



On ZBC

June 2013

“Eye on ZBC” is a monthly summary of how the public broadcaster presented pertinent political and socio-economic issues, especially those relating to the activities of the coalition government, ahead of harmonized elections. It will also assess how the broadcaster is monitoring adherence to the Global Political Agreement signed by the country’s three main political parties in September 2008. It is a product of the Media Monitoring Project, Zimbabwe.

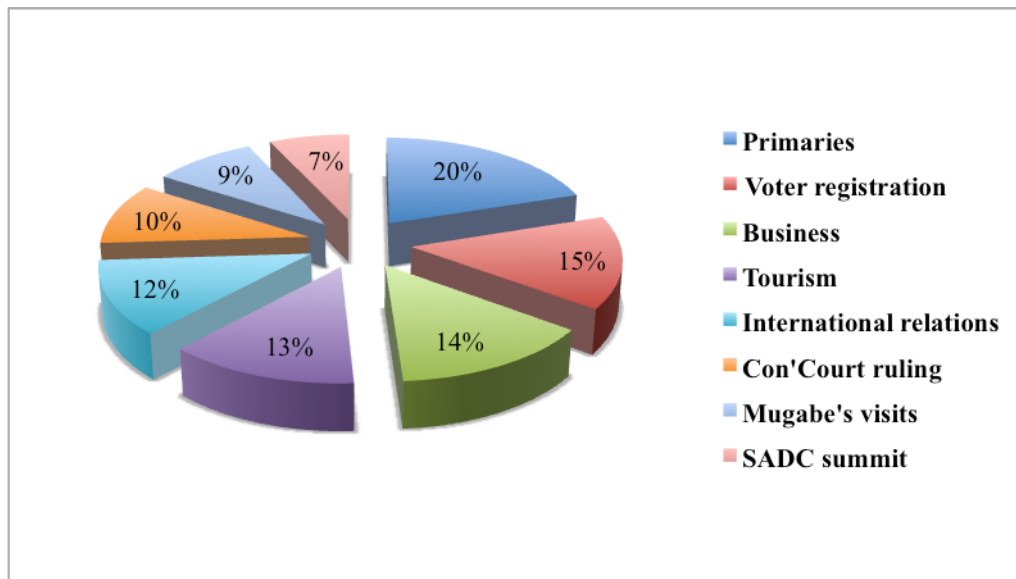
SUMMARY

THE national broadcaster, ZBC, carried 254 news reports on various national issues in the period under review.

The most popular issues were the holding of primary elections by Zimbabwe’s main political parties; the ongoing mobile voter registration exercise; and the ruling by the newly created Constitutional Court directing President Mugabe to hold harmonized elections by July 31st, an order the President has since complied with, and news of a special SADC summit in Maputo to discuss the country’s elections. These matters were covered in 134 stories, constituting 53% of ZBC’s topical stories.

Business news, including preparations for the hosting of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) General Assembly by Zimbabwe and Zambia, also competed for attention, with 68 (27%) stories.

Reports on Zimbabwe’s relations with other countries and Mugabe’s visit to Japan, Botswana, and Singapore, among others, anchored the list of ZBC’s topical stories this month. These issues were contained in 52 (20%) stories. See Fig. 1.



PRIMARY ELECTIONS

ZBC glosses over problems in ZANU PF primaries

THE national broadcaster (ZBC)'s mandate as a public broadcaster came into question again this month over the grossly partisan manner in which it covered the activities of Zimbabwe's main parties.

ZBC's coverage of the recent primary elections by the country's top two political parties was severely biased against the MDC-T, while the station gave widespread, favourable publicity to its rival ZANU PF.

This was reflected in the 51 stories the national broadcaster carried on the party activities of the coalition parties in the month. Of these, 32 appeared on the sole national television station, ZTV. The remaining 19 appeared on the national radio station, Spot FM.

Forty of the 51 stories were on ZANU PF's primary elections, while the remaining 11 were on those of the MDC-T.

Notably, all the 11 reports on the MDC-T were negative. The stories were on alleged infighting and intra-party violence, as well as claims of candidate imposition, lack of transparency and democracy, and chaos in the selection of candidates in the party.

