

**State or Public Service Broadcasting? An Analysis of the
Coverage of Political Issues and Debates During an Election
Campaign on Television News**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for a
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**By
Herbert Macha**

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SUPERVISOR: DR. TAWANA KUPE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
Table of Contents.....	(i)
Acknowledgements.....	(iv)
Dedication.....	(v)
Abbreviations.....	(vi)
List of Appendices.....	(vii)
Abstract.....	(viii)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Background to the Study.....	1
1.3. Research Agenda.....	3
1.4. General Objective of Study.....	5
1.4.1. Specific Objectives.....	6
1.5. Research Assumptions.....	6
1.6. Significance of the Study.....	7
1.7. Methods of Study.....	8
1.8. Thesis Outline.....	10
1.9. Conclusions.....	11

CHAPTER TWO: MEDIA AND POLITICS IN ZAMBIA

2.0. Introduction.....	12
2.1. Political Situation in Zambia.....	12
2.1.1. Independence.....	12
2.1.2. One Party System.....	12
2.1.3. Multi-Party System.....	13
2.1.4. The 'Third Term' Debate.....	15
2.2. The Media in Zambia.....	16
2.2.1. The Press.....	16
2.2.2. Broadcasting.....	18

2.2.3. Television in Zambia.....	19
2.2.4. Price and Ownership of Television Sets.....	20
2.2.5. Electricity.....	20
2.2.6. The Legal Aspect of Broadcasting in Zambia.....	21
2.2.7. Conclusion.....	22

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. Introduction.....	23
3.1. Media and Democracy.....	23
3.2. The Media as Public Sphere.....	26
3.3. Public Service Television as a Public Sphere.....	29
3.3.1. Consumerism or Citizenship.....	29
3.4. Roles of Public Service Television.....	30
3.4.1. Watchdog Role.....	30
3.4.2. Agency of Representation	31
3.4.3. Agency of Information and Debate.....	33
3.4.4. Informed Citizenship.....	33
3.4.5. Entertainment.....	35
3.5. Public Service Television Perspectives.....	35
3.5.1. Definition of Public Service Television.....	36
3.5.2. Television as a 'Public Good'.....	37
3.5.3. Towards a Working Definition.....	38
3.5.4. Control Structure.....	39
3.5.5. Privileges.....	39
3.5.6. Obligations.....	40
3.5.7. Editorial Independence.....	44
3.5.8. Public Service Television Funding.....	45
3.5.9. Social Construction of News.....	46
3.5.10. Conclusion.....	48

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

4.0. Introduction.....	49
4.1. Content Analysis of ZNBC Television News.....	49
4.2. Quantitative Content Analysis of ZNBC Television News.....	50
4.3. Sampling Procedure.....	52
4.4. Qualitative Content Analysis of Television News.....	53
4.4.1. In-Depth Interviews.....	53
4.4.2. List of Interviewees.....	54
4.4.3. Document Analysis.....	55
4.5. Limitations to the Study.....	56

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.0. Introduction.....	57
5.1. Findings.....	57
5.1.1. Content Analysis of Main News.....	57
5.3. Conclusion.....	69
5.4. State or Public Service? The Discussion.....	70
5.6. Discussion of Main News.....	71
5.6. Making Election News.....	76
5.6.1. Editorial Independence.....	76
5.6.2. Institutional Autonomy.....	81

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0. Introduction.....	84
6.1. State or Public Service.....	84
6.2. Possible Transformation.....	85

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES.....	89
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Nathan for his inspiration during my early school days, my mother Dorothy, my wife Margret and children; Cynthia, Sandra, Brian and Nchimunya.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABN- African Broadcast Network
AZ- Agenda for Zambia
BBC-British Broadcasting Corporation
CSO – Central Statistics Office
EUEOM- European Union Election Observation Mission.
FDD- Forum for Democracy and Development
Fodep- Foundation for Democratic Process
HP- Heritage Party
LAZ- Law Association Of Zambia
MIBS – Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services
MISA- Media Association Southern Africa
MMD-Movement for Multi-party Democracy
NCC- National Citizens Coalition
NLD- National League For Development
NOCE- National Organisation for Civic Education
OYZ- Operation Young Vote
PAZA- The Press Association of Zambia
PF- Patriotic Front
SDC- Social Democratic Party
TBN- Trinity Broadcasting Network
UNIP -The United National Independence Party
UPND-United Party for National Development
ZAMCOM-Zambia Institute of Mass Communication
ZDC- Zambia Democratic Party
ZIMA – Zambia Independent Media Association
ZIMT- Zambia Independent Monitoring Team
ZNBC- Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation
ZRP- Zambia Republican Party

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Appendix 2: Presidential elections 2001- Provisional Results

Appendix 3: Population Size and growth Rates by Province

Appendix 4: Percentage Distribution of Population and Density by Province

Appendix 5: Population 18 years and with or without Voter's Cards Province

ABSTRACT

Public Service Television remains a key institution of democratisation in the context of emerging democracies in Africa, especially with the advent of liberalisation and commercialisation of the media. The democratic changes taking place in Zambia require a genuine public service broadcasting television that will promote pluralism in the public sphere. Among the many available strategies and mechanisms for fostering a sustainable democratic and cultural environment, public service broadcasting is still the best.

This study set out to examine representation of political issues and debates during election campaign on ZNBC television news to assess the extent to which it plays a role as a public broadcaster in the mediation of pluralistic politics. Election news on television, in line with the public sphere argument was found to be essential for investigating the nature of public service television from the point of view of impartiality, universality and diversity. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods the study has confirmed the hypothesis that the role of a public service television in the mediation of pluralistic politics is compromised by ZNBC's partial and unbalanced coverage of elections. As a result ZNBC, as a public service broadcaster is undermining the very democracy it is expected to promote.

Public service television should take new forms if it is to be recognised and appreciated by the public as a genuine, open and democratic public sphere. I therefore recommend that a system of license fee for viewers be introduced. Secondly, government should increase funding into public service television to supplement revenue from license fee and advertising. Thirdly, I recommend the appointment of an independent board whose members will be appointed for a fixed term, by public nomination and a process of public hearing, according to publicly available criteria, which guarantees diversity of political, ethnic, social and professional background. Fourthly I suggest the formation of an Election News Coverage Committee comprising of journalists, academicians, the church and civic organisation that will formulate and implement editorial policy on election coverage and above all monitor and the coverage of elections on ZNBC television news.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. 0. Introduction

This chapter presents the general background to the problem, which generated the researcher's interest in undertaking this study. It situates the study in a global as well as a Zambian context. Further, it presents a statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, relevant research issues, the significance of the study and the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Background to the Study

Public Service broadcasting remains the key institution of democratisation in the context of emerging democracies in Africa, especially with the liberalisation and commercialisation of the media. Against a background of global trends toward liberalisation and privatisation, public service broadcasters are faced with the challenge of having to provide information and act as a public sphere where the views and opinions of all interested parties can be represented without interference. Some initial historical backtracking is necessary in order to understand current trends in the Zambian media.

The United National Independence Party (UNIP), which ruled Zambia from independence in 1964, and as the sole legal party after 1973 was in October 1991 dislodged from power by the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) in an election. Zambia became the first English speaking country in Sub-Saharan Africa to peacefully revert to multi-party democracy (Bayles and Szeftel 1999). The transition came as a result of popular dissatisfaction with one-party rule, and also the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Sichone and Chikulo 1996: 9). The return to multiparty politics paved way for the formation of many political parties.

Under the one-party system, UNIP owned and controlled the major daily newspapers, *Times of Zambia* and *Daily Mail*, and their Sunday versions *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* (Kasoma 2000). In addition, it was in full control of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), which operates the nation-wide radio and television station (Kasoma 1997). According to Kasoma (1997), both radio and television were extensively used for government propaganda, and no dissenting views or news were allowed to be broadcast.

With the change in the political dispensation came the assumption that ZNBC could contribute to the democratic process by transforming itself from a state-owned and controlled broadcaster into a public service broadcaster. But the MMD government has continued to own and control ZNBC and the two national newspapers including their Sunday versions (Kasoma 2000: 211). Political interference plays a fundamental role in ZNBC's programming, starting with the fact that television cameras are assigned according to who will be at the centre of the event being covered (Banda 1998:112).

In addition ZNBC's autonomy is often called in question during elections, and 'there is need for a clear policy that takes into account all differing political and other opinions in the country to avoid complaints or accusations of bias towards the ruling party' (Banda 1998: 112). In many instances, for instance, ZNBC radio and television have refused to air advertisements from opposition political parties since 1991. The ownership and control of the electronic and print media has therefore continued in a similar manner to that which obtained under the UNIP government.

The liberalisation of the airwaves since 1992 has enabled a number of investors to start up radio and television stations. But the majority of these are religious stations, while the rest are either community or commercial stations: for instance, there are Radio Ichengelo, Radio Chikuni owned by the Roman Catholic Church, Radio Christian Voice, Trinity Broadcasting Network and Mazabuka Community Radio (Banda, 1998). The conditions of the broadcasting licenses for religious stations do not permit them to air political broadcasts (Banda 1998). The only commercial radio station, Radio Phoenix, covers

political issues but does not transmit nation-wide. Today ZNBC, which has broader obligations and is publicly financed, remains the only nation-wide public radio and television station open to political broadcasts (Kasoma 2000).

The ZNBC depends on state grants for its operations, and to all intents and purposes it remains a *de facto* state communication institution (Banda 1998:112). Formally ZNBC is an autonomous institution established by an Act of Parliament (Act No 16 of 1987). It is managed by a Board of Directors, which is appointed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Banda (1998) notes that the government uses the appointment system as a conduit for influence on editorial matters. The Board hires and fires managerial staff; and Asante (1997) argues that one of the ways in which government can directly control and manipulate the media is through the appointment and dismissal of staff, or reward for exemplary behaviour. According to Kabwe (1997) the media employees who refuse to toe the MMD line are intimidated and harassed. In October, 1996, for instance, controller of television programmes Ben Kangwa was suspended for allowing a paid for UNIP advertisement in which Kaunda was announcing his party's decision to boycott the elections.

1.3. Research Agenda

The problem with the debate over the role of the media in the democratic process in Africa over the past few years is that too much emphasis has been put on the role of the state, with the solution to state control invariably being identified as privatisation and a complete opening up to market forces –Zambia being a case in point. This study explores the potential of public broadcasting services in pluralistic politics without subtracting the advantages of a liberal pluralistic media. The role of the market in relation to the media has been the focus, and consequently too little attention has been paid to a discussion of the media in relation to citizen's rights.

While the Media Policy paper recognises the need to reorganise ZNBC as public service broadcasting and also the need for the introduction of an independent broadcasting regulator of both radio and television broadcasts, no legislative changes have taken place

since the policy paper was launched in 1996 by the MMD government (see MIBS Information and Media Policy 1996: 23).

With the change in the political dispensation (from a one-party to a multi-party system) came the assumption that ZNBC could contribute to the democratic process by transforming itself from a state-owned and controlled broadcaster into a public service broadcaster. This is reflected in the Government's 1996 Information and Media Policy paper, whose policy objective among others is to strengthen ZNBC as a public broadcasting service (MIBS Information and Media Policy 1996). But the MMD government has continued to control and own ZNBC and the two national newspapers, *Times of Zambia* and *Zambia Daily Mail* and their Sunday versions (Kasoma 2000: 211). A number of scholars such as Kasoma (1986) and Ansah (1988) have noted that government ownership of the media appears to be an inevitable phenomenon in Africa, and one, which those in power should use to enhance democracy rather than stifle it.

Although ZNBC has become more accommodating towards the opposition than the UNIP government was, there are still complaints from the opposition that not enough of their news and views are being broadcast during election campaigns. Political interference plays a fundamental role in ZNBC's programming, starting with the fact that television cameras are assigned according to who will be at the centre of the event being covered (Banda 1998:112). The Media Reform Committee, set up soon after the return to a multiparty system in August 1992, made several recommendations one of which was that ZNBC be removed from government control and be placed under an independent public authority accountable to, and financed by, Parliament. But the current status of the Committee's recommendations is unclear.

An independent Electoral Commission of Zambia, established under the Electoral Act, CAP 13 of the laws of Zambia, and the Constitution of Zambia, CAP 1, is constitutionally responsible for among other things, conducting presidential and parliamentary elections. The Electoral Commission from time to time prepares and issues guidelines in the form of statutory instruments, like the Electoral Code of Conduct, on the

conduct of elections. These are very useful documents for candidates, political parties, civil society, election monitors and the media. ZNBC as a public service broadcaster is supposed to abide by the Electoral Conduct Regulations issued by the Electoral Commission of Zambia. These stipulate that there should be equitable time and accessibility for both the ruling party and opposition parties during elections (Electoral Code of Conduct, Statutory Instrument 179, 1996). It is also important to note that the Electoral Commission of Zambia is not by law empowered to enforce compliance with the code. The presidential and parliamentary elections are held at least every five years. The prime objective of the Electoral Commission is to ensure that all the elections are free and fair to all contesting candidates, political parties and electorates. If certain candidates or political parties are not covered or are presented in an unfavourable manner by the media, then the elections are not free and fair.

ZNBC's autonomy is often called into question during elections, and there is a need for a clear policy that takes into account all the various political and other opinions in the country, to avoid complaints or accusations of bias against the ruling party. Both in funding and editorial considerations, ZNBC has remained a *de facto* state information organ.

1.4. General Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to determine through critical analysis the representation of *political issues* and *debates* during an election campaign on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) television news. With the changes in the political system and changes in the broadcasting field, the main interest will be to examine the extent to which ZNBC plays a role as a public service broadcaster in the mediation of pluralistic politics during this year's presidential and parliamentary election campaigns. Although there is widespread agreement that news is unavoidably influenced, and therefore 'biased', by organisational routines, production constraints, and journalistic values, the contention here is that ZNBC television news is deliberately biased to favour those in power.

Therefore this study is premised on the hypothesis that coverage of election campaigns by ZNBC favours the political party in government and does not adequately cover the opposition political parties. And even when the opposition parties and their candidates appear on television news, they are presented in an unfavourable manner. This scenario gives undue advantage to the ruling party during elections and therefore undermines the democratic process in the country. ZNBC television is a public service station, transmitting nation-wide and also governed by access and fairness rules in coverage of news about politics and elections.

1.4.1. Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the coverage of the contending political parties on ZNBC television Main News.
2. To determine the extent to which ZNBC television covers news around the country.
3. To examine the extent of government's interference in the editorial operations of ZNBC newsroom.
4. To determine the extent to which ZNBC television news allows for dissenting views.

The study will seek to answer these questions:

- (a) To what extent does ZNBC's television news represent pluralistic politics from a public service point of view?
- 16 Does ZNBC television news allow for the expression of alternative viewpoints and the critical discourse of the opposition parties during election campaigns?

1.5. Research Assumptions

Public broadcasting is essential to the promotion of pluralism in the public sphere and remains a key institution of democracy. The assumption that public service television broadcasting is important to Zambia's democratic process is central to this study.

Political information is a valuable commodity in a democracy, and the news media are central agents in providing information about candidates and campaign issues to the electorate (Wasserman 1999). The electorate is entitled to learn through the media about the policies and programmes of each political party in elections. Public service

broadcasting is profoundly political in so far as it is an object of concern and intervention for political actors of all sorts.

The study assumes that public service television is supposed to be impartial, fair and balanced in the coverage of political issues pertaining to elections. The study recognises that the media have an important role to play in facilitating the citizen's right to vote through the reporting of issues and events before, during and after elections. Public service television, it is assumed, is an open forum governed by fairness and access rules where all political actors must be allowed access so that their campaign messages reach the voters. McQuail (2000) points out that public service broadcasting should be fully developed and be supported by policy and regulation.

The broadcast policy should ensure that public service broadcasting is universally accessible, that is, a full service for all, inclusive of the interests of the social minorities (McQuail 2000). Just as the State is supposed to act to promote some hypothetical 'national interest' in balancing demand, so is the BBC supposed to be itself a marketplace for ideas and competing viewpoints, endorsing none, admitting all, a national institution above the fray (Schlesinger 1978; 166). ZNBC should assume the position of the BBC. The ZNBC television news must be a source of political information that enables citizens' to exercise their political choices during an election. Television is important during election times because it allows viewers both visuals and sounds. This study assumes that television has gained a prominent position within the political systems of the world, and that concern for democracy automatically necessitates a concern about television news.

1.6. Significance of the Study

To scholars, academicians and researchers, the findings of the study are expected to contribute to the existing literature in the field of broadcasting, particularly on public service television as a public sphere for the promotion of pluralistic politics.

The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical information capable of influencing election news coverage during an election by the public service broadcasting television station.

1.7. Methods of Study

This study has employed both qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis. Jankowski *et al* (1993) argue that the use of multiple methods or triangulation provides for more valid results than a single research strategy use. It can also assist in constructing a more encompassing perspective on specific analysis, what anthropologists call 'holistic work' or 'thick description' (Jankowski *et al.* 1993:62). In short, the research question was investigated by drawing on content analysis of the election coverage and interviews with newsroom members and individuals within and without the media fraternity.

The choice of ZNBC television news for the study is based on the fact that television has gained a prominent position within the political systems of the world and concern for democracy automatically necessitates a concern about television news (Dahlgren 1995). The analysis of news bulletins broadcast at 19 00h before and after the Presidential and Parliamentary elections reveals that the coverage of political issues during an election was unfair and unbalanced.

In this study I have selected one month of news bulletins, from 6th December 2001 to 3rd January 2002. To represent one month of news, the study chose a systematic sampling consisting of every third day, so a total of ten (10) days were selected. The months of December 2000/January 2002 were chosen because this was the election campaign period and it was expected that there would be more coverage of political issues. The basis for analysing the news surrounding elections is the conception that public service television should be diverse, equal, balanced and universalistic in its approach to citizenship rights during elections.

Further, to analyse political representation and debates on public service television, the analysis of characters, actors and sources is important both from a straightforward narrative or literary perspective and from a more sociologically articulated theory of media representations and media roles. The literary perspective will contribute to analysing political themes, topics and issues relating to the election campaigns featured in the 19 00 hours main television news. And then sociologically articulated theory of media representation and roles will be used to analyse relations among political actors, themes, topics and issues, and the language that is used. This will also entail analysing the number of sources represented in each news item, the type of sources, source context and types of knowledge provided by sources (Hansen *et al.* 1998:108). This method according to Hansen *et al.* (1998), will assist me in examining whose views, opinions and ideas dominate the news. According to Hansen *et al.* (1998), the analysis of who is portrayed as saying and doing what to whom and with what attributes, is essential to an understanding of media roles in social representation and power relationships in society.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with key players in news production at ZNBC television, especially the decision-makers and 'gatekeepers' in the television news department. I interviewed the following staff from ZNBC: Controller News and Current Affairs, Assignment Editor, News Manager and a Senior Reporter. I also interviewed a TV producer and a Senior Reporter from Zambia Information Services (ZIS). In all the interviews, I was finding out their responsibilities, roles and expectations in the coverage of political issues during an election period.

