analyzing mediated legitimacy in multipolar communication environments.

### INTRODUCTION

Since January 2025, Donald Trump’s return to the presidency has reactivated intense global media circulation of his leadership, reintroducing a polarizing executive figure into an already fragmented international communicative environment. His renewed presidency does not operate solely within institutional governance structures; rather, it circulates as a transnational discursive construct through which geopolitical tensions, sovereignty claims, security anxieties, migration controversies, and economic realignments are interpreted and narratively structured. In contemporary mediatized political ecosystems, leadership is no longer confined to executive decision-making but is continuously staged, reframed, contested, and stabilized within journalistic discourse (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Hepp, 2020). Trump’s second term, therefore constitutes not merely a political event but a discursive and narrative phenomenon unfolding across heterogeneous media systems.

Scholarly attention to Trump’s communicative practices has been substantial. Researchers have examined his populist rhetoric (Wodak, 2015; Moffitt, 2020), antagonistic media strategies (Bennett & Livingston, 2018), disinformation dynamics (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019), and the hybridization of institutional and digital communication (Chadwick, 2017). The personalization of executive authority in networked media environments has been analyzed as part of broader transformations in political communication characterized by mediatization, platformization, and polarization (Aelst, Sheaffer, & Stanyer, 2017; Blumler, 2016; Klinger & Svensson, 2018). These studies convincingly demonstrate that leadership in the twenty-first century is inseparable from mediated performance.

Yet this expanding literature remains largely anchored in Western media systems. Comparative perspectives often privilege North American and European contexts, leaving African news ecologies underexamined. When Africa appears in analyses of

U.S. foreign policy communication, it is frequently framed as a site of diplomatic consequence rather than as an autonomous discursive arena. Such asymmetry reproduces epistemic hierarchies that treat Global South media as reactive or derivative rather than generative (Thussu, 2018; Wasserman, 2018). The absence of systematic research on African media representations of Trump's renewed presidency therefore constitutes a significant analytical gap.

This gap is especially consequential given Africa's centrality in contemporary geopolitical transformations. The continent occupies a strategic position within global supply chains for cobalt, lithium, and other critical minerals essential to energy transition technologies (Lee, 2017; Carmody, 2020). It is also embedded in security alliances, migration governance frameworks, and development finance regimes shaped by competition among the United States, China, the European Union, and emerging powers (Alden & Schoeman, 2015; Brown & Harman, 2013). Decisions taken by the U.S. administration—regarding multilateralism, migration policy, security cooperation, or trade—resonate within African political and economic systems. Consequently, African news media do not merely report on U.S. executive actions; they interpret them within local and regional strategic horizons.

Understanding how Trump's leadership is constructed in African public spheres is therefore analytically indispensable. African media systems operate within distinct communicative infrastructures shaped by postcolonial state formation, democratization struggles, hybrid regimes, and evolving journalistic norms (Wasserman, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2015). They mediate global power through regionally situated lenses that integrate sovereignty concerns, development aspirations, security anxieties, and historical memory. Examining African news discourse thus enables a shift away from Eurocentric models of transnational political communication toward a more plural and decentered analytical framework.

Theoretically, this study builds on the premise that media discourse does not simply transmit political information but stages actors within structured enunciative configurations and organizes events into intelligible narrative forms.

Maingueneau's (2014) theory of discursive scenography conceptualizes discourse as inseparable from its scene of enunciation. Every journalistic text constructs an enunciative arrangement that defines authority, voice, legitimacy conditions, and implied audience. This staging contributes to the production of ethos—the discursively constructed image of competence, strength, reliability, or disruption attributed to political actors. Ethos is not inherent in leadership; it is mediated and narratively stabilized (Amossy, 2014).

Complementing this approach, Charaudeau (2011) emphasizes that media discourse operates under a “communication contract” balancing credibility and dramatization. Journalism transforms political processes into media events through framing, emotionalization, and event-ization. In mediatized political environments, executive decisions become narratively amplified and morally evaluated within competitive attention economies (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). This transformation is particularly visible in coverage of high-profile leaders whose actions are symbolically charged.

Narrative theory further deepens this analytical architecture. Lits (2020) demonstrates that media discourse organizes heterogeneous events into structured plots that assign roles, causality, and moral orientation. Political actors become narrative figures—mediators, disruptors, protectors, antagonists—within recurrent storytelling patterns. Ricoeur's (1984) theory of emplotment clarifies how narrative configuration links disparate occurrences into coherent temporal sequences. Emplotment does not merely describe events; it structures their intelligibility by establishing beginnings, turning points, and projected futures. As Polletta, Chen, Gardner, & Motes (2011) argue, narratives are fundamental to political meaning-making because they render complex developments cognitively manageable and normatively interpretable.

