



Defending free expression and your right to know

The mass media have a critical role to play during “election periods” acting as the main sources of information for the public about the prevailing political environment, the preparations for holding the elections, and about the political contestants themselves. As the holding of harmonised elections on July 31st 2013 approaches, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ) will be carrying daily media updates on this momentous event until the day after the election results are announced. The daily media updates monitor the output of the mainstream domestic print and electronic media relating to coverage of election issues. This is aimed primarily at establishing whether the media is communicating the information the public needs to make informed decisions when they go and vote – and whether they can vote freely. For any views and comments, you can email us at monitors@mmpz.org.zw

The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe

Daily Election Report – No.22-2013

Monday, August 5th, 2013

****This is MMPZ’s final daily report of the domestic media’s coverage of Zimbabwe’s 2013 harmonised elections. We hope subscribers found this service useful.***

ELECTION AFTERMATH

ZBC continues to discredit allegations of electoral fraud

THE news bulletins of the national broadcaster, ZBC, continued to drown allegations that the just-ended harmonized elections were marred by widespread irregularities with reports praising Zimbabwe for holding credible elections and urging outgoing Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and his MDC-T party to concede defeat.

This was reflected in all the 20 stories ZBC [ZTV (13) and Spot FM (seven)] carried on the elections.

So biased was ZBC that it suffocated and discredited claims by the MDC-T and an independent election watchdog, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), that about 750 000 urban voters were disenfranchised for the July 31 election, a development they argued severely undermined the credibility of its results.

Without ZBC taking any investigative interest in these issues, such claims of electoral irregularities risk being dismissed as lone voices in the wilderness.

ZBC's lack of interest in investigating the alleged irregularities is an indictment of its watchdog role, as a public service broadcaster, to encourage transparency and accountability in national processes and to ensure the public's right to receive a wide diversity of independent and non-partisan information and ideas.

Instead, ZBC gave prominence to reports in which a cross section of Zimbabweans and the region praised the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), for holding free, fair and credible elections, and congratulating Robert Mugabe and his ZANU PF party on winning. They were also quoted expressing their hope that the new government would address the country's problems.

In its top story, ZTV reported South African President Jacob Zuma congratulating Mugabe on his re-election. In a statement released by the Department of International Relations, Zuma described the July 31st elections as **“successful”** and called for peace among the people of Zimbabwe.

Zuma urged all political parties in Zimbabwe to accept the outcome of the polls, saying observers reported it to be an expression of the will of the people. He encouraged the people of Zimbabwe to seize this opportunity to collectively contribute towards building their country, driven with a common desire for peace, stability and prosperity.

ZTV's website inserted editorial commentary in their news story: ***"President Zuma's message is a direct contrast to what the United States, Britain, Australia and their allies, countries that imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe are saying about the elections"***. Its reporter, Judith Makwanya, followed suit: ***"The Western countries seem to be sharing the same hymnbook with their Zimbabwean progeny the MDC."***

In another report, ZTV reported UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon as having endorsed the elections.

This was followed by reports on a collection of domestic groups, including ZANU PF, endorsing the elections and urging the MDC-T to accept defeat.

In one such case, ZTV reported UZ lecturer Prof. Charity Manyeruke saying the landslide victory by ZANU PF and President Mugabe ***"is an expression of gratitude to him and his party for spearheading the land revolution and the various indigenization and empowerment programmes"***.

The same report quoted another analyst, Gabriel Chaibva, reminding Zimbabweans that the ***"defeat of the MDC-T was long predicted by the very same Western media that used to sing Morgan Tsvangirai's praises saying they lived in comfort and forgot to return to the people who they were supposed to serve"***.

In another story, ZTV reported ***"two political analysts from rural Zimbabwe"***, Norbert Mushoriwa and Patrick Chikuwe, also known as "Cde Africa", urging Tsvangirai to accept defeat, claiming the MDC-T leader was ***"the architect of his party's dismal performance"***.

Speaking to ZTV in the Melfort area, Cde Africa said it was time for the MDC-T to ***"go back to the drawing board and re-strategize for next elections due in five years time"***, adding that ***"the country cannot be held to ransom by people who concentrated on self gratification when Zanu PF went back to the drawing board and corrected their mistakes in the 2008 election"***.

