Measuring Political Narratives in African News Media: A Word Embeddings Approach

Online Appendices

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A Text Analysis

A.1 Pre-Processing Steps

We follow standard pre-processing conventions to clean the corpus, including removing punctuation, numbers, and non-character tokens; converting all letters to lower-case; and selective stemming for each political keyword concept (e.g., politicized, politicizes, politicization $\rightarrow$ politicize) (Denny and Spirling 2018). We also streamlined British and American spelling (e.g., politicise $\rightarrow$ politicize). In addition, every instance of "International Criminal Court" or "Court" (if the latter was referencing the ICC) was replaced with "icc."

A.2 ALC Embeddings Estimation

Our analysis uses à la carte (ALC) embeddings, an approach that derives the embedding of any given word from the embeddings of the words that appear around it (Khodak et al. 2018).[1] The model is trained on a large corpus as a one-time cost; context-specific words are then computed à la carte using using pre-trained GloVe vectors.[2] Antoniak and Mimno (2018) show that pre-trained vectors often perform well or even better than locally trained vectors, unless the corpus uses niche terms that are context-specific, such as medical or scientific writing. Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) also recommend using pre-trained embeddings when analyzing small corpora because stable estimates generally require a substantial corpus (e.g., GloVe embeddings were trained on corpora ranging from 6 to over 800 billion tokens).

Following best practices, we used pre-trained 300-dimensional GloVe embeddings as implemented by Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart's (2023) *ConText* package, which allows for the estimation of group-level embeddings (in our case, documents were grouped by year-month).[3] After deriving year-month embeddings for each term in Table 1 in the main text, we calculate the $cosine(anchor, keyword)$ for each politicization term and average across all word pairs: This represents our main outcome of

[1] https://github.com/NLPrinceton/ALaCarte.
[2] https://nlp.stanford.edu/projects/glove/.
[3] https://github.com/prodriguezsosa/conText.

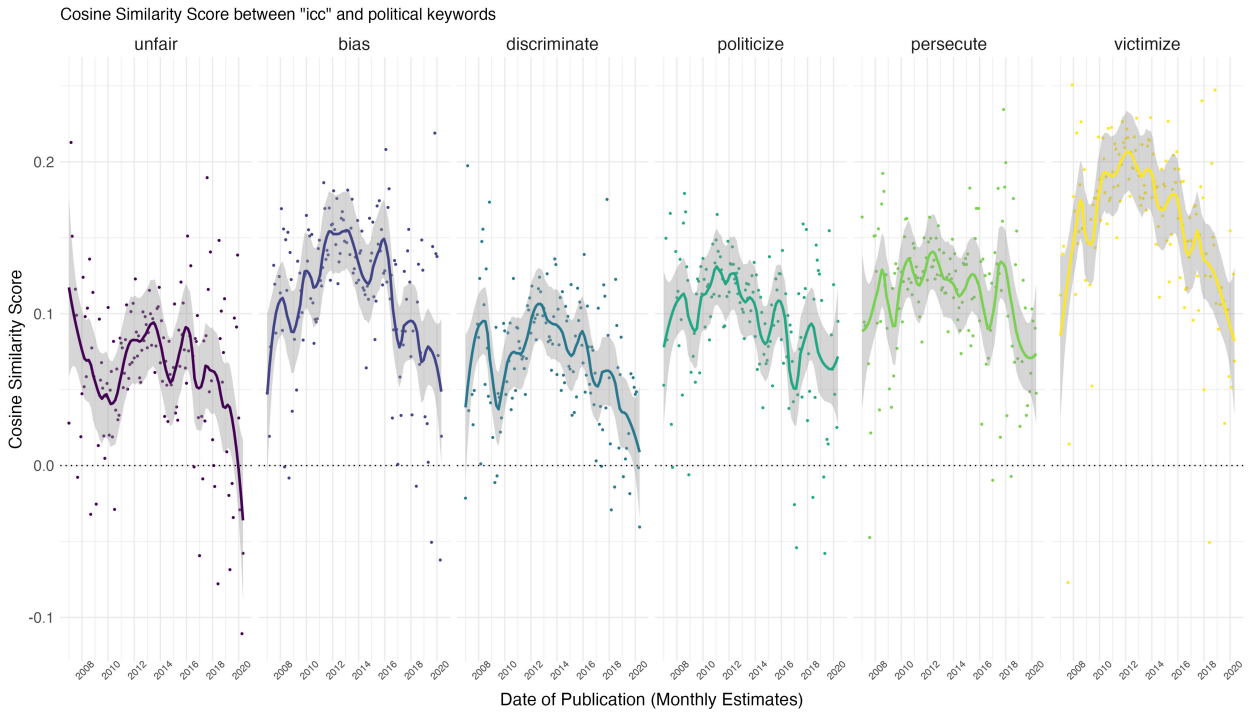

Figure A1: Cosine Similiarty Scores between "icc" and Disaggregated Politicization Terms

Year-month cosine similarity scores for each anchor-keyword pair, bootstrapped 100 times using pre-tarined GloVe vectors and ALC transformation matrix. Smoothed conditional means generated using loess.

interest. Disaggregated trends are reported in Figure A1.

Our year-month estimates were made possible by ALC's ability to estimate rare terms, even single examples (Khodak et al. 2018). Deriving a monthly measure also enabled us to assess changes during key moments in the ICC timeline (see Figure 1 in main text). When analyzing smaller corpora, it is standard to bootstrap the model and average across the results (Antoniak and Mimno 2018; Rodman 2020; Rodriguez and Spirling 2022). All of our estimates were bootstrapped 100 times, as recommended by Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023), allowing us to generate confidence intervals.

A.3 Varying Window Size

Context windows—the words *surrounding* the term of interest—are key to the ALC approach. For the ALC model, we specified "icc" as our target (anchor) and identified all mentions of the ICC in our corpus, building a "context" around each anchor (delimited by windows of varying size, as discussed in more detail in the next section). The context window becomes input for the document-feature

matrix, which in turn serves as the input for the document-embedding matrix. We embed each document "à la carte" by multiplying each of its feature counts with their corresponding pre-trained feature embedding, column-averaging the resulting vectors, and multiplying by the ALC transformation matrix.

Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) explain that choosing an optimal window is ultimately at the discretion of the researcher and should be based on corpus-specific considerations, though they caution against using windows that are too small (e.g. <5 words) and note that performance marginally improves as window size increases. Throughout the main text, our findings are based on a context window of 24-words, meaning 24 words before and after our anchor term. We selected 24 as the baseline window because that was the average length of a sentence in our corpus. This window size would thus capture, on average, words appearing in a few sentences before and after the target concept, assuming that the anchor term can appear anywhere within a sentence (e.g. beginning, middle, or end).

To check the stability of our estimates across different contexts, we generated ALC embeddings using "icc" as the anchor and windows ranging between 6 and 48 words. Figure A2 shows how varying window size affects the cosine similarity scores. Moving from the top to the bottom row, eyeball comparisons suggest that as window size increases, the diachronic embedding score becomes less volatile over time. Note that these results corroborate Rodriguez and Spirling's (2022) finding that 6- and 12-word windows tend to have similar performance.

We next evaluated whether window size affects the performance of our CPD algorithm. We performed the CUSUM test for each context window and report the results in Table A1. The first identified change point varies between May and June 2016 (smaller windows favoring May and larger windows favoring June) and is remarkably robust, regardless of window size. The second estimated change point—November 2010—is less stable across different context windows, shown in Table A2. The second change point is statistically significant at the .01% level for 6- and 12-word windows but barely reaches this threshold at the 24-word window and becomes insignificant for the 48-word window.

Based on these findings, while we are reasonably confident in the robustness of our first estimated change point (June 2016), we caution against attaching too much weight to the second date (November 2010). Because the second change point is more suggestive than conclusive (though intuitive, given a major Court development toward the end of 2010), we opt to not restart the CPD process around November 2010. Recall that our CPD algorithm specified that if an estimated change point is no longer significant, the algorithm terminates.

