



Mediated political cleavages: Zimbabwe's 2000 election seen through the media

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Abstract

The 2000 parliamentary election was the first Zimbabwean election in which the media situation gave the opposition against President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF)) a fair possibility to inform the voters about the political situation in the country. Even if ZANU (PF) still controlled radio and television, a few newspapers opposed to the regime had been established toward the end of the 1990s. This article discusses three political consequences of this new situation: Which way did the new media situation influence the election campaign agenda? How did the media present the conduct of the election in the light of generally accepted democratic rules? What did the media tell voters about the political violence that took place during the election campaign?

Introduction

On 18 April 1980 Zimbabwe was founded as an independent state after several years of liberation struggle against Ian Smith's white minority rule in what had until then been Rhodesia (Sithole 1999; Bhebe, 1999). Earlier in the same year, in the country's first free election, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu (PF)) had won a clear victory and its leader Robert Mugabe was sworn in as the country's first head of government¹. In the following years Mugabe worked systematically towards gaining the same level of control over the country that he already had over his party. This goal was achieved in December 1987: the Unity Accord with the

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largest opposition party PF-ZAPU marked the end of 'The Dissident War' that had been going on in Matabeleland for about five years (Laakso 2002). Mugabe and ZANU (PF) were now in full control of the state apparatus and with the loyal support of the media he also controlled the processes of public opinion formation in the country². As a consequence none of the competing parties represented a real threat to continued ZANU (PF) rule in the subsequent parliamentary elections in 1990 and 1995 (Moyo 1991; Quatin, 1992; Darnolf, 1997; Makumbe and Compagnon 1998).

At the time of the parliamentary election in 2000 the situation had changed. Mugabe's defeat in the referendum on the new Constitution in February 2000 showed that the support for the recently established party, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) led by Morgan Tsvangirai, was considerable, and that the outcome of the parliamentary election was not a foregone conclusion. (Saunders 2001). ZANU (PF) now found itself with a competitor that the party had to take seriously. Also, in the last two to three years, several newspapers critical of Mugabe's regime had been established (Rønning and Kupe 2000; Saunders 2000; Rønning 2003). The most important of these was *The Daily News* with five issues a week, but also three or four independent weeklies now played an important role in public debate. ZANU (PF)'s earlier control of the information flow had thus become weakened, even if the party still controlled radio and television (Zaffiro, 2002). A situation of *de facto*, if not formal absolute, rule and total state control of the media had thus been changed into a situation in which ZANU (PF) and MDC struggled for power as two more or less equal political parties, both having important supporters in the media.

The development of society in the 1990s also contributed to weakening ZANU (PF)'s and Mugabe's positions in the population. The economy had gradually deteriorated through the 1990s; in the election year inflation stood at 60 per cent, and unemployment had reached 50 per cent. In addition to these gloomy figures, a steep falling-off in investments in most areas of society showed that there was little chance of any improvement in the near future. The overall outcome was rapidly increasing poverty and by the turn of the millennium some 60 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line. The spread of AIDS was another problem that would require a vast effort to prevent mortality from having serious long-term consequences for the social fabric.

This situation posed a serious challenge both to Zimbabwe's democratic government and to its media. Was the democratic culture of the country strong enough to handle an equal struggle between political rivals? Would the media treat the two parties in a tolerably fair way? This article will shed light on these two issues by analysing the image the media presented of

- the country's most important challenges at the advent of a new millennium
- the conduct of the election in the light of generally accepted democratic rules of the game
- the extensive violence that arose before the election.

This study spans the period from the referendum in mid-March to one week after the election. Within this period, News@Eight, the main television news programme from the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) was analysed, as well as the following newspapers: *The Herald/The Sunday Mail*, *The Chronicle/The Sunday News*, *The Daily News*, the *Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Financial Gazette*, *The Standard* and *The Zimbabwe Mirror*³. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of all relevant items in ZBC's News@Eight, and of election-related newspaper articles. On that basis, important characteristics of the media's coverage of the campaign was defined and their treatments of major political issues were compared. Such a strategy does not give a precise picture of quantitative aspects of the election campaign, illuminates special features of the political contents of media and places individual news items in a wider context so as to bring out the broad outlines.