ZTV also reported various church leaders urging Tsvangirai to concede defeat and work towards the development of the nation. Among them was chairperson of the Faith for the Nation Campaign, Reverend Andrew Wutawunashe; leader of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christians Denominations Dr Goodwills Shana; and Tehillar Christian Network founder and president Reverend Sam Malunga.

Notably, Wutawunashe reportedly ***"castigated the move by the MDC-T leader Mr Tsvangirai to challenge elections which were conducted in a peaceful and enabling environment"***, while Malunga called on the church to ***"pray against agents of evil bent on destabilizing the peace and tranquillity prevailing in the nation"***, in reference to statements by MDC-T treasurer-general Roy Bennet, who was reported calling for mass protests.

More balanced perspective from private radio stations

The private radio stations presented a balanced perspective to the debate on whether Zimbabwe's elections were credible or not.

Not only did they report ZANU PF and its allies, as well as South Africa and the UN, hailing the conduct of the elections, they also gave space to those expressing reservations over the manner in which the elections were held.

In addition, the private radios reported a ZANU PF victory as having the potential to undermine efforts to turn around the economy and quoted some Zimbabweans saying they were still in ***“shock and disbelief”*** over ZANU PF's win.

Notably, SW Radio Africa observed that celebrations by ZANU PF were ***“subdued”*** and ***“took place mostly in high-density areas”*** dominated by the party.

The same station, reported that ZANU PF's “landslide victory” was likely to result in the erosion of ***“basic individual freedoms”***, as the party now had a two-thirds parliamentary majority, which would allow them to change the constitution.

It quoted outgoing MDC-T chief-whip in Parliament, Innocent Gonese, saying: ***“As it stands we won't be able to block any legislation put forth by ZANU PF. In short what it means is that we have gone back to the dark days of the one-party state”***.

Gonese said legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Criminal Codification and Reform Act, which the regime has been widely using to prosecute political and human rights activists, ***“is now safe in ZANU PF hands”***.

In another case, SW Radio Africa reported the main opposition party in South Africa, the Democratic Alliance, as having rejected the preliminary endorsement of Zimbabwe's elections by the regional observer mission, saying the polls were not free, fair or credible.

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE

THE private radio stations recorded two incidents of post-election rights abuses.

These were:

- Reports of former MDC-T councillors, Rindai Muchemwa and Nobert Dhokotera, being assaulted by suspected ZANU PF supporters at Chipadze shopping centre in Bindura (SW Radio Africa).
- The eviction of 11 MDC-T supporters from their Mbare homes by ZANU PF followers who were celebrating their party's victory in the elections. The victims have since sought refuge at the party's headquarters in Harare (Studio 7).

Print media report for Monday, August 5th, 2013

SUMMARY

Today's main feature in the press was the international community's reaction to Zimbabwe's election results.

The state-controlled press embarked on a campaign to legitimize the outcome of the July 31 elections through selective sourcing.

The Herald gave more prominence to complementary voices from regional groups, such as COMESA, SADC and the African Union, while discrediting the West and other observer groups that questioned the credibility of the polls. In one of the reports, *The Herald* quoted ZANU PF's Jonathan Moyo saying, **"National elections are our business and we don't want the British to poke their colonial nose in our affairs"**.

The private newspapers gave prominence to articles from news agencies, such as *AFP*, *SkyNews* and *Reuters*, which relayed the West's reservations over the manner in which Zimbabwe had conducted its polls.

In other news, the *Daily News* reported that a South African Investigation company, Nasini Projects, was **"99 percent"** sure that the just ended elections were **"rigged"** and that they had the evidence to prove it. This came on the back of calls by the MDC-T to have a **"forensic audit"** of electoral process mainly the ballot papers and the voters' roll.

THE STATS

The print media carried 45 election-related reports.

Of these, 27 (60%) appeared in the private newspapers, the *Daily News* (15) and *NewsDay* (12). The remaining 18 (40%) were captured in *The Herald*. All reports were on the aftermath of the July 31 general elections.

The Herald and *Daily News* carried the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission's notice about recounting of votes in Mudzi South and Tsholotsho North constituencies.