Recent scholarship on mediatized leadership underscores that legitimacy increasingly depends on narrative coherence rather than institutional authority alone (Corner, 2017; Ekström & Westlund, 2019). Leaders are evaluated through narrative frameworks that frame them as reformers, disruptors, guardians, or threats. In globally interconnected media ecologies, these narratives

travel transnationally but are recontextualized within local discursive environments (Hepp, 2020; Thussu, 2018). African media, far from passively relaying Western frames, actively reinterpret global actors in ways that reflect regional priorities and strategic positioning.

Despite the availability of robust theoretical tools, few studies have systematically combined discourse analysis and narrative theory to examine African media representations of contemporary global leadership. This study addresses that lacuna by articulating two central analytical concepts: (1) Discursive scenography, referring to the enunciative staging that authorizes political actors within journalistic discourse and shapes their ethos. (2) Narrative regime, referring to recurrent patterns of emplotment through which news texts organize temporality, causality, conflict, and moral evaluation.

The articulation between these two dimensions allows for a multidimensional examination of leadership construction. Scenography illuminates how authority is discursively staged and legitimized; narrative regime reveals how events are temporally structured and morally oriented. Together, they offer a framework for analyzing how legitimacy is stabilized, reframed, or destabilized within media discourse.

Empirically, the study analyzes a multilingual corpus of news articles published between 20 January 2025 and 20 January 2026 across nine African media outlets representing Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, Hispanophone, and Arabophone contexts. This comparative design acknowledges Africa's internal diversity and avoids homogenizing its media landscape. It enables identification of cross-cutting patterns while preserving contextual variation linked to linguistic tradition, geopolitical alignment, and national interest structures.

The article pursues three interrelated objectives: (1) to identify dominant discursive scenographies structuring the enunciation of Trump's leadership in African news media. (2) to map recurrent narrative regimes organizing Trump-related storytelling across thematic domains such as diplomacy, migration, security, multilateralism, and resource governance. (3) to examine how the articulation between scenography and narrative regime contributes to the stabilization, reframing, or

destabilization of leadership legitimacy within diverse African public spheres.

By situating African media as active agents in the symbolic construction of global political order, this study contributes to political communication scholarship from a Global South perspective. It argues that leadership legitimacy in contemporary geopolitics emerges not solely from institutional authority but from the interplay between enunciative staging and narrative configuration within mediated environments. Trump's second-term presidency thus becomes a strategic analytical site for observing how global power is discursively negotiated, narratively structured, and regionally recontextualized in African news ecologies. Through this lens, African media appear not as peripheral observers but as co-producers of contemporary geopolitical meaning.

## **METHODS**

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, multi-site research design to examine how African news media construct Donald Trump's leadership during the first year of his renewed presidency. The objective is explanatory rather than statistical, focusing on meaning production instead of frequency measurement. The approach aligns with interpretive political communication research, which treats media discourse as constitutive of political reality rather than reflective of it (Waisbord, 2019; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2016). Leadership is therefore analyzed as discursively produced within journalistic texts situated in distinct national and geopolitical contexts.

The epistemological foundation is constructivist and interpretivist. Political authority is understood as emerging through discursive articulation, institutional mediation, and narrative configuration. Media texts are conceptualized as arenas where legitimacy, sovereignty, crisis, and strategic positioning are symbolically negotiated (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Hepp, 2020). This perspective draws on recent scholarship emphasizing that mediatised politics operates through performative staging and communicative structuring rather than purely institutional decision-making (Ekström & Westlund, 2019; Kreiss, 2019). Consequently, the study privileges textual interpretation grounded in observable discursive features.

The research design is multi-site and comparative. Nine African media outlets were purposively selected to reflect linguistic, regional, and geopolitical diversity across Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, Hispanophone, and Arabophone contexts. This comparative logic follows recent calls to decenter Western media systems in political communication research (Thussu, 2020; Chakravartty & Roy, 2017). The inclusion criteria prioritized national relevance, consistent coverage of international politics, accessible digital archives, and editorial stability. Such purposive sampling is consistent with qualitative comparative design strategies emphasizing analytical depth over representativeness (Saldaña, 2021; Flick, 2018)

Data collection covered the period from 20 January 2025 to 20 January 2026. Articles were retrieved directly from official media websites using systematic keyword searches combining “Trump” with thematic terms such as “agreement,” “migration,” “defense,” “NATO,” and “sanctions.” Inclusion criteria required Trump’s centrality in the headline, subheadline, or substantive content. Exact wire duplicates were excluded to avoid redundancy. The final corpus includes news reports, analytical features, and editorials. Digital archiving procedures ensured traceability, consistent with contemporary qualitative data management standards (Silver & Woolf, 2018).