Table A1: First Change Point

window	change point	p-val
6	2016-05-01	0.0001
12	2016-05-01	0.0001
24	2016-06-01	0.0001
48	2016-06-01	0.0001

Table A2: Second Change Point

window	change point	p-val
6	2010-11-01	0.0001
6	2018-01-01	0.1657
12	2010-11-01	0.0003
12	2018-12-01	0.2012
24	2010-11-01	0.0073
24	2018-12-01	0.3169
48	2010-11-01	0.0954
48	2018-12-01	0.6213

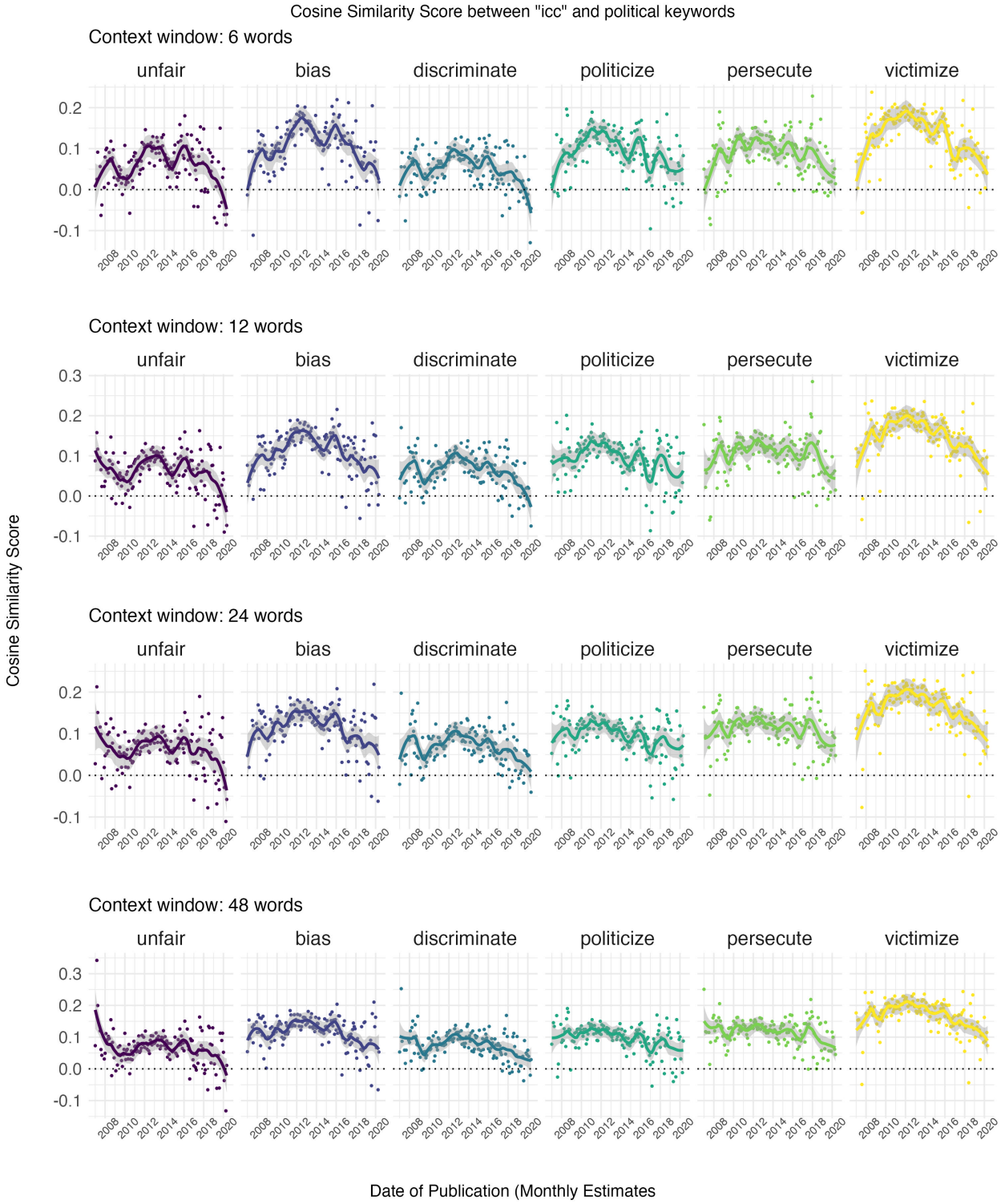

Figure A2: Cosine Similarity Scores by Context Window Size

A.4 Nearest Neighbors and Contexts

This section reports the nearest neighbors—words with the highest cosine similarity score—of the anchor term "icc" by publisher and publication year. Table A3 shows that across all publishers, the nearest neighbor of "icc" is "icc" itself; this reflects syntactical features of the documents in our corpus. Newspaper articles about the ICC repeatedly use the term "icc" within the same text and often more than once within a single sentence. Other terms include references to general judicial processes and activities (e.g., "prosecution," "war-crimes"), as well as names of actors associated with the ICC (e.g., Fatou Bensouda is a former ICC Chief Prosecutor). We find similar results when we break down the nearest neighbors analysis by time, as shown in Table A4.

To further flesh out syntactical patterns, in Table A5 we report the nearest contexts around our target term "icc." Nearest contexts refer to a window of words surrounding an anchor that are semantically close, where closeness is again defined by having a high cosine similarity score. The nearest contexts analysis reveals that our target term tends to be immediately surrounded by terms that provide general descriptions of the Court and its activities: statements about what the Court represents, who the relevant actors are, and the current status of ICC proceedings. These patterns make intuitive sense, considering the generic style of newspaper reporting. Sentences containing references to the Court tend to first describe relatively objective features or current activities of the Court; such descriptors will thus have the highest cosine similarity scores. Subjective characterizations of the Court will typically come later in the text, and politicized terms may even appear in sentences that do not directly mention the ICC.

Table A3: Nearest Neighbors for the ICC (By Publisher)

Publisher	Neighbors	Cosine
Capital FM (Nairobi)	icc	0.50
	prosecution	0.44
	war-crimes	0.42
	bensouda	0.42
	bubacar	0.41
The East African Standard (Nairobi)	war-crimes	0.46
	icc	0.44
	crimes	0.43
	perpetrators	0.41
	prosecutions	0.40
The Nation (Nairobi)	icc	0.51
	war-crimes	0.44
	prosecutions	0.42
	bubacar	0.42
	tribunal	0.42
The Star (Nairobi)	icc	0.50
	war-crimes	0.43
	bensouda	0.42
	bubacar	0.42
	desalegn	0.40

Table A4: Nearest Neighbors for the ICC (By Publication Year)

Year	Neighbors	Cosine
2007	crimes	0.45
	icc	0.45
	war-crimes	0.45
	tribunals	0.44
	tribunal	0.44
2008	icc	0.52
	tribunal	0.52
	crimes	0.51
	prosecute	0.48
	war-crimes	0.46
2009	icc	0.51
	tribunal	0.49
	war-crimes	0.44
	ocampo	0.43
	bubacar	0.41
2010	icc	0.54
	war-crimes	0.43
	ocampo	0.43
	tribunal	0.43
	prosecutions	0.42
2011	icc	0.50
	war-crimes	0.45
	ocampo	0.43
	prosecution	0.42
	prosecutions	0.42
2012	icc	0.48
	war-crimes	0.44
	bensouda	0.41
	bubacar	0.41
	desalegn	0.40
2013	icc	0.51
	war-crimes	0.42
	bensouda	0.42
	bubacar	0.41
	desalegn	0.40
2014	icc	0.47
	prosecution	0.44
	bensouda	0.42
	desalegn	0.41
	bubacar	0.41
2015	icc	0.47
	ruto	0.45
	bensouda	0.42
	bubacar	0.41
	prosecution	0.40
2016	icc	0.50
	bensouda	0.42
	war-crimes	0.41
	prosecution	0.41
	bubacar	0.40
2017	icc	0.45
	bubacar	0.43
	bensouda	0.42
	ocampo	0.42
	nyamu	0.41
2018	icc	0.56
	war-crimes	0.44
	bubacar	0.43
	al-bashir	0.41
	tribunal	0.41
2019	bubacar	0.45
	bensouda	0.44
	icc	0.44
	war-crimes	0.44
	desalegn	0.43
2020	investigations	0.42
	kibe	0.42
	war-crimes	0.42
	kibunja	0.41
	prosecutions	0.40

