Chapter Six

The Political Economy of the ‘Third’ Transition

6.0 Introduction
This chapter provides the socio-political and economic context of press-state-capital relations in the period 1998-2004. Using Sylvester (2003)’s analytic categories, the period is referred to as the ‘third’ transition. The contextual background provided in this chapter is intended to inform the discussion of media framing of the 2000 and 2002 elections in chapters Seven and Eight.

Among other things, the chapter examines how struggles between the state and fractions of capital and civil society create a scenario where powerful competing political and economic interests define the press’s *modus operandi* more than previously. The metamorphosis of state communication policy beginning in 1999 and its role in shifting the context of journalism practice in the new millennium is also discussed as a product of these struggles.

Overall, the rationale for a contextual discussion is to establish how the structure-agency dynamic plays itself out in Zimbabwean media arena during politically contested times.

6.1 The late 1990s: A Storm is Brewing
There is a growing body of literature focusing on various aspects of what has come to be commonly known as the ‘Zimbabwe Crisis’. In much of this literature, the 1990s are depicted as a policy era that provided a fertile background to the political and economic crisis that beset Zimbabwe beginning at the turn of the millennium (See, for example, Campbell, 2003; Chan, 2003; Bond & Manyanya, 2003; Sylvester, 2003; Saunders, 1999). This chapter does not engage the political economy of the Zimbabwe crisis in much detail due to factors of both space and the focus of the study. However, a discussion of specific policy realities and initiatives across the spectrum of politics and the economy is done here with a view to locating the role of the press in context.
The ‘third’ transition in Zimbabwe began with the rise of civil society claims on the state around 1997, and continued into the new millennium, culminating in a struggle “between democratic and sharply autocratic tendencies” (Sylvester, 2003:30). By the late 1990s, it was clear that market-oriented reforms had failed to stimulate the envisaged economic revival. Unemployment, inflation and poverty shot up, resulting in constant clashes between the state and civil society organisations. In 1997 alone, for example, there were at least 55 national labour actions, involving just over 1 million worker participants (Saunders, 1999:68). This was a sharp increase from the previous 10 years, which had an average of 15 actions (Ibid). Besides national strikes called by the main labour body, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), demonstrations against the state were also convened around the same time by Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) which demanded compensation for participating in the liberation struggle in the 1970s. When the state capitulated and offered hefty Z$50,000 once-off gratuities and subsequent monthly grants of Z$2000, the economy took a dramatic tumble (Bond & Manyanya, 2003).

In January 1998, spontaneous food riots broke out in Harare and Chitungwiza, and later spread throughout the country’s main urban centres. Mass protests against the rise of food and other commodities were brutally crushed by the state apparatus; at least 10 people were killed and several hundreds arrested.1 When Herald ran an editorial comment mildly criticising the state’s harsh response to the protests and challenging official claims that whites and other “enemies of state” were behind the unrest, the paper’s editor, Tommy Sithole, was instantly sacked.2

What was perhaps clear from the food protests and subsequent, innumerable strike actions that plagued Zimbabwe into the new millennium, was that the protestors had by now broadened their range of reference. Although the predominant grievance remained the question of economic marginalisation, “there was also a linking of (President) Mugabe’s name to those of other authoritarian leaders in Africa—such as

2 Sithole was given an administrative post within the Zimpapers which had nothing to do with editorial functions at the Herald. He was replaced by former Director of Information, Bornwell Chakaodza.
Daniel arap Moi in Kenya, Mengistu and Mobutu” (Chan, 2003:113). In May 1998, for example, University of Zimbabwe students besieged parliament, carrying placards that likened Mugabe to Indonesia’s Suharto, who had been forced to resign a few weeks earlier.

Besides economic decline and the social restlessness it created in its wake, three other factors contributed to the highly charged political environment of the late 1990s. First, the decision by the government to deploy troops to the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in August 1998 was met with stiff resistance at home. While the public press celebrated the military decision as a pan-African support for the transitional government of Laurent Kabila in its effort to repel invaders, private newspapers, especially the *Financial Gazette* and *Zimbabwe Independent*, consistently blasted the decision as ill-conceived and harmful to the economy. Opposition to the war intensified within both the opposition parties and civil society. The fact that the decision was taken without parliamentary approval, and also the question of whether an already ailing economy could sustain a costly war abroad, were key issues raised by the anti-war lobby. Further, the implication of Harare elites—generals, politicians and some local businessmen—in the systematic looting of the DRC by the United Nations became a source of embarrassment for the government and a tool for civil society groups opposed to the military intervention (see Bond & Manyaya, 2003).