The primary unit of analysis is the complete news article. This choice allows examination of scenographic coherence and narrative sequencing across introduction, development, and closure. Within each article, analytical attention was directed to headlines, lead paragraphs, direct quotations, modal expressions, and closing segments. Such holistic textual analysis follows discourse-analytic approaches emphasizing macro-structural and micro-linguistic dimensions (Breeze, 2023; Kelsey, 2022). Paragraph-level segmentation was employed during coding to capture shifts in evaluation, voice, and temporal orientation.

The principal research instrument was a structured two-track coding framework articulating discursive scenography and narrative regime. A detailed codebook was developed prior to full coding, with operational definitions, inclusion criteria, and empirical examples. The codebook evolved through pilot testing and iterative

refinement, following thematic analysis stabilization procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This structured approach ensured conceptual differentiation between enunciative staging and temporal emplotment while maintaining analytical coherence across the multilingual corpus.

The first analytical track focused on discursive scenography. Coding categories included enunciative position, ethos attribution, modalization, and communication contract markers. Ethos categories—mediator, protector, strategist, disruptor—were inductively refined through pilot analysis. Modal verbs, evaluative adjectives, and rhetorical intensifiers were systematically recorded. Institutional references and urgency signals were coded to assess journalistic dramatization strategies. This procedure aligns with contemporary discourse-analytic methodologies examining authority construction through lexical and pragmatic markers (Wodak, 2015).

The second analytical track examined narrative regimes. Articles were coded for dominant plot types, actantial positioning, and temporal logic. Plot identification required analysis of causal sequencing and resolution structure, drawing on recent developments in narrative political analysis (Ewick & Silbey, 2020). Temporal markers such as rupture, repetition, escalation, restoration, and anticipation were systematically documented. This allowed identification of patterned emplotment structures across outlets, consistent with narrative governance approaches emphasizing temporality in legitimacy formation (Subotic, 2021).

Data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, pilot coding refined categories and clarified overlaps. Second, full corpus coding was conducted manually using the finalized codebook. Third, analytical memos documented interpretive decisions, emerging patterns, and potential ambiguities. Fourth, cross-national comparison synthesized recurring scenographies and regimes across linguistic clusters. This iterative and memo-driven approach reflects best practices in qualitative analysis, emphasizing reflexive interpretation and comparative pattern detection (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Analytical rigor was ensured through codebook stabilization, reflexivity, negative case analysis, and internal consistency checks. Reflexive memos recorded interpretive assumptions and

mitigated ideological bias, particularly given the polarized nature of Trump-related discourse (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018; Berger, 2015). Negative cases were examined as analytical stress tests, refining typological boundaries rather than excluding anomalies (Yin, 2018). After temporal distancing, a subset of articles was recoded to verify stability. This internal consistency procedure strengthened reliability within the qualitative interpretive framework.

Data display processes involved comparative matrices summarizing scenographies and narrative regimes by outlet, linguistic cluster, and thematic domain. Frequency percentages were calculated descriptively to illustrate distribution patterns without implying statistical generalization. Visual tables facilitated cross-site comparison and pattern recognition, following qualitative data display principles that enhance analytical transparency (Saldaña, 2021). Such structured displays supported theoretical articulation between enunciative staging and temporal configuration.

Ethically, all materials consisted of publicly accessible journalistic texts. No personal data beyond published content were collected. The study adheres to ethical guidelines for digital text analysis, treating media articles as public cultural artifacts while ensuring accurate citation and contextual integrity (Markham, 2018). No content was altered, anonymized, or recontextualized. Interpretations remained grounded in explicit textual evidence. By integrating discursive and narrative analysis within a comparative African corpus, this methodological framework offers a transferable model for examining transnational leadership construction in plural media ecologies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the empirical findings and their interpretation through an integrated analytical framework combining discursive scenography and narrative regime. Rather than separating description and interpretation, each identified pattern is immediately examined in relation to its theoretical implications. The analysis proceeds by first outlining dominant scenographies and then examining narrative regimes, demonstrating how their articulation contributes to the stabilization, modulation, or suspension of

leadership legitimacy within African news discourse.

### **Discursive Scenographies**

The subsection examines the dominant discursive scenographies through which Trump's leadership is enunciatively staged in African news media. Focusing on positioning, ethos construction, and lexical authorization, it identifies recurring configurations that structure how authority is presented, justified, and modulated across diverse journalistic contexts.

