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The Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
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Weekly Media Review 2010-46

THE WEEK'S TOP STORIES

FINANCE Minister Tendai Biti's presentation of the 2011 national budget and South African president Jacob Zuma's visit to assist the country's coalition principals resolve their prolonged political dispute attracted the media's attention this week.

ZANU PF's campaign activities also got significant coverage in the government media and the private Press (See Fig.1). While the official media promoted ZANU PF and its policies ahead of next year's proposed national elections, the privately owned papers viewed the party's campaign tactics as undermining the possibility of free and fair elections. They cited as proof ZANU PF's use of violence and hate speech against its political opponents and abuse of State resources to sustain its campaign.

The official media's coverage of the activities of the two MDC remained negative in violation of Article XIX [d] of the Global Political Agreement (GPA), which compels them to provide ***"balanced and fair coverage"*** to all the coalition parties for their ***"legitimate political activities"***.

Fig 1: Topical news distribution in the media

Media	Budget	Power sharing	ZANU PF campaigns	MDC activities	Human rights
Official Press	28	1	13	20	3
ZBC	43	16	22	0	0
Private papers	25	32	8	3	34
Private Radios	6	14	0	0	19
Online agencies	7	8	0	0	13
Total	109	71	43	23	69

ZANU PF blasts Biti's 'partisan' budget

FINANCE Minister Tendai Biti's alleged allocation of more funds to ministries run by the two MDC formations, and what they believed was his reluctance to support the country's agricultural sector, was cited by ZANU PF and the official media as the basis for their condemnation of his proposed 2011 national budget.

Out of the 71 stories the official media carried on the US\$2,7 billion budget, 33 (46%) vilified it, while six (8%) cautiously viewed the budget as a solution to some of the country's socio-economic calamities. The remaining 32 were relatively balanced but played down the main news in the budget proposing a nearly 100 percent increase in civil servants' salaries.

This contrasted sharply with the passive and favourable publicity these media gave previous fiscal and monetary policy presentations by the ZANU PF arm of government, especially Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono.

Biti's budget presentation, whose highlights also included setting aside funds for next year's anticipated elections, was broadcast live on ZTV for three hours on Thursday November 25th, and appeared for approximately an hour the following day on the same station after its 8pm news bulletin.

But while the government dailies (26/11) gave the budget front-page lead status and published its full supplement, ZTV (25/11, 8pm) relegated news of this nationally important event to a brief report as the third item in its main evening bulletin and to the business section. Instead, ZTV led with a report on an event in which President Mugabe urged parastatals to adopt good corporate governance followed by a report on Vice-President Joice Mujuru attending a police graduation ceremony at Morris Depot.

The Herald and *Chronicle* (26/11) reported Biti's budget as having been described as **"underwhelming"** and **"disappointing"** for allegedly **"failing to give due importance to key State policies"** in addition to **"not going as far as expected in unlocking disposable income for workers"**.

The official dailies, together with ZTV (25 & 26/11, 8pm) quoted senior ZANU PF officials such as Bright Matonga, Paddington Zhanda and Joseph Made and their allies, such as the Affirmative Action Group (AAG) president Supa Mandiwanzira and 'analyst' Jonathan Kadzura criticizing Biti for allegedly failing to provide adequate support to the agricultural sector and the controversial indigenization programme. They also accused him of refusing to admit that Zimbabwe's failure to get international budgetary support was due to **"illegal Western sanctions"**.

The private media highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of Biti's budget, viewed its criticism by ZANU PF and the state media as politically motivated, and emphasized that a lack of international budgetary support and poor economic performance handicapped Biti's ability to sufficiently fund all sectors of the economy.

State media downplays Zuma's visit

THE visit by SADC mediator, South African President Jacob Zuma, to assist Zimbabwe's coalition parties break their protracted political deadlock exposed regional concern over Zimbabwe's crisis, contrary to the impression given by ZANU PF and the state-controlled media.

Zuma's visit was prompted by the SADC Troika's failure to meet in Botswana the previous week.

The government media downplayed the visit by depicting it as normal and routine, whose aim was mostly to review progress in the implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

These media also continued to dismiss as baseless complaints by the two MDC formations over ZANU PF's alleged violation of the power-sharing agreement.

ZTV (26/11, 8pm) passively reported Zuma appearing to trivialize fierce disagreements between the coalition principals as a mere ***"communication breakdown"***. Zuma was reported to have said he was ***"very happy"*** with the outcome of his meeting with the principals, as ***"they are now talking to each other"***. The national broadcaster cited the imminent resumption of Monday meetings between the principals as proof that Zuma's mediation efforts were ***"fruitful and successful"***. Although ZBC mentioned that Zuma's meeting had also ***"touched on a number of issues"*** such as President Mugabe's unilateral appointment of some senior government officials and the need for a roadmap for next year's proposed elections, it did not disclose whether these issues had been resolved.

Instead, ZBC criticized the MDC for raising ***"issues that were agreed upon way back in August"*** that ZANU PF would not make any further concessions until the MDC formations had successfully campaigned for the removal of ***"illegal sanctions"***.

The Herald (27/11) carried a similar story.

The private media provided more details of what transpired during Zuma's meeting with the principals.

They reported Zuma urging them to come up with a roadmap for democratic elections and expressed concern over their failure to effectively resolve their differences.

The Standard (28/11) quoted Zuma's spokeswoman, Lindiwe Zulu, confirming this. She also said her boss had expressed concern over Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's lawsuit against President Mugabe over the unilateral appointment of some senior government officials.

The private media also quoted political commentators questioning the effectiveness of SADC's mediation and viewed calls for the adoption of an election roadmap by SADC as an indication of a shift of focus to elections as a means of resolving the country's political crisis.