Besides the issue of the DRC war, another issue around which the state-civil society contestation heightened was the constitutional review process of 1999. Although the government took a leading role in the process of drafting a new constitution, calls for a new constitution to replace the 1979 Lancaster Constitution date back to the mid 1990s, and were initiated by opposition parties and civil society groups. By 1999, there appeared to be national consensus that a new constitution was needed for the country. However, different interest groups wanted the new constitution to secure their particular social and political interests. Chan (2003) captures the hitherto prevailing mood in Zimbabwe with regard to a new constitution: “Intellectuals opposed to the Government wanted it; technocrats within Zanu PF, seeking to

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3 For a comprehensive discussion of the debate about the war, see Horace Campbell’s book, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*, 2003
modernise their party, wanted it; and the old guard of the party, thinking it might entrench even further their own powers, wanted it” (p.113).

In May 1999, President Mugabe appointed a 396-member commission to review the Lancaster House constitution, and undertake an outreach to gather the people’s views on the new constitutional draft. Meanwhile, the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), a coalition of civil society groups opposed to Zanu PF, ran a parallel exercise and produced its own draft constitution. The NCA argued that the presidential commission was dominated by ruling party members and sympathisers, and hence the resulting document was likely to be a Zanu PF rather than a national constitution. The government commission’s six-month outreach programme resulted in a draft, which was put to a referendum in February 2000, and got rejected. The run-up to the referendum was characterised by intense media and political campaigns for either a ‘Yes’ or a ‘No’ vote for the draft. The state and public press favoured the affirmative vote, while a host of civil society organisations led by the NCA wanted the draft thrown out. The rejection of the draft constitution was widely viewed as a rejection of President Mugabe and the ruling party. The ‘No’ vote league campaigned around the draft’s provision for increased powers of the Executive as a recipe for tyranny, while for the ‘Yes’ campaigners the draft’s provision for compulsory state acquisition of land was its historic strength. That the rejection of the draft constitution was immediately followed by farm invasions and a host of authoritarian state decisions is arguably an indication of the significance of the event to the political economy of Zimbabwe’s ‘third’ transition.

Lastly, the formation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) as a direct offshoot of the ZCTU, in September 1999, was the political culmination of decade-old social struggles pitting the state against civil society. The coalescence of civil society into a political entity was not taken lightly by the incumbent government, as it presented the first most serious threat to its political security since the merger of Zanu PF and PF Zapu in 1987. State reaction to dissent from both the opposition and civil society—including the press—was more decisive than before, and assumed both legal and extra legal forms.
The 21st century in Zimbabwe therefore began on a note of fierce political contestation. Besides fighting the opposition, the state also sought to take its war to the doors of mainstream capital, which it accused of connivance with the workers’ based opposition. Subsequent to the January 1998 protests, the ZCTU called for several workers ‘stay-aways’. The overwhelming success of these ‘stay-aways’ depended partly on the cooperation of employers who promised not to victimise the workers for staying at home rather than reporting for duty. It could be argued that state management of the economy, including the hefty payouts to war veterans, the military’s intervention in the DRC, as well as the failure of both ESAP and the Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP), alienated the state from the predominant players in capital. At the same time, with land occupations and their repercussions on industry, the political complexion of capital would eventually change, prompting a realignment of state-capital relations. For the media, where the polarities that defined post-2000 Zimbabwe played themselves out, relations with the state depended largely on which camp an individual media organisation belonged.

6.2. New Terrain; New Boots

With political stakes higher than ever, the state’s response to increasing opposition to its rule was varied. Within the realm of media policy, there was a sense of urgency with which the state moved to introduce legislative measures to deal with sections of the press considered troublesome. As early as February 2000, then Minister of Information, Chen Chimutengwende, lamented that the existing media environment was “too relaxed” and had “allowed the penetration of media organisations with a political agenda to destroy the government and country” (Herald, 5/2/2000). The minister announced that the government would introduce measures to, among other things, restrict ownership of private media to local investors. In an ominous indication of things to come, Chimutengwende told journalists in Kariba: “We are not living in normal times. We therefore have to make such measures. There is a fierce battle for the hearts and minds in Zimbabwe and we just have to win it” (Herald, 5/2/2000).

Although it was only until 2001 that formal legislation curtailing a range of nominal freedoms the media had enjoyed since 1980 was introduced, there is evidence that the state had abandoned its policy referred to in Chapter Four as ‘tactical indifference’ to the private press at least two years earlier.
The military detention and torture of two *Standard* newspaper journalists in January 1999 was arguably the initial indication of the changed terrain of media-state relations. The paper had, on January 11th, 1999 reported that 23 officers had been arrested for plotting a coup against Mugabe for his military involvement in the DRC and his mismanagement of the economy. The government denied the report, and swiftly deployed the military police to arrest Mark Chavunduka and Ray Choto—the editor and author of the story, respectively—on January 13th.