#### **1. Executive mediation**

Executive Mediation is the most recurrent scenography (34%), especially in DRC–Rwanda coverage, where agency is foregrounded through initiative and personal oversight. A long illustration frames mediation as leader-driven breakthrough: “President Donald Trump personally invited Presidents Félix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame...” (Actualite.cd, 5 Dec 2025). Similar formulations—“direct involvement,” “continuous communication,” and “decisive leadership”—recur across outlets. This pattern is consistently illustrated across the corpus (e.g., *AhoraEG*, 5 Dec 2025; *Nation Africa*, 22 Jan 2026).

Analytically, this scenography centralizes executive agency and constructs leadership as a performative intervention rather than institutional delegation. In Maingueneau's framework of discursive scenography (Maingueneau, 2014), the enunciative scene assigns authority through immediacy and control. Lexical markers such as “personally” function as authorization devices stabilizing legitimacy. Leadership legitimacy is thus discursively enacted through enunciative centrality, confirming that authority emerges from staged presence rather than formal institutional position.

This configuration aligns with Charaudeau's theory of media discourse and communication contract (Charaudeau, 2011), where dramatization enhances visibility while maintaining credibility. Personalization is recontextualized within African geopolitical concerns, particularly regional security stabilization. As Charaudeau (2005) suggests, media discourse balances information and dramatization. Executive mediation therefore operates as a hybrid scenography in which voluntarism is narratively justified, reinforcing legitimacy when aligned with coherent narrative closure.

## 2. Sovereign restoration

The sovereign restoration scenography represents 22% of the corpus and constructs Trump as a guardian of national autonomy rather than a diplomatic broker. Expressions such as “prioritize its national interests” and references to “national security” frame executive decisions as strategic recalibration rather than rupture. Lexical markers, including “recalibration,” “defend interests,” and “security environment,” consistently position disengagement as rational and protective. This pattern is consistently observed across the corpus (e.g., *Jornal de Angola*, 7 Jan 2026; *Nation Africa*, 16 Jan 2026).

From a discursive perspective, this scenography reconfigures executive authority through a sovereignty-centered ethos. Drawing on Maingueneau’s enunciative approach (Maingueneau, 2021), the discursive scene shifts from mediation to protection, assigning legitimacy through defensive positioning. The lexical field of security operates as a normalization mechanism that reframes potentially controversial actions as necessary adjustments. Authority is thereby constructed through anticipatory defense, where leadership is legitimized by its capacity to safeguard national interests under perceived external constraint.

At the level of narrative structuring, this configuration resonates with Charaudeau’s analysis of media discourse (Charaudeau, 2005), where credibility is sustained through rationalization strategies. In parallel, Ricoeur’s concept of emplotment (Ricoeur, 1984) highlights how temporal orientation contributes to meaning stabilization. Here, narrative projection toward security and control reinforces legitimacy. Sovereign restoration thus stabilizes authority through the convergence of defensive enunciation and forward-looking narrative configuration.

## 3. Conditional supervision

The conditional supervision scenography (14%) emerges during implementation phases, foregrounding monitoring and compliance. Statements such as “Nothing has truly changed on the ground” and “implementation challenges remain” introduce tension between official claims and empirical observation. Executive authority remains present but is subjected to verification, producing a discursive environment in which

legitimacy is no longer assumed but continuously evaluated. This pattern is consistently observed across multiple outlets (e.g., *News24*, 21 Jan 2026; *Hiiraan Online*, 27 Jan 2026).

At the enunciative level, this scenography introduces a conditional form of authority structured by evaluative plurality. Drawing on Maingueneau’s discursive framework (Maingueneau, 2014), the scene becomes polyphonic, integrating institutional affirmation and journalistic skepticism. This coexistence functions as a mechanism of discursive testing, where authority is no longer stabilized through declaration alone. Instead, legitimacy becomes contingent upon observable outcomes, reflecting a shift from performative assertion toward empirically grounded validation within mediated discourse.

From a narrative perspective, this dynamic corresponds to Ricoeur’s concept of incomplete emplotment (Ricoeur, 1984), where closure is deferred and meaning remains unstable. Charaudeau’s analysis of media discourse (Charaudeau, 2011) further highlights how credibility depends on sustained verification. Narrative progression remains open, structured by anticipation and monitoring rather than resolution. Conditional supervision therefore produces provisional legitimacy, in which authority is neither consolidated nor rejected but remains dependent on future developments and empirical confirmation.

## 4. Strategic deterrence

Strategic deterrence (11%) frames Trump as a geopolitical strategist operating within competitive security environments. Expressions such as “strategic repositioning” and “deterrent power” situate leadership within balance-of-power dynamics rather than diplomatic mediation. This configuration prioritizes preparedness, signaling, and projection. Executive action is presented as calculated and anticipatory, embedding leadership within broader architectures of geopolitical competition. This pattern is consistently illustrated across outlets (e.g., *Jornal de Angola*, 7 Jan 2026; *Elbalad.news*, 12 Jan 2026).