Seven of these 11 reports were on intra-party violence in the MDC-T.

In one such case, ZTV (14/6, 8pm) reported the alleged petrol bombing of a home belonging to MDC-T activist Ernest Banda in Highfield, Harare, on June 14th, in **“a suspected case of intra-party violence ahead of the party’s primary elections”** on June 15th. The station reported National Police spokesperson Senior Assistant Commissioner Charity Charamba confirming the case and indicating that initial investigations were pointing to a case of intra-party violence.

Earlier, ZTV (6/6, 8pm) carried **“more reports”** of MDC-T intra party violence. These included a **“wrangle”** between aspiring MDC-T MP candidates Ezra Sibanda and Mark Moyo. The broadcaster quoted Charamba confirming the case, saying the **“assault”** occurred at Makepesi Business Centre in Lower Gweru where Joblin Moyo attacked a female MDC-T member Modrick Gwainda, accusing her of supporting Sibanda.

Another ZTV story (26/6, 8pm) reported the arrest of three MDC-T supporters for **“public violence”** in Manicaland. The three, Patrick Sagandira, Lovemore Chifomboti and Moses Ndowa, allegedly assaulted supporters of aspiring MDC-T National Assembly member for Makoni Central, Grace Kwinje.

In contrast, ZBC’s coverage of ZANU PF’s primary elections was lauded as having run smoothly, with aspiring candidates and their supporters in the **“revolutionary”** party upholding **“discipline”** and **“loyalty”** to ZANU PF and its leadership (ZBC, 2, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27/6, 8pm).

The station reported ZANU PF candidates as having heeded to calls for peace from their leadership, while the conduct of primary elections itself was resoundingly **“successful”**, **“smooth”**, and **“violent free”**.

Notably, ZBC made no reference to reports of chaos, violence, and protests by some aspiring ZANU PF candidates and their supporters against favouritism, the imposition of candidates, and alleged manipulation and rigging of the votes as reported elsewhere in the private media during the same period.

Among the reported victims of the ZANU PF intra-party fighting were Mashonaland Central Governor Martin Dinha, who is said to have withdrawn from Bindura South primaries because of an alleged attempt on his life; Henrietta Rushwaya due to alleged threats from Shuvai Mahofa; and Esau Mupfumi, under unclear circumstances. The private media also reported on the controversial disqualification of some ZANU candidates such as Sharon Mugabe, and Marian Chombo, allegedly at the behest of her former husband Ignatius Chombo.

Reportedly, some of these problems resulted in some aspiring ZANU PF candidates and their supporters lodging appeals and staging demonstrations at their party’s provincial and national headquarters, while others such as Marian Chombo threatened to stand as independents in the upcoming elections if their grievances were not dealt with.

ZBC also censored reports that the actual voting in the ZANU PF primaries was fraught with irregularities.

For instance, the station made no reference to reports that ZANU PF's voters' roll was ditched in some constituencies, allowing anyone with an ID to vote (SW Radio Africa, 26 & 27/6).

ZBC also downplayed ZANU PF's failure to conduct its primary elections in one day as planned, due to serious logistical challenges, which included the late arrival of ballot papers and boxes in some areas, resulting in voting starting as late as 4pm (SW Radio Africa, 25/6).

Instead, the national broadcaster flooded its audiences with positive, and mostly banal reports, about ZANU PF's primary elections, disguised as national news.

This was reflected in stories such as *ZANU PF digests recommendations* (2/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF tackles key issues* (13/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF sets out primaries rules* (14/6, 8pm); *No imposition of candidates: SK* (15/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF candidates submit CVs* (15/6, 8pm); *Mash Central welcomes primaries guidelines* (15/6, 8pm); *Let not primary elections divide us: VP Mujuru* (16/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF completes candidates nomination* (17/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF vets candidates* (18/6, 8pm); *Politburo endorses candidates* (19/6, 8pm); *No to infighting, ZANU PF told* (21/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF primaries postponed* (21/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF primaries re-scheduled to Tuesday* (23/6, 8pm); *Midlands goes to the polls* (25/6, 8pm); *Voting opens in Mat South* (25/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF extends primary elections* (25/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF bigwigs win primaries* (26/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF primaries results start trickling in* (26/6, 8pm); *ZANU PF's final list of candidates* (28/6, 8pm).