This was not the first time the government had arrested and detained journalists. In 1994, *Daily Gazette* journalists Basildon Peta and Brian Latham were detained and questioned under the Official Secrets Act for publishing a story on tax evasion by Zanu PF companies, using information leaked from the government’s Department of Taxes. However, what distinguished the *Standard* case was the use of the military, rather than the police, to effect arrests and detention of the alleged offenders. This had to do with the militarised or ‘securitised’ nature of the state, a process which started at the beginning of the ‘third’ transition as the state became weaker and unable to address developmental challenges facing the country. Militarisation and brute force became the state’s response to popular opposition against the crisis of service delivery.

Hardly a month after the *Standard* incident, police arrested and detained another set of journalists, this time from the *Zimbabwe Mirror*. This was for an older article alleging that the family of an officer serving in the DRC had been presented with only his head for burial after his death in combat. The outset of the ‘third’ transition was therefore marked by increasingly hostile press-state relations that manifested the growing tensions between the state, capital and civil society.

**6.2.1 Goodbye Linquenda House**

Beginning mid-2000, the structure of government communication systems underwent a radical metamorphosis. The newly created Department of Information and Publicity in the President’s Office replaced the Ministry of Information (which was disbanded) and oversaw the restructuring of both the ZBC and Zimpapers. The new department,
which enjoyed a huge presidential funding vote, also spearheaded a process of media ‘reform’ characterised by a frenzy of legislative footwork.

The change in the management of public information and articulation of a new media policy was conceived earlier, as noted above. In February 1999, the Ministry of Information set up a taskforce to oversee a process of self-restructuring. Chimutengwende told *Herald* the rationale for restructuring was to “turn (the) ministry into a competent, unbureaucratic and action-oriented ministry” (*Herald*, 5/2/1999). The restructuring was also consistent with the state’s perception of the threats of the ‘changed times’.

However, Chimutengwende did not stay in cabinet long enough to oversee the restructuring process. He lost his post in an historic reshuffle that saw some 17 cabinet ministers lose their posts, most of whom had served in cabinet since 1980. The newly appointed ‘war cabinet’—as President Mugabe christened it—comprised mostly young, educated technocrats and a sprinkling of the old ruling party guard. Mugabe argued the new cabinet had a role to prosecute a war being fought on two fronts: internally, in the form of the opposition and parts of civil society which the state accused of being puppets of the West; and externally, a diplomatic war. The external war involved primarily Britain, the European Union and the United States, all of which imposed travel restrictions and limited sanctions against top government officials accused of human rights abuse and bad governance.

The relocation of the department of information, from Linquenda House in Nelson Mandela Avenue to Munhumutapa Building in Samora Machel Avenue was both symbolic and strategic. In its old location, the department was accessible to the public, and its dealings with journalists were, according to Zimbabwe Union of Journalists (ZUJ) Chairman, “very co-operative”.4 The old Ministry was mostly responsible for accreditation of journalists and ‘implementing’ the state’s rather unclear information policy enunciated in Policy Document 21 (1988). As discussed in the previous chapter, this policy document entitled: *The democratisation of the media in

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4 Matthew Takaona, Interview, April 2004.
Zimbabwe, contained broad general outlines without clear strategies and workplans for implementation.

Besides this document, the old Ministry of Information at Linquenda House was also responsible for usurping the duties of the ZMMT by controlling editorial practice at Zimpapers. In its heyday, the Ministry was an information centre for both local and foreign visitors, tourists and filmmakers. With the appointment of Professor Jonathan Moyo as Minister of Information in July 2000, the relocation to Munhumutapa Building, which also houses the President’s Office, ensured that public access was immediately curtailed. The disbanding of the old bureaucratic Ministry of Information—itself a symbol of the state’s 1980s flirtation with Marxist-Leninist social and economic rhetoric—and its replacement by a trim but powerful department was an indication of the state’s ideological volte face. One could argue further that the outlook of the new department was a reflection of the incumbent Minister’s personality. Formerly an academic and fierce critic of the Zanu PF government, US-educated Moyo was regarded by his peers as a rightist intellectual with elitist tendencies (Chan, 2003:162). According to a principal press officer in the new department, the nature of the new set-up and the media laws it enacted were consistent with the American political system consisting of a strong Presidency, tough security legislation and an effective state public relations infrastructure.\(^5\) Besides citing the American system, the government also deflected criticism of its harsh media policies by pointing towards Europe, particularly Sweden and Britain as the ‘inspiration’ for its own draconian media legislation. In response, the Swedish embassy in Harare in 2003 organised a two-week trip for Zimbabwean journalists to familiarise themselves with the media policy regime in Sweden to test the veracity of the state’s claims. However, the government forbade journalists from the public media from participating in the tour.\(^6\)