Hate language poisons election climate

REMARKS by Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri that the country's security forces would never allow Zimbabwe to be ruled by "Western puppets" dampened prospects for free and fair elections next year.

His comments were reminiscent of those made by senior security personnel in the countdown to the violent 2008 elections and follow hard on the heels of similarly intolerant comments by senior ZANU PF officials and others, including Vice-President John Nkomo, Defence Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa, Didymus Mutasa, war veterans' leader Jabulani Sibanda and Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba over the past month.

They also coincided with an upsurge in stories in the government media depicting the MDC formations as incompetent and conspiring with the West to effect illegal regime change.

Out of the 55 stories that these media carried on the activities of the coalition parties, 35 (64%) were on ZANU PF activities, which all portrayed the party in favourable light. The remaining 20 depicted the MDC groups as confused, lacking focus, and being Western puppets.

Among the conspiracy stories were front-page reports in *The Herald* and *Chronicle* (22/11) claiming that the US and Britain were mobilizing financial and technical support to back the MDC-T's election campaign. No proof of this was provided. The papers also accused Prime Minister Tsvangirai and his party of getting "**expert advice**" from a British intelligence operative called Charles Heatly.

At the weekend, ZTV (26/11, 8pm) passively quoted Chihuri urging the police force to "**vote wisely**" in next year's elections "**to protect the country's sovereignty**". He declared: "**Nyika ingaenda imi muripo...Kana chimbwasungata chapiwa ushe hwekutonga nemi chakamirira vanhu vekunze, nyika yaenda. Nyika hadzitongwe nezvimbwa sungata kana kuti puppets, kana kuti running dogs ...mentality yacho nethinking yacho iri inside out kunge pocket yaburitswa iri empty...Haungadi kutongwa nerombe rakadaro...**" (*This country will never be repossessed by former colonizers and their puppets while you (ZRP) are there. These running dogs' mentality is sick, twisted and confused. You cannot be ruled by such loafers*).

The official media did not view such language as a blatant violation of Article 19e of the GPA, which compels all the media to: ***“refrain from using abusive language that may incite hostility, political intolerance and ethnic hatred, or that unfairly undermines political parties and other organizations”***.

The private media paid little attention to what appeared to be campaign activities by the coalition parties ahead of next year’s planned elections.

Instead, they remained focussed on showing that the prevailing political and electoral conditions were not conducive for the holding of credible elections.

They cited as proof delays in the implementation of an electoral roadmap, intensification of offensive language bordering on hate speech by ZANU PF and the state media, interference in the country’s political affairs by the security forces and continuing human rights violations.

RIGHTS ABUSES PERSIST

ONGOING human rights violations against a wide cross-section of Zimbabwean society dominated the private media compared to other topical issues.

Out of their 179 stories on topical issues monitored by MMPZ, 66 (37%) were on rights violations, an indication of the private media’s concern with the problem.

Sixteen of them reported fresh incidents, two of which appeared in the official media.

They included:

- The eviction by soldiers of suspected MDC supporters from their homes in Chipinge East (SW Radio Africa, 22/11).
- Burning of homes belonging to 43 families in Mhangura by suspected ZANU PF youths (*Daily News* and *The Zimbabwean*, 23 & 25/11), and
- The arrest of MDC-T members in Nkayi, Bikita, Marondera and Masvingo on various charges. Most of them stemmed from holding ‘unsanctioned’ meetings (Studio 7, *Daily News*, *The Standard* and *Sunday News* and *The Zimbabwean*, 23, 25, 26 & 28/11).
- The shooting of a suspected motorcycle thief by the police in Nyabira after he had allegedly tried to disarm a police officer during a raid on his residence. (*The Herald*, *News Day* and *NewZimbabwe.com*, 24/11).

THE LOUDEST VOICES

PREDICTABLY Finance Minister Tendai Biti was the most quoted individual in the all the media, reflecting the importance they attached to news of his 2011 budget.

He was quoted 15 times in the government media. ZANU PF national chairman Simon Khaya Moyo (12), the party's Goromonzi North MP Paddington Zhanda (seven), leader of civil servants unions Tendai Chikowore (six) and MDC-T spokesman Nelson Chamisa (five) followed.

Biti was mostly quoted presenting the budget, while Zhanda and Chikowore criticized it for failing to allocate more money towards salaries for civil servants and MPs. Moyo gave updates on ZANU PF's preparations for its annual conference and described as **"unheard of"** Prime Minister Tsvangirai's decision to initiate legal action against a sitting president. Chamisa emphasized the need for Zimbabwe's coalition parties to agree on a roadmap for democratic elections.

The private media quoted Biti 22 times and Tsvangirai 15, while MDC-T spokesman Chamisa and UZ political science lecturer John Makumbe (eight times each) trailed.

Tsvangirai was mostly quoted justifying his decision to sue President Mugabe over his unilateral appointment of senior government officials, while Chamisa accused ZANU PF of violating the GPA. Makumbe urged the MDC-T to avoid putting too much faith in SADC.

Quotes of the Week

"This country came through blood and the barrel of the gun and it will never be recolonized through a simple pen, which costs as little as five cents" – Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri addressing 150 police officers who visited Chimoio and Nyadzonia shrines in Mozambique last month (*The Herald*, 29/11).

"Its like a mushroom, a big head, small body and no roots. He should have given more money to agriculture..." – ZANU PF's Mhondoro West MP Bright Matonga criticizing Finance Minister Tendai Biti's 2011 national budget (ZTV, 25/11, 8pm).

"You don't take political matters to court. What Tsvangirai has done is to aid Mugabe. This is an unwise decision, a wrong strategy that leaves him exposed...(This) makes people wonder if he is the right man to be president of this country..." – constitutional law expert Lovemore Madhuku (*Daily News*, 25/11).

End/

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