Table A5: Nearest Contexts for the ICC

Publisher	Context	Cosine_Similarity
Capital FM	trial here kenya lawyer kibe mungai argued extradited fundamental rights violated urged icc stay extradition proceedings commence trial kenya enable clear name suggested matter referred principal judge chief justice hear icc prosecutor fatou bensouda accused bribing attempting bribe witnesses testifying case deputy president william ruto attorney githu muigai	0.83
Capital FM	lodged trail allegations four prosecution witnesses intermediaries accused interfering course justice trial ruto overview following ruling which charges ruto journalist joshua arap sang vacated prosecutor fatou bensouda consider next steps application alleged case crumbled due witness interference pointing fingers three kenyans wanted icc icc also asked kenya arrest	0.83
The East African Standard	kabage njoroge lead people affected clashes file affidavit demand icc follow its perpetrators lives lost order turn icc intervention posed kabage icc independent permanent tries persons accused serious crimes international concern namely genocide crimes humanity war crimes act case investigated prosecuted national judicial system unless national proceedings genuine	0.86
The East African Standard	refer matter icc kabage njoroge lead people affected clashes file affidavit demand icc follow its perpetrators lives lost order turn icc intervention posed kabage independent permanent icc tries persons accused serious crimes international concern namely genocide crimes humanity war crimes act case investigated prosecuted national judicial system unless	0.86
The Nation	voluntarily submitted icc required face charges stemmed post-election violence kenya believed impunity submitted iccs equally along cooperated icc committed justice levels asp political organ kenya case meeting took place backdrop scheduling order icc appeals chamber render its decision kenya's cooperation icc august icc prosecutor fatou bensouda appealed trial	0.81
The Nation	get nod justice legal affairs committee its publication mps now expected debate ending country's tenure signatory icc which makes harder kenyans appear hague based case commission individual serious crimes humanity president kenyatta remarks nakuru thanksgiving meeting dismissal case ruto kenyan allowed travel hague route future icc prosecutor fatou	0.81
The Star	icc response filed yesterday githu kenya compel witnesses testify bensouda misinterpreting kenyan law rome statute githu travel hague tomorrow defend kenya accusations failed cooperate icc summonsed githu appear hearing motion prosecution case deputy president william ruto journalist joshua sang prosecution requested icc issue summons icc witnesses kenya declined	0.82
The Star	icc yesterday dismissed request african union cases president uhuru william ruto referred local mechanism independent purely judicial institution icc react political statements resolutions submitted parties case accordance procedural rules maria kamara icc field officer kenya summit backed request kenya charges crimes humanity facing president uhuru deputy president william	0.81

A.5 Alternate Anchors

Our main analysis uses "icc" as the anchor term to reflect how Kenyans discuss the body in contemporary media (wherein our texts were pre-processed to replace all mentions of "The International Criminal Court" and "The Court" with "icc"). But other terms have been used by Kenyan media to speak to the same anchor concept in earlier periods. For example, "Ocampo" and "Hague" have served as signifiers for the ICC, especially during the early years of the Court's operation.[4] Using the same pre-processing steps, embeddings specifications, and bootstrapping procedures as in the main model, we regenerated cosine similarity scores between our politicization keywords and our anchor embedding, the only difference being the inclusion of "ocampo" and "hague" in our anchor embedding. We aggregated these scores and report the results in Figure A3.

Using the CPD algorithm and CUSUM test outlined in Section B, our main findings remain unchanged: the first change point detected occurs in June 2016 (p-value = .0001). After splitting the corpus around June 2016, the CPD algorithm was repeated and two additional change points were detected in November 2010 (p-value = .054) and December 2018 (p-value = 0.405). Because neither change point was statistically significant at the 5% level, the algorithm terminates.

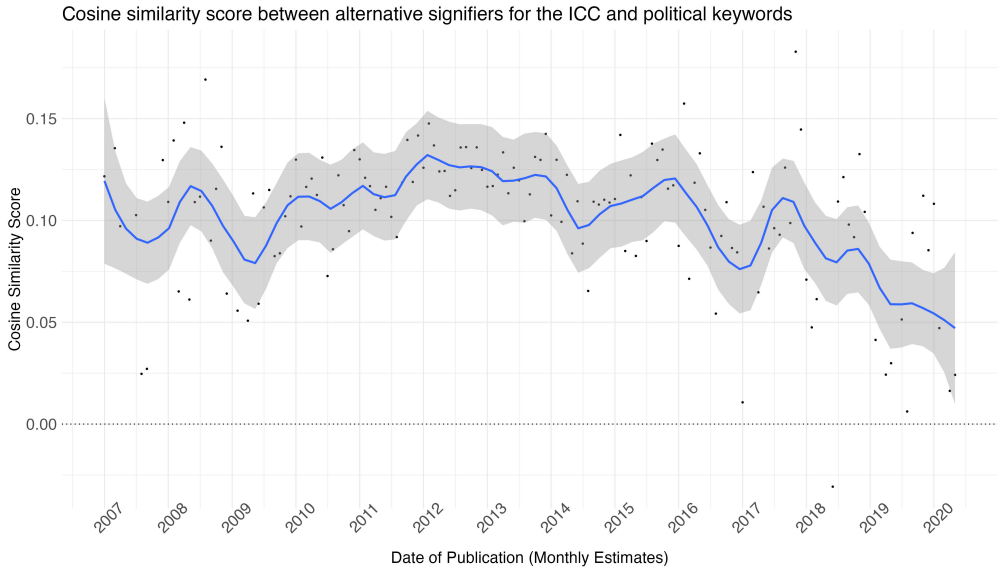

Figure A3: Aggregate Trends for Alternate Anchor Terms: ICC, Hague, Ocampo

[4]Luis Moreno Ocampo was the first Chief Prosecutor of the ICC; the ICC is located in The Hague.

A.6 Alternate Embeddings: Locally Trained Vectors

Our original estimates used the pre-trained GloVe vectors and transformation matrix provided by the ConText package, which is recommended by Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) when analyzing small corpora because generating stable embeddings requires a substantial corpus (e.g., GloVe embeddings were trained on corpora ranging from 6 to over 800 billion tokens). Pre-trained vectors also tend to perform well or even better than locally trained vectors, unless the corpus uses niche terms that are context-specific, such as medical or scientific writing (Antoniak and Mimno 2018). To further check our analyses, we re-estimated our main model using locally-trained 300 dimensional word vectors and a locally estimated transformation matrix. We opt for 300-dimensional vectors based on best practices in embeddings research. Rodriguez and Spirling (2022) show that while more dimensions and larger window sizes unconditionally improve model fit, improvement becomes marginal after 300 dimensions. When we ran the CUSUM test using locally trained vectors, our results were identical to when we used pre-trained vectors: the first change point, June 2016, was highly significant (p-value= 0.0001).