Within this configuration, authority is constructed through anticipatory positioning and strategic competence. Drawing on Maingueneau’s analysis of communication discourse (Maingueneau, 2021), the enunciative scene foregrounds control, calculation, and forward

projection. Lexical markers associated with deterrence operate as signals of preparedness, reinforcing an ethos of strategic mastery. Leadership legitimacy is thus anchored in the capacity to anticipate threats and manage uncertainty, shifting the basis of authority from immediate outcomes to prospective control over evolving geopolitical dynamics.

At the narrative level, this pattern resonates with Lits' conceptualization of media storytelling as structured by temporal orientation (Lits, 2020), where anticipation shapes interpretive coherence. Charaudeau's earlier work on information discourse (Charaudeau, 2005) further emphasizes how media construct credibility through rationalized framing of action. Here, deterrence is narratively configured as a continuous process rather than a resolved event. Legitimacy is therefore sustained through projection and vigilance, positioning leadership as effective within an open-ended strategic horizon.

#### 5. Institutional negotiation

Institutional negotiation (9%) embeds Trump within multilateral frameworks, emphasizing coordination and procedural continuity. Expressions such as "constructive discussions" and "ongoing consultation" foreground structured dialogue over personal initiative. Executive action is situated within institutional routines, where authority appears distributed rather than centralized. This configuration highlights cooperation, stability, and adherence to established diplomatic mechanisms. This pattern is consistently observed across the corpus (e.g., Elbalad.news, 18 Jan 2026; News24, 19 Jan 2026).

Analytically, this scenography repositions authority within collective institutional processes. Building on Maingueneau's reflections on discourse and institutional positioning (Maingueneau, 2014), the scene shifts from individualized leadership toward procedural legitimacy. The predominance of technocratic language functions as a depersonalization strategy, attenuating charismatic authority. Leadership is thus constructed through participation in structured frameworks, where legitimacy derives less from individual intervention than from alignment with institutional norms and coordinated governance practices.

From a narrative standpoint, this configuration corresponds to incremental storytelling patterns characterized by continuity rather than rupture. Lits

(2020) highlights how media narratives can stabilize meaning through repetition and procedural progression. Complementarily, Ricoeur (1984) emphasizes that temporal coherence does not always require dramatic transformation. Here, legitimacy is sustained through predictability and institutional embedding. Leadership is therefore evaluated through its capacity to maintain coordination and continuity within established governance structures.

#### 6. Ambivalent disruption

Ambivalent disruption (10%) presents leadership as oscillating between decisiveness and instability. Expressions such as "volatility" and "uncertain trajectories" highlight unpredictability within political and institutional systems. This scenography combines recognition of strong executive action with concern over its systemic consequences. Authority is thus represented through tension, reflecting both effectiveness and disruption within a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment. This pattern is consistently observed across outlets (e.g., News24, 15 Jan 2026; Nation Africa, 28 Jan 2026).

At the discursive level, this configuration produces a fragmented ethos marked by instability and competing evaluations. Drawing on Wodak's analysis of political discourse and ambiguity (Wodak, 2015), the enunciative scene becomes a site of tension rather than coherence. Lexical markers associated with volatility function as interpretive triggers, preventing fixed positioning. Leadership is therefore constructed through oscillation, where authority is simultaneously affirmed and questioned within a discursive environment characterized by uncertainty and contestation.

From a narrative perspective, this dynamic reflects open-ended storytelling structures in which closure remains absent. As emphasized by Moffitt (2016), populist leadership often operates through disruption and ongoing crisis performance. In parallel, Ricoeur (1984) highlights how unresolved narratives sustain interpretive plurality. Here, legitimacy is neither stabilized nor fully undermined but remains contested. Leadership is continuously renegotiated within a narrative field shaped by ambiguity, instability, and shifting evaluative frames.

## **Narrative Regimes**

The subsection analyzes the narrative regimes structuring how Trump-related events are temporally organized and interpreted in African news media. It identifies recurrent patterns of emplotment that shape causality, sequencing, and evaluation, showing how narrative configuration contributes to the stabilization or suspension of leadership legitimacy.

### **1. Escalation–Resolution**

Escalation–Resolution (31%) structures narratives from prolonged crisis to decisive breakthrough. Temporal markers such as “for more than three decades” and “new chapter” signal rupture and transformation. Events are organized into a progression from instability to resolution, positioning leadership as a turning point within an extended temporal sequence. This regime dominates coverage of diplomatic agreements framed as historically significant. This pattern is consistently illustrated across outlets (e.g., *Pressecotedivoire*, 23 Jan 2026; *Actualite.cd*, 5 Dec 2025).