A key advantage of the Department of Information and Publicity, which comprised the Minister, his Permanent Secretary and a coterie of press officers, was its access to unlimited funding from the President’s vote. This enabled it to embark on a range of propaganda projects. At its inception, the Department’s immediate challenge was to

\(^5\) Interview, Knox Zengeni, April 2004.

harmonise state information policy in politically contested times. Given that existing policy then was either incoherent or simply implied through practice, the task was to articulate policy that would bring the different arms of government together into a unified information policy entity. The department’s strategic location in the Presidency elevated it above other portfolios, making it the public face of the ‘war cabinet’. In discharging its duties, the Department adopted a multi-pronged approach to the task. This included fast-tracking media-oriented legislation through parliament, multi-media information campaigns and an increased control of Zimpapers by the state. Because of its profound impact on journalism practice in the country, a discussion of specific aspects of state communication and information policy under Jonathan Moyo is important here.

6.2.2. Legislative Controls
If the Department became inaccessible to the public physically because of its new location in a high security controlled area, the extent of its detachment from the citizens was also reflected much more vividly at the symbolic level. It spearheaded various laws and implemented policies without much evidence of consultation and public participation outside ruling party circles. Prior to legislating the practice of journalism in Zimbabwe, the Department established a Media Ethics Committee in July 2001. The committee, whose members were handpicked by the Minister of Information, was mandated to conduct an inquiry into the state of media in the country and make recommendations. Editors of privately owned newspapers did not recognise the committee’s legitimacy, citing its unrepresentative composition, and consequently refused to work with it. Curiously, the complete findings of the committee were never made public.

The submission of the Media Ethics Committee’s report was followed by a phase of frenzied lawmaking. Firstly, the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Bill was published by an Extraordinary Government Gazette on November 30th, 2001. Twice, a parliamentary legal committee threw the bill out. In one instance, the Zanu PF chairman of the legal committee, Edison Zvobgo, described the bill as “the most calculated and determined assault on our liberties guaranteed by the Constitution”. The bill, still retaining many of its original imperfections despite having had 36

amendments, was later passed into law after a ruling party caucus had whipped dissenting members into line.

The ostensible purpose of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) was to make public information available to both members of the public and the press, while at the same time ensuring the right to privacy of citizens. In reality, it succeeded in making public information difficult to access, especially by the media. Further, AIPPA was designed to silence a critical media and increase the influence of the Minister of Information on mediated communication in the country. Among its numerous provisions, AIPPA provides for registration of journalists by a Media and Information Commission, a body whose members are handpicked by the Minister of Information. It also provides for the registration of media organisations by the same commission. Under AIPPA, registration certificates for both journalists and media organisations can be cancelled at any time should the Minister or the Commission deem so necessary. Unaccredited journalists may not be employed anywhere in the country, and there is a fine and/or jail liability for both the journalist and the organisation that breaches that legal provision.

The vesting of power in the hands of an individual minister was a key issue raised in the adverse parliamentary report which was produced by the Parliamentary Legal Committee on AIPPA, but ignored eventually when the bill was passed. The report made the following fundamental observation:

Why does the Minister (of Information) or any Minister seek such overwhelming power from this Parliament? He would have a Commission, if the Bill passed, which could be empowered to take legal or other lawful action. All news agencies would live in terrorem of the Minister if this provision passes because the penalties he can impose are devastating. Should the Minister of Commerce and International Trade, or Finance be given the same powers in relation to their portfolios? They would all go around with “certificates” in their briefcases looking for businesses to shut down “if the Minister has reasonable grounds to believe” that such businesses are operating in contravention of some Act. These provisions are arbitrary, dictatorial and unconstitutional (Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates, Volume 28, No. 46 January 29th, 2002).
The allocation of immense power to the Minister and the Commission had grave consequences for the media, particularly sections of the private press that were perceived to be critical of the political establishment. One of the most devastating results of AIPPA was the closure of three privately owned newspapers in the space of just eight months. The *Daily News* and its sister weekly *Daily News on Sunday* were shut down in September 2003, while the weekly *Tribune* followed suit in May 2004. Although they were forcibly shut down under different circumstances, (The ANZ papers were closed after the Supreme Court threw out their constitutional challenge of AIPPA, while the *Tribune* allegedly failed to inform the MIC of changes in its shareholding) the publications were closed under AIPPA.