CURRENT AFFAIRS

THE national broadcaster also continued to violate its public mandate with its lopsided coverage of national issues.

The state mouthpiece extensively used its current affairs programmes in the period under review to complement its biased news bulletins to perpetuate the political ideologies of ZANU PF over its coalition partners. The programmes mostly focused on the activities of ZANU PF and its officials on issues around voter registration and inspection; election dates and party primary elections.

Nine programmes were monitored, and these included: *Media Watch*, *Melting Pot*, *African Pride*, *Economic Forum*, *View Point* and *Spotlight*. Eleven voices were used in these monitored programmes, four of which belonged to ZANU PF, and four to pro-ZANU PF analysts such as Danny Masukuma, Tafataona Mahoso, Vimbai Chivaura and Isheunesu Mupeperekwi.

We sample the editorial thrust of one of these, *African Pride*, broadcast on Thursdays at 13/6 18:30 and repeated on 20/6, 18.30.

Panellists Vimbai Chivaura, Dr. Tafataona Mahoso and Prof. Isheunesu Mupeperekwi hosted the programme, which focused on 'Our pride as Africans' with particular focus on Zimbabwe and the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe'.

However, discussion on the matter degenerated into a platform for perpetrating hate speech and racial slurs, including recasting the definition of African culture to fit within ZANU PF's narrow characterization of what it means to be African.

Sentiments of programme: Pro-ZANU PF.

Below are excerpts of the discussion.

Q: What is then the role of elections, except to fulfil the revolutionary direction?

Prof. Mupeperekwi: ***“One man one vote was a central thing. The whites, the colonizers’ did not accept that blacks were men, which is why they denied the people the vote. You must have attained some degree of white culture and education for you to be allowed to vote.”***

“Right now people are running around talking about voting as if its obvious, it’s not obvious. This vote is the essence, the epitome of the success of our struggle.”

“What we want people to understand is that, this vote is not about politicians. Is not about political parties. This vote is about the people, it’s at the centre of what we call, Zvavanhu – Our African Pride. We wonder now when some people say, they want to teach us how to vote, when we died in order to be able to vote. There are people who tell us they should be allowed to do voter education. There are people who say, we want to come and see how you vote. Where were you when we were fighting you? The Europeans and Americans right now say we want to come and observe your vote.”

“The very people who spilled our blood want to come and see how we are voting. All those claims are illegitimate. Nobody else should come and observe our vote except ourselves, that is, the Africans.”

Q: Dr. Mahoso, if you take the background that, Prof. Mupeperekwi has given. Any election in the past or future, would it be an election if it makes nonsense of all these sacrifices we have gone through. What are we electing?

Dr. Mahoso: ***“The destiny of Zimbabwe is one journey, and because it’s one journey on that journey you stop and look and say, are we still together, and an election is a pause along that path.”***

“The problem we have now is what is clearly expressed very well in a recent British Guardian article: How Morgan Tsvangirai can beat Robert Mugabe. Instead of the journey, it’s now about Tsvangirai beating Mugabe, that is the problem that we have.”

“We are now surrounded by what we call the clans of Judas who want to divert us from that journey and now tell us all kinds of other objectives, which have nothing to do with why Zimbabwe was created, Zimbabwe and its wealth, that is what our people died for. They did not die so Morgan Tsvangirai could beat Robert Mugabe nor did they die so that Tsvangirai could say, as he said on 19 May, ‘We can’t build a national economy on peasants’. That is not our people fought for.”

“This person is completely lost on what Zimbabwe is about”.

Prof. Mupeperekwi: ***“There is no way we can have people coming together, ganging together to form an opposition against the wishes of the people. The things that we died for, Zimbabwe and its wealth. Who is to form a coalition to derail this? So that the people do not continue on their path of freedom, justice and ownership of all resources of Zimbabwe.”***

Q: They killed Chitepo, Tongogara, Ziyapapa Moyo, but did they stop the revolution?

Dr. Mahoso: ***“They are those people who brought Zimbabwe from Rhodesia. Now we have reached a stage where we need the young people to join with them to continue the revolution.”***

“The clans of Judas say, Change, which means we must go back.”