The election campaign agenda

As the parliamentary election approached, there was a series of problems that national authorities would be obliged to tackle in order to prevent the people's situation from becoming catastrophic. An opposition that appeared willing and able to plot a course whereby the most serious problems could be dealt with would consequently stand a good chance of doing well in the election. Yet neither economic problems nor the spread of HIV/AIDS became issues in the election campaign. There was no media debate on the reasons for high unemployment and inflation; on the consequences of a situation in which fewer and fewer people had incomes they could live on; or on what it would take to stimulate the country's economy. Furthermore, little was heard about measures that might slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS or what could be done for those who suffered the consequences. Nor did the pro-opposition media devote much attention to Zimbabwe's military engagement in the Congo, which should have been a good cause for them to take up, in view of its impact on the country's economy.

Although the country's serious economic and social problems should have played into the opposition's hands, it was ZANU (PF) that set the substantive campaign agenda. It became clear, shortly after the referendum, that two issues were intended to secure the government party renewed confidence among the electorate: the question of who was to own the land and the struggle against unwarranted intervention in the country's internal affairs by its former colonial power, Great Britain. ZANU (PF) took the recipe for overcoming the MDC's challenge from the fight for independence more than 26 years previously. Its winning policy then, just distribution of arable land and the struggle against imperialism, would once more win the party an election victory. Now as then, the people were to be mobilised against a common enemy, the British and their henchmen in the country, the white and black 'lackeys' in the MDC, and the white farmers who controlled the best agricultural areas. The party wanted to show that it was now in earnest in seeking land redistribution, and that it would

be willing to take untraditional steps to achieve its goal. This policy won the full support of pro-government media, whereas pro-opposition media remained strongly critical towards it.

Media coverage of the ‘war veterans’ farm occupations mirrored a fundamental difference between the pro-government and the pro-opposition media. In the eyes of the former the occupations were a completely understandable reaction to an intolerable situation. They questioned neither the lawfulness of the take-overs, nor the police response to them. For a long time, both the ZBC and *The Herald* ignored the fact that these acts were violations of the country’s laws, treating the occupations so as to give the impression that they were justifiable actions and there was no reason to criticise. In the opinion of the pro-opposition press, they were unlawful acts that threatened to do irreparable harm to an important principle of Zimbabwean society, and in the face of the authorities’ passivity *The Daily News* asked in its 3 March 2000 leader: ‘Has the government abdicated its responsibility to protect the people and sacrificed them at the altar of political expediency?’ *The Financial Gazette* answered the question in its editorial on 16 March 2000: ‘It’s now obvious that right from the start the veterans got the all-clear to move onto the farms from none other than Mugabe himself as part of the election campaign of his governing ZANU (PF) party.’

Another marked difference in media treatment concerned what the consequences of the farm occupation would be for the country. This was a prominent theme in the pro-opposition newspapers right from the start, with the emphasis on the economic consequences for further agricultural development, for banks with large outstanding loans to farmers, and for the balance of trade. They also voiced concern for the country’s food situation, which could worsen so much as to require imports, for the situation of the many farm workers who risked losing their jobs when the war veterans took over the farms, and for the country’s tourist industry. This perspective was largely neglected by the pro-government media, although at the end of March *The Herald* did print a couple of articles suggesting that the occupations might damage the country’s economy and that they threatened farm workers’ jobs. However, when early in May *The Financial Gazette* and *The Daily News* carried a report from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to the effect that the occupations were threatening the country’s winter sowing and that large imports of wheat might be necessary, both the ZBC and *The Herald* remained silent. Where the pro-opposition newspapers feared dangerous consequences of the war veterans’ taking the law into their own hands, the pro-government media anticipated future progress in rural districts in the wake of the take-over of the farms.

One important intention behind the propaganda that ZANU (PF) and the pro-government media directed at Great Britain was to weaken the MDC by associating the party with the alleged wish of the British to regain control over Zimbabwe. With Britain under its Labour Government presented by Mugabe and his media supporters as out to thwart Zimbabwe’s democratically elected government, any link with, or support from, Great Britain was held to show an unpatriotic attitude and intent to

undermine the country's independence. This criticism was not aimed only at the white population of British descent, with the commercial farmers at the forefront, but also to a considerable degree at the leaders of the MDC, who were described as agents of the British. According to the pro-government media, the leaders of the MDC were Great Britain's 'lackeys', 'sell-outs', who wanted to sell the country back to its old colonial masters and who therefore lacked political credibility in the Zimbabwe of today.