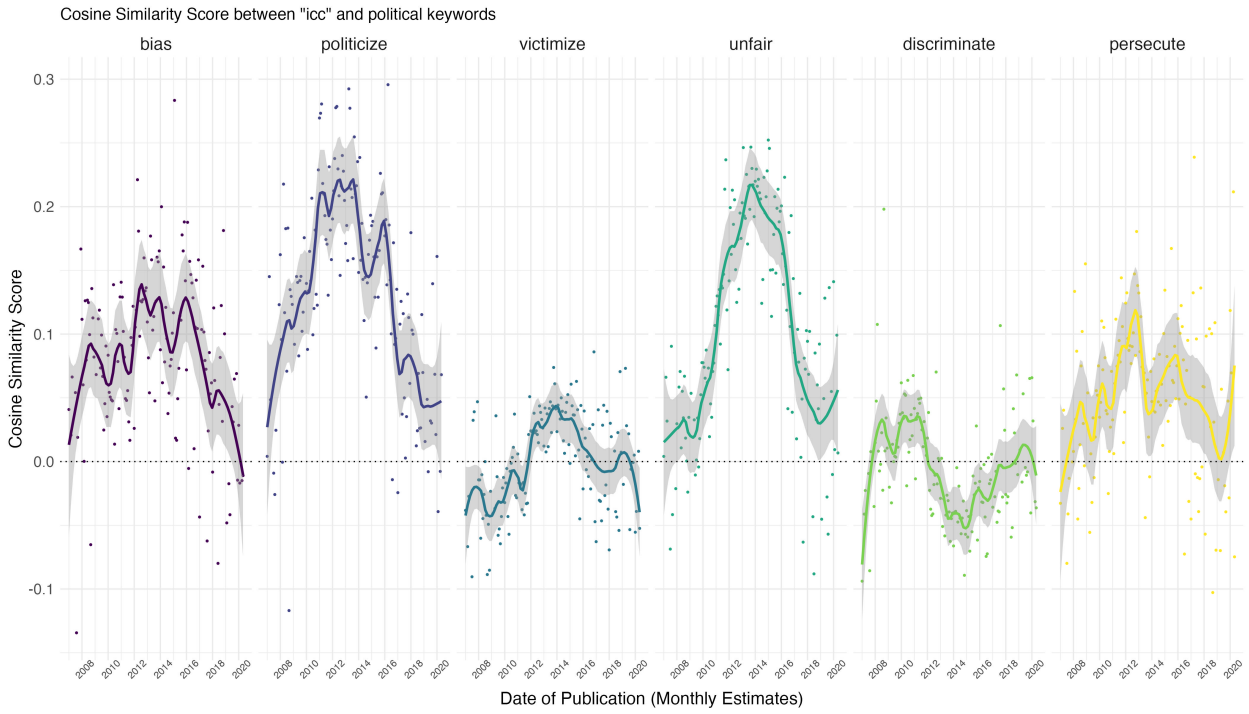

Figure A4: Locally Trained Embeddings

A.7 Diachronic Embeddings versus Cosine Similarity

To date, diachronic embeddings analyses tend to focus on semantic change over relatively long stretches of time—multiple decades or centuries—as a way to examine how the usage of specific terms has evolved across different eras (Garg et al. 2018). More recently, scholars have begun exploring the performance of embeddings over much shorter intervals to reflect the fact that discourse can evolve rapidly in certain contexts, such as social media. These models show that the embeddings of single terms, especially generic noun phrases, do not typically move significantly from month to month, or even year to year. For example, Kulkarni et al. (2015) show that while words like "hurricane" do not change within a single year, words like "sandy" can take on entirely new meanings within the same time interval following specific unusual events (i.e. "Hurricane Sandy"). In our case, the literal meaning of the phrase "International Criminal Court" has not changed within the period of our study; mentions of the ICC in our news corpus were always referring to the same institution. As we corroborate with the nearest neighbors analysis, terms most strongly associated with the ICC were relatively consistent between 2007 and 2020 (Appendix A.4, Table A4).

Whereas Kulkarni et al. (2015) identifies changes in the embeddings estimates of specific terms (an approach that is more useful over longer time horizons or when words took on entirely different meanings), our approach detects changes in the *co-occurrence* of target words and political sentiments (an approach that is more useful over shorter time horizons and when the definitions of individual words are not expected to change). Our findings suggest that while the literal meaning of the ICC has not shifted over the past decade, its co-occurrence with politicized terms has varied considerably.

B Change Point Detection Algorithm: Setup and Procedure

We identify significant changes in our time series using a cumulative sums (CUSUM) chart. While the CUSUM test has less power than the Chow Test, the latter presumes change points have been identified a priori.[5] As Barnard (1959, 249) observes, a CUSUM chart "enables us to see, literally at a glance, not only the value of the last observation—which corresponds to the slope of the line joining the current point to the point immediately preceding it—but also the mean of the last ...*n* observations for any *n*." This provides an intuitive way to visualize change points in time series data. Segments of the CUSUM chart with positive slope indicate values that are above average; segments with negative slope indicate values that are below average; a sudden change in direction of the slope indicates a sudden change in the average, i.e., a change point (Page 1954; Taylor 2000).

Let $x_1, x_2, \ldots x_t$ represent the time series, such that x_t is the cosine similarity score between the anchor and sentiment term estimated in period t. We represent our time series using a mean shift model:

$$x_t = \mu_t + \epsilon_t$$

where μ_t is the average and ϵ_t the random error at time t. It is further assumed that the errors are independent with mean zero. Generally, $\mu_t = \mu_{t-1}$ except when there is a change-point.

We generate the cumulative sums by first calculating the mean across all time periods $\overline{x} = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{t=1}^{n} x_t$. Starting the cumulative sum at zero, $S_0 = 0$, we calculate the cumulative sums by adding the difference between the current value and the average to the previous sum: $S_t = S_{t-1} + (x_t - \overline{x})$ for $t = 1, 2, \ldots n$.

The CUSUM estimator (the change point) is defined as the furthest point from zero in the CUSUM chart:

$$\mid S_{\max} \mid = \max_{\mathrm{t=0,...n}} \mid S_t \mid$$

The magnitude of the change is estimated as $S_{\text{diff}} = S_{\max} - S_{\min}$ where $S_{\max}$ is the maximum

[5] See Western and Kleykamp (2017) and Spirling (Spirling) for discussion of the trade-offs between parametric and diagnostic procedures.

and $S_{\min}$ is the minimum CUSUM value within the time interval. To assess whether these differences are statistically significant, we bootstrap the sample by randomly reordering the sequence of data and generating a new CUSUM chart. The random reorderings simulate our time series data as if no change occurred; if our observed estimate S_{diff} is larger than our simulated differences, then we have stronger evidence that a change did in fact occur.

If the magnitude of the change S_{diff} is shown to be statistically significant using bootstrapping, the time series data is broken up into two segments before and after $S_{\max}$. CUSUM charts are then calculated for each segment and the whole process is repeated to discover new change points.

Our CPD algorithm is adapted from Kulkarni et al. (2015) and Taylor (2000) and centers on the identification of statistically significant change points. When identified change points are no longer statistically significant, the algorithm terminates. We lay out the steps below:

For each period t where $t = 1, \ldots n$:

(a) Use ALC to induce period-specific embeddings.

(b) Calculate cosine similarity scores for each *anchor, keyword*.

(c) Calculate mean cosine similarity scores across all *anchor, keyword* pairs.

(d) Generate CUSUM chart for $t = 1, \ldots n$:

i. Estimate change point $\mathrm{S}_{\max}$.

ii. Bootstrap sample and generate CUSUM for simulated observations.

A. If S_{diff} is statistically significant, split corpus at S_{m} and repeat step (d) for each sub-corpus.

B. if S_{diff} is not statistically significant, terminate procedure.

B.1 Change Point Estimation

We generated a CUSUM chart from our aggregated cosine similarity scores and plotted these changes in Figure 4 in the main text. The estimated change point is the global maximum on the chart, which

falls in June 2016. The estimated magnitude of the change is $S_{diff} = S_{max} - S_{min} = 1.059592 - (-0.2164225) = 1.27$. Running 10,000 bootstrapped simulations showed that this change point is statistically significant at the 0.01% level.

We split the sample around the first change point (June 2016) and generated two new CUSUM charts, one for the pre- and post-June 2016 periods. We show both charts in Figures B1 and B2. We identify two change points in the pre- and post-samples: November 2010 (a global minimum) and December 2018 (a global maximum). Only November 2010 is statistically significant using 10,000 bootstrapped simulations; we thus reject December 2018 as a change point.[6]

While the CPD algorithm instructs that the CUSUM test should be repeated whenever another significant change point has been identified (and terminates whenever estimated change points are insignificant), we opt for a conservative strategy in this case due to the fact that our robustness check in Section A.3 found that the stability of our *second* change point (but not our first) depended on context window size; that is, our results became insignificant with larger context windows. Our estimate for the second context window is thus suggestive but not conclusive.

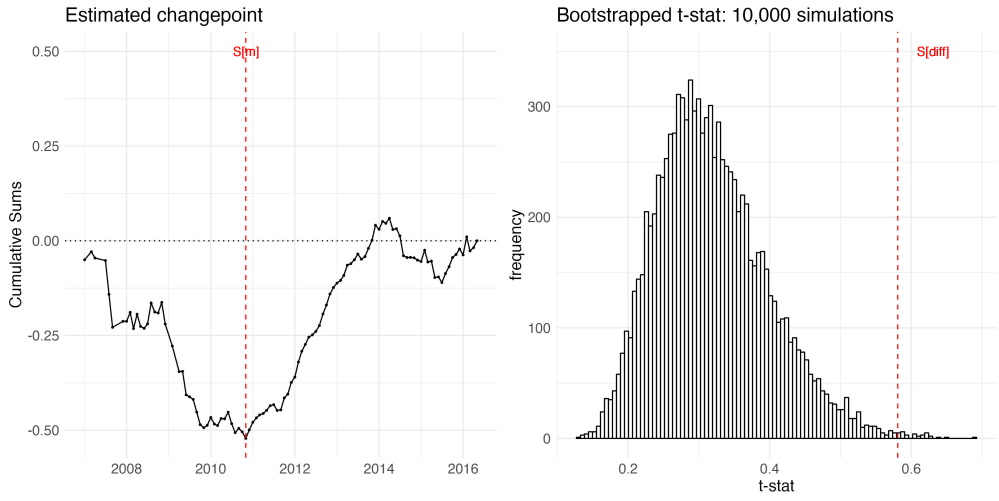

Figure B1: Pre-June 2016 Sample

[6]Note that the CPD algorithm for the CUSUM test first identifies the largest inflection point, then the second largest, then the third largest, and so on, until change points are no longer statistically significant (Kulkarni et al. 2015; Taylor 2000). That is, the procedure does not identify inflection points in chronological order. In our case, the biggest change point occurred following the ICC's decision to terminate all of its proceedings in Kenya. The second largest change occurred near the beginning of the period of ICC activity in the state.