Bryman (1998) notes that interviews are important in generating a rounded account of a particular group or organisation. They require minimum guidance from the researcher yet allow considerable latitude for interviewees to express themselves freely (1988: 46). For Cantrell (1993), interviews enable the inquirer to develop insights into how the participants interpret and make meaning of the world.

The major themes to guide the interviews were open-ended questions on how decisions in the newsroom influence the final product, the news. These questions were instrumental in

determining the extent to which ZNBC television, as a public service broadcaster, plays a role as a resource for information during election campaigns.

1.8. Thesis Outline

The thesis consists of six chapters:

In the first chapter entitled **Introduction**, I present the general background of the study from both a global and Zambian perspective, and delineate the factors that prompted me to undertake the research.

In the second chapter, entitled: **Media and Politics in Zambia**, I write briefly on the political situation in Zambia since independence in 1964. The chapter also examines the history of the Zambian media, and the development of broadcasting from independence to the present.

The fourth chapter is entitled: **Research Methods and Procedures**, and focuses on the methods, procedures and techniques employed in the research. It offers a rationale for the adoption of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, and including in-depth interview analysis. The chapter also explains how the data was processed and analysed.

Chapter five titled **Findings, Interpretation and Discussion**, presents the findings of the study in two parts. The first part is a quantitative report and analysis of data emanating from recorded news bulletins, whilst the second part is a report and analysis from in-depth interviews. In this chapter I also discuss the interpretation of the data and the findings of the study.

Finally, as its title indicates, chapter six offers a **Conclusions and Recommendations**. The recommendations are made in the light of the study's findings.

1.9. Conclusions

This chapter has given an overview of the study, providing a general background and citing the factors that led to the investigation. It has described the objective of the study, the research issues and assumptions, and the significance of the study, as well as providing an outline of the entire thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

MEDIA AND POLITICS IN ZAMBIA

2.0. Introduction

This chapter traces the political history of Zambia from the time of independence to date, and links it up with the growth of both electronic and print media. It attempts to uncover the relationship that has existed between politics and the media since independence, one-party system and now multi-party political dispensation. The chapter also gives a brief political situation just before the elections.

2.1. Political Situation in Zambia

2.1.1. Independence

Zambia gained independence from Britain when United National Independence Party (UNIP) under Kenneth Kaunda took effective control of government on 24 October 1964. Post colonial Zambia experienced multi-party politics with UNIP dominating parliament. Zambia legally became a one-party participatory democracy on 13 December 1972, thereby granting UNIP a monopoly of political power by making it the only legally permitted party in Zambia (Chikulo 1979, 1996, Mwanakatwe 1994). Kaunda's politics led to the deterioration of the Zambian economy to unprecedented low levels in which inflation rose to an all-time high and the standard of living generally dropped (Mwanakatwe 1994).

2.1.2. One Party System

Under the one-party system, one of the main features of political culture was the emphasis on intra-party electoral competition, that is, voters had to choose an individual within the party based on suitability and credibility, and not on a party label (Chikulo 1996). Until the introduction of multi-party elections in 1990, Presidential and Parliamentary elections did not represent a truly democratic, and satisfactory expression of the will of the people in Zambia (Mwanakatwe 1994, Chikulo 1996).

During this period, both the press and broadcasting media had almost totally been under government control, as Kasoma notes 'what followed was a period of almost total subjugation of the country's media (1997). Kaunda used the media as tools for propagating his ideology, the philosophy of humanism, which he effectively used to silence all opposition and criticism. He maintained that the journalistic professions must develop as an integral part of the humanist transformation of Zambia just as those who practice it are an integral part of it (Kasoma 1989). In addition, the Head of State, wielded great influence over the media, includes appointing and dismissing of editors.

2.1.3. Multi-Party System

In October 1991, Zambia changed from a formal and legalised one-party rule to political pluralism in a general elections that dislodged UNIP from power and ushered in the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD). While the credit for this development obviously should go to MMD and other popular groups in the country, it is important to note that creditors, donors and international financial institutions had come up with conditionality for continuing aid to African countries, including Zambia (Ihonvbere 1996). Alongside 'economic conditionalities', requiring African countries to restructure their economies by implementing structural adjustments programmes, introducing market reforms, and reducing the proportion of the wealth controlled by the state, there developed from the mid-eighties, a set of parallel 'political conditionality', requiring democratic reforms and 'good governance (Baylies 1995, Szseftel 1987, 1999, Kasoma 2000). The victory of Chiluba's MMD was partly due to MMD's stated commitment to the principle of democracy. The transition was also as a result of popular dissatisfaction with one-party rule and the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Sichone and Chikulo 1996: 9).

The return to multi-party politics paved way for the formation of many political parties, and currently they are thirty-seven registered parties. Today various political parties compete to be in power among themselves. After the 1991 elections, UNIP became the

official opposition in parliament, and other opposition parties mushroomed. Although they are currently many opposition parties, most of them are represented little more than their leaders (Baylies 1995, Szeftel 1987, Kasoma 2000). The political landscape is such that MMD dominates in parliament, and political opposition is numerically insignificant, and many Zambians feel that they live in *de facto* one party state (Chikulo 1996). Baylies and Szeftel (1996) have indicated that MMD has worked to reproduce rather than replace UNIP, and has failed to forge more durable institutions (1996).

It is important to note that the existence of a strong opposition is one of the hallmark of a working democracy. It is argued that a strong opposition will keep the government accountable, and offer checks and balances. Today the major parties apart from MMD are; United National Independent Party (UNIP), United Party for National Development (UPND) with five seats in parliament, Zambia Republican Party (ZRP), Heritage Party (HP), Zambia Democratic Party (ZDC), the newly formed Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) with one seat and numerous others. The parties taking part in this year's tripartite elections are the following; Movement for Multi party Democracy (MMD), Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD), United Party for National Development (UPND), United National Independence Party (UNIP), Agenda for Zambia (AZ), Heritage Party (HP), Patriotic Front (PF), National Citizens Coalition (NCC), Social Democratic Party, Zambia Republican Party (ZRP) and National League For Development (NLD). The CSO estimated 3, 649, 225 persons as eligible voters and it is expected that eleven political parties will have to share the votes from those that will be registered voters (CSO 2001).

The sad development in Zambia is that elections have been characterised by apathy since 1991. This is partly a reflection of a growing disillusionment among the Zambian public with politicians in particular, and also the political process as a whole and lack competitiveness created by the media's coverage of opposition parties (Chikulo 1996, Mwanakatwe 1994, Ihonvbere 1996). Even in other countries such as USA, Sweden and others, political knowledge among citizens is seemingly on the decline and as a result

voter turnouts are diminishing and there is great concern on how to renew interests in voting (see Dahlgren 2000: 311).

The MMD, and Chiluba have been in power for consecutive two terms (ten years) since 1991. Presidential and Parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place towards the end of this year. Early this year there had been calls from MMD cadres to amend the Republican Constitution to allow President Chiluba stand for presidency for the third time (the Constitution allows the president to rule for two consecutive terms) but pressure from MMD 'dissidents', civil society and the church prevented this to happen. The MMD members who were opposed to the third term campaigns have since formed two breakaway political parties: the Forum for Democracy and Development (FDD) under the interim chairmanship of Simon Zukas and the Heritage Party under Godfrey Miyanda as interim president.

2.1.4. The 'Third Term' Debate

The analysis of ZNBC television news in coverage of election news should start with the so-called 'Third Term Debate', 'because this set the tone for the way the media will structure their reporting of the elections (Banda 2001: 24). In this debate, MMD cadres started agitating for President Chiluba to 'go' for the third term as a President of both Party and the Republic. The debate raged on in both the private media and state owned media. The clergy, civil society, students and others opposed to 'third term' later formed an 'Oasis Forum' whose mission was to stop the MMD cadres from changing the Constitution and therefore allowing Chiluba to participate in the elections. The opposition, civil society, the church and others opposed to Chiluba's 'third term' bid were adequately covered by the private media especially Radio Phoenix which featured a talk show 'for' or 'against' third term. The state-owned media largely ignored the activities of the 'Oasis Forum' and in some cases dismissed them as insignificant opposition party schemes to discredit the ruling party. ZNBC television news featured mostly those that were for the 'third term'. Both the private newspapers, especially the Post and radio stations waged a campaign against the 'third term' bid for Chiluba. On the other hand the state-owned media waged a campaign for the 'third term' bid for Chiluba.

The result was a highly polarised media situation between state-owned and private-media. This scenario is expected to characterise the coverage of this year's elections.

2.2. The Media in Zambia

In Zambia, like the former Soviet Union, the media was seen as a direct tool of the state, and therefore it was owned, and operated by UNIP and its government. Bagdikian (1983) has noted that communist authorities have always recognised that to control the public they must control information (Asante 1997). The party and its government (the term used to address UNIP government) owned, and controlled the major daily newspapers, *Times of Zambia* and *Daily Mail* and their Sunday versions *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* (Kasoma 2000). In addition, it was in full control of the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), which operates the nation-wide radio and television station (Kasoma 1997). According to Kasoma, (1997) both radio and television were extensively used for government propaganda, and no dissenting views or news were allowed to be broadcast. In multi-party elections, the role of the media is important in ensuring that proper balance is maintained in projecting each political party's image.

During the days of Kaunda, his news invariably always came first regardless of the news value of what he was saying or doing (Kasoma 1997). Kasoma (1997) notes that there were instances where both radio and television news started off as the main headline of their news bulletins with Kaunda playing golf or viewing game in a game park and then much later in the bulletin reported some earth-shattering news of an airline disaster. UNIP government treated ZNBC radio and television as government mouthpiece created to defend government policies and decisions.

2.2.1. The Press

Today the Zambian media is still concentrated in the hands of government, for instance, the *Times of Zambia* (15 000), the *Zambia Daily Mail* (12, 000), the Sunday versions, *Sunday Times* (15 000), the *Sunday Mail* (5 000) and the *Financial Mail* (4 000) are owned and controlled by the state. This concentration of ownership of the Press by government has led to lack of diversity of the Zambian media, failure to reflect the full

spectrum of the views and opinions current within the Zambian politics and society at large. It has also posed a severe threat to the notion of 'free' marketplace of ideas, which has brought barriers-to-entry, such that it is not easy to start up a new medium. This is clear if you take a look at stories covered in a day by all the state-owned national newspapers; *Times of Zambia*, *Daily Mail*, *Financial Mail*, *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Mail* and ZNBC. They carry the same news stories, if you have read one, you have read all. In this case state-owned newspapers are the only newspapers that are well distributed across the country, and well accessed by many people, the content of which is favourable to the ruling party.

In Zambia there are no private newspapers worth talking about. Private media is yet to be realised, currently *the Post Newspaper* with a circulation of 15 000 is the only privately-owned daily newspaper that can be described as a national newspaper. The survival of private newspapers has been quite difficult. In addition to the *Post newspaper*, there is the *Monitor*, a bi-weekly with circulation of 30, 000 and the *National Mirror*, a weekly with a circulation of 3, 000 (Southern African Media Directory 1999). Apart from the *Post*, whose circulation is audited by the London based Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC); no other newspaper in Zambia is independently audited. The figures quoted are from Southern African Media Directory of 1999 and therefore are not been verified by an independent audit.

History has shown that the privately owned newspapers have a short life span because of prevalent harsh economic conditions in the media industry; newspapers have come on the scene, and have quickly disappeared because of unfair competition (see Kasoma 1986, 1997, 2000). This has also been largely due to stiff competition between the heavily subsidised government-owned newspapers and the private-owned newspaper (Kasoma 1997). Djokotoe (2001) notes that the combined circulation of local newspapers and periodicals published in English and Zambian languages stands at 290 500 copies, which is numerically insignificant in a country of 10.2 million people, 75 percent of whom are literate (CSO 2001).

2.2.2. Broadcasting

The liberalisation of airwaves since 1992 has enabled a number of investors to start up radio and television stations. The decision to open airwaves to private broadcasting might seem to be in line with the ideological basis on which the MMD government was voted into office following the multi-party elections of October 1991 (Maja-Pearce 1995, Banda 1997). But the majority of these are religious stations while the rest are either community or commercial stations (Banda, 1998, 2000). The first private broadcasting stations in Zambia were licensed in 1993 under Section 7 (1) of Zambia National Broadcasting (Licensing) Regulations, which were enacted in December 1993. The first private radio station to be set up was the *Radio Christian Voice*, owned by British evangelist, Bob Edmonton (Banda 1997).

The Catholic Church has been granted license to operate four radio stations; *Yatsani Radio* in Lusaka, *Radio Ichengelo* on the Copperbelt province, *Radio Chikuni* in Southern province and *Radio Maria* in Eastern province. The conditions of their broadcasting licenses for religious stations do not permit them to air political broadcasts (Banda 1998). They have been told in no uncertain terms that they should not veer into political reporting or else their licenses will be revoked (Banda 1998). In June this year, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Vernon Mwaanga had warned the private media to avoid operating outside their limitations because government would withhold their licenses (*Zambia Daily Mail*, July 19, 2001).

The only commercial radio station established in 1996, *Radio Phoenix*, covers political issues but does not transmit nation-wide. Then there are two community radio stations, *Mazabuka Community Radio* station, set up in February 2000 by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services and UNESCO and *Radio Lyambai* in Mongu started in 2000. To date none of these private and community radio stations covers nation-wide, ZNBC, which has broader obligations and is publicly financed, remains the only nation-wide public radio and television station open for political broadcasts (Kasoma 2000).

2.2.3. Television in Zambia

Zambia only has state-owned broadcasting station transmitting from Lusaka and Kitwe. ZNBC transmits both on radio and television programmes to a greater part of the country's population. A private company, the London Rhodesia Company (Lonrho) started television broadcasting, in Kitwe in 1961 but was purchased by the new government at independence in 1964, and incorporated into the state broadcasting system. During the 27 years of one-party rule of Kaunda, radio and television were extensively used for government propaganda, and no dissenting views or news were allowed to be broadcast (Kasoma 1997). Kasoma (1997) observes that news in the state-owned radio and television station; the ZNBC became litany of politicians, mainly Kaunda's speeches from the highest to the lowest ranking officials.

ZNBC has a single-channel television station transmitting in English for sixty-nine hours per week, eight hours everyday except for Saturday and Sunday when it broadcasts 12 hours. ZNBC does broadcast news in seven major languages (Tonga, Nyanja, Lozi, Kaonde, Bemba, Luvale and Lunda) from Monday to Friday. The only competitors to ZNBC television are two private pay channels, *Multichoice (Zambia)*, and a subsidiary of *Multichoice* in South Africa and *Cable and Satellite television (CASAT)*. Banda (1997) notes, the introduction of *Multichoice (Z) Ltd* and *CASAT* is only meaningful in terms of 'moneyed' public with foreign-produced movies/films, news and sports, rendering them ineffective in terms of indegenised political content meant to provide a surveillance of their political environment. There are very few Zambians who can afford *pay television* with a monthly subscription of about ZMK 200, 000 where the national poverty line stands at 86 percent of the population, and average gross monthly salary of US\$ 45 for civil servants (see World Development Report 2000/2001).

And the *Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN)* established in 1998 is a Christian broadcasting station affiliated to TBN in the United States. This television station is purely Christian-evangelist and does not broadcast any news. In its quest to improve its programming and financial standing, ZNBC has entered into an alliance with African

Broadcast Network in which ZNBC leases out some of the airtime to enable ABN to broadcast its entertainment and other programmes to television viewers (Banda 2001). Private television in Zambia is not contributing much to the democratic role as a public sphere.

2.2.4. Price and Ownership of Television Sets

The relatively high cost price of television sets and the widespread unavailability of the sets in the past have been major hindrances in the meaningful penetration of the medium of television in Zambia. Today the cost of black and white television is about ZK200 000 and the 14 inch colour television set is about ZK 600 000 for Philip made set, ZK 700 000 for Sony made set. The cost of television sets is very high for an average Zambian whose average income is ZMK 150, 000 and therefore television ownership is severely low. There are about 383, 000 television sets distributed over a population of 10.2 million, 32 % of which are in urban areas and 6 % of which are in rural areas (CSO 1994, 2001).

In Zambia where literacy ratio stands at 62.7% for male population to 50.1 % for female population, local languages broadcasting becomes the single most important communication tool for the majority of Zambians (CSO 1995). Television reception is mainly restricted to the line of rail and limited to the electrified areas in urban areas and other smaller rural towns spread over the country. Transmission to provincial centres is only possible within the average radius of 80 kilometres of these centres (Information and Media Policy 1996). Zambians that have managed to buy television sets often have to contend with the problem of availability of electricity necessary to operate them.

2.2.5. Electricity

Only 38 percent of households in Zambia have electricity. Urban areas are better serviced than rural areas. Of the households with electricity, 82 percent are in urban areas whilst barely 10 percent of them are in the rural areas (CSO 2001). This means that only a few Zambians have access to electricity to operate their television sets, particularly less so in the rural areas where 95 percent of the people have to find alternative source of energy.

Batteries are the main means by which the majority of ruralites use as power for their black and white television sets. The car batteries are increasingly becoming expensive to buy. The price of a new 12 volts battery, capable of powering a television set costs about ZMK 150, 000. In addition it needs about ZMK 15, 000 for recharging on a weekly basis. The problem is compounded by the fact that charging facilities are situated in urban areas that require transport for the owner to charge the battery. The alternative to both electricity and batteries is the solar system, which requires more monetary resources to set up.

2.2.6. The Legal Aspect of Broadcasting in Zambia

Zambia's post-independence constitution inherited a considerable number of stringent laws from the colonial era, some of which worked against proper functioning of television and other media. To date some statutory limitations are still vague, and unspecific, for instance freedom of expression is guaranteed under Section 22 (a) of the Constitution with reference to the media freedom under Section 22 (b) but also says that these rights can be abrogated in the interest of national security, defence, health etc. In addition, there is so far no specific Act on access to Public Information (at the time of writing there was a proposed Bill from MIBS). The absence of a freedom to information Act potentially makes it extremely difficult for journalists to gather and verify their stories on time especially on stories concerning government. It also makes their role as watchdogs to those in power impossible. The Freedom of Information Bill, 2001, under Part 2, Section 5 provides that every person shall have the right of access to information which is under control of a public office and that every public authority shall make available to the general public on request. A person who requests for information in pursuance need not give an reason or justification for that person's interest in the information being requested for. The Bill is quite promising in terms of freedom of the press in the history of the Zambian media.