Promoted by the pro-government media's loyal and uncritical mediation of ZANU (PF)'s political message, landownership and relations with Britain became prominent issues in the election campaign. Mugabe's tactics were successful because neither the MDC nor the pro-opposition media managed to establish an alternative substantive agenda on which to base attacks against ZANU (PF)'s weak spots. Nor did the media note that, 20 years after the struggle for independence, Mugabe was looking back rather than forward in choosing the two most important issues from those days, landownership and independence for the people, on which to base his campaign. Instead of winning the continued confidence of the people by means of policies for dealing with the economic and social problems the country was facing, he sought to stay in power by invoking united resistance to the allied inner and outer enemies: the white farmers and the British imperialists. The pro-opposition newspapers pointed out from time to time that Mugabe had had 20 years in which to redistribute the land without achieving significant results and that Great Britain could hardly be said to be a real threat to the country's independence. However, neither argument was put forward strongly and systematically, and the pro-opposition press cannot be said to have seriously confronted ZANU (PF) on its two core issues in the election campaign.

A free and fair election?

Prerequisites for free and fair elections are not only that fundamental democratic conditions are met, but also that they are openly discussed, so that the voters can exercise their rights in society and base their political choices on sound knowledge. Free elections have both a legal aspect that relates to the laws and rules governing the conduct of the elections, and an information aspect that relates to the ability of the voters to participate in the elections correctly.

As to the legal aspect there was a marked difference between a positive goodwill towards the government in the pro-government media and a reserved scepticism in the pro-opposition media. The positive goodwill in the pro-government media applied both to voter registration and to the role of the international observers. These media did not query the registration process, which, in their opinion, had been properly carried out: the result was reliable, and there was little reason for the criticism of it that had been voiced. On 23 March 2000 *The Herald* also invited the Registrar-General, Tobaiwa Mudede, to assess the quality of the register, and his judgement was clear:

no country had a perfect voter register and Zimbabwe had nothing to be ashamed of in that respect. The pro-opposition media were much more critical than the ZBC and *The Herald*. They conveyed an impression of a register that was in poor shape, inaccurate and defective. They also claimed that registration had taken place after the official deadline and that some candidates had transported voters to the registration offices, and criticised the lack of receipts indicating that voters had registered. Although the criticism was rather fragmentary and each separate point carried little weight, the underlying trend was clear. The registration procedures were so unreliable that the voting registers were not to be trusted and this gave the authorities the opportunity to manipulate the election in favour of ZANU (PF).

The debate on the desirability and functions of international observers began when Secretary-General McKinnon of the Commonwealth visited Harare in mid-May, and remained until the voting day. The main message in the articles and broadcasts of the pro-government media was that Zimbabwe was fully capable of conducting a satisfactory election and that international observers really had no business in the country. The pro-opposition newspapers held a completely opposite opinion of the observers, whom they considered absolutely essential if there was to be any hope of a free and fair election. On 16 June 2000 *The Standard* complained that there were too few international observers and doubted whether the bodies that were supposed to run and monitor the election would manage to carry out their tasks in a satisfactory way. *The Daily News*, too, feared that the working conditions imposed on the observers would hinder them in their work, and reported on 9 June 2000 that the war veterans had stated loudly and clearly that the observers had no business on the occupied farms. On 15 June 2000 the newspaper followed this up with a presentation of the observers' view: they insisted on their right to move freely and talk to whomever they liked.

The disagreement between the pro-government and pro-opposition media over the importance of the observers was an excellent reflection of their general views on the formal and legal aspects of the conduct of the election. The pro-government media conveyed an impression designed to build confidence in the system and in those responsible for it. According to this view, there was little reason to criticise the election system, and the bodies responsible for the implementation of the preparatory processes were performing their duties competently and impartially. International observers thus were an unnecessary evil with no business in the country. The image presented by the pro-opposition media was absolutely contradictory. In their opinion, the way previous elections had been run had shown very clearly that the ruling party had many opportunities to take unfair advantages. While international observers might help to reduce the extent of election rigging, they could not guarantee a free and fair election. Nevertheless, on one point the media were agreed: the country's election system placed considerable demands on the voters' knowledge and it was difficult for voters to keep informed of the substance of the various requirements.

That raises the issue of whether the media gave the voters the background needed for their choice between the parties that were standing for election.

There are two sides to the information aspect where media coverage of the election is concerned. The first is technical – how to vote – and the second is substantive – the information required to make an informed voting choice. In Zimbabwe this means knowing both how to register as voters and how to cast a valid vote. There was little specific information of this nature in the media, even in the pro-opposition newspapers, which otherwise concerned themselves a good deal with the technical aspect of the election. One reason for this must be that the information from the authorities was sometimes unclear and therefore difficult for the media to pass on, but that is not the only explanation. A more active informative effort on the part of the media would have made it easier for voters to act appropriately in an election system in which it is easy to slip up. In this regard the media failed.