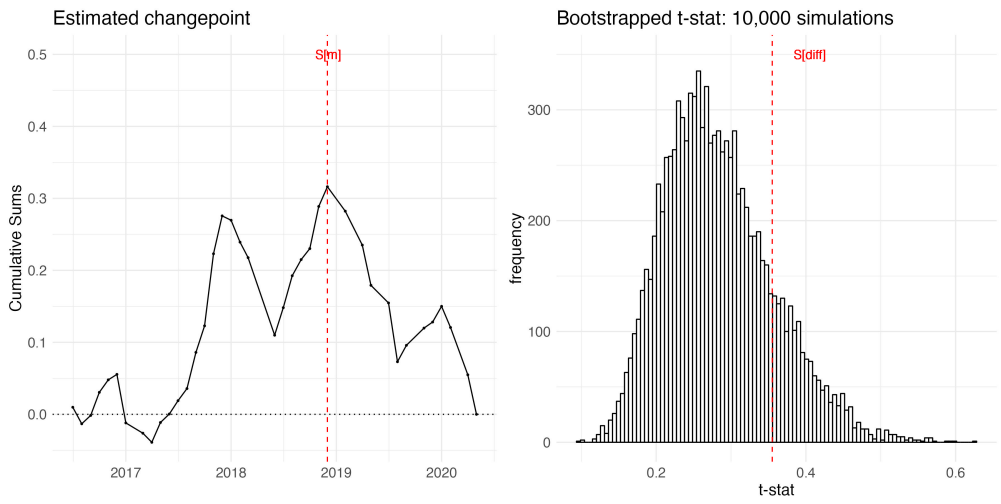

Figure B2: Post-June 2016 Sample

B.2 Discussion

Our estimates of the first change point are remarkably stable, each estimate falling within a month of each other. Our estimates of the second change point, however, are less stable to different window sizes. The instability of the second change point in 2010 has at least two potential explanations, empirical and mechanical.

First, there were several major ICC events in Kenya spread out over the course of the year (e.g., the ICC authorized the commencement of investigations on March 31, 2010; summonses for the Ocampo Six were issued on Dec 15, 2010) that arguably intensified politicization of the ICC in the popular press. However, it is not obvious which of these developments would have driven a more significant change in news coverage. The ICC's case against Kenyan leaders was gradually ratcheting up over a period of several months in 2010 (though it is worth noting that November 2010, our estimate for the second change point, was only a month before summonses for the Ocampo Six were issued by the ICC). There was thus no clear trigger point to catalyze an anti-ICC narrative in the Kenyan press. For example, should the Court's approval of the Prosecutor commencing investigations in Kenya be deemed more threatening than the first indictment? Or did the threat not fully materialize until the first summons to appear in court? While each of these developments posed a potential threat to Kenyatta, Ruto, and the remaining Ocampo Six, it is not immediately obvious how to rank these threats, especially in real time as the case was unfolding.

By contrast, June 2016 may be a more definitive break point in our sample because it was a month after the ICC officially terminated its last proceeding against Kenyan leadership (the case against Ruto). This was a clearer, more explicit break point in the immediate threat from the Court. Our analysis further suggests that the politicization of the ICC significantly dissipated following the ICC's decision to drop its case, which corroborates our intuition that depictions of the ICC as a politicized body in the popular press became less intense after Kenyan elites were no longer under direct threat of prosecution.

Second, the CPD algorithm is designed to identify change points over successively smaller sub-samples of the data. Specifically, each time a significant change point is identified, the CUSUM test is repeated for sub-samples both pre- and post- the change point. This means that with each iteration, the CUSUM test is being run on a smaller sample. Shrinking sample size helps explain why the significance tests become more unstable when identifying second and third change points.

These reasons together help to explain the more consistent estimates of the first change point in 2016 and why this later event is represented by a more pronounced decline in media politicization of the ICC.

C Kenyan Newspapers and the Media Environment

C.1 Kenyan Newspapers on *AllAfrica*

While Kenyan newspapers regularly publish content online, none of the newspapers in our study maintain extensive online archives. In fact, most only have online records that date back a few weeks or months. We therefore turned to *AllAfrica*, an online news repository that features daily and weekly publications from private and state-owned sources from across the African continent. Kenyan media is especially well represented on the site, with some sources dating back to the 2000s. We delimited our search to begin in 2007 and to continue until 2020 to ensure comprehensive coverage across all newspapers in our sample.

Note that dating our corpus back to 2007 means that we are capturing news coverage for the

period falling between the post-election violence in 2007 and the start of the ICC's formal investigation in 2010. By extending our corpus to 2020, we also capture news coverage for the period between the termination of ICC proceedings in Kenya and present-day. This temporal coverage enables us to explore how news coverage changes pre- and post-ICC interventions.

Publishers

Our data comprises all four major Kenyan dailies featured on *AllAfrica*: *The Nation*, *The East African Standard*, *The Star*, and *Capital FM Radio*.[7] Ownership of Kenyan media is concentrated in just a handful of conglomerates, notably the Nation Media Group and the Standard Group. Having multiple outlets represented in the corpus helps to guard against the results being driven exclusively by particular publishers' political leanings during the period (for example, coverage at *The Nation* traditionally favors the ruling party).[8]

Table C1 shows the distribution of articles in our sample by publisher. Approximately 50% of the articles in our corpus come from *The Star*, followed by *The Nation* (33%), *Capital FM* (17%), and lastly *The East African Standard* (less than 1%). The small sample size of *The East African Standard*, due to limited coverage on *AllAfrica* (which only includes reporting up until 2008), led to more variable embeddings and cosine similarity scores as evidenced by the wider confidence intervals for the estimates (reported in Section C.2 below). However, estimates for this sub-group still fall within the range of other publishers' (Figure C3), speaking to the advantages of ALC embeddings, which are specifically designed to derive stable estimates for rare or singular terms (Rodriguez and Spirling 2022). As an additional robustness check, we excluded articles published by *The East African Standard* and re-estimated embeddings for our anchor concept and politicization keywords, after which we performed the CUSUM test according to the same CPD algorithm as before. Our main results do not change. June 2016 remains a statistically significant change point (p-value = 0.0001).

[7] *Capital FM Radio* has both a radio station and a online news site; our analysis covers the latter (see https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/).

[8] See Appendix C.2 for trends by publisher.

Table C1: Distribution of Articles across Kenyan Publishers

	Publisher	Media ownership	Count	Proportion
1	Capital FM	Capital Group	915	0.17
2	The East African Standard	Standard Group	17	0.00
3	The Nation	Nation Media Group	1733	0.33
4	The Star	Radio Africa Group	2627	0.50

Article and Author Types

We hand-coded the type of editorial content for each article in the corpus. Table C2 shows the distribution of articles by editorial content. "Opinion" refers to an article presenting the opinion of the writer or editor; "non-opinion" refers to standard reporting. In the dataset, the *opinion* variable is dichotomous, coded 1 if opinion and 0 otherwise. Hand-coding was done with the assistance of multiple coders, and each coding decision was collectively discussed. The vast majority of coding decisions were straightforward, as the digital publication in *AllAfrica* would often denote at the beginning of the article "EDITORIAL" or "OPINION". There were two articles for which a confident coding decision could not be made; we exclude these from the main analysis.

Table C2: Type of Editorial Content

Article-type	Count	Proportion
Non-Opinion	4121	0.78
Opinion	1169	0.22

For each opinion piece, we further hand-coded the identity of the author, based on her occupation at the time of the article's publication. The author-types are listed below.

- *journalist or editorial board*: individual journalists, columnists, or the editorial board at the newspaper
- *domestic government official*: Kenyan government and public officials
- *international government official*: government and public officials of a foreign government
- *international or regional organization*: representatives of international or regional governmental organizations, such as the African Union, United Nations, or the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor
- *civil society (domestic)*: members of Kenyan civil society, including NGO representatives, lawyers, civic leaders, and academic experts

- *civil society (international)*: members of international or regional civil society and NGOs, such as the Coalition for the International Criminal Court and International Commission of Jurists
- *unknown author*

We identified author-type using the writer's bio that appeared at the end of the article. In cases where a bio was missing, coders relied on secondary sources of information. This identification process typically involved three steps: online searching for the name in the byline, validating that the individual had written for the publisher, and expanding the search to identify her official position/occupation at the time of the article's publication. The byline data feature 408 distinct individual writers, which included some prominent names. For example, Fatou Bensouda authored three opinion pieces in her capacity as the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC. Her predecessor Luis Moreno Ocampo features twice. Where a byline did not exist or there was insufficient information, author-type was coded as "unknown author". Table C3 reports the distribution of opinion pieces by author-type.