Besides granting the public very limited access to information and in rendering public bodies unaccountable to the public, AIPPA also has the controversial provision outlawing majority foreign ownership of media in the country. This provision should be viewed against the background of the government’s professed disdain for certain privately owned newspapers owned by foreign capital. The *Daily News* was the most obvious case in point.

Besides AIPPA, the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) of 2001 further entrenched the position of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (later renamed Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings) as the key player in the broadcast media field. While ostensibly designed to deregulate the electronic media, the Act created difficult conditions for new entrants, so much so that by the beginning of 2005—four years since its inception—there were no private broadcasters in the country. Another controversial aspect of this legislation was its provision for a mandatory 75 percent local content for broadcasters. While applauded in the local production industry as a plus for the promotion of local talent, the provision was simultaneously criticised for creating within ZBC programming an overwhelming, low quality sameness. The state-appointed Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ)—the licensing authority—is empowered by the Act to interfere with editorial content of broadcasters and enforce adherence to the local content quotas. The Act also empowers the Minister of Information to amend, suspend and terminate as well as set licensing conditions for broadcasters through his control of BAZ.
The Public Order and Security Act (POSA), passed in 2002, was another piece of legislation passed in the ‘third’ transition which has implications for journalism practice in the country. Among its litany of deterrents to free expression, POSA criminalises the publication of “false statements prejudicial to the State” (Section 15). In the context of a paranoid state, a mild criticism can easily pass for a prejudicial statement, resulting in criminal prosecution for the individuals or organisations concerned. The duo of POSA and AIPPA became a systematic expression of the state’s media policy in the ‘third’ transition, predicated on—much like the Rhodesian policy during the UDI era—the need to eradicate ‘the enemy within’, who was supposedly being used as a puppet by the ‘external enemy’.

6.2.3. Journalism as ‘Terrorism’

Besides the legal arsenal, state media policy in the ‘third’ transition was also expressed through extra-legal means. Official discourse predicated on the need to combat ‘terrorism’ ensured that sections of the media were regularly publicly chastised for being accomplices in alleged anti-government activities. Aligned with ‘terrorism’ was the discourse of ‘regime change’, borrowed from the first term of the George W. Bush presidency in the United States. According to a principal press officer in the Department of Information, post-2000 media policy was “reactive rather than proactive”, and was premised on the need to defend national sovereignty in the wake of both internal and external threats.\(^8\)

In 2002, Walter H. Kansteiner, then US Assistant Secretary of State in charge of Africa, allegedly made an announcement while visiting Botswana that his government was working with selected regional governments, opposition parties and some journalists in Zimbabwe to effect ‘regime change’ in Harare. The announcement set off a series of inflammatory official rhetorical pronouncements against journalists in the private press as well as the opposition MDC. Although not part of codified policy, the popularised official line depicting especially the private press as instruments of ‘regime change’ had grave consequences. The privately owned *Daily News*, for example, was effectively ‘banned’ from rural areas, which constitute the traditional

\(^8\) Knox Zengeni, Interview, April 2004.
stronghold of the ruling party. In some areas, being seen reading or carrying the paper could earn one a severe beating or some such torture. Likewise, journalists from the *Daily News* and other private publications were constantly publicly harassed by ordinary citizens because they were perceived as sell-outs.

In a political context operating on binaries, journalism practice was reduced to being either *for* or *against* the state. In March 2004, the Minister of Information told *Herald*: “Mercenaries of any kind, whether carrying the sword or the pen, must and will be exposed and they will suffer the full consequences of the law” (*Herald*, 11/3/2004). The perception that private press journalists were ‘mercenaries’ or instruments of ‘regime change’ informed state media policy during the ‘third transition’.

The deportation of virtually all foreign journalists working in Zimbabwe by the end of 2001 was also part of a sustained policy initiative designed to silence any critical interpretations of the unfolding crisis in the name of national security and the fight against media ‘terrorism’.

Within the realm of the public media, the Minister of Information assumed direct personal intervention, restructuring both the print and broadcast media in less than a year after assuming office. Between 2000 and 2003, he fired at least five editors from the *Herald, Sunday Mail, Sunday News* and the *Chronicle*. Most of the sackings were rarely publicly explained. The restructuring also led to the final dissolution of the ZMMT in 2001, formally placing the running of the public press under direct state control. A new state-owned company called New Ziana, was created with the mandate of rolling out a state media empire consisting of digital satellite television and radio, regional newspapers and a news agency.

The Department’s influence also extended to the state broadcaster, the ZBC. In 2001, the broadcaster was forced to retrench 400 employees, most of whom were seasoned journalists, as part of a restructuring process codenamed “Vision 2030”.