The other side concerns the media's efforts to give the voters foundations for carefully considered choices between the competing election candidates. One element in this task is to provide information on what political alternatives they have to choose between. In this respect, all the media failed before the election in 2000, as none of them tried to give the voters anything like an objective picture of the pre-election political landscape. While the pro-government media painted ZANU (PF) in glossy and the MDC in gloomy colours, the pro-opposition media did the opposite, though they were better at slating ZANU (PF) than at praising the MDC. Now that the voters had the opportunity, for the first time since liberation, to vote for a party with a real chance of loosening ZANU (PF)'s grip on power, it was unfortunate that the media gave them so little grounds for comparing the parties' qualities. Another media assignment was to keep the voters abreast of the politicians' doings in the election campaign, a task that both *The Herald* and the ZBC performed very diligently where ZANU (PF) was concerned. Neither *The Herald* nor the ZBC had much to say, however, about MDC events, and although the newspapers, which sympathised with the party, had more, it was limited in scope. One important reason for this difference is that ZANU (PF) engaged in a much higher level of activity than the MDC, but the fact remains that ZANU (PF)'s media supporters provided better information on that party's operations than the MDC's supporters did on the party they favoured.

The media have a dual role before elections. The media's first role relates to how they view the democratic aspects of the election. In this connection there was a marked difference between the pro-government and the pro-opposition media. Those in the first group, spearheaded by *The Herald* and the ZBC, were well satisfied with the state of affairs. The other group, with *The Daily News* as the most widely read paper, was much more critical. Readers were left in no doubt that the authorities were attempting by every means to wreck the opposition's election campaign and that, if necessary, they would not hesitate to manipulate the vote. In this way the pro-opposition newspaper sowed serious doubts about the legitimacy of the elections, a notion of which there was no trace in the pro-government media. The media's

second role relates to their own contribution to making the election free and fair. The pro-government media did little to achieve that. Criticism of the authorities was virtually non-existent, and little concrete information regarding policies, contests and choices were to be found. The pro-opposition newspapers took their critical role seriously, noting in the course of the election campaign many circumstances that should not have arisen. Where information was concerned, however, they did not do much better than the pro-government media, and seemed to be more intent on pointing out unsatisfactory behaviour of the authorities than on advising the voters. Altogether, therefore, the contribution of the media in this respect left a great deal to be desired.

Political violence

Before the country's first free election in 1980, ZANU (PF) threatened that the violent fight for independence would continue if the party did not win. It did win, but the next election in 1985, in the middle of the Dissident War in Matabeleland, was no less violent. Nor was the 1990 election free of violence, but conditions were more peaceful than they had been five years before. This development towards less political violence continued in 1995, when ZANU (PF) was completely predominant. While the trend was in the right direction, many must have noted the clear connection between the extent of pre-election violence and the strength of the opposition to ZANU (PF). So there was good reason for *The Daily News*, in a leader in its first edition in election year 2000 (Monday, 3 January 2000), to call on all parties to endeavour to make the coming election an election 'free of threats, intimidation and violence'.

Those who, in view of the challenge from the MDC, feared that the election campaign would again be marked by violence were correct. With reports from independent non-governmental organisations as its source, the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (MMPZ)⁴ (2000, 10) estimates that there were more than 1 000 acts of violence during the election campaign, in which over 30 people were killed and several thousand more or less seriously injured. According to the same sources, the aggressors in over 90 per cent of the cases of violence had links to ZANU (PF). All the media saw politically motivated violence as a prominent feature of the election campaign, but they differed both as to the scale of the violence, and as to who was promoting it. While *The Daily News* reported on violent incidents almost daily through most of the campaign, and the weeklies (except *The Zimbabwe Mirror*) carried several reports and comments on violence each week, items on violence were far fewer in *The Herald* and the ZBC. Pro-government and pro-opposition media disagreed even more widely over who was behind the violence. According to MMPZ (2000, 42), *The Herald* saw the opposition as responsible for the use of violence in 33 of its 36 articles on violence during the election campaign, while ZBC Television blamed the MDC in forty-eight per cent of the 65 violent incidents it reported on,

and ZANU (PF) only in three per cent. Although the MMPZ gives no corresponding figures for the reporting of violence in *The Daily News* or any of the pro-opposition weeklies, there can be no doubt that the picture it conveyed was the direct opposite, or that they chiefly quoted opposition politicians concerning who originated the violence. In the *Zimbabwe Independent* for 20 April 2000, for instance, Welshman Ncube, Secretary-General of the MDC, claimed that government-supported violence was destroying any possibility of ‘a free and fair election’.