These parts of laws are unsatisfactory in a country that claims to be democratic. The ZNBC Act, Section 27 provides that if a Minister is of the opinion that a particular

broadcast is defamatory, blasphemous, obscene or seditious, he may by notice in writing, prohibit ZNBC from making such broadcast, and ZNBC shall comply with such notice.

An Act of Parliament established the present ZNBC in 1987 and before then, it was directly under government control as a department of the Ministry of Information. Formally ZNBC is an autonomous institution established by an Act of Parliament (Act No 16 of 1987). The ZNBC Act regulates the issuing of licenses. This Act also provides for the establishment of ZNBC, and the definitions of its functions and powers. It also generally provides for the control, regulation of broadcasting, diffusion services and other relevant matters. Section 25 of the ZNBC Act provides that no person other than ZNBC shall operate a broadcasting service in Zambia otherwise than in accordance with the terms and conditions of the license issued by a Minister. Although ZNBC Act does not stipulate that ownership of public broadcasting will rest with the Minister, it is very clear from the powers of the Minister that it is owned by the State. This situation has compromised ZNBC as a truly public broadcaster. With the introduction of multi party politics in Zambia, all politicians are interested in the media for their contact with the electorates. Specific statutes to guarantee both freedom of expression to citizens and protection from interference by those in power should also be provided.

2.2.7. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has provided a brief historical perspective of the media from the time of independence in 1964, to the time of the liberalisation of the broadcasting and introduction of political pluralism in Zambia. The chapter highlights the interface between politics and the media through the first, the second and the third republics. Finally the chapter discusses the legal aspect of broadcasting. The next chapter presents the methods of data collection and analyses, employed in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. Introduction

Public service broadcasting remains the key institution of democratisation in the context of emerging democracies in Africa, especially with the liberalisation and commercialisation of the media. Public service television is essential in the promotion of pluralism in the public sphere. This study focuses upon news from the perspective of public service television as a public sphere. It is therefore based on democratic public sphere perspectives. For example, what constitutes public service television? What are its obligations? During election campaigns how is it expected to cover contending political parties? Similarly, what is a public sphere and how does it in this case relates to public service television news? Then there are the issues addressed by news production theories: for instance, does news content serve the interests of the proprietors or is news a reflection of reality? Are journalists independent in the choice and interpretation of stories during election campaigns? In short, this chapter explains the concepts of the public sphere and public service television, and shows how news is a social construct of journalists.

3.1. Media and Democracy

In discussing notions of the public sphere and public service television it is important to begin by looking at the interface between the media and democracy. It is widely acknowledged by scholars that in any democratic political system the media function both as transmitters of political communication, which originates outside the media organisation itself, and as senders of political messages constructed by journalists (McNair 1995, Curran 1995). The media also provide the structures and processes through which 'public conflicts' may be resolved; it is safe to say that the media are an integral part of politics and the political (Negrine 1994). It is therefore evident that in any elections the media's contributions in providing information and elucidating choice are particularly important. The low degree of political knowledge has been a source of

lament since the very start of such research in the early decades of this century (Dahlgren 2000). Citizens need accurate information from the media and many recent studies have shown a strong correlation between reading newspapers and political knowledge (see Buckingham 1997). Knowledge is still closely associated with power, not least in the civic context, and for knowledge one needs both information and meaning (Dahlgren 2000). Yet others have argued that the assumption that the informational, journalistic output about current affairs in the media that is of relevance for civic culture is probably still largely true, but increasingly less so. For the purpose of this study, as Dahlgren puts it:

The increasingly referential symbolic media universe has become a significant agency of socialization in the modern world, and social experience becomes increasingly interwoven with media experience, or at least interpreted in terms made available by the media. (2000: 324)

In modern politics, where political rallies are dying out, political actors too are becoming aware that the key to political power lies in the use of the media. Broadcasting has contributed to the observable decline of the political party, and it has done so by preempting the party's role as a communicator of politically relevant information and as a structurer of political debate (Garnham 1986). As McNair (1995) points out, the increased awareness of the central importance of media coverage has convinced many competing political parties that they need to seek the aid of the media to achieve their aims. Whatever the ideological differences that may exist between political parties in modern democracies, they all share a commitment to constitutional means of advancing their objectives, that is, of trying to convince a population as a whole of their correctness, and putting their policies to the test of periodic elections (McNair 1995: 6). Again for political parties, the smooth functioning of the democratic process described above is dependent primarily on the ability to communicate with those who will vote for and legitimise them.

The media remains crucial to the democratic process; as Murdock and Schlesinger put it:

The heart of a democratic society is the requirement that citizens, if their vote is to have any substantive meaning, should have equal access also to sources of information and equal opportunities to participate in the debates from which political decisions rightly flow. (1986: 34)

McNair (1995) identifies five functions of the media in 'ideal-type democratic society, which are crucial to an understanding of the relationship between media and democracy. Firstly the media must inform citizens of what is happening around them: democracy needs an informed citizenry, and the media are the chief vehicles for achieving this requirement. Secondly they must educate the people as to the meaning and significance of the facts. Thirdly, they must provide a platform for public political discourses, facilitating the formation of 'public opinion' and feeding that opinion back where it came. Fourthly, the media must give publicity to government and political institutions. Finally, the media in democratic societies must serve as channels for the advocacy of political viewpoints.

Indeed the media should brief the voters and assist them to make an informed choice at election time. According to Murdock:

For these roles to be achieved adequately, the media must act as a public sphere, where citizens must have access to information and debates regarding decisions taken in the sphere of politics that will enable them to know and effectively assist them exercise their civil and political rights. (1992:21)

Very Imp't

Discussion of the democratic role of the media is bound up with debate about how the media should be organized in a country. A good starting point for discussing the democratic role of the media is provided by Murdock's concept of the role of the media. He argues that people must be considered as citizens enjoying full human rights, and for them to exercise their full rights as citizens:

They must have access to the information, advice, and analysis that will enable them to know their personal rights and allow them to pursue them. Second, they must have access to the broadest possible range of information, interpretation and debate on areas that involve public political choices and they must be able to use communication facilities in order to register criticism and propose alternative courses of action. And thirdly, they must be able to recognize themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations on offer within the central communications sectors and are able to contribute to developing and extending these representations. (Murdock 1995:21)

People must have access to reliable reports, portrayals, analyses, discussions, debates and so forth about current affairs. For McNair (1995) the importance of an informed, knowledgeable electorate dictates that democratic politics must be pursued in the public arena. This requires a media that acts as public sphere.

3.2. The Media as Public Sphere

The media, as mentioned earlier are crucial to the success of democracy in many countries by of they function as public arena. Public service television news has a key role to play in the democratic public sphere. It should provide objective and balanced information in order to promote fair representation of political issues during election campaigns. Thus the cornerstone of this study is the notion that public service television news must be a source of political information that enables citizens to exercise their political choices during an election.

Democratic politics are public, the political process demands that individuals act collectively in making decisions about who will govern them. And this is done through Presidential and Parliamentary elections that are held at agreed intervals (in most countries provided for by the Constitution). During elections, electorates express themselves by voting for certain political parties or individuals. McNair (1995) argues that the private political opinions of the individual become the public opinion of the people as a whole, as this is reflected in voting patterns. Public opinion, in this sense, is formed in what German sociologist Jurgen Habermas has called 'the public sphere'. Many scholars have come up with definitions of this public sphere, and it is important to look at each of these definitions before looking at Habermas's concept and models of public sphere.

For Josef Ernst, the public sphere is that distinctive discursive space within which individuals are combined so as to be able to assume the role of a politically powerful force (McNair 1996). For Kuhn (1998), the public sphere is an institutional framework

and set of practices, which encourage wide and inclusive public debate about issues of social and political importance (in Randall 1998: 3).

The earlier definition of public sphere by Habermas referred to a sphere of private people coming together as a public (Curran 1995: 135). In Habermas's account of the rise of democracy, historically the first version of the public sphere or space was represented by the 18th century coffee shops or debating societies, where active participants in political life met, discussed and formed political projects (McQuail 2000). An important task was to keep a check on government by way of an informed and influential public opinion. This was done through private conversation. This was known as 'bourgeois' public sphere mainly because the 'bourgeois' class patronised these coffee houses. According to McNair (1994) the public sphere is no longer a bourgeois realm of politics but has expanded to include absolute majorities of the population in modern democratic societies. The media considered as a public sphere comprise of the communicative institutions of society, through which facts and opinions freely circulate.

Habermas's work received much criticism from other scholars for idealising a bygone and elitist form of political life (Curran 1990). Despite much criticism, the idea of the public sphere has been found to have more value under conditions of mature capitalism (McQuail 2000: 158). Habermas has since shifted his earlier position, no longer conceiving the public sphere as private individuals coming together as a single public but 'as a network for communicating information and points of view' that connects the private world of everyday experience to the political system (Curran 1995: 135). The public sphere is also viewed as being much more differentiated, pluralistic and organised than before. This conception offers greater hope that the media will facilitate meaningful debate and exhibits greater faith in the independence of media audiences. The concept of public sphere identifies a sphere distinct from the economy and the state, and includes a whole set of institutions within which public debates and decision making are carried out; the media, ad hoc committees, letters, submissions, public hearings, public inquiries, etc. This sphere should be characterised by general accessibility of information, free and unconstrained access, and possibilities for rational discussions (Syvertsen 1992: 27).

In this study the public sphere is regarded more as a public forum, a source of political knowledge and a basis for collective political action. For Curran (2000), the public sphere is a neutral space within society, free of both the state or corporate control, in which the media should make available information affecting the public good and facilitate a free and reasoned public dialogue that guides the public direction of society. Curran writes that a model of public sphere offers:

A neutral zone where access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely available, where discussion is free of domination and where all those participating in public debate do so on an equal basis. The media facilitate this process by providing an arena of public debate, and by reconstituting private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion. (Cited in McQuail 2000: 158)

Citizens need to participate in political issues especially during elections. With access to reliable information from a variety of perspectives and to a diversity of opinions on current affairs, citizens will arrive at their own views on important issues and thus prepare themselves for political participation (Dahlgren 1995). All the political contestants must be given enough time to campaign on the publicly funded media that act as a public sphere. Their issues must be objectively and impartially represented in news bulletins. For McQuail, the public sphere refers to:

A notional 'space' which provides a more or less autonomous and open arena or forum for public debate. Access to the space is free, and freedom of assembly, association and expression are guaranteed. (McQuail 2000: 157)

Therefore public service television should be an arena of public debate where all may participate without conditions. The electorate is entitled to learn through the media, in its role, which acts as a public sphere, about the policies and programmes of each political party in an election.

In a situation where there are over thirty political parties, access to public television will depend on the number of seats they hold in parliament from the previous election. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) suggest that each political party should receive that share of attention which is merited by its strength in the country, as defined by a mixed formula of votes cast in the previous elections and seats contested in the current one. This system

would ensure fair competition among political parties, especially in third world countries where one strong political party has formed a government against weak and fragmented opposition parties.

3.3. Public Service Television as a Public Sphere

Ideally, a fully functioning democracy requires broadcasting services that empower their audiences, and such services should be central to the public's engagement in political debates (Keane 1991). In recent years the media have been a major vehicle for mass advertising that has promoted consumerism and acted as the central forum for organising political information and debate in the emerging liberal democratic systems based on universal suffrage. With the widespread liberalisation and commercialisation of broadcasting going on in many countries, there is a need to strengthen the public service broadcasting model, as it is still a core institution for the promotion of democracy. Why is Public service television still very crucial for the promotion of democracy?

3.3.1. Consumerism or Citizenship

The communication system has found itself caught between these two paradigms of liberal economy and liberal democracy; the communication system has been caught in the centre of the tension. Defendants of public communication systems argue that whilst the exercise of citizenship presupposes collective action in pursuit of equality and fraternity as well as individual liberty, the ideology of liberal economy encourages people to seek private solutions to public problems by purchasing a commodity. According to Murdock:

It urges them to buy their way out of trouble rather than pressing for social change and improved social provision. It also redefines the nature of citizenship itself that it becomes less a collective political activity than an individual, economic activity-the right to pursue one's interest without hindrance in the marketplace. (1995: 19)

This study is based on the notion that the consumer marketplace offers an array of competing products, but does not confer the right to participation in deciding the rules that govern either market transactions, or the distribution of the wealth and income that allows people to enter the market in the first place. It provides choice at a price, and without empowerment. But Keane (1991) argues that the media should 'aim to empower a plurality of citizens who are governed neither by an undemocratic state nor

undemocratic market forces' (126). Keane (1991) vehemently attacks the suggestion that the privatisation of what he terms the 'public sphere' of broadcasting is a positive thing. For Keane, the organisation of the media on market principles does not extend freedom, because 'liberty and equality are unsafe in market liberalism and public service media should try to counter head-on the market liberal strategy' (1991). With the profound democratic changes going on in many third world countries, it is imperative that they have media that look upon their audience as consisting citizens rather than consumers.

To meet these conditions, a communication system needs to be diverse and open to the people regardless of their affiliations. How should the media then be organised so as to extend this diversity and openness and thereby provide adequate resources for realisation of full citizenship? Where commercial broadcasting regards listeners as consumers of products, the ethos of public service views them as citizens of a nation state and regards public broadcasting as too important to be left to the whims of market forces. Therefore the second theoretical approach in this study is premised on the notion that public service television has a key role to play in the democratic public sphere. It assumes that television news is a source of political information and potentially crucial for the survival of democracy in any given society. Public service television is expected to perform specific roles in a democratic dispensation, some of which are identified below.

3.4. Roles of Public Service Television

3.4.1. Watchdog Role

One of the primary democratic roles of the media in terms of traditional liberal thought is 'to act as a public watchdog overseeing the state' (Curran 1991: 84). According to Curran (1991), this involves 'revealing abuses in the exercise of authority, although it is extended to include facilitating a general debate about the functioning of the government' (84). Ronning (1997) argues that this is essential in all forms of democratic theory and has to do with the principle that choices made by power holders are to be publicly scrutinised and contested (Mano 1997).

Handwritten note:
None
Analysis

However Curran (1991), in his reassessment of the media as a watchdog, argues that 'while critical surveillance of government is an important aspect of the democratic function of the media, this is no longer paramount (84). Curran contends that:

This conventional view derives from a period when media were highly politicised and adversarial. Most modern media are now given over to entertainment. Coverage of public affairs accounts only a small part of even news media content and only a proportion of this takes the form of critical scrutiny of government. (2000: 86)

Curran (1991) argues that a broader definition of watchdog of the media is needed and suggests that the media should be seen as 'a source of redress against the abuse of power over others' (86). The watchdog role of the media should be beyond state control, because this role is traditionally compromised by the closeness of the public service broadcasting to the government. But, as Curran (1991) argues in his reassessment of the traditional approach of the public watchdog role, public service broadcasters enjoy some 'publicly' based independence that enable them to perform the watchdog role more meaningfully at times than privately owned broadcasting concerns. Their audience credibility, their strategic long-term interests, their self-conception and the self-respect of their journalists, have all encouraged a defence of public service broadcasting autonomy from government. Curran (1991) argues that a strong internal system of checks and balances and fear of public disapproval are strong components in public services broadcasting's performance of the watchdog role (89). Curran (1991) argues that the 'ultimate defence of public service broadcasting autonomy is public support' (89). Curran (1991) has argued that the watchdog perspective of the media is rather defensive and that the media can be viewed in a more expansive way as an agency of information and debate that facilitates the functioning of democracy (127). Thus the other major role of public service television in the public sphere is that of representation.

3.4.2. Agency of Representation

It is evident that most people around the world depend on television for news: it is the source they most draw upon and which they generally regard as the most reliable (Randall 1998: 9, Hall 1998: 54, Negrine 1994, Schulz 1997). Public service broadcasting

should be organised in such a way as to enable diverse political parties to express their viewpoints, mobilise support and help them reach the voters. According to Curran (2000), the media should brief the electorate and assist voters to make an informed choice at election time (127). This study is premised on the notion that the media should take a central role in providing political information on the working of the political system, which would ultimately encourage citizens to participate in the political processes in a positive way (quoted in McQuail 2000). The media should provide a channel of communication between government and governed, so as to help society to clarify its objectives, formulate policy, co-ordinate activity and manage itself (127). Television election campaigns, for most people, have become the major learning experience of democratic polities, and through television the public is exposed to a larger body of rational evidence on which to base their electoral choice than ever before (Negrine 1994). In other words the representational role of public service television must include assisting to create the conditions in which alternative viewpoints and perspectives are brought into play. This refers to the role of creating and nurturing a public sphere in which various viewpoints in society are aired and exchanged on public service television (Dalgren 2000).

For Schulz (1997) this situation has arisen especially because of the decline of all *fora* for political interaction, especially political meetings (in McQuail 2000: 158). Therefore the role of public service broadcasting as an agency of representation is essential, mainly because it encourages wide participation in society, potentially creating, in public service television, a citizens' channel which allows them to be heard and receive essential information on citizenship issues (Mano 1997: 26). Generally people are represented primarily through political parties, interest groups and the myriad structures of civil society.

Public service television should assist political groupings to mobilise support, that is, help them to operate as representative vehicles for the views of their supporters and to register effective protests and develop and promulgate alternatives (Curran 1991:103). The media, according to McQuail (2000) when organised in an appropriate way, especially

when open, free and diverse, can be considered one of the most important intermediary institutions of civil society.

In relation to theories of democratic transition, O'Neil (1998) has noted that 'the media...is vital to the creation of and vitality of civil society; without it, freedom of communication, and thus the foundation of democratic rule is undermined. For democracies to function civil society requires access to information as a means to make informed political choices and politicians need the media in order to present their views and interact with society'.

3.4.3. Agency of Information and Debate

Public service television should be organised in a way that enables diverse social groups and organisations to express their viewpoints. Representation has to do with both the informational and extra-informational aspects of media output, such as the symbolic and rhetorical (Dahlgren 1995:15). Curran observes that the media can be viewed as an agency of information and debate, that is: 'after having briefed the people and staged a debate the media relay the public consensus that results from this debate to government and in this way it is argued the government is supervised by the people between elections' (2000:129). The study is based on the assumption that coverage of political issues during election campaigns is objective and impartial, and that the views of all those contesting the elections must be heard.

Public Service television as an agency of representation is very essential mainly because it encourages wide participation in society, potentially creating, in public service television, a citizens' channel which allows them to be heard and to receive essential information on citizenship issues (Mano 1997: 26). What then constitutes citizenship?

3.4.4. Informed Citizenship

Public service television is obliged to foster and maintain citizenship rights for the democratic wellbeing of society. Murdock identifies four basic human rights-freedom of

movement, freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of conscience, which need legal guarantees and protection from state interests (Murdock 1992:20).