Zuma's endorsement divides the press

After Zimbabwe's election results were announced the international community, which had been observing the country's elections, decided to express their opinion on the way the plebiscite was conducted. This stirred varying emotions in the newspapers.

The endorsement of the poll by SADC facilitator, South African President, Jacob Zuma, excited *The Herald*; news of his approval was splashed on the paper's front page and it became the backbone of the paper's argument that the elections were credible. Zuma was affectionately referred to as "Comrade", a title that does not come cheaply from the paper.

Zuma was reported to have urged all the parties to respect the result **"as observers said it was an expression of the will of the people"**. The paper also praised the UN, AU, SADC and COMESA who endorsed the elections saying they were free and fair.

However, not everyone accepted their opinion, and *The Herald* highlighted this by attacking the West after reports emerged that Australia, the United States and Britain all raised concerns about the legitimacy of the polls. Six reports were dedicated to denigrating the West. For example, in response to reports that Australia's foreign affairs Minister, Bob Carr, had called for **"a re-run of the elections based on a verified and agreed voters' roll,"** the paper said; **"Former British colony Australia demonstrated how far removed the Anglo-Saxon world is from reality on the ground"**.

The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), an independent civic election watchdog, also bore the brunt of *The Herald's* attacks. The paper enlisted the help of Jonathan Moyo who accused the network of working in cahoots with the West to effect regime change in Zimbabwe: **"ZESN is their mouthpiece they are not independent voices, they are just their masters' voice"**.

The private press was disappointed by Zuma's endorsement of the July 31 elections, and *The Daily News's* editorial comment reflected this, **"It is surprising and a bit strange that Zuma would rush to endorse Mugabe ignoring the serious issues raised against the outcome of the elections"**. *NewsDay* also highlighted Zuma's backing of the election result **"jolts"** MDC-T's poll challenge, as the party had hoped the SADC facilitator would be more sympathetic to their plight.

But neither paper clearly explained that Zuma's endorsement followed an election that ignored many of SADC's preconditions for holding the poll. Nor, of course, did *The Herald*.

The private dailies echoed the international community's unease over Zimbabwe's election results. *NewsDay* reported that, **'US, UK, EU condemn poll results'**, while *The Daily News*, carried a report headlined, **'Mugabe's free but unfair win,'** These sentiments were recurrent in six stories in both *The Daily News* and *NewsDay*.

Even though all the papers gave the impression that it was Africa against the West over Zimbabwe's poll results, *NewsDay* reported that Botswana also noted **"cases that fell short of the best practice regarding the conduct of credible elections"**

In other developments, the private press continued to reveal election-related irregularities that scarred the credibility of the poll. For example, *The Daily News* reported that a South African investigations company, Nasini Projects, claimed that a "delicate" ballot paper was used to rig Zimbabwe's elections. It

claimed, ***“the ballot paper had a water mark X against Mugabe and ZANU PF’s name such that if any ink is placed on the paper, the substance on the paper will react and remove the ink and activate the watermarked X into print”***. However, the report did not say whether the company had proof for this claim and how it was used in the election.

With the MDC-T threatening to pull out from all government institutions if ZANU PF’s victory was upheld, *The Herald* quoted Clerk of Parliament Austin Zvoma saying an ***“MDC-T pull-out won’t affect Parliament”***. The paper also tried drive a wedge into the MDC-T by reporting that its executive council decision was likely to spark an ***“intra-party rebellion”***.

MEDIA ISSUES

There were two notable media developments captured by the press today. *The Herald* and *NewsDay* reported on the directive by the Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) for mobile phone operators to switch off unregistered subscribers due to a rise in what it described as ***“abusive and offensive”*** calls allegedly heightened by the emergence of ***“micro blogger Baba Jukwa”***.

NewsDay also highlighted election observer group SADC-ECF’s assessment of Zimbabwe’s blatantly partisan media environment during the election period. The story reported that the group noted ***“with great concern the partisan and biased coverage given to some political parties and their candidates by both the public and private media”***. It was part of a wider story in which its author assessed the partisan nature of the domestic media, singling out *The Daily News* and *The Herald* as examples. Notably though, it failed to identify the responsibilities a state-owned news service has to the public.

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