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10 Geoff Nyarota, Interview, May 2004
11 Happison Muchechetere, Interview, April 2004.
retrenchments were followed by a spree of hiring, resulting in the replacement of most
of the employees by young and inexperienced journalists. Again, as in the sacking of
Zimpapers editors, there was no official explanation of the ZBC restructuring process.
It is, however, arguable that the engagement of the youth in place of veteran
journalists was consistent with the state policy of inculcating what Ranger (2004)
refers to as “patriotic history” in young people. He makes the following fundamental
observation:

Over the past two or three years there has emerged in Zimbabwe a sustained
attempt by the Mugabe regime to propagate what is called patriotic history.
Patriotic history is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean
revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to youth over the heads of
their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed
revolutionary values (Ranger, 2004:1).

An intrinsic feature of “patriotic history” as applied to the Zimbabwean context was
its “reliance on dualisms and binaries of insider/outside, indigene/stranger,
landed/landless, authentic/inauthentic, patriot/sell-out” (Muponde, 2004:176).
Premised on ‘othering’ as a condition of political and cultural life, the “patriotic
history” project was also essentially hegemonic, and was applied across institutions of
state, under the cultural co-ordination of the Department of Information.

The implementation of this hegemonic project was prosecuted with spectacular
precision. Besides the ZBC restructuring exercise, the introduction of youth camps for
purposes of ‘re-orienting’ the youth on matters of the country’s history and future also
fell within the policy framework. Graduates of these youth institutions would later be
involved in banning and burning down whenever possible private newspapers,
especially the Daily News. As part of the same sustained project, the Department
launched the musical video series “Hondo Yeminda” (loose translation: “a struggle
for land”) featuring both old and young musicians funded by the state to produce
cultural material largely asserting the African people’s right to land while excoriating
the British for their alleged neo-imperial ambitions. This was also consistent with the
ruling party’s 2000 elections campaign motto predicated on the theme: “Zimbabwe
will never be a colony again”.

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6.2.4 A Note on Three Competing ‘Journalisms’

The framing of elections by the press in the ‘third’ transition assumed distinct approaches, which for analytical purposes are referred to in this study as ‘patriotic’, ‘oppositional’ and ‘independent nationalist’. The application of these journalistic approaches to the closely fought electoral contests was arguably a reflection of the broader relations between the different sections of the press and fractions of capital, civil society and the state.

The first form of journalism to intensify after 2000 was ‘patriotic’ journalism. It is important to note that ‘patriotic history’ discussed above was largely mediated through this journalistic phenomenon. This form of journalism was practised by the public media, and emerged “as the Zimbabwean government’s last resort” at a time “when [the rhetoric of] socialism had been abandoned, education and welfare undermined” (Ranger, 2005:8). Ranger adds that: “In this journalism, Zimbabweans are divided into patriots and traitors: the rest of the world is divided into supporters and imperialists. And there are fewer and fewer trustworthy supporters left” (2005:14). Both Herald and Sunday Mail applied this form of journalism to delegitimise the opposition and sections of civil society ahead of the polls, and presented the electoral contests as moments of struggle between patriots and traitors. In the next two chapters, ‘patriotic’ journalism features quite prominently as an analytic category used in the discussion of the public press’s framing of the 2000 and 2002 elections.

In line with the polarised political context at the time, ‘patriotic’ journalism as practised in the public press had its match in the private press’s ‘oppositional’ journalism. This form of journalism emerged as counter-hegemony as way back as the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Saunders, 1991, 1997, 1999). It was arguably after 2000 that ‘oppositional’ journalism became strong in response to the closure of democratic space for the press and civil society by the increasingly paranoid and authoritarian state. As the next two chapters show, ‘oppositional’ journalism sought to delegitimise the Zanu PF government and state, and foregrounded almost exclusively the economic and political blunders associated with Zanu PF rule. Further, this brand of journalism in broad terms saw the future of the country in MDC hands, where the rule of law and economic prosperity would be guaranteed. Writing about this form of
journalism, Mano (2005) quotes a Zimbabwean journalist as saying: “When it comes to the government, they [oppositional journalists] use ‘the-nothing-can-ever-come-out-of-this-wretched-government attitude…it is the behaviour of the aggrieved” (2005: 66). The state viewed this as ‘politically motivated journalism’ or ‘journalism for regime change’, and applied the repressive and legal apparatus at its disposal to curtail it.