Without these basic human rights, Murdock contends, it is impossible to work towards a fully democratic society based on open debate and genuine competition for power (Murdock 1992:20).

Closely associated with citizenship are the political rights to participate in the making and exercise of the laws by which one consents to be governed. According to Murdock (1992), in liberal democracy these entail both the right to choose between competing candidates for legislative assemblies, and the right to participate in the application of laws in the courts through the jury system (20). It is important to point out that these sets of citizenship rights are neither static nor are they consistent across societies in the modern world (Dahlgren 1995: 135). However the rights are enshrined in international human rights conventions to which most countries are signatory, making them to a larger extent universally relevant. Murdock (1992) observes that it is not enough to possess these citizenship rights: they must be exercised as well. He identifies three areas in which a communication system is implicated in the constitution of citizenship:

1. First in order for people to exercise their full rights as citizens, they must have access to information, advice, and analysis that will enable them to know what their personal rights are and allow them to pursue them effectively;
2. They must have access to the broadest possible range of information and debate on areas that involve public political choices, and they must be able to use communications facilities in order to register criticism and propose alternative courses of action; and
3. They must be able to recognise themselves and their aspirations in the range of representation on offer within the central communications sectors, and be able to contribute to developing and extending these representations (21).

Moreover public service television is obliged to develop a civic culture among citizens. According to Dahlgren the notion of civic culture points to those features of the socio-cultural world that constitute everyday preconditions for all democratic participation in the institutions of civil society, engagement in the public sphere and involvement in political activity (2000: 320). To acquire such civic culture people must have access to relevant knowledge via the media. Accessibility must not only pertain to technical and economic aspects but should also include language and cultural proximity. Dahlgren

argues that the sources of knowledge and materials for the development of competencies must be comprehensive, and cast in modes that communicates well with different collectivities (2000: 321).

3.4.5. Entertainment

One of public service television's roles is that of providing entertainment to viewers. By its very nature television is an entertainment medium. Public service television entertainment can be seen as one of the means by which people engage at an intuitive and expressive level in a public dialogue about the direction of society (Curran 1991: 102). Fictional programming on television is an important dimension in which public dialogue takes place and in this sense it is an integral part of the media's informational role (Mano 1997: 29). Media fiction offers cognitive maps of reality, and furnishes social understandings that have political implications and media entertainment is bound up with debates about social values and identities which are key determinants of voting behaviour (Curran 2000: 139). In short, public service television should fulfill its entertainment function for the democratic wellbeing of its viewers. The next section discusses the various perspectives on public service television, including its definition, its privileges and obligations to the viewers, and its contributions to democracy in general.

3.5. Public Service Television Perspectives

In the face of the rampant commercialisation of the media, public broadcasting is essential in the promotion of pluralism in the public sphere. Among the many available strategies and mechanisms for fostering a sustainable and democratic cultural environment, public service broadcasting is still the best. There is still no substitute for independent, publicly funded public service broadcasting organisations, as the Council of Europe acknowledged in 1994 when it identified public service broadcasting as essential to the functioning of the media in a democratic society (Raboy 1998). It offers the best way of establishing an open public forum because it is governed by values of fairness and access rules. The study of public service broadcasting is in this case synonymous with that of public service television. In many instances the radio and television are so difficult to distinguish from each other that it is more fruitful to apply a general institutional

perspective. Thus in this study the notion of public service broadcasting is used interchangeably with that of public service television. What is public service television and what is its control structure? What are its duties, obligations and responsibilities?

3.5.1. Definition of Public Service Television

What exactly is meant by the public service concept in broadcasting? According to the British Peacock Report, some use the phrase to describe only certain broadcasting institutions, others to describe national broadcasting systems as a whole, still others use it to describe a certain mixture of programmes (Mpofu 1995). The Peacock Report found it difficult to obtain what it termed 'an operational definition' from broadcasters. Part of the Peacock Report reads:

When the Peacock Committee turned to broadcasters for their interpretation of public service they remained unenlightened. 'We had some difficulty' their report observed, in obtaining an operational definition from broadcasters', and it criticised the BBC particularly for being too vague or for claiming too much. (Peacock Report in Scannell 1989)

A survey of opinions on the issue shows that academics and politicians are no longer sure of the precise parameters of public service broadcasting (Mpofu 1995). Because of the differing definitions available from local and international sources, it is important that this chapter clearly describes the notion of public service television specific to the needs of this study. As Mpofu and Tomaselli (1995) observe, the idea of public service broadcasting changes with time, and the history of broadcasting technology and institutions has always been a history of transition. The ethos of public service broadcasting and its practices have changed considerably since the earlier decades of the twentieth century (for example the BBC pre-1955). This study focuses on public service television in terms of openness and accessibility to the public. Historically, a combination of public pressure, enlightened self-interest and favourable social political moments led governments in various countries to create public service broadcasting institutions, placing them at arm's length from politics and sheltering them from the effects of commerce (Raboy 1998: 172). For Raboy, wherever this model was followed, public service broadcasting became the central institution of the democratic public sphere,

taking on increasing importance as broadcasting came to occupy more and more public space and time, and playing an important role in the democratisation of public life.

3.5.2. Television as a 'Public Good'

Public service broadcasting interprets public service as a public good, as opposed to a private good, aimed at serving the entire population, just like public health services and roads. Television qualifies as a public good on the grounds that it has the characteristics of non-exclusion and non-rivalry (Mano 1997: 13). From an economics perspective, non-exclusion means that sellers are not able to limit consumption to those who pay for the good. Non-rivalry means that one person's consumption of a broadcast does not deny another a consumption opportunity; for instance, if consumer A consumes an apple it is not available for B to eat, whereas if A watches a television programme, it is still possible for B and others to watch it. Television meets the non-rivalry condition. As a public cultural good, television is not destroyed by the act of consumption. The consumption by one individual does not in anyway diminishes the consumption of the same good by another individual.

The public good characteristic of broadcasting is also reinforced by the low to zero extra cost of reaching an extra viewer or listener (Collins 1998: 368). There is nothing in it, which is exclusive to those who pay more. This economic logic is central to the interpretation of television as a public good fundamentally benefiting everyone in society (Mano 1997: 13). The service's essential rationale was set out by the BBC's first Director General, John Reith, who recognised from the outset that, unlike a newspaper, broadcasting was a public good in the technical sense that its consumption by one person did not preclude its consumption by another. Murdock cites Reith's views thus:

The broadcast is as universal as the air. There is no limit to the amount, which may be drawn off. It does not matter how many thousands there may be listening; there is always enough for others, when they wish to join in. For him broadcasting in a more general, philosophical sense, since its universal reach helped constitute the audience as members of a unitary public. It was, in his phrase, 'a good thing' that it would be shared by all alike, for the same outlay and to same extent.... the genius and the fool, the wealthy and the poor listen simultaneously and to the same event. (Murdock 1995: 27)

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was the first pre-eminent public service broadcasting institution to embrace the principle of public service and devotion to the highest interest of community and nation. For Reith public service broadcasting objectives were 'to inform, to enlighten the people of the nation as a whole and to entertain them with programmes of high standards and good tastes' (Burn 1978). Economic theory recognizes the existence of goods which confer long-term benefits but which no individual thinks are worth paying for. These are known as *merit goods* - culture, scientific research and education (Collins 1998). According to Collins, free markets tend to under-supply *merit goods*, so that it is generally accepted that there is a legitimate role for the state in providing them and that public service broadcasting provides an efficient way of delivering these merit goods to many final consumers. Within the terms of reference of this study, public service television has the role of providing political information about contending political parties, which falls within the category of *merit goods*, and which private service broadcasting cannot provide for.

3.5.3. Towards a Working Definition

Keane (1993) defines the public service model as 'one that requires the development of a plurality of non-state media of communication, which both function as permanent thorns in the side of political power and serve as the primary means of communication for citizens situated within a pluralistic society' (Boyd-Barrett and Newbold 1995: 264). As Scannell (1989) has argued, 'the fundamental democratic thrust of broadcasting lay in the new kind of access to virtually the whole spectrum of public life that radio and television made available to all'. Scannell maintains that public service television has enabled genuinely new forms of communicative relationships to emerge in an expanded, modern and democratic public sphere, and its agenda must be a public agenda.

In many western European countries, public service broadcasting refers to a system that is set up by law, and generally financed by public funds (often a compulsory license paid by households), and given a large degree of editorial operating independence (see McQuail 2000). The general principle of operation is that the system should serve the

public interest by meeting important communication needs of the society and its citizens, as decided and reviewed by the democratic political system (McQuail 2000).

In this study, the public service broadcasting also refers to state-owned radio and television institutions, that are not only financed by the state through the taxpayers' funds and, or partly by viewers and listeners through compulsory license fees, but are also controlled by the state. This is the common form of public service broadcasting in most African countries (Opuku-Mensah 1998).

It would seem that to arrive at a working definition of public service broadcasting we will have to return to its guiding principles and values, and look at each of the three cornerstone principles of public broadcasting: control structure, privileges, and duties and obligations. The discussion of control structure and institutional privileges offers necessary background to the issue of obligations facing public service television, which is the focus of this study.

3.5.4. Control Structure

In principle public service television institutions are construed as self-governing and autonomous, particularly in their day-to-day affairs (Mano 1997: 15). A publicly appointed Board of Directors with a Chairman and a Director General ensures such autonomy in management matters. Moving the locus of power within the public service media from the state to civil society appears to be the guiding force behind the suggestions put forward by Keane, who calls for a plurality of non-state, as well as national media to serve the interests of a diverse and horizontally organised society (Tomaselli 1994).

3.5.5. Privileges

The second fundamental characteristic of public service television operations is that they have been entrusted with a formidable number of privileges guaranteed by the State. Historically high on the list of privileges was enjoyment of legislated monopoly: the absence of competitors meant that they had exclusive license to broadcast, and in many

instances this was backed by legislation. In many instances, too, the public broadcaster was privileged to issue broadcasting licenses to private broadcasting stations. It also had a secure and independent source of revenue from license fees. As Syvertsen (1992) observes, the license fee was perceived to be crucial for safeguarding the autonomy of broadcasters. It provided protection against government pressures. The license fee, often fixed and compulsory, is a distinct advantage to a public broadcaster over a commercial broadcaster as it constitutes a steady funding base (Syvertsen 1992). In a significant way, the viewers' license fee revenue guarantees an important source of income to a broadcasting institution. In many African countries public service broadcaster were largely dependent on public funds raised from taxpayers, although some broadcasters may levied television license fees. From the perspective of the broadcasters, the license fee was almost as important as the monopoly, since it implied that the revenue would pour in almost independent of demand (Syvertsen 1992).

But the privileges enjoyed by public broadcasters are presently being eroded by changing circumstances whereby the medium of television, for instance, is becoming more internationalised and commercialised (Mano 1997). The introduction of new technology has introduced the possibility of more numerous broadcast outlets, fragmented in terms of geography, region, locality and interest. A proliferation of viewing opportunities has thus been created, and this has led to changes in the content of material broadcast. The multiplication of channels has meant that competition has become stiffer and audiences have fragmented (Mpofu 1996). According to Mpofu:

New technologies have allowed for the entrance of new players and outlets are competing for viewers, diverted resources to strategies for gaining and keeping attention, changed the economics of programme production and sharpened the struggle for power in the media. Thus new opportunities have also raised new problems, those of coping with abundance rather than scarcity (1996: 18)

This situation is forcing most public service broadcasters to 'to intensify co-production deals, to privatise or sub-contract parts of their programming and production facilities, to engage in international marketing ventures, and in general to speak the language of profit-conscious business executives' (Keane 1990). Beset with this serious economic

problem, the public service broadcaster nevertheless has special obligations towards society, regardless of its diminishing privilege base.

3.5.6. Obligations

The third most important characteristic of public service television is a set of obligations that it is supposed to fulfil in return for the privileges described above. It is important to note that these obligations in a way constitute the various public expectations that are placed on public service television corporations: both media and political analysts regard television as a core political and ideological institution of any society (Mpofu 1996). A general consensus has emerged concerning the basic principles and objectives of a public service broadcaster and this is elaborated below.

According to McQuail, these include universality of geographic coverage, diversity providing for all main tastes, interests and needs, as well as matching the full range of opinions and beliefs, providing for special minorities, having concern for national culture, language and identity, serving the needs of the political system, being in essential respects balanced and impartial on issues of conflict, and having specific concern for quality as defined in different ways (2000). These principles are discussed in detail below.

Public service television has an obligation to provide two kinds of universal service: geographic and programme and audience universality. For Collin:

Geographic universality is achieved through extension of transmissions to communities where the cost of providing service exceeds the revenue earned and programme and audience universality is achieved by serving all, the poor as well as the rich with a range of programmes including those which maybe unprofitable. (1998: 366)

In short, this means that public service broadcasting must aim to be available to every member of a society, regardless of his or her remoteness and inaccessibility. According to Mpofu (1996) a genuinely national television with relationships to members of society as citizens and not just consumers has to be available even to those who live outside the cities and towns. The social value of *merit goods* and the benefits potentially conferred

by public service setting a quality threshold can only be realised if the services charged with these mandates are widely consumed (Collins 1998: 369).

The principle of universality extends to appeal, with programmes chosen so as to service a diversity of public needs. In the case of television news, the service must aspire to appeal to the interests of the whole population and serve national priorities. The news should represent the interests and points of view of all without an evaluative commitment to any particular group of people in society. At all times, not just during election campaign periods, public service television should be impartial, non-partisan and accessible to parties and people with varied opinions. It should serve even the interests of the minorities. Access to television should be considered a social necessity in the same way as access to water, roads, health, etc.

It is widely acknowledged that the independence/impartiality couplet is a particular ideological construct of the public broadcasting ethos and has never been applicable to all countries (Mpofu 1996: 13). Tomaselli argues that:

The success of the claim to political independence depends on the willingness of politicians to abstain from interference with day-to-day running of the broadcaster, the ability of the broadcaster to resist political interference by remaining in control of the reporting and analysis of news and current affairs and public confidence; the acceptance by both pressure groups (reviewers, commentators, political analysts, academics) and the general public (in most countries voters, tax-payers) that the broadcasting service is indeed independent. (Cited in Mpofu 1996: 12)

Public service television must reflect national concerns, interests, events and culture. For Mpofu argues that the national broadcaster should televise political events of importance like general elections. This principle is based on the notion that public television is expected to 'respect if not support the dominant values and moral standards of their own society and to give expression to the culture, arts and language of their own national society' (McQuail 2000: 142). For instance, in time of crisis public service television should provide a focus and a voice for national concerns, while still retaining independence. Public service television can in this way foster national identity.

Public service broadcasting was introduced for the purposes of cultural development and democratisation and hence is perceived to serve the public interest. The obligation of national interest implies that 'we should have a media system that is operated according to the same basic principles governing the same society, especially in relation to justice, fairness, democracy and current notions of desirable social and cultural values' (McQuail 2000: 142). The media should carry out a number of important tasks in the public interest, including providing adequate support for the democratic political system by acting as a public forum for debate and a source of useful information to the voters. Former Director General of the BBC, Charles Curran (1979), observed that it was a broadcaster's role to win public interest in public issues, and that broadcasters have a responsibility to provide a rationally based and balanced service of news which will enable adult people to make basic judgements about public policy in their capacity as voting citizens of a democracy (in Golding 1994: 463). This study emphasises in particular the principle of impartiality in the representation of news for all political parties in an election. The media should work as a public sphere and contribute to the working of the nation's political institutions. For McQuail (2000) this contribution can be made through publishing full, fair and reliable information on public matters, assisting in the expression of diverse points of view, giving access to many voices in society and facilitating the participation of citizens in social and political life (142).

For Syvertsen (1992) the obligation to broadcast in the public interest carries both negative and positive implications. According to Syvertsen, the negative implications are that broadcasters are expected to refrain from transmitting anything that might threaten the social order or national security. This constraint is usually legislated. They are also expected to avoid certain forms of media conduct, especially those associated with extreme commercialisation and with promoting cynical and negative images of public figures and political processes (McQuail 2000: 145). Public television, which uses monies from all citizens, must represent all views fairly and should be even-handed in its presentation of candidates, parties and issues.

Public service television has an obligation to provide a balanced output in its programme schedule. For the purpose of this study the notion of balanced output would apply to television news. Public service television has a duty and obligation to convey different viewpoints of all the political parties taking part in an election impartially. As recipients of public funds they have an obligation to reflect the views and serve the informational needs of all citizens. Syvertsen (1992) points out that from the beginning, broadcasting institutions pressed for greater opportunities to broadcast debates and talks on topical issues. Syvertsen (1992) observes that neither the broadcasting corporations nor the public at large should play a part in political discussions, their role being merely to chair and listen to (in Reith's phrase) 'outstanding exponents of conflicting opinions.' The Crawford report suggested that:

A moderate amount of controversial matters should be broadcast provided that the material was of high quality and distributed with scrupulous fairness. (in Syvertsen 1992)

In Norway, for instance, party political broadcasts were introduced in the very first year of NRK existence, as each party was given twenty minutes to present their views prior to 1933 general elections (Syvertsen 1992).

In the coverage of political issues, the public service television has an obligation to be impartial; 'the central question here is the relationship between broadcasting institution and the state and the way in which the latter is able to circumscribe the agenda and autonomy of the former' (Syvertsen 1992: 62). Government should ensure that the public service broadcaster is fully independent in all editorial and operational matters. In most African countries, there is need for a statutory guarantee of such independence and a clear prohibition of government interference in any respect of operation (Barker 2000: 3).

3.5.7. Editorial Independence

Editorial policy and decision-making in all broadcasting institutions should be free from interference by government or the governing board (Barker 2000). MISA defines editorial independence as 'the right of journalists and editors to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria, consistent with international standards, such as the

newsworthiness of an event or its relevance to the public's right to know and in accordance with international codes of ethics of journalism' (Barker 2000: 3).

Television news should therefore be objective and impartial representing and accommodating all views to secure a just outcome in an election. For Schlesinger:

There should be no predominant groups or interests in society, but rather that 'there are only competing blocs of interest, whose competition, which is sanctioned and guaranteed by the state, ensures that power is diffused and balanced and that no particular interest is able to outweigh heavily upon the state. (1978: 166)

This notion holds that news should represent all interests and points of view without evaluative commitment to any. In its campaign for the liberalisation of broadcasting in Southern Africa, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) outlined some of the principles and duties of public broadcasting to include:

To meet the requirement of pluralism there needs to be a comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news and information coverage across a range of broadcasting outlets, in order to support a fair and informed debate. This includes a mix of international, national and local issues, local perspectives and comprehensive coverage of the political process, including parliament, political party conferences, national and local elections. (Barker 2000)

This implies that the news production process is simply a set of technical routines, which enables the producers to secure an undistorted picture of reality. The credibility of this position is predicated on the assumption that the news staff constitute a collective of 'neutral', non-partisan operatives whose adherence to a particular model of professionalism in turn ensures that fact and value are held rigidly apart (Schlesinger 1978: 164).