Within the narrative framework, this regime organizes events into a structured sequence linking crisis, intervention, and resolution. Drawing on Polletta et al. (2011), storytelling functions as a mechanism that renders complex political processes intelligible. Temporal markers operate as structuring devices that guide interpretation toward transformation. Leadership is positioned as a decisive agent within this sequence, where legitimacy emerges through its insertion into a coherent narrative that emphasizes causality and outcome.

From a broader analytical perspective, this configuration aligns with Corner’s work on mediated political narratives (Corner, 2017; Lits, 2020), where authority is reinforced through narrative coherence. In addition, Subotic (2021) highlights how temporal structuring shapes political legitimacy. Here, resolution functions as a stabilizing endpoint that consolidates meaning. Escalation–Resolution therefore produces strong legitimacy by aligning narrative closure with executive agency, reinforcing the perception of effectiveness within the journalistic construction of political events.

### **2. Geopolitical reconfiguration**

Geopolitical reconfiguration (19%) expands narrative scale by linking local events to global

transformations in supply chains, mineral governance, and shifting power relations. References to “strategic resource corridors” and global economic realignment reposition regional developments within broader systemic dynamics. Events are framed not as isolated occurrences but as structurally embedded processes within an evolving international order. This pattern is consistently observed across the corpus (e.g., *Jornal de Angola*, 20 Jan 2026; *AhoraEG*, 18 Jan 2026).

Analytically, this regime extends interpretation beyond immediate events toward long-term systemic transformation. Drawing on Thussu’s perspective on global communication flows (Thussu, 2018), media narratives integrate local developments into transnational dynamics. Temporal and spatial scaling operates as a key interpretive mechanism, situating leadership within broader geopolitical shifts. Authority is thus framed not through isolated actions but through its role in shaping or responding to structural realignments.

From an analytical standpoint, this configuration resonates with recent work on global political economy and media imaginaries. Power et al. (2022) emphasize Africa’s centrality in energy transition politics, while Carmody (2020) highlights resource-driven geopolitical restructuring. Within this framework, legitimacy is constructed through strategic positioning in global systems rather than immediate outcomes. Geopolitical reconfiguration therefore reinforces leadership authority by embedding it within narratives of long-term transformation and structural significance.

### **3. Security–Protection**

Security–Protection (18%) organizes narratives through anticipatory risk management rather than retrospective resolution. Expressions such as “preventive safeguards” and “necessary measures” frame executive decisions as precautionary interventions. Events are oriented toward potential threats, emphasizing vigilance and preparedness within uncertain environments. Leadership is thus positioned as proactive, acting to mitigate risks before escalation occurs. This pattern is consistently observed across outlets (e.g., *Hiiraan Online*, 14 Jan 2026; *Nation Africa*, 16 Jan 2026).

Through narrative organization, this regime prioritizes anticipation as a central organizing principle. Drawing on Beck’s theory of risk society (Beck, 1992), political action is framed through the

management of uncertainty rather than response to completed events. Media discourse constructs authority through projection into possible futures, where legitimacy depends on the ability to foresee and prevent disruption. Leadership is thus evaluated in relation to its capacity to manage potential threats within a forward-looking temporal horizon.

From a communicative perspective, this configuration aligns with Strömbäck and Esser's (2014) analysis of mediatized politics, where visibility and anticipation shape political evaluation. Ekström and Westlund (2019) further highlight how journalism structures expectations through future-oriented framing. In this regime, legitimacy is not anchored in achieved outcomes but in sustained vigilance. Security-Protection therefore stabilizes authority by aligning anticipatory narrative logic with protective enunciative positioning within uncertain and risk-sensitive contexts.

#### 4. Strategic competition

Strategic competition (11%) frames events as moves within an ongoing geopolitical rivalry, emphasizing interaction among global powers. Expressions such as "intensified competition" and references to strategic repositioning highlight a dynamic environment structured by anticipation and counteraction. Events are presented relationally rather than in isolation, situating leadership within a broader field of geopolitical contestation. This pattern is consistently illustrated across the corpus (e.g., *Jornal de Angola*, 15 Jan 2026; *Elbalad.news*, 12 Jan 2026).

Analytically, this regime constructs a relational structure based on interaction and strategic adjustment. Drawing on Kitchen and Cox (2022), multipolarity introduces fluid power configurations that require constant repositioning. Media narratives reflect this instability by framing events as responses to competing actors. Leadership is thus positioned within an evolving strategic field, where legitimacy depends on adaptability and the capacity to navigate shifting geopolitical alignments rather than achieving definitive outcomes.