All the media expressed some degree of concern at the extensive violence that was taking place, but the message came across much more clearly in the pro-opposition than in the pro-government media. The former were clearer in their warnings against violence, underscored its unfortunate consequences more heavily and were more inclined to view its use as a political instrument. The latter were more vague in their criticism of violence, and seemed more ready to accept its place in the election campaign.

The pro-opposition newspapers’ spotlighting of the violence that took place before the election deviated sharply from the impression conveyed by the pro-government media and provided important correctives in four respects. The first two were easy to see. The pro-opposition media presented a more violent election campaign as a whole, for one thing. But for the pro-opposition newspapers, the situation would have appeared much more peaceful, especially in the countryside and on occupied farms. Second, there were great differences in the media’s attributions of responsibility for the violence on which they reported. Without the opposition newspapers, the media presentation would have been heavily slanted against the opposition and the ruling party would have stood out as much more peaceful than independent observers considered it to be.

Though the next two aspects were not so evident, they were at least as important. The third was the intentionality of the violence, of which the two media groups conveyed very different impressions. The pro-government media to a large extent presented the use of violence as spontaneous and random. Violence arose in chance encounters between supporters of the two major parties, usually following provocation by MDC supporters or when opponents of ZANU (PF) carried out unmotivated assaults on the party’s supporters and other innocent people. This was a way of individualising the violence and dissociating it from any organisational or institutional base. This presentation of violence as something which ‘just happened’ was also conveyed in impersonal formulations: ‘A police reaction team had to be summoned on Sunday to quell violence that had erupted between MDC and Zanu (PF) supporters at Nehanda Village in Madziva, Shamba on Saturday’ (*The Herald*, 26 April 2000, 1).

The pro-opposition media took a different view of who was responsible for the violence, which according to them was both systematic and organised. In their opinion, it was systematically aimed at supporters of the MDC, at social leaders who might influence others in their local communities to support the MDC, and at groups

that had previously supported ZANU (PF) but now regarded the MDC as an attractive alternative. The Daily News thus claimed on 18 May 2000 (p. 9) that 'War veterans and Zanu (PF) supporters are alleged to have compiled lists targeting farmers, opposition party candidates and activists and civil servants, especially teachers', the objective being to break down the core of MDC support. Furthermore, according to the pro-opposition newspapers, circles with close links to the government and under its control were organising the violence. This took many forms. The war veterans were by no means such a disorganised rabble as some clips from occupied farms in the ZBC's news broadcasts made them out to be and, if those newspapers are to be credited, their activities on the farms and their surroundings were undoubtedly centrally led. According to an article in The Daily News on 11 May 2000, they were also actively supported by army personnel, who helped with supplies and logistics in particular. Last but not least, these newspapers repeatedly drew attention to the support the police indirectly gave ZANU (PF) by not intervening in much of the violence that took place.

The fourth difference between the pro-opposition and the pro-government media relates to the emphasis they gave to the consequences of violence. The pro-government media saw the violence as principally a series of separate incidents, which of course had regrettable results for those they affected, but beyond that had no significant consequences. Neither *The Herald* nor the ZBC considered what impact the violence might have on the actual election result, on the country's political system in the longer term, or on the persons exposed to the violence or their closest relatives. The pro-opposition media touched, to varying degrees, on all these aspects and to them the violence was much more than passing incidents, soon to be forgotten. On the one hand they regarded it as a tool, which ZANU (PF) was using to ensure an election victory that the party would not win in an election campaign fought by democratic means. On the other hand, as these media saw it, violence had damaging social consequences in the local communities afflicted by it; harm that would take a long time to overcome.

As election day approached violent outbreaks were given little space in the pro-government media. They expressed few ideas on the impact of the violence on the ballot, did not note the doubts that so much violence might give rise to concerning the legitimacy of the election, and expressed no regrets to the many victims of the violence. The pro-opposition media gave more thought to this aspect, and two days before the election *The Daily News* claimed in its election supplement (p. 6) that '[t]his month's parliamentary election – the fifth this country has held – is the bloodiest in Zimbabwe's 20 years of self-rule'.