A third strand in the competing models of journalism in the ‘third’ transition was ‘independent nationalist’ journalism, associated with the weekly Zimbabwe Mirror newspaper. As discussed later in this chapter, the paper pegged its editorial line on what it called the ‘national’ interest, and sought to provide a dispassionate, non-partisan approach to the post-2000- crisis in Zimbabwe. One of the paper’s editors characterised the paper’s editorial line thus:

We are nationalist, non-partisan. We are pan-Africanist…we are not middle-of-the-road. We’ve got a particular line, which is nationalism. We support Zanu PF on nationalistic grounds, the same with MDC. But when the stakes are high, the partisan inclinations can be high, especially around election time.\textsuperscript{12}

As argued in Chapter Seven, ‘independent nationalist’ journalism in 2000 provided a dynamic and nuanced representation of the electoral contestation in the country. There was a distinct line between editorials and news pieces, and the paper covered the activities of smaller political parties and independent candidates more than other papers under study. However, it is important to note that ‘independent nationalist’ journalism transformed into a brand of ‘patriotic’ journalism in its framing of the 2002 election, arguably as a result of changes that occurred at the levels of ownership and financing of the paper. As Chapter Eight observes, the paper’s reliance on state-aligned financial institutions as well as its proximity to state power via its owner Ibbo Mandaza, culminated in its takeover by the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) in 2002 although this only became public information three years later. Arguably, this fundamental change contributed to the demise of ‘independent nationalist’ journalism.

\textsuperscript{12} Interview, Innocent Chofamba Sithole, April, 2004
6.3. The Private Media, Capital and Civil Society: A Marriage of Convenience?

The relationship between the media and centres of power in society and its implications for media representation of issues is a key concern of critical political economy of communication. How particular issues and debates are framed by the media is arguably shaped “at every entry level by the structured asymmetries in social relations” (Golding & Murdock, 2000:73). In the same vein, a discussion of the manner in which the Zimbabwean media covered the elections of 2000 and 2002 (in chapters Seven and Eight) should be located in the matrix of prevailing relations between the media and socio-political and economic hierarchies.

The ongoing discussion has so far touched on state-media relations in a context of political contestation and economic deterioration. Naturally, this discussion has identified state policy as a critical determinant of the political environment in which journalism practice occurs. However, it is the media’s relations with sections of civil society and fractions of capital opposed to the Zanu PF government —real or perceived—which partly influenced the state’s policy approach, or response, to media in the ‘third’ transition.

Although media-capital-civil society relations had been shifting at different phases of the postcolonial transition, a significant realignment occurred at the beginning of the ‘third’ transition. The constitution-making process provided a context for the realignment. According to Hammar & Raftopoulos, local business and the white commercial farming sectors “allied with the NCA and an emerging opposition movement in campaigning for a ‘no’ vote in the referendum” following the constitutional review process of 1999 (Hammar & Raftopoulos, 2003:10). At the same time, the mainstream privately-owned and commercially-funded press joined the civil society-white capital nexus in their critique of the state. Meanwhile, the state assumed even greater control over the public press, and a new policy regime ensured that this section of the press became an effective state propaganda apparatus.

This new set of relationships, informed as it was by the nature of the political contest of the time, had profound implications for both media funding and media representation of the elections. Firstly, in the run-up to the 2000 elections, the state-owned press was subjected to a sustained ‘punishment’ by predominantly formal,
white-dominated business that was on a collision course with the state. The state-
capital acrimony had its many vicissitudes, but the land reform programme and the
escalating official rhetoric about wholesale seizures of white and foreign-owned local
companies precipitated a protracted stand-off between the two.

Advertiser support is a vital lifeblood for the press in Zimbabwe. In a context where
neither subscriptions nor distribution are developed beyond the rudimentary, the bulk
of the funding for the press, including Zimpapers publications, has always been local
advertising. Throughout the ‘second’ transition, the major advertisers in Zimbabwean
newspapers were foreign owned, locally based companies such as Coca Cola, Lever
Brothers, Old Mutual, Barclays and Standard Chartered banks, among others. Donor-
supported non-governmental organisations running various programmes from
HIV/AIDS prevention and care to community development were also a significant
source of revenue for the press. The third category of advertisers was the government
and its parastatals. However, in the ESAP-inspired era of fiscal frugality, the level of
state advertising was reduced.13

Throughout the period under study, Zimpapers enjoyed the lion’s share of advertiser
support because of its strong infrastructure and high circulation figures. At its peak,
Zimpapers controlled “close to 90 percent, if not more, of the total newspaper
circulation and a similar percentage of advertising revenue” (Nhema, 2002:112). However, circulation dropped and advertiser support dried up in the run-up to the
2000 elections, against the background of the meteoric rise of the Daily News as an
alternative daily publication. In one incident, Herald took the extraordinary step of
publishing a front page editorial comment appealing to business not to abandon
Zimpapers for political reasons. The editorial, entitled “Media madness: now business
is using the dollar against Zanu PF”, accused advertisers of teaming together to apply
their collective financial muscle against the ruling party and in support of the MDC
(Herald, 9/5/2000). By boycotting Herald as an advertising medium, the business
bloc was threatening democracy, argued the editorial. The same editorial added: “It
would be very ironic that the private sector, the supposed guarantor of press freedom,
not the government, will be responsible for the deliberate destruction of media

plurality and diversity”. At the time, circulation at *Herald* had taken a nose dive, dropping from 120 000 to just above 80 000.