Table C3: Distribution of Author-Types among Opinion Pieces

Author-Type	Count	Proportion
... journalist or editorial board	461	0.43
... domestic govt official	111	0.10
... international govt official	9	0.01
... international or regional org	109	0.10
... civil society (domestic)	288	0.27
... civil society (international)	79	0.07
... unknown author	20	0.02

In Section C.2, we use this disaggregated data to show that the ALC embeddings are largely consistent across different publishing outlets, article-types, and author-types.

C.2 Politicization Trends by Publishers and Article/Author Types

In the main article, we reported word embeddings estimates for the entire corpus, pooling together different publishers and types of editorial content. However, some studies view individual journalists and media houses as strategic actors (Brutger and Strezhnev 2022; Groeling and Baum 2009) that

exercise agency over the information or framing that feature prominently in their pages (Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon 2005). Below, we present descriptive trends by publication- and author-type without controlling for time. Our purpose here is to examine whether the degree of media politicization of the ICC varies significantly by news source.

Figure C3 shows trends by publisher (top) and type of editorial content (bottom); standard errors were generated through bootstrapping our estimates 100 times. The association between ICC and each politicization keyword is consistently positive and significant, regardless of publisher. As shown in the top plot, the association between "icc" and "victimize" is generally the strongest among the keyword pairs, and the association between "icc" and "unfair" is generally the weakest, though still positive. The exceptions to this trend are the estimates for *The East African Standard* (hereafter *Standard*), which has wider confidence intervals than the other publishers; this is likely due to its smaller sample size (see Appendix C.1, Table C1). The bottom plot of Figure C3 compares non-opinion and opinion editorials. Unsurprisingly, politicization of the ICC is stronger in opinion pieces, but the size of the difference is not substantial (e.g., the association between "icc" and "victimize" is approximately 0.20 in non-opinion pieces and 0.22 in opinion pieces).

Figure C4 focuses exclusively on opinion content broken up by author-type.[9] The cosine similarity scores are more variable in this case, illustrating differences in how different types of authors write about the ICC. The association between the ICC and politicization keywords is generally positive and significant across the board. However, for professional journalists and editors, while the association is still generally positive, it is weaker than for other author-types, and is actually negative for the term "politicize." We see similar patterns for international or regional organizations, where most of the terms have positive and significant scores but the association for "discriminate" is negative.

These results suggest that the Kenyan media is not a monolith when it comes to reporting on the ICC: there is variation in word usage both among and within different types of bylines. But these differences are also suggestive of the motivations of different authors. Note that domestic govern-

[9] "Unknown" refers to content with an unidentified author.

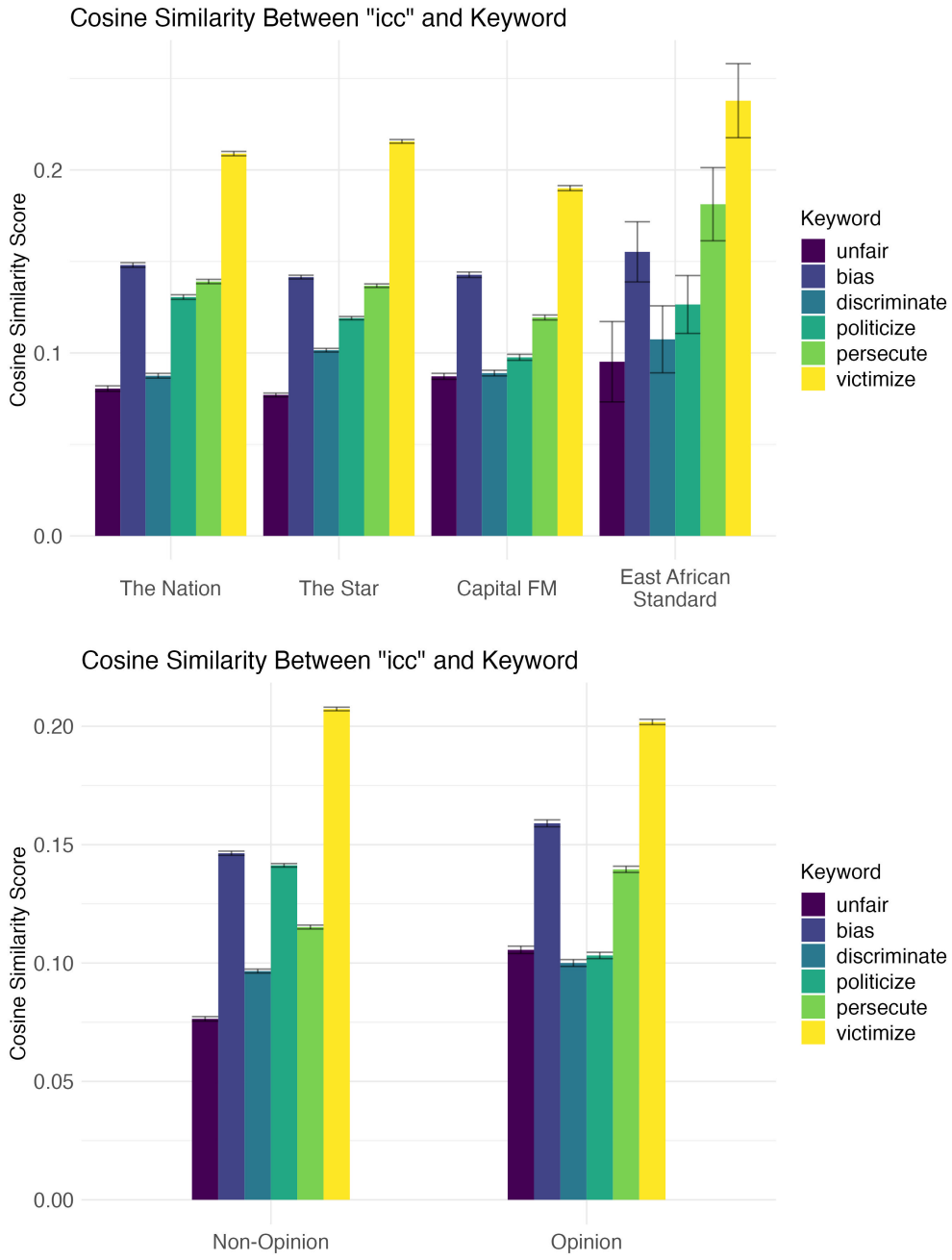

Figure C3: Pairwise Word Similarity Scores by Publisher and Article-Type

On the top plot, each column shows pairwise similarity between the *icc* anchor and politicization keyword features for different newspaper publishers. On the bottom plot, each column shows pairwise similarity score for non-opinion and opinion articles. In each plot, estimates were bootstrapped 100 times to generate 95% confidence intervals.

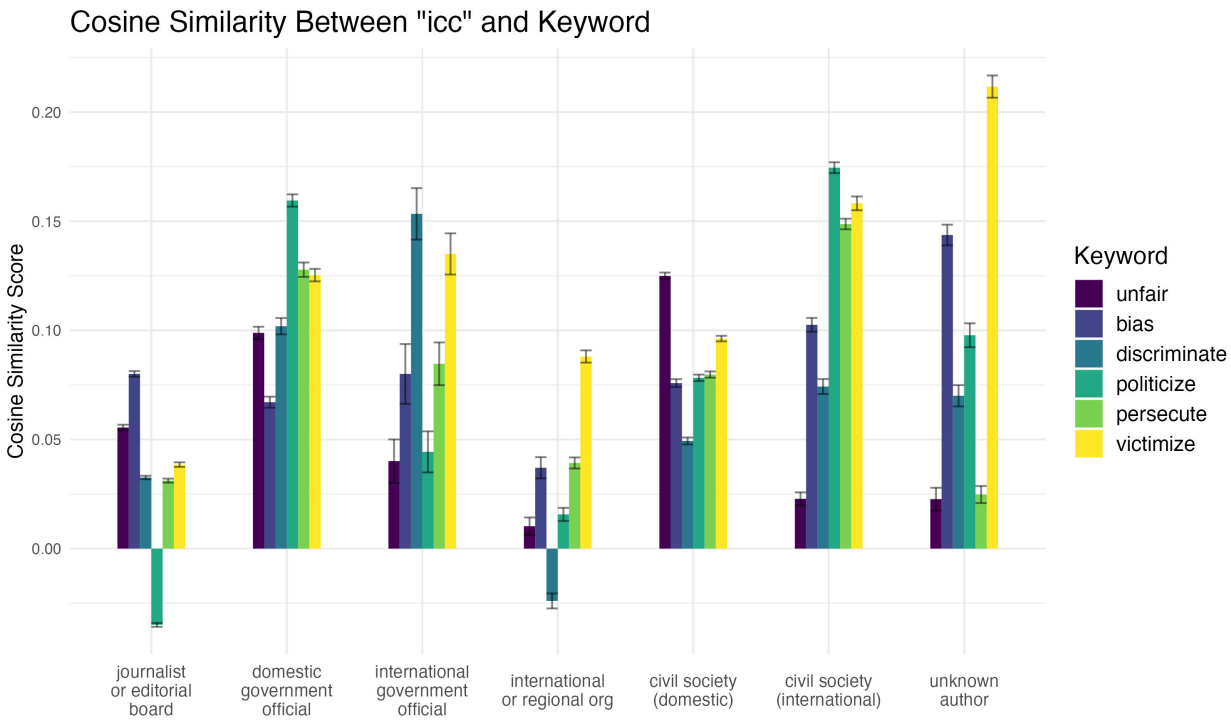

Figure C4: Pairwise Word Similarity Scores by Author-Type

Each column shows the pairwise similarity between *icc* and keyword features for different author-types in opinion articles.