Prof. Mupeperekwi: ***“I can’t believe this, security sector reform. This cacophony of security sector reform. The security sector is led by those who survived the struggle, the Chiwegas, the Chihuris, the Manyongos. We are being told they must be removed, they must be retired. The opposition are saying, these people spoil us, they must be prevented from going back to Egypt.”***

“This story about security sector reform is nonsense”.

Q: Who is afraid of the people who fought for this country?

Dr. Mahoso: ***“Our viewers should look at The Herald of the 11th of June 2013. There was a big meeting in South Africa, involving the leader of the MDC and Roy Bennett, commonly known as Pachedu when he was misleading the people. It was a big conference where they are relocating all the white forces from Australia and New Zealand to try and assist these turncoats in Zimbabwe and how to steal the election in Zimbabwe. Those are the people who are afraid.”***

“These turncoats want to go back to Egypt, which is why they want security sector reforms”.

Q: What is the difference between a party that joined hands with Rhodesians who have killed those who brought our freedom?

Prof. Mupeperekwi: ***“One of the most vicious, murderous units of the Rhodesian army was called the Selous Scouts. I am very surprised that, today we have got Selous Scouts in the Parliament of Zimbabwe, voted in by black people, murderers. Today the parties that are joining with these murderers are just as guilty of the genocide we are discovering at Chebondo and Rusape.”***

“Anybody who is joining the whites and the Selous Scouts are equally guilty and will be rejected by the people.”

“Last time through hunger people were voting wrongly, this time the people will reject them in this election”.

Q: What makes some of our people vote back the murderers into Parliament?

Dr. Mahoso: ***“The message about these coming elections is; you have liars among you but, we are not going to use the machete or gun. Punish all the sell outs with your vote.”***

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

ZBC paints a rosy picture of electoral preparations

ZBC gave a glowing picture of the country electoral preparations ahead of the July 31st harmonised elections.

This was reflected in 36 (92%) of the 39 reports ZBC carried on the administrative aspect of the elections. Of the 39 stories, 24 (62%) appeared on the national television station, while the remaining 15 appeared on Spot FM.

The news on Zimbabwe's electoral preparations was exclusively based on officialdom. It was fetched from the Zimbabwe Electoral Authority; the Joint Monitoring and Implementation Committee (Jomic); the Registrar-General's Office; and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), which all claimed that preparations for the elections were progressing smoothly and that they were ready for the polls.

As a result, there was no attempt to marry the official pronouncements with the situation on the ground, especially on the mobile voter registration exercise. For detailed analysis of the first two weeks of the second mobile voter registration exercise, please refer to MMPZ's update on this exercise issued on Friday June 28th. Those wishing to obtain a copy of this report can obtain one from monitors@mmpz.org.zw"

Among the issues ZBC touted as evidence of Zimbabwe's readiness for the polls was:

- The ongoing intensive mobile voter registration exercise;
- ZEC's meeting with traditional chiefs, urging them to treat all persons within their areas of jurisdiction equally and fairly in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the country;
- The commission's meeting with political parties, urging to ensure their nomination papers are in order and are submitted by not later than 4pm on June 28th as well as explaining the provisions that can lead to the disqualification of candidates;
- The sitting of the Nomination Court.
- Preparations for the selection of external observers and the arrival of AU observers;
- The commencement of ZEC's media monitoring;

- ZEC's release of guidelines explaining the criteria it would use in accrediting local civic society organizations willing to participate in the voter education and appeals for the CSOs to be impartial in discharging their duties;
- The commission's announcement that there would be no new delimitation of boundaries for the elections;
- The launch by Jomic of a code of conduct that promotes peace before, during and after elections;
- Warning by the police for Zimbabweans to desist from violence; and
- Reports of ZEC finalizing the list of party candidates to contest in the upcoming parliamentary polls and those nominated by parties for the Women's Quota in the National Assembly and Senate.

The only hint on some of the problems faced in the administration of the polls, was in the form of ZBC's coverage of Registrar General Tobaiwa Mudede **"bemoaning financial shortages"** during the voter registration and inspection exercise (ZBC, 10/6, 8pm).