Conclusion

In the period leading up to the election in 2000, both the ZBC's Television news and the newspapers connected to Zimpapers served as loyal outlets for ZANU (PF),

even though their attachment in terms of ownership was to the state of Zimbabwe, not to ZANU (PF) as a political party. This role as a political channel was manifested in a number of ways, and ZANU (PF)'s policies were not only widely presented and discussed, they were also praised. Events in the political arena were constantly presented from a ZANU (PF) point of view, and in ways that brought out the party's advantages over its election rivals. In this way ZANU (PF) was free to carry on its political activities in the knowledge that the country's largest media would ensure that its policies were presented to the voters in a favourable light, and would refrain from calling attention to matters which the party preferred to keep out of the lime-light.

The Daily News, with its clearly negative attitude to the governing party and evident sympathy for the MDC, was the state-controlled media's counterpart. Nevertheless, it played a different role in relation to the parties from that of the state-controlled media. Instead of serving as a channel for the MDC, *The Daily News* was an independent actor, albeit with a definite political preference for the MDC. It devoted much more space to criticising the governing party than to boosting the MDC, and its strategy, aimed at bringing about a political change in the country, was to show how misguided ZANU (PF)'s policy had been and what undemocratic methods the party was using to stay in power. This focus on ZANU (PF) left the MDC in the background and voters learnt little about the substance of the MDC's policies. Furthermore, *The Financial Gazette*, the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *The Standard* were in similar situations to *The Daily News*, because all three made known their clear standpoints rather by criticising ZANU (PF) than by promoting the MDC. As a result, much of the support for the opposition was indirect.

It was, in fact, a conspicuous feature of the election campaign that the opposition parties failed to make the most of the chances they had to challenge the ruling party in the areas where it was most vulnerable because of its failed policies. As reflected in the media, the opposition's campaign showed two distinct characteristics. One was that it was defensive. Neither the MDC nor the pro-opposition newspapers managed to focus the debate on areas where they might have questioned ZANU (PF)'s economic and social policies of recent years. Issues that distracted attention from some of the most urgent social problems dominated the election campaign agenda. The other was that the opposition's election campaign was negative. MDC concentrated much more on what in their opinion was wrong with the sitting Government's policies than on what solutions they themselves had to offer to the same questions. This amounted to a failure by the opposition to acquaint the voters with its own policies.

The existence of newspapers beyond the control of Zimpapers nevertheless provided an important corrective to the pro-government media's one-sided support for ZANU (PF) in the run-up to the election in 2000. After the government had closed down *The Daily News* in September 2003 the situation changed. Without the publication of this newspaper, the 2005 elections suffered an enormous loss of balanced

media coverage. This, however, is the subject for further research and cannot be dealt with in the present article.

Notes

1. The two major parties in the first election in 1980 and subsequent main rivals, both originated from the liberation struggle, and each represented one of the two main ethnic groups of the country. ZANU (PF) was led by Robert Mugabe and had its electoral base in the Shona people, living in the eastern and central parts of the country. The Patriotic Front – Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF ZAPU) was led by Joshua Nkomo and had its base in the Ndebele people, living in the western parts. The 1987 Unity Accord was a peace treaty for which Mugabe set the conditions and which was enforced using military operations against civilians in Matabeleland from 1982 onwards. The treaty merged the PF ZAPU into ZANU (PF) to form one single party.

2. Zimbabwe has a simple and straightforward media structure. The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) under state control has exclusive rights to broadcast radio and television, and the most important newspapers are the dailies *The Herald* and *The Chronicle*, and the Sunday newspapers *The Sunday Mail* and *The Sunday News*, are closely associated with the state through Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (Nyahunzvi 2001). Before the election in 2000 their counterparts were found in the privately owned newspapers *The Daily News*, *Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Financial Gazette* and *The Standard*, of which the last-mentioned three are weeklies. *The Zimbabwe Mirror*, which can be said to hold a middle ground between the two groups, is also a weekly.

3. The research does not include radio, which may seem paradoxical in a country where radio reaches a much larger proportion of the population than newspapers and television. Radio broadcasts are, however, like television programmes, the preserve of the ZBC, which is still government controlled. Politically speaking, both radio and television serve very largely as channels for ZANU (PF) and radio closely resembles television, both in the tenor and in the main message of its political material. The principal impression of the media's election campaign in 2000 would therefore not have been significantly altered if radio had been included in the study.

4. <http://mmpz.icon.co.zw/>

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