ment officials—actors who face the greatest threat of investigation or prosecution by the ICC—have significantly higher cosine similarity scores on the politicization metric than ordinary journalists and editors. This may indicate that political elites were directly deploying the media to disseminate anti-court narratives, which is consistent with our claim that newspapers provide a channel for elites to propound self-interested messaging. Civil society actors, both domestic and international, also have consistently positive and significant scores, perhaps indicating that these types of actors are more likely to weigh in on politicization debates. Our author-type analysis is more suggestive than conclusive due to the small sample size of certain groups, limiting our ability to generalize these findings too broadly, but they are a promising avenue for further research.

Overall, the trends in Figures C3 and C4 demonstrate how the ALC embeddings deliver consistent results across different categories of articles. These trends suggest that politicized narratives about the ICC permeate the entire media landscape in Kenya, illustrating insights that can be gained from using text-as-data in contexts like Kenya (Harris 2015). Recent research finds that publisher

co-ownership chains tends to homogenize the content and focus of news coverage of foreign policy (Baum and Zhukov 2019). This potentially explains the patterns in Kenya, where the Nation Media Group and the Standard Group are dominant actors in the newspaper industry. Further, a media bill passed in December 2008 granted sweeping powers to the Information Ministry and the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) to regulate broadcast scheduling and coverage. Controvertially, provisions of this bill allowed the Internal Security Minister to raid media houses for national security purposes, which may arguably led some journalists to self-censor content (Stern 2009). Such administrative tactics of repression would have facilitated direct and indirect elite capture of newspaper content, though further research is needed to substantiate these mechanisms more finely.

At the same time, Kenyan news consumers have access to a wide variety of private print and digital media (Nyabuga and Booker 2013). Unlike more authoritarian media environments, the Kenyan news space exemplifies a middle ground of media openness, a prevalent characteristic of imperfectly democratic states today (Levitsky and Way 2020). The degree to which the popular press have leeway in editorial decisions in such media environments is a potential scope condition we leave for future studies.

D Politicization Keywords in Context

D.1 Conceptualizing Politicization

Our concept keyword terms (Table 1 in the main text) were derived from two fronts: (1) prior theoretical and empirical scholarship on judicial legitimacy and the politicization of courts in the media, and (2) close reading of sample Kenyan newspaper articles in our corpus.

We began by surveying the rich scholarship on the institutional sources of court legitimacy—in the US (Caldeira and Gibson 1992; Driscoll and Nelson 2021; Easton 1965; Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird 1998) and in autocratic or weakly democratic regimes (Baird and Javeline 2007; Helmke 2010, 2002; Helmke and Rosenbluth 2009; Kerr and Wahman 2021). There is also a growing literature on the legitimacy of international courts (Gibson and Caldeira 1995; Lupu 2013; Madsen 2020; Voeten 2020),

including the ICC (Clarke, Knottnerus, and de Volder 2016; Dancy et al. 2020; Dutton 2017). Although this literature does not specifically address how courts are politicized in the press, it provides crucial theoretical resources for conceptualizing politicization. A court free from politicization (a legitimate court) is characterized by the absence of bias and political influence[10] and the perception of fairness in procedure.[11] In contrast, politicized courts hold trials that are perceived as selectively targeting or discriminating against particular individuals.[12] This scholarship thus underscores three general features: partisan bias, unfair procedure, and discrimination.

While turning to existing scholarship was useful as a starting point, off-the-shelf dictionaries tend not to perform well on niche corpora (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). For example, political terms such as "factionalism" did not appear in the corpus at all. In other cases, political terms that did appear had drastically different interpretations depending on context. "Injustice," for instance, could refer to the crimes the ICC was prosecuting but could also describe how the court unfairly targeted political actors.[13] Even the term "partisan" was not always used in the same context. It sometimes referred to the partisan nature of the case against Kenyatta,[14] but elsewhere describes the partisan behavior of the Kenyatta Government.[15]

For example, in a 2013 article from *The Star*, a Kenyan senator was quoted during a debate on whether Kenya should pull out of the Rome Statute and initiate a withdrawal from the ICC: "the conduct of the investigations and judicial processes of the ICC in the Kenyan cases have been **politicised** and selectively applied" (quoted in Mureithi 2013). President Kenyatta was often quoted in the press and offered extremely explicit assessments of the ICC's treatment of his case: "I have been **victimized**, libeled and senselessly profiled by the same defective process…There is no justice when human rights clubs and an international tribunal conspire to betray victims of human rights abuses and **per-**

[10] E.g., Dancy et al. 2020; Lupu 2013; Pereira 2001; Voeten 2013

[11] E.g., Baird 2001; Dickson, Gordon, and Huber 2009; Gibson 2002; Gonzáles-Ocantos 2016; Kershaw and Alexander 2003; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler 2009; Tyler 1990; Tyler et al. 1997

[12] E.g., Clarke, Knottnerus, and de Volder 2016; Osiel 1999; Pereira 2005

[13] For example, one editorial equating the ICC's investigation of Ruto with a "witch-hunt" describes "the injustice we cause criminal suspects when we treat them as convicts even before their innocence or guilt is established"; Mwangi 2010.

[14] E.g., "Uhuru maintained that the damning report the ICC heavily relied on for his prosecution at The Hague was undependable and partisan"; Olick 2015.

[15] E.g., one editorial criticized "rhetoric and utterances at partisan public rallies"; Miguna 2014.

secute the innocent. The tragedy of this travesty is beyond words" (quoted in Kaberia 2014). Such texts helped contextualized political terms as they appeared in our Kenyan newspaper corpus.

In sum, our list of keywords (Table 1 in the main text) includes the language of political prosecution (politicize, persecute, victimize) informed by reading of sample texts, as well as general notions of illegitimacy (bias, discriminate, unfair) informed by the judicial legitimacy scholarship. In other words, we strike a balance between topic-specific terms as they relate to ICC affairs and terms with strong theoretical foundations. This balanced approach aligns with practice in previous research on media coverage of US Supreme Court decisions.[16] Our main analysis in the article averages the cosine similarity scores to ensure that certain terms are not driven the results (Garg et al. 2018).

D.2 Keywords in Context, Pre- and Post-Change Points

We provide examples of article excerpts, prior to and after significant change points identified in the CPD analysis. These illustrations are selective. They are not intended to systematically test shifts in media tone, but instead to provide greater context for how concept words (Table 1 in main manuscript) appear in newspaper articles before, during, and after moments of intensification in politicized narratives.

Articles covering the ICC before the second change point in late 2010 do not always shield the ICC from critique by editorial writers. However, the target of criticism is more diffuse—the ICC is but one example of a set of institutions with imperfections. The framing of deliberately politicized, biased, or discriminatory processes specific to the ICC is nearly absent, as in the following article:

> "When Experts Laid Bare Poverty of Development Policy." *The Nation*. Jul 20, 2007.
>
> *The Hague in the Netherlands stands majestically as the world's sole geographical symbol for justice, housing as it does the ICC, the Rwanda and Yugoslav tribunals, and the International Court of Justice. These hallowed institutions, however flawed their dispensation of the promise*

[16] Hitt and Searles 2018, for example, analyze whether televised news coverage of the US Supreme Court "utilized the analogy of sports or war, such as battle, competition, winning, or fight... For example: 'end zone,'" a cultural framing that is relatively specific to the US. At the same time, the authors capture judicial legitimacy by identifying general terms such as "judicial standing" and "justice integrity" in news coverage.

they hold, reflect the long global struggle for the rule of law as the means to address and deter aggressive war, genocide and other mass crimes, and mediate disputes between nations.