3.5.8. Public Service Television Funding

Public service television should be funded by the public which it serves, particularly by means of a license fee compulsory for every owner of a television set, in return for a good service available to all from the broadcaster (Mano 1997). The issue of universality of payment was according to Mpofu 'rooted in the thinking that as everyone is capable of receiving the national broadcaster, everyone should pay for it'. In fact the rise in monetarist policies around the world has provoked re-evaluation of the principle that

regardless of whether or not the individual uses a public service, as citizens, he or she should still pay for it through license fees or other mechanisms for raising public finance (Mpofu 1996). Public service television must be independent from the paymaster. In autocratic countries, government retains control of the media to limit the influence of the opposition. There are many examples to illustrate the susceptibility of public service television to political interference, especially from the state. Television is now perceived as an agenda setter for political debate and as having influence on the profile of political parties (Mpofu 1996). MISA's recommendations to most African countries where only the State has the resources adequately to fund public service broadcasting is that 'safeguards should be incorporated into the funding process.' This, according to MISA, will ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the government or parliament will not reduce or manipulate broadcasting budgets in retaliation for programming decisions with which they disagree (Barker 2000: 4).

3.5.9. Social Construction of News

The production and reception of the news has been widely researched. This study is premised on the theory that news is a socially constructed representation of reality and that news and current affairs are crucial in constructing our view of the world. News is influential in shaping the thinking of the people and they believe in radio and television news in particular because much of what is said is factually true, and because the news organisations have spent many years promoting their reputation for truthfulness and impartiality' (Dumbleby and Burton 1992). But news is a creation of journalistic process, an artefact, even a commodity (Fowler 1991: 13, Bell 1991: 155-174). For instance Hall (1978) argues that 'the media do not simply and transparently report events, which are 'naturally' newsworthy *in themselves*. News is the end product of a complex process, which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories' (Cited in Fowler 1991: 12). The Glasgow University Media Group describes television news as:

A sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society. From the accents of the newscasters to the vocabulary of camera angles...the news is a highly mediated product. (in Negrine 1994)

Journalists select what events should be included in news. The selection is accompanied by transformation and differential treatment in presentation, according to numerous political, economical and social factors (Fowler 1991). The process of selection and inclusion, and, by implications, of exclusion, contradicts the view that the news media give full and comprehensive account of world events (Negrine 1994). So journalists help construct a reality that is made up of beliefs as well as facts. In fact most news is constructed within a framework of firm expectations, which are used to guide the deployment of available resources. For Schlesinger (1978) the news that is received on any given day is not as unpredictable as much journalistic mythology would have people believe: rather, the doings of the world are timed to meet the needs of a production system in many respects bureaucratically organised.

The news media select events for reporting according to a complex set of criteria of newsworthiness. Criteria that are probably more or less unconscious in editorial practice are referred to as news values (Fowler 1991). But news values and conceptions of the significance of events are ideological. For Golding and Elliot news is ideological because it provides an integrated picture of reality and a worldview supportive of the interests of powerful social groups (in Negrine 1994). For the critical school of media studies, the products of the mass media are systematically organised so as to present a picture of the world to assist in the reproduction of the relations of domination existing in society. Murdock (1973) also argues that in all political and economic systems, news coincides with and reinforces the definition of the political situation evolved by the political elite. Schudson prefers a more flexible theoretical stance:

The media reinforce the 'cultural hegemony' of dominant groups, that is, they make the existing distribution of power and rewards seem to follow from nature or common sense and succeed in making opposition views appear unreasonable, quixotic or utopian—perhaps even to dissenters (in Curran and Gurevitch 2000: 181)

Finally this study recognises that news is not just reported, but it is also interpreted, and interpreting any event involves the beliefs, opinions, hopes and aspirations of those gathering, reporting and publishing the news. In that process, inevitably, ideology determines what gets reported, when it is reported and how the reporting is done. The media define for the majority of the population what significant events are taking place,

and also they offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events (Hall *et al.* 1978: 57). Therefore in this whole news production process the politicians need access to communication channels operated by the media organisations and they must construct and adjust their messages to the demands of formats and genres of those particular media. Hall (1978) and others have shown how even production schedules, and conventions for access to sources, affect the content and representation of news (see Schlesinger 1978).

In television news, there is heavy reliance on planning structure, which creates a routine agenda of predictable stories, which provide the backbone of each day's production requirement (Schlesinger 1978). Broadcasts have limited manpower and cover only the stories they think are most newsworthy. There is also always pressure and the constant problem of controlling work processes to meet deadlines or output times. Newsgathering strategies ensure economy of time and effort by employing journalists to regular sources of news. All the above need to be taken into account in the determination of what should be selected and included in public service television.

3.5.10. Conclusion

The chapter began by discussing the role of the media in democracy and theoretical perspectives on the public service television, in the process mapping out the obligations ideally expected of television offered as a public service. The public sphere perspectives, as revealed in the third part of the discussion, amplify the importance of public service television in the democratic process in society. The last section of the chapter discusses news production theory. The next chapter discusses the media and political landscape in Zambia.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

4.0. Introduction

This study employed both qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis. Jankowski *et al.* (1998) argue that the use of multiple methods or triangulation provides more valid results than a single research strategy. Triangulation can also assist in constructing a more encompassing perspective on specific analysis, what anthropologists call 'holistic work' or 'thick description' (Jankowski *et al.* 1993: 62). The study focused on ZNBC television Main News at 19 00h because of the important role ZNBC news is playing in emerging democracy in Zambia. Television news was selected for analysis because of the numerous complaints and criticisms from its viewer in terms of impartiality and unbalanced coverage of political issues. News, in line with the public sphere argument was found to be essential for investigating the nature of public service television from the point of view of impartiality, universality and diversity (Mano 1997).

4.1. Content Analysis of ZNBC Television News

To analyse representation of political news and issues on ZNBC television, content analysis method was employed. ZNBC television was chosen because it has been in existence for a long time (since 1961, see Chapter 1), and is the only television channel in Zambia that is universally accessible, and 'caters' for the national news needs. Content analysis of the Main News bulletins provided a concrete basis for analysing and discussing the representation of political news and issues of a public service television in pluralistic politics. It was important to know the representation of political issues and political parties during election campaign period. According to Hansen *et al.*:

Social stereotyping, misrepresentation, and what Garbner (1972) has termed the 'symbolic annihilation' (through under- representation or non-representation) of different groups and types of people in society have been central concerns of content analysts since the early part of the century. (1998: 111)

This study analysed television news using public service principles as the basic yardstick guidelines. In the first place, this study analysed the Main News using quantitative

content analysis, and this was followed by qualitative content analysis. Both methods bring out an inside character of television news.

This method Holsti (1969) argues is 'systematic' or for Krippendorff (1980) 'replicable' (Hansen *et al* 1998; 95). David and Chavas (1982) argue that content analysis is a method of data analysis as well as a method of observation' (Mano 1998: 31). According to David and Chavas instead of observing people's behaviour directly, or asking them questions about it, the researcher takes communications that people have produced and asks questions of the communication (Mano 1998: 31).

What is content analysis and how objective can it be? According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (Hansen *et al* 1998: 94). But the use of the word *objective* has been of much controversy, and critics have argued fundamentally, and rightly, 'that *objectivity* in content analysis as in any other research is an impossible ideal serving only to cover cosmetically, and mystify values, interests and means of knowledge production which underpin such research' (Hansen *et al.* 1998: 95). Content analysis as used in this study is defined by David and Chavas (1982) as a 'technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages' (Mano 1997: 31). As noted by Holsti (1969) the inferences from content data are derived from frequency with which symbols or themes appear in the text (Hansen *et al.* 1998). For Hansen *et al.* (1998) content analysis is by definition a quantitative one, 'the purpose of the method is to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts, and through this, to be able to say something about the messages, images and representations of such texts, and their wider social significance' (95). The study first employed the quantitative content method.

4.2. Quantitative Content Analysis of ZNBC Television News

To analyse the representation of political issues and debates during an election campaign on the ZNBC television news, this study employed quantitative content analysis. As earlier mentioned, content analysis is by definition a quantitative one. Content analysis

can help provide some indication of relative prominence and absences of key characteristics in media texts (Hansen *et al.* 1998: 95). Content analysis allows producing systematic description of what news contain. According to Deacon *et al.*:

By counting how often particular topics, themes or actors are mentioned, how much space and prominence they command, and in what contexts they are presented, content analysis provides an overview of patterns of attention, it tells us what is highlighted and what is ignored. (1997:17)

In this situation, quantitative content analysis would show which political party received more coverage and representation on ZNBC television news than others.

News stories come from two types of sources, the media and newsmakers. According to Bell (1991) attribution serves an important function in the telling of the story, 'it reminds the audience that this is an account which originated with certain persons and organizations.' (190). In this study the origin of the story is very significant in understanding the power relations existing in the Zambian society. For Hansen *et al.* (1998) the analysis of who is portrayed as saying and doing what to whom, and with what attributes, is essential to an understanding of media roles in social representation and power relations in society (108). It also according to Hansen *et al.* (1998), does assist the study examine whose 'views, opinions and ideas dominate the news' (108). According to Bell (1991), a story 'should be regarded as embedded under stack of attributions, each consisting of source, time and place (190). The most important is the newsmaker component of who says what information? For Bell news sources are of two broad kinds:

Suppliers of information, which the journalist wants to know, or news actors whose own utterances have news value- announcements, reactions, proposals and the like...the source exercises her role as news actor through speaking. (Bell 1991: 191)

News about what someone has said, either as a witness to facts or as a news actor. But someone does not mean just anyone. The conclusions of news production on the nature of news sources are solid; news is what an authoritative source tells a journalist.

It was also found to be important to consider how television Main News portrayed the candidates, especially the frequency of the news reports on each political party, duration and the positioning of the story within the news bulletin. The length of the news stories



on elections was measured in order to establish the proportion of campaign news for all contending political parties in relation to the entire bulletin. It was also important to identify which news story, and party opened the bulletin (lead story). The basis for analysing the news this manner during election was linked to the conception that public service television acting, as a 'public sphere' should be diverse, equal, balanced and universalistic in its approach to citizenship rights during elections. Election news also offered a good opportunity to investigate how ZNBC television meets public service obligation in relation to the political public sphere. The unit of analysis in this study was campaign news. What is campaign news? For van Praag and van de Eijk (1998) campaign news is defined as 'news about candidates, parties, planned election events, polls, formation composition or news making explicit reference to the election or campaign' (in deVreese 2001: 163). Each news story was coded for topical focus and listing the topics of each individual story using a predefined list of topics completed this type of coding.

4.3. Sampling Procedure

This study focused on the coverage of political news and issues by ZNBC news at 19 00 h. A period of one month between 2nd December 2001 and 1st January 2002 was selected. This was a period covering election campaigns and soon after elections when election results was being announced. During this period, it was expected that they would be more news on politics. To represent one month of news, the study chose a systematic sampling consisting of every third day, so a total of ten (10) days were selected. The Main News at 19 00 hours was recorded for every after a third day. Many content analysis researchers have tested the reliability of different sizes and designs of samples across different time periods; for instance, Mintz (1949) notes that 'to represent a month of news, samples consisting of every second day and every fifth day provided a content proportions of the entire month' (Bell 1991: 23). The first day was randomly selected and ten recordings of Main News were done between 2nd December 2001 and 3rd January 2002.

4.4. Qualitative Content Analysis of Television News

Whilst analysing and quantifying types of actors or sources who are quoted or referred to in the television news goes a long way towards showing how social power is expressed through, and with mass media, 'many content analysts have rightly pointed out that the analysis of actors and sources needs to go further to analyse the differential uses to which voice are being put in the media (Hansen *et al.* 1998: 109). This study used textual content analysis, which is a qualitative content analysis, based on literally perspectives that contribute to analysing political themes, topics and issues relating to election campaigns. The critical question in this study was how the primary definers of news were being used, elaborated and framed by the media?

4.4.1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with respondents involved with ZNBC television. The Interviews also extended to Zambia Information Services because of their input to ZNBC news. In general, these were face-to-face interviews in which respondents answered various questions on public service television. The format of the interviews was largely non-structured (see appendix 1). Topics were used as guides to the research questions. According to Nachmias (1981). Four features describe this kind of interview approach:

It takes place with respondents known to have been involved in a particular experience, it refers to situations that have been analysed prior to interview, it proceeds on the basis of an interview guide specifying topics related to the research hypotheses and it is focussed on the subjective experiences regarding the situations under study. (in Mano 1997: 33)

The study followed the topic-focused interviews, which were intertwined with the non-structured technique that contains no pre-specified questions. This means those questions were not asked in any order. This gave respondents a chance to provide other details that might have been left out in the questioning. The advantage of this technique is that it gave respondents a chance to provide other information than what the interview guide mentioned and as a result new issues and questions of interest came up during interviews. All formal interviews were recorded and additional questions came up after transcription.

I conducted interviews with four respondents from ZNBC, two from Zambia Information Services (ZIS) and one from the *Zambia Daily Mail*. The semi-structured interviews took the form of conversation, and on average the interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. I was interested in facts about how each of these media institutions are organised, the reporters' work, and major mechanisms for controlling production, and what an ordinary day looks like. I was also interested in how reporters perceived their own situation as creators of news about elections for the nation, what they think about coverage of political issues in the changing media scene, pressure from and interference from authority, and what they would like the situation to be. Themes such as editorial independence, fairness and balanced coverage, priority of, and approach to campaign news were addressed in each interview. To get a broader picture, and be able to cross-examine information, it was also necessary to carry out interviews with people representing different aspects of the Zambian media outside ZNBC.

The criteria of selecting interviews were largely flexible and open ended but still restricted to key informants with input in ZNBC television news. Four interviews were drawn from ZNBC. The number was limited to four because of the in-depth nature of the interviews, and only those crucial to newsrooms were interviewed. Furthermore, follow up questions were carried out through telephone conversations. All formal interviews were recorded, and with the exception of one whose office was too busy to allow for a recording. Some of the main informants were interviewed several times as new questions came up in news picture. However these follow-up interviews were not recorded but through telephone conversations.

4.4.2. List of Interviewees

The following respondents were interviewed at ZNBC;

1. Senior reporter, ZNBC News and Current Affairs, James Simasiku (**recorded**).
2. Assignment Editor, ZNBC Newsroom, Jappy Musaka (**recorded**).
3. News Manager, ZNBC Newsroom, Cecilia Banda (**recorded**).
4. Controller News and Current Affairs, Nkamu Nkamu. (**Recorded**).

The next category of interviews outside ZNBC comprised;

1. Executive Producer at ZIS Filming Department, Chola Chifukushi (**recorded**)
2. Senior Press Officer at ZIS Press department, Bedenicko Kayaya (**not recorded**)

It was also necessary to interview a media practitioner outside ZNBC and a Chief reporter of Daily Mail was interviewed.

1. Newton Sibanda (**not recorded**)

Finally the opinion of viewers were necessary to bring the study, a viewer based critique of ZNBC television news. I got the opinions of viewer from the 'letters to editor' columns of the daily newspapers.

4.4.3. Document Analysis

In order to strengthen the objectivity of the results of the findings a method of document analysis was employed. Before the election campaign started, information from documents was used to construct interview questions. More important was the analysis of documents after the elections, which included reports on elections by local, and international election monitors and observers, newspaper and magazine articles. It was necessary to get opinion of the local and international election monitors and observers on the performance of the public service television in the election campaigns. I analysed the following reports:

1. Interim Report by Foundation for Democratic Process (**Fodep**).
2. Preliminary Report by Zambia Independent Monitoring Team (**ZIMT**) and National Organisation for Civic Education (**NOCE**).
3. Second Interim Statement by European Union Election Observation Mission.
4. Interim Statement by Zambia Election Observation Mission, The Carter Centre.

Although their mandate was on the conduct election, election monitors also were concerned with media coverage of elections particularly the public media and therefore

their observation of the public media performance contributed to an independent opinion to this study.

4.5. Limitations to this Study

A few methodological, practical and theoretical limitations were encountered during the course of the study. Some respondents, especially from Zambia Information Services, at the outset, did not feel free to air their views because of the secrecy oath associated with civil servants in Zambia. One senior reporter from ZIS preferred not to give a recorded interview or even to reveal his name. At ZNBC all the respondents were willing but this was after producing a letter of introduction from management. However I explained to the respondents the purpose of the study, and that it was purely for academic purposes. I requested them to detach themselves from the official capacity as either civil servants or managers or reporters for a state owned media. As a result, I received full co-operation and this helped me shape the trend of the interviews.

I missed a few recordings of news at 19 00h because of the technical faults that I experienced with my recorder. However I managed to make up for the missed recordings as I finally had nine recorded news bulletins. I never obtained any documents from ZNBC, I was told to make a formal application to management, which I did but never got a reply. I needed the producer's guide, assignment schedules and financial reports for the first half of the year 2001.

In spite of the limitations cited above, this study was successfully conducted. The next chapter presents and discusses findings from the recordings, interpretation and discussion of the findings of my study in accordance with research issues and assumptions mentioned in the first chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

5.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of my study of ZNBC television news broadcasts and of the in-depth interviews with ZNBC personnel and other interest groups from a public service television theoretical point of view. The chapter also considers the critique of ZNBC television news made by local and international election monitors and observers in the recently held elections in Zambia. The chapter situates the data cited in this and previous chapters in theoretical framework of public service broadcasting, thus juxtaposing the reality of television news and the ideal public service television news. It then considers how this ideal can be realised in practice. First the discussion will focus upon news from the perspective of public service television as a public sphere. Then the focus will shift to the mandate and obligations of public service television during election campaigns, and the independence of journalists in the choice and interpretation of stories during election campaigns.

5.1. Findings

5.1.1. Content Analysis of Main News

The study was meant to investigate the representation of political issues and debates during an election campaign on the ZNBC television news in order to assess the extent to which ZNBC television represents pluralistic politics from a public service point of view. The content analysis included selected daily Main News bulletins broadcast at 19 00 hours, and it covered a one-month period before and after the elections. This study isolates the news genre for content analysis chiefly because through its 'frame viewers learn about themselves and others, of their own institutions, leaders, and life styles, and those of other nations and their people'. (Mano 1997: 61)

The study only considered local stories. This is largely because the meaning of news is a product of interaction, so that news only becomes meaningful within a determinate context. It can only communicate appropriately if the same social structural determinants

at work in the news itself are at work when one reads it or listens to it determinants that are at work in the news itself are at work when one reads it.