From a broader interpretive perspective, this configuration resonates with Rolland's (2020) analysis of emerging global orders shaped by rivalry and systemic competition. Klinger and Svensson (2018) further emphasize how digital-era media amplify dynamic and reactive political narratives. Within this framework, legitimacy is

constructed through strategic responsiveness and situational awareness. Strategic competition therefore reinforces leadership authority by embedding it within a narrative of continuous adjustment in a contested and evolving international system.

#### 5. Institutional continuity

Institutional continuity (9%) organizes narratives around procedural stability and sustained coordination within established frameworks. Expressions such as "consultation mechanisms" and "coordinated action" emphasize structured interaction rather than rupture or transformation. Events unfold incrementally, reinforcing predictability and organizational coherence. Leadership is thus embedded within institutional routines, where authority appears moderated by collective processes. This pattern is consistently observed across outlets (e.g., *Elbalad.news*, 18 Jan 2026; *News24*, 19 Jan 2026).

From the perspective of narrative design, this regime foregrounds continuity as a key mechanism of meaning stabilization. Drawing on Hepp's concept of deep mediatization (Hepp, 2020), media narratives increasingly structure political reality through sustained communicative flows rather than isolated events. The emphasis on procedural repetition and coordination constructs authority through reliability. Leadership is thus framed as effective when it maintains institutional coherence within ongoing processes rather than producing disruptive or exceptional outcomes.

From a broader analytical perspective, this configuration resonates with Kreiss's (2019) work on political communication as structured practice, where legitimacy emerges through consistent performance. Blumler (2016) similarly highlights the evolution toward stabilized communicative environments in contemporary politics. Within this framework, legitimacy is grounded in predictability and institutional endurance. Institutional continuity therefore reinforces authority by embedding leadership within durable governance structures that privilege coordination, repetition, and procedural stability.

#### 6. Uncertain aftermath

Uncertain aftermath (12%) suspends narrative closure by foregrounding incomplete outcomes and ongoing challenges following formal agreements. Statements such as "Nothing has truly changed on

the ground” reopen the narrative sequence after moments of apparent resolution. Events remain unsettled, emphasizing fragility and implementation gaps. Leadership is thus situated within a context of deferred outcomes rather than stabilized achievements. This pattern is consistently observed across outlets (e.g., News24, 21 Jan 2026; Nation Africa, 28 Jan 2026).

Analytically, this regime is structured by the absence of closure and the persistence of evaluative uncertainty. Drawing on Ewick and Silbey (2020), narratives function not only to stabilize meaning but also to expose tensions and unresolved dynamics. The reopening of events disrupts linear progression, preventing definitive interpretation. Leadership is therefore framed within an ongoing process of verification, where authority remains contingent upon future developments rather than consolidated through completed action.

This configuration resonates with Stroud’s (2020) work on interpretive fragmentation in contemporary media environments, where competing evaluations coexist. Subotic (2021) further highlights how temporal indeterminacy shapes political meaning. Within this framework, legitimacy is neither affirmed nor rejected but remains provisional. Uncertain aftermath thus produces a suspended form of authority, where legitimacy is continuously renegotiated through evolving narratives and the absence of definitive resolution.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined how African news media construct Donald Trump’s leadership during the first year of his renewed presidency through the combined lenses of discursive scenography and narrative regime. Moving beyond descriptive reporting, the findings demonstrate that leadership is actively produced through enunciative staging and narrative configuration. African media do not merely relay global political events; they interpret, reframe, and stabilize leadership within regionally situated discursive and geopolitical contexts.

The analysis shows that leadership legitimacy emerges from the articulation between scenographic positioning and narrative structuring. It is stabilized when executive centrality aligns with coherent narrative closure, as in Executive Mediation combined with Escalation–Resolution. Conversely,

legitimacy becomes conditional or suspended when verification, monitoring, or unresolved outcomes dominate, particularly in configurations such as Conditional Supervision and Uncertain Aftermath. Legitimacy therefore appears as a dynamic and contingent process rather than a fixed attribute.

By integrating discourse analysis and narrative theory within a comparative African corpus, this study advances a transferable analytical framework for examining mediated legitimacy in multipolar communication environments. It demonstrates that African media function as active sites of geopolitical meaning-making, recontextualizing global leadership through sovereignty concerns, security priorities, and resource governance. This perspective contributes to decentering political communication research and highlights the importance of Global South media in shaping contemporary representations of power.