But these courts reflect also the ability of the powerful to tackle issues which concern them most, while challenges faced primarily by the rest of humanity languish. The greatest source of death and misery in our world is economic impoverishment and the unequal distribution of national and international wealth, which kill nearly 100 times as many people as die from wars.

Even as late as spring of 2009, when the ICC begins to make in-country visits to assess the need for an intervention, media coverage of the institution is relatively neutral:

"Hague Judges in Country Next Week." *The Star*. Apr 17, 2009.

ICC judges are coming to Kenya next week, officially to explain how the court works but unofficially to start preparations for handling cases of post-election violence in the Hague. Uganda judge Daniel Ntanda Nsereko and Kenya's Justice Joyce Aluoch will be accompanied by a team of experts on international law who will discuss the ICC options available to member countries.

Officially the judges and experts will make presentations on the implementation of the Rome Statute establishing the ICC at a workshop for the Parliamentary Global Action workshop in county hall on Thursday next week. Unofficially they will be finding out what progress the government has made in setting up a local tribunal and the government's willingness to cooperate in case the ICC takes over the investigation of the post-election violence cases.

...

Another PGA member, Abdul Bahari, said next week's workshop may clarify what option MPs prefer. "We do not have a common stand on the matter but we hope the workshop, which is very timely in our considered opinion, will sensitize all of us, including the public, on the best options. The entire parliament will then have its final say," Bahari said.

...

Kenya depositions its instruments of ratification to the Rome statute at the UN Assembly on 15 March, 2005, but dithered in passing the implementing international crimes bill for three years. It was eventually enacted into law last year.

The preferences of political leaders are still unclear at this point, in the article's rendering of the situation. There are even instances in which the coverage is slightly critical of the Kenyan government: It 'dithered' in enshrining the state's ratification of the Rome Statue in domestic criminal law.

When concept words, such as "politicize" and "bias", appear in this period, their usage, too, tends to be in the abstract. Consider the following excerpt covering domestic political debates over proposals to address the 2007 electoral violence in local courts, rather than the ICC:

"Ruto Beats a Retreat, Rejects Hague Trials." *The Nation*. Jul 15, 2009.

> *In an interview with* The Nation*, the Justice Minister questioned the objections raised over the proposal to strip the president of immunity from prosecution, saying that The Hague does not recognise them. Neither does it recognise the president's powers to give amnesty.*
>
> ...
>
> *The president postponed a decision to Monday to allow ministers time to study the proposals. Ms Betty Murungi, a human rights law expert, described the indecision of the cabinet as unfortunate and called on ministers to close ranks and support the clauses. She argued that Mr Moreno-Ocampo would not accept a tribunal that did not meet international standards.*
>
> *And speaking to editors, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator Aeneas Chuma warned of the perils of politicising the process of ending impunity. "Statements, newspaper articles and TV cues suggesting culpability of certain personalities at this stage are not very helpful as they help to widen the political and tribal rivalries, thereby deepening resentment among citizens," he said.*

Although the entire article is dedicated to coverage of various political elites' views on the procedural implications of the ICC and the Rome Statute, the ICC itself is not (yet) framed as an illegitimate institution. The media's framing—'perils of politicising the process of ending impunity'—invokes more general risks to the judicial process. Moreover, the source of such 'perils' is not the ICC, but domestic Kenyan elites themselves. The phrasing is used to synthesize concerns voiced by a UN official in response to the deliberations by Kenyan cabinet ministers. Note further that the portrayal of the ministers' debates is largely descriptive, with little editorializing.

This tone shifts in late 2010, after the second change point when summonses to appear have been requested. In one particularly colorful editorial appearing in *The Nation* days after the summonses, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC is explicitly accused of 'cherry-picking' the Ocampo Six in an act of 'imperial arrogance' that amounts, in the writer's view, to a gross violation of procedural fairness:

"Ocampo's List is a Deal Synonymous With Judicial Failure Dressed in Blind Imperial Arrogance." *The Nation*. Dec 17, 2010.

> *The overzealous ICC celebrity prosecutor Senor Ocampo's timid, symmetrical, politically correct and carefully cherry picked list of six fall guys, the small fish whom he strangely accuses of bearing the greatest responsibility for the post election mayhem; the symbolic acolytes who must die to save the high priests, is clearly a result of a deal synonymous with judicial failure*

dressed in blind imperial arrogance that makes examples of natives without looking at the bigger picture.

This confirms my long held fears that his showboat intervention was a judicial sham, a sad political mockery of justice, where sons are unacceptably sacrificed for the sins of their fathers. Ocampo has grossly violated the right to a fair trial of the six accused by naming them before he completes his investigations, especially before the police and the provincial administration chiefs have tendered their statements. From now on, there is no guarantee that he won't proceed with bias, digging only where he hopes to get the evidence to nail them. Having strangely promised to make an example of Kenya, and not to support us as per his ICC mandate, there is no guarantee that if he found evidence exonerating any of the six he won't withhold it.

On October 2, 2010, I wrote in this column that, "Mr Moreno Ocampo has... settled for soft targets through convenient indictments of juniors, excluding president Mwai Kibaki and prime minister Raila Odinga, the main beneficiaries of the mayhem." Ocampo can't claim to be fighting impunity, yet he has just granted de facto immunity and impunity to the two principals who respectively headed PNU and ODM, the two war formations that undermined state institutions and exploited tribal fault lines to make the 2007 elections a stage for an existential war of tribes? Ocampo has made a puzzling contribution to jurisprudence, separating the violent crimes from their context.

...

A similar tone is sustained in media coverage while the ICC's threat to Ruto is still active. Though *The Nation* is traditionally favorable to incumbent parties, other media outlets are also echoing and amplifying elites' anti-ICC narratives during this period, as illustrated in the following excerpt from *The Star*. A significant portion of the article is devoted to direct quotes by MPs and paraphrasing their messages. Though the content of anti-ICC attitudes is attributed to the MPs, a close reading reveals how subtle word choices used to paraphrase the politicians are laden with normative content: The ICC 'should not threaten to gag [politicians]' and the cases are 'unjust' or 'political':

"Hundreds Pray for End of Ruto Case." *The Star*. Sep 15, 2015.

Thousands attended a rally in Nakuru yesterday, calling for an end to the case against Deputy President William Ruto and journalist Joshua Sang at the ICC. ... Prompted by a recent decision by the court to admit evidence given by witnesses who later recanted their testimony and which now leaves Ruto in a precarious position, the MPs, senators and governors said the cases were unjust.

...

Cheboi said the ICC cases "were scary and deserved God's intervention".

...

Kilifi North MP Gideon Mung'aro led a delegation of 38 MPs from the Coast. He said Ruto was innocent and the case was political. Duale lashed out at the Kenya National Human Rights Commission, saying it had conspired with the ICC "to fix the two". The ICC prosecution relied heavily on the findings of a commission headed by Justice Philip Waki, which in turn used the report prepared by the KNCHR after the 2008 post-election violence. "I know a human rights commission used by the ICC is here taking photos, but your plans will fail," he said.

More than 40 leaders from Central Kenya who attended the meeting in solidarity assured their Rift Valley counterparts of support. Tharaka Nithi Senator Kithure Kindiki said allowing the use of recanted testimony was aimed at fixing Ruto. Gatundu South MP Moses Kuria said the ICC should not threaten to gag them on the issue in public while it had politicized it already. "We as the people of Mt Kenya are not happy about the ICC case. Our brothers are innocent and should be freed. If they persist, we will never entertain their nonsense," he said.

By 2017, well after the June 2016 change point, words like 'politicize' and 'bias' are no longer tied to the ICC but instead to domestic actors and institutions:

"NGO Asks Bensouda to Open Investigations Into Odinga, Kalonzo." *Capital FM*. Oct 15, 2017.

Two kenyans have petitioned the ICC in which they are calling for the investigation of opposition leader Raila Odinga and his running mate Kalonzo Musyoka over what they term as inflammatory conduct and other crimes that fall within the jurisdiction of the court.

...

The petitioners contend that domestic investigations against Odinga and Musyoka cannot take off allegedly due to retaliation and politicisation by NASA [National Super Alliance, an opposition coalition]... The petitioners go on to say that the two NASA leaders hold the "perverted" view that any Kenyan institution "unwilling to pander to their whims" must be disbanded.

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