The classification of what topics, themes or issues are covered within a general area of coverage chosen for analysis is a common starting point for studies of media content (Hansen 1998: 112). The content analysis in this study of news restricts its analysis of news to stories within the following categories; actor sequence, political party, origin of the story, story type, and duration. Types or categories of coverage were chosen in accordance with the study's general area of investigation, the elections process. More categories could have been included, but because practical of considerations the above were deemed sufficient for the purpose of the study.

Analysing and quantifying the types of actors or sources who are quoted or referred to in news shows how social power is expressed through mass media (Hansen *et al.* 1998:109). The actor sequence is very important because it signifies the relative importance of news stories in a bulletin: for instance, the first story is considered the most important story of the day. The categories constitute an important way of determining public service television's role in the Zambian public sphere in terms of 'who' is the main actor in the news, and which political party does he or she represent, what is the 'theme' or story type and how is related to the election campaign, and finally, how much time is allocated to each news item. All these aspects are crucial and central to ZNBC's mandate as a public service television station. In the next section are tables showing the findings and description of each news bulletin.

5.2. Main News Bulletins: 3rd December 2001 – 1st January 2002

5.2.1. Main News Monday 3rd December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. MMD Candidate	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	2
2. Opposition leader	PF	Lusaka	Elections	2
3. Former UNIP President	UNIP	Lusaka	Retire	1.30
4. Former MMD MP	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	0.30
5. Foreign Affairs Minister	MMD	Lusaka	Health	2
6. Vice President	MMD	Lusaka	Education	2
7. Agriculture Minister	MMD	Lusaka	Farming	1.30
8. Government Official	Unknown	Lusaka	Health	1.30
9. Traditional Chief	Unknown	Lusaka	Health	1.30

On this day there were few stories directly related to my study: out of nine local new stories only three were about elections. Of the three stories on elections, two represented the MMD while only one was on the Patriotic Front. The lead story is about the MMD candidate Levy Mwanawasa filing his nomination papers at the High Court. It shows the candidate Levy Mwanawasa before the Returning Officer, Chief Justice Mathew Ngulube, and smiling at Party cadres some of whom are chanting party slogans. It also shows incumbent President Chiluba waving to the crowd.

The second lead features Patriotic Front presidential candidate Michael Sata filing his nomination papers before the Chief Justice, Mathew Ngulube. The story does not give as much coverage to his supporters-the lead story does to his rival's supporters. The fourth story features a former MMD Member of Parliament for Chavuma constituency, Jerry Muloji (not adopted as an MMD parliamentary candidate), denying reports that he would contest the forthcoming parliamentary elections on any party ticket. He is featured urging the people of Chavuma to vote for MMD and Levy Mwanawasa. The rest of the stories were not relevant to my study.

5.2.2. Main News Thursday 6th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. Opposition leader	FDD	Lusaka	Elections	2
2. Opposition leader	NCC	Lusaka	Elections	2
3. Opposition leader	AZ	Lusaka	Elections	2
4. Opposition leader	HP	Lusaka	Elections	1. 30
5. Panos Executive	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	1
6. Health Minister	MMD	Lusaka	Health	2.30

Most of the local news on this day was about the nomination of opposition presidential candidates. Four opposition parties' leaders were featured 'lodging in' nomination papers. The other two stories were not significant and relevant to my study. All the parties but one had equal coverage in terms of time. In this news bulletin, although opposition parties were prominently represented, there were no campaign messages in the stories.

5.2.3. Main News Monday 10th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. President Chiluba	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	3
2. Vice President	MMD	Kabompo	Elections	1.30
3. AIDS Activist	Unknown	Lusaka	Health	2.30
4. Donor	Unknown	Kabwe	Donation	1.30

This news bulletin led with a story about President Chiluba saying that the government would consider sending peacekeeping soldiers to Central Africa Republic shortly before his departure for Sudan. He is featured saying that Levy Mwanawasa stands a good chance of winning the elections.

Chiluba is shown listing a number of reasons why Zambians should vote for Mwanawasa:

'Vote for Mr. Mwanawasa, he is the first Vice President of the third republic, the first vice president of our MMD, State Counsel...very mature lawyer, a lawyer that worked very... very hard to get those that worked against the principles of democracy by trying to overthrow Dr Kaunda's government illegally...he helped to rescue them, once you try to do that I don't think you can be a democrat...you can not reform, it is impossible to change from throwing guns to trying to establish democratic systems of government...so I urge Zambians to vote for Mwanawasa.'

The second lead story features the Vice President in Kabompo calling on electorates to safeguard the peace they were enjoying and urging them to vote for MMD. He is shown filing a nomination paper in Kabompo with party cadres. The rest of the stories were not relevant to this study.

5.2.4. Main News Friday 14th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. President Chiluba	MMD	Khartoum	Conflict	2.30
2. President Chiluba	MMD	Khartoum	Elections	1
3. Japanese official	Unknown	Lusaka	Donation	2

On this day there were six local stories, of which only two were related to elections. The two stories featured the President and his Vice President. The lead story featured President Chiluba calling for respect for a democratically elected government in Khartoum in Sudan. Two of the presidential candidates had been implicated in coup attempt previously under Kaunda's leadership. Although they are not mentioned in the story, by implication is that they are bad candidates capable of assuming power by means other than through elections.

The second story is about president Chiluba meeting chief Ndake of the Senga people on a campaign tour of the Eastern province to drum up support for the MMD presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa. In this news bulletin, there was no mention of the

opposition. There was no coverage of the opposition political parties. The other story was about a donation by the Japanese Ambassador to a non-governmental organisation.

5.2.5. Main News Tuesday, 18th December 200

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. Minister of Information	MMD	Mkushi	Elections	1
2. Vice President	MMD	Mpika	Elections	1. 30
3. BP Manager	Unknown	Lusaka	Employment	3
4. Government Official	Unknown	Kitwe	Graduation	3

Two stories of the four selected directly referred to the election campaign. The lead story featured the Minister of Information who is also the Secretary General of the ruling MMD, Vernon Mwaanga, addressing a rally in Mkushi. He was assuring people of Mkushi that the MMD government had supplied relief maize to hunger-stricken areas. In this story Mr. Mwaanga is dismissing the allegation by 'some quarters' that the distribution of relief maize was a campaign strategy for the ruling party. Although the story was comparatively short, the story carried the positive message that the MMD government was caring and that it should be voted back into power.

The second story featured the Vice President, Enoch Kavindele, who is also MMD vice president, blaming maize distributors for not supplying relief maize to hunger-stricken villagers and issuing a warning that government would cancel the contracts with maize distributors for 'failing to perform'. This again was at campaign rally in Mpika. He is blaming the high price of mealie-meal on a shortage of maize which is the result of connivance between the suppliers and opposition political parties.

'What is the point of you people of Mpika asking me to send you maize and I send you three tracks of relief maize and the maize is just rotting away in the warehouse... It therefore shows that the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have been appointed and paid are working with the opposition to make us unpopular,' Kavindele said at a campaign rally in Mpika.

In this news item the Vice President is again showing that the MMD government is working for the welfare of the people, and alleging that shortages of maize, could be

blamed on opposition and the NGOs entrusted to distribute relief maize. In summary the opposition is being portrayed negatively. The Vice President is telling the voters that there is a conspiracy between the NGOs and opposition against the MMD government. The other two stories had no bearing on the elections. On this day the news bulletin covered the MMD, and the opposition was only mentioned negatively, at a rally held by the Vice President in Mpika district of Northern Province.

5.2.6. Main News Friday 22nd December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. Former detainee	MMD	Lusaka	Election	4
2. President Chiluba	MMD	Lusaka	Lusaka	3
3. Police Commissioner	Unknown	Lusaka	Donation	2
4. Finance Minister	MMD	Lusaka	Election	1
5. Trader	Unknown	Lusaka	Business	2
6. President Chiluba	MMD	Many places	Election	8

On this day the news ran for one hour and there was extensive coverage of the elections: of the six stories, four were directly related to election campaigns. The Main News bulletin featured the MMD in three stories, while there was no item on the opposition candidates or parties. Here it is difficult to distinguish between a Minister and Party member. The lead story involved a former detainee, a sympathiser of the ruling MMD, dismissing claims made by former President Kaunda on Radio Phoenix that the MMD government's human rights record was pathetic. The former detainee, Faustino Lombe, described himself as one of the victims of Kaunda's hostile rule and said:

'It is not right for President Kaunda to claim that his hands are more cleaner than Chiluba's ...I escaped from Kaunda's intentions to kill me and...I have lived in Canada for the last thirteen years in political asylum...I want to make the record straight that in terms of violating the fundamental human rights ...Kaunda beats Chiluba by far...'

The story was designed to clear the MMD government's human rights record and portray it positively. The second lead story was about a donation of game meat by President Chiluba to University Teaching Hospital Children's Wing on the eve of Christmas. In

picture, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Dr Kashiba Bulaya is representing the President. And receiving the donation on behalf of the hospital is Irwin Chomba, who is shown thanking the President. Although the news item has no direct election campaign message, the donation has a bearing on how voters would perceive the MMD, seeing that the President is from the MMD party.

The fourth story is about Minister of Finance, Katele Kalumba, dismissing as false and unrealistic claims by the opposition that if it were voted into power it would provide free services. In this news item the Minister is urging Zambians not to embrace the economics of political parties decreeing free services and reduced taxes. The Minister of Finance is undermining the opposition political parties by describing their policies as unrealistic and unworkable. Again the elections of the political opposition are not covered, yet there are reactions to their proclamations.

The last story was a feature, which traced President Chiluba's campaign trail around some parts of the country. In this news item President Chiluba is shown on a campaign tour of Western, North Western and Luapula Provinces, and he is shown addressing rallies campaigning for the MMD presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa, members of parliament and local government councillors. At all the rallies he is addressing he is listing the successes achieved by the MMD government. The news item also showed resignations from the opposition political parties.

5.2.7. Main News Thursday 25th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. President Chiluba	MMD	Mpongwe	Elections	3
2. Civic Activist	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	3
3. Mwanawasa's wife	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	1
4. Various people	Unknown	Lusaka	Celebrations	2

In this bulletin, the MMD was given more time to publicise its campaign trails while opposition was given none. Of the four stories two prominently featured the MMD, and one included condemnation of the opposition by an election monitor and observer. The lead story featured President Chiluba commissioning a new road in Mpongwe on the Copperbelt. He is shown addressing local people, and promising them better a standard of living and urging them to vote for the MMD. In his address the President is emphasising the point that MMD is the only party that can bring development to the area. The second lead story is about an election observer, Coalition 2001 Chairman Ngande Mwanajiti, condemning an opposition political party for buying votes from villagers in Southern province. Mr. Mwanajiti is shown addressing a press conference, and is quoted as saying:

'one of the prominent individuals... who I shall mention here, a former Cabinet Minister... who has been involved in the shoddy activities is Suresh Desai...his campaign machinery has been busy giving underwears and nickers'.

The news bulleting mentions the opposition in negative way. The opposition FDD is being portrayed as a corrupt party desperate to win an election through 'vote buying'. The story that follows features the wife of MMD Presidential candidate, Maureen Mwanawasa, urging those who can afford, to help the vulnerable people in society. This was at an occasion where she and her husband donated foodstuffs and other items worth K5 Million to Mapode orphanage in Lusaka. She is shown being mobbed by women and as she is children and giving out foodstuffs. The news item also shows MMD Presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa dancing with a group calling itself 'Shaka'. Though there was no reference to election campaigns, the news item indicated implicit support for the MMD's aspiring presidential candidate.

5.2.8. Main News Wednesday 26th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. Presidential Chiluba	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	3
2. Presidential candidate	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	3
3. Presidential candidate	HP	Lusaka	Elections	1.30
4. Presidential Candidate	UPND	Lusaka	Elections	1.30
5. Former UNIP official	UNIP	Ndola	Elections	1
6. President Chiluba	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	5

This day was special, instead of selecting 28th December; I selected 26th December because it was the eve of Election Day. All local news focussed on election campaigns. Four political parties, including the ruling MMD, out of the eleven contesting the elections were covered. President Chiluba and the MMD presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa were given the first two slots. In this news bulletin, Mwanawasa is calling on the electorate particularly not to vote for FDD (breakaway of MMD) describing them as 'exploitative people caught in their own emotions and instability and just wanting to get into power but have no interest of the people at heart.'

Two other, shorter stories cover the last rallies by opposition presidential candidates Godfrey Miyanda of the Heritage Party (HP) and Anderson Mazoka of United Party for National Development (UPND). In their messages the two opposition leaders are shown presenting their manifestos, and Opposition UNIP is then covered in the context of the ruling MMD's rebuttal of claims concerning their presidential candidate's health, stemming from Radio Phoenix's interview with the former President Kaunda. Dr Kaunda had said in the interview with Frank Mutubila on Radio Phoenix that Levy Mwanawasa was not mentally fit to run as State President after his October 1992 accident. In this news bulletin a former UNIP Ndola district chairman, James Chasaya, is shown refuting the claim that Mwanawasa is not mentally fit to be a State President. Again the time allocated to the MMD presidential candidate was more than given to opposition candidates some of whom were totally ignored despite holding their last rallies in Lusaka.

Chasaya further accuses the Law Association Of Zambia (LAZ) of being ‘tribal’ and an appendage of the UPND alleging that it is not a reliable source to give impartial guidance and opinion on the forthcoming elections. This appears to be a rebuttal of statements made by LAZ, but it is difficult to clearly state what the story was since it was not carried by ZNBC television news. The last story features an interview between Chiluba’s and Esipiso Manoa of Reuters, in which he is shown outlining some of the successes and failures in his tenure of office. But the main agenda of this news item is the election campaign. On this important day, 12 minutes of the 15-minute local news bulletin were allocated to MMD, and only 2 minutes to the opposition HP and UPND presidential candidates. This represents an 80% allocation of news to the ruling MMD, with only 14% going to the opposition political parties.

5.2.9. Main News Friday 28th December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. ZNBC Staff	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	2
2. ECZ Staff	MMD	Kitwe	Elections	4
3. ZNBC Staff	MMD/UPND	Solwezi	Elections	1
4. ZNBC Staff	UPND	Livingstone	Elections	2
5. Election Monitors	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	2
6. Police PR Officer	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	2.30
7. Government Official	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	0.30

On this day all the news stories were about the elections, most of the news highlighting the vote counting and voting at various polling stations. The second lead story is about MMD scooping all five parliamentary seats in Kitwe. These are the first election results to be in a news item. The news item also shows returning officers announcing the MMD winners for parliamentary seats in Chimwemwe, Nkana, Kamfinsa, Kwacha and Wusakile.

The third story is about MMD Vice President Enock Kavindele winning the parliamentary seat in Kabompo. The rest of the election news is about UPND leading in

most of the constituencies in the Southern province, but no pictures are shown in the news story. The remainder of the bulletin had no bearing on this study. In summary, although opposition parties were represented in the news, the MMD dominated by taking the lead story, which was accompanied by pictures depicting winners celebrating their victory, while the opposition UPND was just mentioned, without pictures.

5.2.10. Main News Monday 31st December 2001

Actor Sequence	Political Party	Origin	Story type	Minutes
1. Minister of Information	MMD	Lusaka	Elections	4.30
2. ECZ Officials	MMD	Ndola	Elections	1.30
3. ECZ Officials	HP	Kabwe	Elections	0.30
4. ECZ Officials	UNIP	Lusaka	Elections	0.30
5. ECZ Officials	ZRP	Chongwe	Elections	0.30
6. ECZ Officials	UPND	Lusaka	Elections	0.30
7. ECZ Officials	UNIP	Lusaka	Elections	0.30
8. ECZ Officials	FDD	Lusaka	Elections	0.30
9. ECZ Chairperson	Unknown	Lusaka	Elections	1.30

Election results dominated this news bulletin. The lead story featured government spokesman Vernon Mwaanga condemning an opposition leader who had ‘declared’ himself the winner. He is shown at a press conference denying that the delay in the swearing-in of the President was the result of efforts to rig the elections. The second lead story is about MMD scooping three parliamentary seats in Masaiti, Chifubu and Ndola central constituencies. The fourth story is about HP winning a seat in Kabwe central. The other stories are about parliamentary victories by UPND, ZRP, UNIP and FDD. The last story was irrelevant to the purposes of this study.

5.3. Table 1: Total Time Allocation

Political Party	Time Allocated/ Minutes	Total Percentage
1. MMD	60	75 %
2. UPND	4. 30	5.4%
3. HP	3.30	4.1%
4. UNIP	3.0	3.75%
5. FDD	2.30	2.9%
6. PF	2.00	2.5%
7. NCC	2.00	2.5%
8. AZ	2.00	2.5%
9. ZRP	0.30	0.4%
10. Others	0	0
TOTAL	80 minutes	100%

5.3. Conclusion

This Chapter has presented the data in table form. The findings reveal that the Main News at 19 00 h featured the ruling party leaders more than the opposition political parties. The table above shows that 75 percent of news coverage was devoted to the MMD whilst the opposition parties shared 25 percent (UPND-5.4%, HP-4.1%, UNIP-3.75%, FDD-2.9%, PF-2.5%, NCC-2.5%, AZ-2.5%, ZRP-0.4 %, others 0%). The opposition parties were underrepresented in the election coverage, and if featured at all, they were portrayed negatively. Another factor was that most of the news stories were urban-based, the majority from Lusaka. The next sections discusses these findings of the content analysis of the Main News from a public service perspective together with the findings from interviews with journalists, and seek to relate their implications to the democratic public sphere in Zambian society.

5.4. State or Public Service? The Discussion

In a multi-party democracy people should exercise their choices rationally, which presupposes a knowledgeable and educated citizenry. The media must provide the information and knowledge on the basis of which citizens can make their political choices. According to McNair (1995) the importance of informed, knowledgeable electorates dictates that democratic politics must be pursued in the public arena. To meet the requirements of pluralism there needs to be comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news coverage and information provisions, across a range of broadcasting outlets, in order to support a fair and informed national debate. This includes a mix of coverage of international, national and local issues, and comprehensive coverage of the political process, including parliament, political party conferences and national and local elections (Barker 2000).

Public service television is by definition supposed to act within the public sphere, that is, 'a communicative institution of society through which facts and opinions circulate, and by means of which a common stock of knowledge is built up as a basis for collective political action' (McNair 1995: 22). Scannell (1989) defines the 'public sphere as a neutral space within society, free of both the state or corporate control in which the media should make available information affecting the public good and facilitate a free, open and reasoned public dialogue that guides the direction of society' (in Gurevitch 20:135, Keane 1991, 1995). Public service television should therefore strive to give equal political representation in the news.