Methodologically, the articulation between discursive scenography and narrative regime provides a robust alternative to frequency-based content analysis by foregrounding structural and interpretive dimensions of media discourse. Substantively, the study reveals how leadership is evaluated not only through institutional authority but through its narrative intelligibility and discursive authorization. These findings underscore the need to consider both enunciative and temporal dimensions in the study of political legitimacy.

Future research should extend this analytical framework across diverse media systems and geopolitical contexts to assess its broader applicability. Incorporating audience reception would further clarify how these discursive constructions are interpreted, negotiated, or resisted within different publics. Longitudinal approaches could also illuminate how scenographies and narrative regimes evolve over time and across political cycles. Leadership in contemporary geopolitics thus appears not as an inherent property of power, but as a contingent outcome of its discursive staging and narrative organization within mediated environments.

## **REFERENCES**

- Aelst, P., Sheaffer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2017). The personalization of mediated political communication. *Political Communication*, 34(2), 203–220.

- Alden, C., & Schoeman, M. (2015). South Africa in the company of giants: The search for leadership in a transforming global order. *International Affairs*, 91(1), 111–129.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Amossy, R. (2014). *Apologie de la polémique*. Presses Universitaires de France.
- Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 122–139.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234.
- Blumler, J. G. (2016). The fourth age of political communication. *Politiques de communication*, (6), 19–30.
- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2019). *The global disinformation order*. Oxford Internet Institute.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Breeze, R. (2023). *Analysing political discourse*. Routledge.
- Brown, W., & Harman, S. (2013). *African agency in international politics*. Routledge.
- Carmody, P. (2020). *The new scramble for Africa*. Polity Press.
- Chadwick, A. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Chakravartty, P., & Roy, S. (2017). *Media pluralism and political power in the digital age*. Oxford University Press.
- Charaudeau, P. (2005). *Le discours d'information médiatique*. INA.
- Charaudeau, P. (2011). *Les médias et l'information*. De Boeck.
- Corner, J. (2017). *Theorising media: Power, form and subjectivity*. Manchester University Press.
- Couldry, N., & Hepp, A. (2017). *The mediated construction of reality*. Polity Press.
- Ekström, M., & Westlund, O. (2019). *Routledge handbook of developments in digital journalism studies*. Routledge.
- Ewick, P., & Silbey, S. S. (2020). *The common place of law: Stories from everyday life* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Hepp, A. (2020). *Deep mediatization*. Routledge.
- Kelsey, D. (2022). *Media and political discourse*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Kitchen, N., & Cox, M. (2022). Power, rivalry and multipolarity. *International Affairs*, 98(2), 321–339.
- Klinger, U., & Svensson, J. (2018). The end of media logics? *New Media & Society*, 20(12), 4653–4670.
- Kreiss, D. (2019). *Prototype politics: Technology-intensive campaigning and the data of democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, C. K. (2017). *The specter of global China: Politics, labor, and foreign investment in Africa*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lits, M. (2020). *Du récit au récit médiatique*. De Boeck.
- Maingueneau, D. (2014). *Discours et analyse du discours*. Armand Colin.
- Maingueneau, D. (2021). *Analyser les textes de communication*. Armand Colin.
- Markham, A. (2018). Ethics in internet research. In M. Zimmer & K. Kinder-Kurlanda (Eds.), *Internet research ethics for the social age* (pp. 47–71). Peter Lang.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*. Stanford University Press.
- Moffitt, B. (2020). *Populism* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015). *Africa's media: Democracy and the politics of belonging*. Zed Books.
- Polletta, F., Chen, P. C. B., Gardner, B. G., & Motes, A. (2011). The sociology of storytelling. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37, 109–130.
- Power, M., Newell, P., Baker, L., Bulkeley, H., Kirshner, J., & Smith, A. (2022). The political economy of energy transitions in Africa. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 89, 102561.

- Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and narrative* (Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.
- Rolland, N. (2020). *China's vision for a new world order*. National Bureau of Asian Research.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2016). *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes*. Routledge.
- Silver, C., & Woolf, N. (2018). *Qualitative analysis using NVivo: The five-level QDA method*. Routledge.
- Strömbäck, J., & Esser, F. (2014). Mediatization of politics. *Journalism Studies*, 15(3), 243–255..
- Stroud, N. J. (2020). *Selective exposure and democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Subotic, J. (2021). Narrative and the politics of memory. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 23(1), 1–17.
- Thussu, D. K. (2018). *International communication: Continuity and change*. Bloomsbury.
- Thussu, D. K. (2020). *Digital media and the Global South*. Routledge.
- Waisbord, S. (2019). *Communication: A post-discipline*. Polity Press.
- Wasserman, H. (2018). *Media, geopolitics, and power*. University of Illinois Press.
- Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.