Mudede disclosed this when he appeared before the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Defence and Home Affairs on June 10th.

ZTV (10/6, 8pm) reported Mudede indicating that although the second phase of the voter registration exercise had started on June 10th, his office was still facing **"serious financial shortages"**, forcing it to **"deploy district teams instead of the ward based registration teams"**.

Mudede complained that the resources available were not enough to cover the 62 active districts countrywide, as treasury had failed to make available the remaining US\$5 million of the US\$13 million it allocated for the second phase, which was expected to end on July 9th.

He said: **"We have failed to get money since the last exercise and we just had to do what we could to comply with the constitution. We will do this so as to cover ground but it is not what we would have wanted. Last time, we could not sustain the exercise with one team per district"**.

The same bulletin reported Mudede admitting that the first phase of exercise, which ran from April 29th to May 19th, had **"failed to yield the desired results due to incapacitation"**, including the portfolio committee's fears that the second phase could meet the same fate due to similar problems.

Otherwise, the rest of ZBC's reports painted a rosy picture on the administration of the vote. Others were based on propaganda, justifying the ZANU PF arm of government's reluctance to allow Western observers to monitor Zimbabwe's elections.

In one such case, ZTV (26/6, 8pm) passively reported a technical team from the SADC Parliamentary Forum, in the country to observe the pre-election environment, saying Zimbabwe **"has a good track record of elections management and the forthcoming elections will prove to the rest of the world that it is capable of conducting transparent polls"**.

The team, led by the SADC Parliamentary Forum chairman, Esau Chiviya, said this soon after meeting ZANU PF national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo at the party's headquarters in Harare. ZTV (10/6, 8pm) reported Chiviya as having expressed hope that peace and political maturity demonstrated during the referendum would continue as the country prepares for harmonized elections.

TOURISM

Mzembi warns politicians

AS Zimbabwe draws closer to hosting the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) General Assembly in August, the national broadcaster, ZBC, gave informative updates on the matter.

Once again, this demonstrated the capability of the national broadcaster to professionally report on pertinent national issues whenever it suits them, especially when the issues are devoid of any political controversy.

Highlights of ZBC's coverage of the UNWTO included reports of Tourism Minister Walter Mzembi warning the country's major parties against political bickering; indications that preparations for the gala were progressing smoothly; assurances by Zimbabwe and Zambia and other stakeholders that they were ready for the event; and news features informing Zimbabweans about the origins and significance of the UNWTO.

ZBC (19/6, 8pm) reported Mzembi warning that ***"bickering among politicians over the elections might cost the country the benefits of hosting the UNWTO"***, slated for the 24th to the 29th of August. The minister issued this warning while unveiling the final structure and programme of the UNWTO meeting in Harare. Mzembi said Zimbabwe's political disagreements, this time over election dates, ***"should not stop or derail"*** the hosting of the carnival.

The minister urged the parties to go for elections according to the Constitutional Court ruling, ***"to protect brand Zimbabwe"***. He was quoted: ***"We need to be peaceful and make sure that elections are held and that they will not disturb the hosting of the mega event that comes to a country once in a life time"***.

The same day, ZBC (19/6, 8pm) reported that the UNWTO Inter-Ministerial Committee had ***"concluded its assessments of the facilities in Victoria Falls ahead of the final inspections by the UNWTO Inspectorate Team"***, in early July.

The assessment reportedly began with a tour of the renovations being undertaken by the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe at Victoria Falls Airport terminal. The refurbishments would see the terminal having ATM services among other services and also incorporate temporary structures that will be set up a few days before the General Assembly.

Earlier, ZBC (15/6, 8pm) reported UNWTO Local Organizing Committee chairperson Councillor Nkosilathi Jiyane expressing satisfaction with the progress that has been made in the rehabilitation of roads, refurbishment of the Victoria Falls hospital and various hotels.

Such sentiments were echoed by Environment Minister Francis Nhema; the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA); the Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe; Safari Operators Association of Zimbabwe; Permanent Transport and Communication Ministry Munesu Munodawafa; the Chinese Embassy; and some local economists (ZBC, 1, 7, 11, 12, 16, 18, 21, 29/6, 8pm).

Ends/

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