But in Zambia, ZNBC is biased and always takes sides when covering electoral issues. In this study it has been shown that the television news is overwhelmingly pro-government. Soon after the elections, the Zambia Independent Media Association (ZIMA) protested in the strongest terms possible against what it called the 'blatant bias' of government media, particularly ZNBC television and radio channels, against the opposition parties (*The Post* January 15, 2002). But ZNBC television as a public service television is supposed to act as public sphere, which is characterised by sufficient autonomy and diversity to address and incorporate different groups.

5.6. Discussion of Main News

The findings on the Main News bulletin in this study show a high concentration of top government and MMD party officials as the main actors in most of the news stories. The President, Vice President and various cabinet ministers are featured in all the news bulletins surveyed. In most instances they are featured campaigning for the ruling party. This is evidenced from ten days' analysis of the main news, which revealed a deliberate pattern of placing the presidency and members of the ruling MMD in the headline stories. Of the nine bulletins recorded, seven top stories featured either the President, the Vice President or a cabinet minister from the ruling MMD. Coalition 2001, a monitoring group, said in their preliminary report that ZNBC flouted the Electoral Code of Conduct by giving the MMD a disproportionately large part of their airtime. The electoral Code of Conduct requires the media to give all contending political parties fair and balanced coverage (*The Monitor* December 21-24 2001).

The State President, the Vice President and the ruling MMD presidential candidate were shown at rallies campaigning for votes. ZNBC crew travelled with them and managed to bring back to the studio news from everywhere that the President, his vice and the MMD presidential candidate travelled to. The MMD presidential candidate accompanied both the President and the Vice President on a countrywide election campaign. A few days before the election, the Washington-based Carter Centre, the Panos Institute of Southern Africa and Operation Young Vote had observed that slanted media coverage had skewed the political playing field in favour of the ruling MMD (*The Monitor* December 21-24 2001).

The ruling party had been given more airtime to show its campaign activities in the main news whilst the opposition had often been denied news coverage. In only four of the ten bulletins were opposition actors included in the news, but even then they were placed in the middle or at the end of the bulletin, as opposed to the priority accorded to MMD. The MMD presidential candidate, who was not in government at the time also enjoyed some substantial coverage, taking the top slot on several occasions. The media monitoring carried out for the European Union Election Observer Mission also showed that the state

owned media, ZNBC, in both its television and radio transmission was heavily prejudiced in favour of the MMD (<http://www.eueu-zambia.org>). Most striking of all is the fact that in all the news stories, which feature the President or Vice President, they are portrayed campaigning for the MMD presidential candidate. In the news bulletin of Monday 10th December 2001, the lead story shows President Chiluba telling journalists at the Lusaka International airport that Zambians should vote for MMD candidate Levy Mwanawasa because of his integrity, while the second lead story similarly is features Vice President Kavindele at a rally, calling on the people of Kabompo to vote for Mwanawasa as president and him as a member of parliament.

In all the news bulletins monitored over nine days, only three opposition parties were shown actively campaigning, and all appeared in the Main News on 26th December 2001 addressing rallies in Lusaka. The opposition parties, which were featured, were the Heritage Party (HP), United Party for National Development (UPND) and United National Independence Party (UNIP). The rest of the news bulletins either featured the opposition parties filing nomination papers, or else portrayed them negatively. For instance, in the news bulletin on 25th December, the second lead story features an election observer, Coalition 2001 Chairman Ngande Mwanajiti condemning an opposition political party for 'vote buying' from villagers in Southern province. Mr. Mwanajiti is shown addressing a press conference where he is saying:

'one of the prominent individuals... who I shall mention here, a former Cabinet Minister... who has been involved in the shoddy activities is Suresh Desai...his campaign machinery has been busy giving underwears and nickers'.

The opposition FDD is being portrayed as a corrupt party desperate to win an election through 'vote buying'. And in all but the four of the news bulletins, the headline news and lead stories were about the MMD. The opposition had one lead story in the Main Bulletin of 6th December 2001 and this story featured the FDD presidential candidate filing nomination papers at the Supreme Court and nothing more.

Bias in favour of the ruling party in public service television coverage is thus characteristic of the approach taken by ZNBC in the 27 December 2001 Presidential and

Parliamentary elections. The Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP) observed that the public media were being used as campaign tools for the ruling MMD, and that this kind of bias was particularly prevalent with ZNBC and the *Times of Zambia* (Fodep 2002 Election Interim Report). Fodep observed that:

The public media in particular have a social responsibility to provide fair coverage and access to a cross section of society without any form of discrimination. Though the Electoral Code of Conduct has a provision that aims at regulating the conduct of the media during election campaigns, the code is not being observed. The public media were being used as campaign tools for the ruling MMD. The coverage of political parties by the ZNBC, Times of Zambia and the Daily Mail was in most cases in favour of the ruling MMD (Fodep Interim Report 2002).

As shown in this study, not only did the television news feature far more stories on the ruling party, it also confined most of its coverage to urban areas. Rural areas were generally not adequately covered, in so far as they feature in the campaign trail of either the President or the Vice President. For instance, the Main News bulletin of 22nd December 2001 featured a compilation of President Chiluba's campaign trail of Western, North Western and Luapula Provinces. In this news bulletin, the President is featured campaigning for MMD aspiring presidential candidates, members of parliament and local government councillors. Fodep noted in their report that the ruling party abused its advantage of incumbency by extending state facilities and resources accorded to the Republican President or Vice Republican President, to the MMD presidential candidate who was not even a government official. According to Fodep, this made the political playing field uneven, as Mr. Mwanawasa was able to fly in a helicopter to various parts of the country using ZNBC cameras and reporters to advertise his election campaign (2002).

During elections, public service television has the important role of informing Zambians about election issues, candidates and parties. This role has grown from that of merely 'a channel of communication to being a major actor in the campaigning process' (de Vreese 2001:156). All political parties taking part in an election must have their issues represented fairly and impartially in the public service media. Public service television should 'offer a way of combining independence from direct state control with an ethos of

impartial public service, which includes the commitment to represent the full range of voices in society' (Randall 1998: 247).

The political opposition has constantly complained about ZNBC's biased coverage of election campaigns. Prior to elections the Carter Centre had received complaints from the major opposition political parties about coverage of the elections in the public media (Carter Centre Interim Report 2002). They complained that ZNBC had completely 'blacked them out' and that they were not receiving any coverage (Carter Centre Interim Report). The Coalition 2001 monitoring group said in their preliminary report that ZNBC flouted the Electoral Code of Conduct by giving the MMD a disproportionate large part of their airtime. The electoral Code of Conduct requires the media to give all contending political parties fair and balanced coverage (*The Monitor* December 21-24 2001). This was also against the Electoral Commission's Equal Air Time Regulation, which stipulates that all political parties should be granted equal time for publicity on television and radio (Panos 2001: 20).

Central to understanding the crucial role of ZNBC television news in the dynamics of election campaigns are changes in the political and media system. Firstly, the multi party system has brought about inter-party competition, and the media provides, according to Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), 'an incentive for citizens to learn, choose and become involved, rather than merely to follow and kibitz over political process' (8). Chapter Two points out that 'public service television as an agency of representation is obliged to encourage wide participation in society, potentially creating, in public service television, a citizens' channel which allows them to be heard and to receive essential information on citizenship issues.'

Therefore ZNBC must inform citizens of what is happening around them, democracy needs an informed citizenry and public service television is the chief vehicle for achieving this ideal. With the profound democratic changes going on in Zambia, it is imperative that the people have media that shall look upon their audience as comprising citizens with full citizenship rights and not just consumers. In doing so, ZNBC journalists

may admittedly face several logistical problems in operations, such as interference from senior staff, transport and communication difficulties, insufficient funds, lack of equipment and inadequate skills in election coverage. Of course this is no justification for slanted coverage on public service television.

ZNBC as a national public broadcaster, in conjunction with the Electoral Commission, political parties and various civic education organisations, is supposed to convey basic information about elections in a balanced way that allows voters to know their choices in terms of all the candidates and issues at stake. In the news considered in this study the opposition party candidates and various other contending forces were not given an adequate voice. This means that if parties and political movements depend on the opportunity to present their messages freely without distortion or manipulation, then FDD, UPND, UNIP, AZ, PF, HP, ZRP and NCC were disadvantaged by poor representation of their candidates and views in the public service television Main News. Denial of access to public service television during an election is a violation of basic citizenship rights particularly those pertaining to one's right to political beliefs and representation. The information role, as pointed out in the Chapter Two, above, stipulates that 'in order for people to exercise their full rights as citizens they must among other things have access to the broadest possible range of information, interpretation and debate on areas that involve public political choices. And they must also be able to use communication facilities in order to register criticism and propose alternative courses of action.'

ZIMT and NOCE have also observed that during election campaign period the public media gave prominence to the ruling MMD and its presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa (ZIMT and NOCE Interim Report 2002). Public service television coverage must be balanced since the success of a candidate in an election may actually rest with how this person's public perception is shaped by television and other media. As ZIMT and NOCE put it, 'the public media has a responsibility to give equitable coverage of all political parties and players' (ZIMT and NOCE Interim Report 2002). ZNBC Main News bulletin at 19 h failed to represent the views of contending parties in a balanced manner

and diminished their chances of winning the election. What had gone wrong in the coverage of elections by ZNBC television news? Was there interference in the work of journalists? The next section analyses the findings from the interviews in an attempt to answer these two questions.

5.6. Making Election News

The study of news must always take into account the social context of news production. The production of news takes place in a large, hierarchically organised, technically complex organisation. Negrine (1994) argues that 'journalists are part of such organisations and their work will reflect, and sustain, the needs of the "profession" as well as those of media organisation' (118). In this scrutiny of the production of election news, it is important to look at some of the independent variable that may have exerted an influence on news content, both within and outside the news organisation. The economic and political 'needs' of media organisations - the need to survive, to maximise profits, to increase sales, to increase advertising revenue, to maintain a political line, to placate politicians - form an important backdrop to the study of the production of all media content (Negrine 1994: 118).

In order to understand the bias in coverage of the elections as reflected in the content analysis of ZNBC television news, it is important to link content analysis with interviews, which according to de Vreese (2001) 'enables comparisons between intentions and internal decision making process and actual outcome' (156). The section that follows looks at whether ZNBC as public service television enjoys autonomy from the State.

5.6.1. Editorial Independence

The question arises of why and how only ruling party politicians come seemingly to command such control over public service television programming like news? How was news selected so as to produce a slanted coverage in favour of the ruling political party? In studies done by others on election coverage in both Britain and the US, a theoretical distinction between a sacerdotal and a pragmatic approach to campaign coverage has been developed (see Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). In a sacerdotal approach, elections are

Analysis

perceived as the fundament of democracy and campaigns are considered newsworthy *per se* (de Vreese 2001:167). In a pragmatic approach, on the other hand, campaign news is evaluated against conventional news selection criteria and is not automatically given special attention (de Vreese 2001:167). The pragmatic orientation implies that the 'amount of time or space allocated to political events will be determined by strict considerations of news values, in competition with the newsworthiness of other stories' (de Vreese 2001:167). In this approach, the news media select events for reporting according to a complex set of criteria of newsworthiness, so news is not simply that which happens, but that which can be regarded and presented as newsworthy (Fowler 1991: 13).

The findings of this study indicate that ZNBC applied both approaches. It is very clear that the selection of stories about the ruling party were based on the sacerdotal approach, that is, that any news about the party in relation to elections was considered newsworthy. However, news about the opposition was filtered through the pragmatic approach, with coverage determined by a strict consideration of news values (de Vreese 2001:167). The President, his Vice, ministers and members of the ruling elite were covered even if the events were not newsworthy. In interviews, both journalists and news administrators at ZNBC gave various reasons why there was such an imbalance in the Main News at 19 00 h. In the newsroom, the news manager disputed this allegation, labeling the opposition as non-newsmakers and claiming that their campaign messages were usually not newsworthy:

What comes out of the political parties themselves is material, which is subject to criticism... their campaign is mainly based on insults. We do not want to be used as conveyer belts for settling political scores. (interview with Cecilia Banda, News Manager ZNBC December 2001)

Stories involving the ruling party, especially the Republican President, his Vice, cabinet ministers and other top party and government officials and their campaigns were considered newsworthy *per se*.

Both the Controller News and Current Affairs and News Manager expressed the fear of losing their jobs if they chose to cover the opposition party instead of the ruling party. As the Controller News and Current Affairs pointed out during an interview:

There is no way I can give or send a camera to an opposition political party when the party in government is holding a functions or meeting ...if it happens I would be asked why I have done so. (interview with Controller News and Current Affairs, Nkamu Nkamu, December 2001)

They also talked about shortages of cameras and vehicles to enable them travel around the country and thus accommodate all the contending political parties. There were only two vehicles and two cameras for the newsroom which it much easier just to cover the ruling party. This situation also encouraged the ZNBC news crew to prefer covering mostly scheduled functions within the capital city. When asked whether or not there was any form of political interference in their work on the part of higher authority. The journalists at first rebuffed the claim, affirming that they were professionals who stood their ground and make day-to-day decisions on what to cover and run as news. However, they later admitted that most of the time they received specific instructions on what to do, on threat of dismissal. As Controller News and Current Affairs put it in an interview:

Our jobs are restricted in the sense that we are supposed to decide what to cover but we do not have that freedom...almost all our assignments are scheduled. (Interview with Nkamu Nkamu December 2001)

This is against the policy of public service broadcasting, which stipulates that the service should follow agreed standards of fairness and impartiality. According to the Controller News and Current Affairs, 'authority' had banned ZNBC from using stories from recorded programmes especially those from the opposition parties. The interviews revealed that journalists at ZNBC enjoy little independence in respect of editorial decisions in the newsroom.

Editorial independence means the right of journalists and editors to make decisions on the basis of professional criteria, consistent with international standards, such as the newsworthiness of an event or its relevance to the public's right to know and in accordance with international codes of ethics of journalism (Barker 2000). The spectra of politically pressured coverage explain why there is such dominance on the point of the

ruling MMD actors in the Main News. The journalists at ZNBC television made it very clear that they usually received instructions to cover certain events and people, especially stories favourable to the ruling party. This reduces journalists, in negation of their professional values, to the status of propagandists. This poses a dilemma for the media, for when 'politicians can predict confidently which events and comments will ring reportorial bells, media professionals are deprived of the opportunities to exercise their own judgement' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 103). The slanted media coverage may in part reflect the genuine shortage of equipment that ZNBC journalists are experiencing; it may even reveal certain strategies of resistance by television journalists to demands for coverage by the ruling party. It confirms the journalists' claim that they have the right to cover what they themselves understand to be news and not just the official functions of one political party.

However, unrelenting pressure from the ruling MMD officials compels them to eventually yield for fear of losing their jobs. The journalists complained that if they ran a story that was not favourable to the MMD government, they were often times summoned to State House. As the Controller News and Current Affairs recalled one of the incidents:

We ran a story given to us by the Permanent Human Rights Commission one year, criticising government on its human rights record, an institution created by government. The Director General of ZNBC, Mr. Duncan Mbazima, late David Likando and I were called to State House by Press Assistant to the Republican President Mr. Richard Sakala and were all reprimanded for running that story. Furthermore if we ran a story for the opposition somebody in the ministry will order to stop the story. (Interview with Nkamu Nkamu, December 2001)

At the peak of the election campaigns ZNBC transferred Controller of News and Current affairs, Nkamu Nkamu, to another department, following the editor's running of opposition FDD President Christon Tembo's interview on the national television. Nkamu Nkamu was transferred to the Human Resources Department on 7th December because of the story he ran on television Main News concerning Tembo's interview with Zambia Information Services. They said he was 'abrogating the rule that no item from the opposition should be aired if it is against the MMD government' (*The National Mirror* December 22-28, 2001). In arriving at such a decision it is evident that ZNBC was acting under external influence. It is known that the President's Press and Public Relations

Assistant comes into the editing suite at ZNBC whenever there is a sensitive story, and especially during elections (Banda 1998).

Fodep also notes that two days before the elections, ZNBC unceremoniously cancelled a live television debate by presidential candidates, who were turned away by armed paramilitary officers when they arrived for the programme (Fodep Interim Report 2002). The MMD spokesman and National Secretary, who was also Information and Broadcasting Minister, said 'his party saw no value in participating in the debates as the television reception was limited'. Observers however point out that the MMD felt they did not need the media debate programmes as they were already benefiting from extensive media coverage in the form of news (Fodep Interim Report 2002). The report reveals that the cancelled programme was arranged and paid for in advance, but was replaced by an interview with President Chiluba, apparently to campaign for 'continuity with change' (Fodep Interim Report 2002). And the same day ZNBC had issued a statement that they would no longer accept advertisements that would stretch them beyond their normal broadcasting hours (Fodep Interim Report 2002).

But the following day the station opened early to facilitate live coverage of the MMD campaign final rally on the eve of Election Day (Fodep Interim Report 2002). Prior to the debate cancellation, Panos, Zamcom and Pact Zambia had entered into a contract with ZNBC under which the state broadcaster would air three presidential debates on December 16, 23 and 26. The first two would be pre-recorded while the third would be live. However, ZNBC director General Edward Mpenso had refused to air the second and third debates on the grounds that the organisers deviated from the 'original concept' (*The Monitor* December 25-30, 2001). From the situation described above it is clear that there is external interference in the work of ZNBC television station. But this is against the principle that 'Government should ensure that the public service broadcaster is fully independent in all editorial and operational matters'. According to MISA:

The editorial policy of public broadcasting should follow agreed standards of political fairness and impartiality. However these should not be set down in detail as this would interfere with editorial independence. There should be no standards, which require, for example, that journalists should reflect the government's development priorities or its desire for national reconciliation. (Barker 2000: 3)

The interviews with journalists at ZNBC indicate that whilst there is a certain amount of freedom in their selection of what should be covered as news, it is not guaranteed and may not apply to certain situations. Most claimed that at times they found themselves in a precarious situations when dealing with potentially controversial stories, or topics that might get them into trouble with authorities both at the station and in government. Such topics might be politically related, for instance stories exposing the shortcomings of government ministers and top officials. As most of them put it, 'never bite the finger that feeds you or and know better where to place your royalties'. This precludes ZNBC from fulfilling the watchdog role, which – as described in the Chapter Two of this study, involves 'revealing abuses in the exercise of the state authority or as means of seeking redress against abuse of power over others in society' (Curran 1991).

The findings of this study indicate that ZNBC television news acted more as a 'rebuttal channel' for government with regard to accusations made by the opposition and other people in the private media. For example on 22 December 2001, ZNBC television news featured a story about a former detainee, a sympathiser of the ruling MMD dismissing claims made by former President Kaunda on Radio Phoenix that the MMD government's human rights record was pathetic. The story was designed to clear the MMD government's human rights record and portray it positively. With public and funding, support the public service television should be obliged to perform the watchdog role. As pointed out in Chapter Two, an internal system of checks and balances and fear of public disapproval should make strong contributions towards public services broadcasting's performance of the watchdog role (Curran 1991).

5.6.2. Institutional Autonomy

In its coverage of political issues public service television has an obligation to give impartial and balanced treatment to all the political parties taking part in an election. To meet this obligation, it is necessary that public service television be autonomous. The central question here, then is the relationship between ZNBC and the state, and the way in which the latter is able to circumscribe the agenda and autonomy of the former. The study shows that ZNBC is strongly attached to the MMD government, and enjoys no

autonomy. This is evidenced in the statement by newly elected Republican President Levy Mwanawasa at his first press conference when he announced his cabinet on 7th January, that government had no intention of changing the state-owned media until the private media demonstrated a greater sense of responsibility. He said that the private media were so destructive that they could bring down a government in months were it not for the counter-balancing effects of state-owned media (*The Monitor* January 11-15, 2002).

A few days later, ZIMA chairman, Matsauso Phiri called on president Mwanawasa to put to an end the blatant misuse of what are supposed to be public media, before his so-called 'new deal' became a complete farce. ZIMA called for the government media to either be privatised or turned into public media that are not answerable to the government of the day. Matsauso Phiri feared that:

Zambia's democracy, the accountability and transparency of its government will not be achieved if Zambians allow those in government to misuse what are supposed to be the people's media for their own selfish ends'. (Press Statement, *Post* January 12, 2002)

The Press Association of Zambia (PAZA) president, Hicks Sikazwe, called on government to be practical in ensuring that the state-owned media were transformed not only to give fair coverage but so as truly to represent the public (*The Post*, Tuesday 12 2002). Sikazwe argues that:

If government policy is for the media to cover all stakeholders, this is exactly what we have been calling for when we call for the transformation of the state media into public media. (*The Post*, February 12, 2002)

According to MISA government should ensure that the public service broadcaster is fully independent in all editorial and operational matters (Barker 2000: 3). A public service broadcaster should develop principled resistance to the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert its independence, integrity and ability to serve the audience. For MISA, at minimum there needs to be a statutory guarantee of independence and a clear prohibition of government interference in any respect of operation (Barker 2000: 3).

By establishment under the ZNBC Act no 16 of 1987, Zambia National Broadcasting Services is an autonomous body corporate. However, both in editorial considerations and

funding, ZNBC's purported 'autonomy' is illusive, and to all intents and purposes it remains a *de facto* state information organ (Banda 2000: 10). It is widely acknowledged that in most Southern African countries, only the state has the resources to adequately fund public service broadcasting (see Barker 2000). MISA advises that safeguards must be incorporated into the funding process in order to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the government or parliament shall not reduce or manipulate broadcasting budgets in retaliation for programming decisions with which they disagree (Barker 2000). Curran argues that one way government can stifle public service broadcasting is through financial sanctions (Curran 2000: 99). Was the representation of political issues and debates on ZNBC television news during election campaign fair and balanced? These and other issues are addressed in the next chapter, which concludes my study and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of my study and makes certain recommendations. It outlines what I consider to be the problems of representation of political issues and debates on ZNBC television news. The chapter ends with possible suggestions on reforming ZNBC television so as to conform with the political changes taking place in Zambia.

6.1. State or Public Service

This study has confirmed the hypothesis that ZNBC television news is deliberately biased, and that coverage of election campaigns favours the political party in government and does not adequately cover the opposition political parties. The study has shown that there is abuse and political interference by those holding political power in the work of journalists at ZNBC television newsroom. In making editorial decisions, journalists are not as free as expected. The indications are that ZNBC television faces financial problems, and that these have affected its operations. With the changes in the political system taking place in Zambia, the problems facing ZNBC television indicate that it is far from fulfilling the obligations of a public service television. The study clearly demonstrates that the role of public service television in the mediation of pluralistic politics is compromised by ZNBC's partial and unbalanced coverage of elections. This is serving to undermine the very democracy it is expected to promote. The study confirms that ZNBC television is offering a state service to the ruling party, and not a public service.

While the study shows that elections news was given considerable time, it was of little value because it only concentrated on the ruling party. ZNBC television news did not display a sense of obligation to inform the electorate about the political standpoints of opposition parties. The loser was the voter, who had no choice but to listen to one point

of view. The study also indicates that standard selection criteria for election news only applied to the opposition, while the ruling party enjoyed massive coverage of campaign news. The treatment of institutions, groups and individuals that represent dissident and deviant views are likely to be guided more strictly by journalists' news values (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). Mostly stories about the opposition were omitted on the basis of their newsworthiness while those of the ruling party given privileged treatment and automatic coverage. The interview, document analysis and content-analytic indicators provided data to support the above conclusion.

The liberalisation of the airwaves has brought growth in privatised information structures. This has not benefited ordinary Zambians, but has instead brought out disparities between the information haves and have-not, or information rich and poor. In the end, only public provision for information infrastructure and public subsidy for information services can ensure that the benefits of access to information will be distributed equitably and democratically (Scannell 1989). Public service television is supposed to function as a public service channel, representing the views of all those competing for electoral office. The level of editorial interference by those in power demonstrates that in order for ZNBC television to fulfil the obligations listed in Chapter Two it is necessary to undertake reforms both within and without the ZNBC television system.

6.2. Possible Transformations

Public service television should take new forms if it is to be recognised and appreciated by the public as a genuine, open and democratic public sphere. If ZNBC television today is defensible as a public service it can only be as a true service to the public, a public service that seeks to realize the democratic ideal of equitable representation of political issues in the news. Critics of advertising as a source of revenue argue that it has direct editorial influence on a broadcaster's ideological stance, and that public service television would be forced to accommodate the advertiser's ideological concerns (Curran 1991). Politicians too can manipulate public broadcasting in a number of ways. One way commonest among African countries is government's refusing to increase funding the television. In the Zambian situation, television will remain substantially funded by the

state for the foreseeable future. However measures must be taken to ensure that this does not reduce the viewership. One insulating device is to limit government financial control through introduction of a license fee linked to the national earnings index (Curran 1991: 106). I therefore recommend that a system of license fees for viewers be introduced. The independent funding obtained from license fees will help to prevent government control. The universality of payment principle requires that the beneficiaries fund public service television. It makes the viewers' license fee a compulsory fee payable by every owner of a television set. The universality method of funding public service television also prevents the creation of second-class citizens excluded by price (Curran 2000: 143). The license fee enables journalists to give their loyalty to the public and not to a few individuals in government. With such public support, public service television will be obliged to perform a public service role. As pointed out in Chapters Two and Five, the internal system of checks and balances and fear of public disapproval should prove to be strong components in public service broadcasting's insulation from political control and manipulation.

In addition, government should increase its funding of public service television to supplement revenue from license fees and advertising. But I support and recommend MISA's stand that 'safeguards should be incorporated into the funding process in order to ensure that government or parliament does not manipulate the budget in retaliation for programming decisions with which they disagree. One such mechanism is for funds to be voted by parliament through a multi-party consensus vote and that parties must agree, the vote must not be a simple majority vote' (Barker 2000: 4).

One other problem that this study has identified is that government has undermined the independence of ZNBC, and has thus restricted public debate through television. This has been achieved through subtle means such as the appointment of staff through a government-appointed management board. I recommend that government's power to appoint a board through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting be stopped, and that appointment to such boards must be by way of "enfranchising" representative national organisations and broadcasting staff to elect the members (Curran 1991: 107).

I support and recommend MISA's view that members of the board should be 'appointed for a fixed term, preferably by public nomination and a process of public hearing, according to publicly available criteria which guarantee diversity of political, ethnic, social and professional background' (Barker 2000: 3). This will serve to establish television as neutral, autonomous and above partisan politics and social interests.

The study has revealed and confirmed that 'widely shared news values can severely constrain the range of options within which reporters themselves can deal with political issues and leaders' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 105). The journalists in this study applied double standards when selecting election news, using a pragmatic approach to opposition parties whilst adopting a sacerdotal approach to the ruling party. Clearly, such tendencies constrict the potential of the media to serve as a genuine 'marketplace of ideas' or to transcend the boundaries of the social and political mainstream (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 105). I recommend that journalists working for public media should begin to redefine their role above and beyond their survival in ways that 'do not entail their subordination to dominant particular interests' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 107). They should commit themselves to democratic service, and adopt an even-handed sacerdotal approach in terms of which elections are perceived as the fundament of democracy and campaigns are considered newsworthy per se. There is a need to reorganise ZNBC television, to disperse power and ensure that there are checks and balances within the system.

With the support of academicians and civil society, journalists must be freed from the bondage of those in power and assert their legitimacy as 'public servants'. This requires a climate of freedom, supported by a written constitution. Reporters need protection from victimisation, especially the loss of their jobs. There is a need for an Election News Coverage Committee comprising of journalists, academicians, the church and civic organisations to formulate and implement editorial policy on election coverage and above all to monitor the coverage of elections on ZNBC television. This committee should act not as a 'gatekeeper' but as a 'democratic midwife' (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995: 108).

6.3. Conclusion

The study set out to determine through critical analysis the representation of *political issues* and *debates* during an election campaign on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) television news. In the context of the changes in the political system and changes in the broadcasting field, the main interest was to examine the extent to which ZNBC played the a role of public service broadcaster in the mediation of pluralistic politics during this year's presidential and parliamentary election campaigns. The study has demonstrated that public service television is important in the enhancement of democracy, especially in countries like Zambia where democracy is just beginning to take root.

With widespread liberalisation and commercialisation of broadcasting going on in many countries, there is need to strengthen the public service broadcasting model as it is still a core institution for the promotion of democracy. This study has confirmed the hypothesis that ZNBC television news is deliberately biased and that coverage of election campaigns favours the political party in government and does not adequately cover the opposition political parties. The study has shown that there is on the part of those holding political power abuse and political interference in the work of journalists at ZNBC television newsroom. Public service television should take new forms if it is to be recognised and appreciated by the public as a genuine, open and democratic public sphere. It is from this perspective that the study has made the recommendations set out above in the belief that ZNBC television needs to be transformed into a 'real' public service television which is representative of the many diverse individual and groups in society.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The information generated from these interviews is for academic purposes and will be treated with confidentiality. (Unscheduled interview guideline, questions were not asked in this order)

General questions

What is your the role of ZNBC television as a public service broadcaster in an election?

What do you understand the obligations of the public service broadcasting?

What is the editorial policy of ZNBC on election coverage?

What is your opinion on the coverage of elections?

What are the problems are you facing as a station?

Do you experience any form of interference in the course of your work?

How do you deal with issues of political interference?

Do you receive any instructions at any time from authority?

Do you receive complaints from the opposition political parties?

What is the number of staff in the newsroom?

What is your opinion on newsroom staffing and equipment?

How is the staffs appointed (management and reporters)?

Do you experience in form of victimisation if you run a story not in favour of the government?

How do you assign your reporters to cover political events?

What criteria do you use to select news on election campaigns done?

Do you have any guidelines on election coverage?

How do you ensure compliance to media statutes and codes of conduct?

Do you have Equal time policy for all political parties?

Do you receive complaints with regards to election coverage from viewers?

How do you deal with such complaints from the viewers?

How do you treat stories from 'paid for' political advertisement?

Is it true that some reporters have been fired for writing stories against government?

Do you have any plans to reorganise ZNBC television news department?

In your opinion how should ZNBC television approach election coverage in order to give fair and balanced coverage to all contending parties?

What should be done to transform ZNBC as an institution so that it responds to the democratic ideals?

Do you have any extra information or comments?



ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA

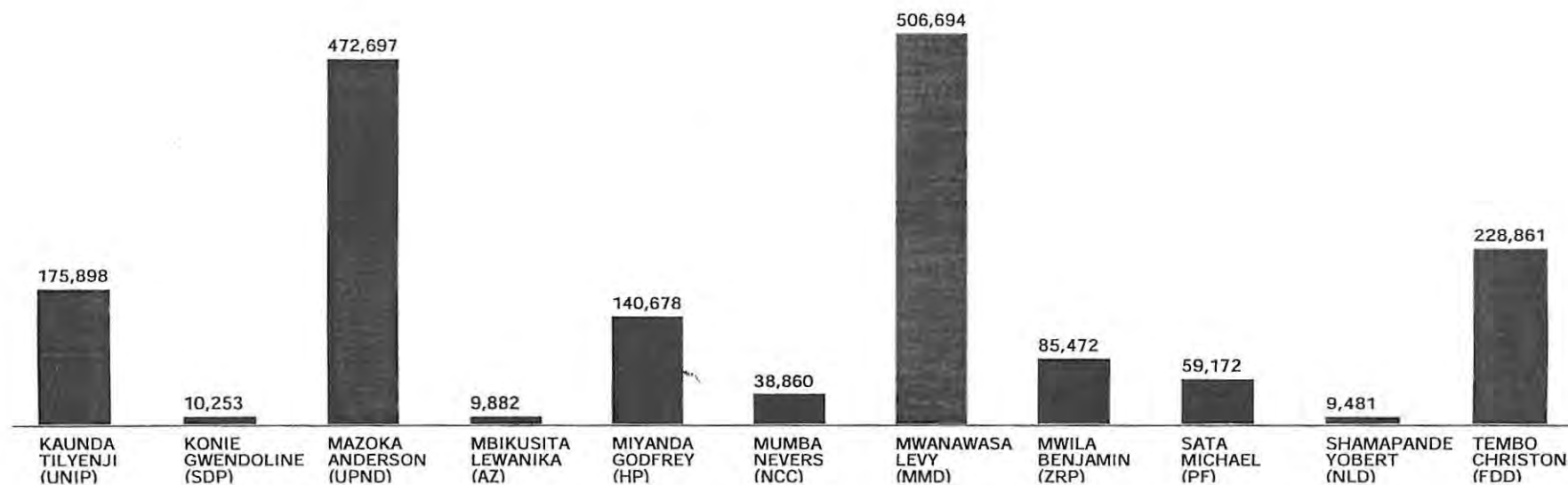
Presidential Election 2001 - Provisional Results

Date: 23-Jan-02
Page No: 87



Votes Received per Candidate, NATIONAL TOTALS

Candidate Name	Valid Votes Received	% Against Votes Cast	% Against Registered Voters	Rejected Ballot Papers	Rejected Ballot Papers %	Total Votes Cast	Total Registered Voters	National Percentage Poll
MWANAWASA Levy P. , MMD	506,694	38.67%	19.45%					
MAZOKA Anderson K. , UPND	472,697	26.76%	18.15%					
TEMBO Christon S. (Lt.Gen.), FDD	228,861	12.96%	8.79%					
KAUNDA Tilyenji C. , UNIP	175,898	9.96%	6.75%					
MIYANDA Godfrey K. (Brig.Gen.), HP	140,678	7.96%	5.40%					
MWILA Benjamin Y. , ZRP	85,472	4.84%	3.28%					
SATA Michael C. , PF	59,172	3.35%	2.27%					
MUMBA Nevers S. (Dr), NCC	38,860	2.20%	1.49%					
KONIE Gwendoline C. , SDP	10,253	0.58%	0.39%					
MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA Inonge (Dr), AZ	9,882	0.56%	0.38%					
SHAMAPANDE Yobert K. (Dr), NLD	9,481	0.54%	0.36%					
	1,737,948	98.19%	66.73%	28,408	1.61%	1,766,356	2,604,761	67.81%



APPENDIX THREE

Table 2: Percent Distribution of Population and Population Density by Province and Census Year

Province	Area	Percent Distribution of Population			Population Density		
		1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
Central	94,394	9.0	9.9	9.8	5.4	7.6	10.7
Copperbelt	31,328	22.1	18.8	16.1	39.9	45.6	52.9
Eastern	69,106	11.5	12.9	12.6	9.4	13.9	18.8
Luapula	50,567	7.4	7.3	7.6	8.3	10.4	15.5
Lusaka	21,896	12.2	12.8	13.9	31.6	45.1	65.4
Northern	147,826	11.9	11.9	13.7	4.6	5.8	9.5
North Western	125,826	5.4	5.6	5.9	2.4	3.1	4.9
Southern	85,283	11.9	12.4	12.7	7.9	10.6	15.3
Western	126,386	8.6	8.2	7.6	3.9	4.8	6.2
Total	752,612	100.0	100.0	100.0	7.5	9.8	13.7

APPENDIX FOUR

Table 1: Population Size and Growth Rates by Province

Province	2000 Population by Sex			Average Annual Intercensal Population Growth Rates			Deviation from National Average Annual Intercensal Population Growth Rates	
	Male	Female	Total	80 -90	90 - 00	% Change	80 - 90	90 -00
Central	489,436	517,330	1,006,766	4.2	2.7	-35.7	1.1	-0.2
Copperbelt	824,912	832,734	1,657,646	1.5	1.3	-13.3	-1.6	-1.6
Eastern	642,433	658,540	1,300,973	4.4	2.6	-40.9	1.3	-0.3
Luapula	388,189	396,424	784,613	2.9	3.4	17.2	-0.2	0.5
Lusaka	712,393	720,008	1,432,401	3.7	3.8	2.7	0.6	0.9
Northern	696,626	710,462	1,407,088	3.2	4.3	34.4	0.1	1.4
North-Western	301,596	309,379	610,975	3.8	3.4	-10.5	0.7	0.5
Southern	639,356	663,304	1,302,660	3.7	3.0	-18.9	0.6	0.1
Western	375,950	406,559	782,509	2.8	2.1	-25.0	-0.3	-0.8
Zambia	5,070,891	5,214,740	10,285,631	3.1	2.9	-6.4	-	-

APPENDIX FIVE

Table 4: Population 18 years and older with or without Voter's Cards Province

Province	Population				Percent Distribution			
	Total Eligible	With Voters Cards	Without Voters Cards	No Response	Total	With Voters Cards	Without Voters Cards	No Response
Central	351,711	142,356	202,558	6,797	100	40	58	2
Copperbelt	625,170	305,441	308,966	10,763	100	49	49	2
Eastern	481,083	245,067	225,346	10,670	100	51	47	2
Luapula	286,506	133,841	143,901	8,764	100	47	50	3
Lusaka	560,271	243,076	305,789	11,406	100	43	55	2
Northern	403,782	180,419	205,780	17,583	100	45	51	4
North Western	198,089	114,962	74,824	8,303	100	58	38	4
Southern	443,655	231,758	197,741	14,156	100	52	45	3
Western	298,988	163,174	128,699	7,115	100	55	43	2
Total	3,649,255	1,760,094	1,793,604	95,557	100	48	49	3