At a time when *Herald* and other sections of the public media were experiencing turbulent times, the ‘oppositional’ press largely thrived on advertising from both capital and donor funded civil society organisations such as the NCA. This could be explained partly as a result of the informal press-capital-civil society coalition forged in the struggle against increasing state authoritarianism, and partly as a natural outcome of the increased circulation figures of the ‘oppositional’ press which fed into the anti-Zanu PF mode in the post-2000 era in mostly urban areas.

### 6.3.1 The Case of the *Daily News*

Because of its role and influence on Zimbabwean politics during its short life, the *Daily News* warrants a close examination in terms of its relationship with both the state and fractions of capital as well as civil society. Five years after the closure of the *Daily Gazette* in 1994, a newly established company, Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) launched the *Daily News*, which became the second private daily to be launched in the country since independence. Besides the daily, the company also launched five weeklies in five provincial cities. At its launch in 1998, ANZ was 60-percent owned by a British-based media company called Africa Media Investments (AMI), with local Zimbabwean capital taking up the minority 40 percent stake. Among the foreign investors were the Bank of Scotland, Tindle Newspapers of Britain, Cross Graphics, a British supplier of printing and associated equipment, Allied Press, New Zealand’s largest private media group, and Commonwealth Publishing. South African newspaper group Independent Newspapers, owned by Irish media mogul Tony O’Reilly, was originally supposed to be among the investors, but pulled out in early 1999 (see Ronning, 2003).

In early 1999 the company’s private placement bid failed to raise the required Z$26 million stake required to sustain the 40 percent equity, resulting in AMI acquiring a *de facto* 83 percent ownership. At the time, media business was categorised in the country’s investment laws as any other business in terms of conditions for foreign ownership. In the absence of a media-specific law providing for media ownership, the Zimbabwe Investment Centre (ZIC) was in charge of policing foreign investment in
the media. Then, the maximum stake a foreign shareholder could acquire was 60 percent. The ANZ case alerted the state to this policy ‘loophole’. From the beginning, the company’s ownership structure caused an outcry from the government, principally for two related reasons. First, the paper was from the outset highly critical of the government and was edited by an outspoken government critic, Geoffrey Nyarota, who a decade earlier had unearthed the ‘Willowgate’ car scandal, to the embarrassment of the government. Secondly, it appeared the government was uneasy about the majority shareholders being British, given the increasingly hostile relations between the two countries in the wake of the compulsory acquisition of white-owned commercial farms by the state in 2000.

When the state enacted AIPPA, it arguably had the Daily News in mind. In February 2000, a year before AIPPA became law, the then Information Minister, Chen Chimutengwende, announced that government would, through the Ministry of Finance, instruct the ZIC to stop processing applications from foreign investors in the media sector, and to include media on a list of restricted sectors. These are sectors where majority foreign ownership is outlawed and any ownership thoroughly vetted because of the sectors’ supposedly strategic interest to the country. Without mentioning the Daily News in particular, Chimutengwende announced that government was uncomfortable with independent newspapers which were “funded by rightwing Rhodesians and other fascists internationally” (Herald, 5/2/2000). In any case, the Minister argued, Zimbabwe was, at the time, “already saturated with newspapers” and therefore anybody wanting to start a newspaper “would be doing it for political reasons, not to make money” (Ibid).

The new law was therefore supposed to bring ‘sanity’ to the private press in terms of both ownership and journalism practice. In so doing, it would also address the state’s fear of ‘politically motivated journalism’ or ‘journalism for regime change’—terms which would be conveniently invoked by the state in dealing with the private press. While AIPPA eventually became the Daily News’s cause of death, the paper initially succeeded in circumventing the ownership dilemma. At the end of 2000, the paper sold its majority shares to local businessman Strive Masiyiwa. Masiyiwa owned the country’s largest cellular phone service provider Econet Wireless, and several other wireless telephone ventures in Africa and abroad.
During its short-lived heyday, the *Daily News* upstaged the public press in attracting advertising capital, beginning in early 2000. The turnaround in the paper’s fortunes came against the background of an inauspicious start. Hardly a year after its launch in July 1998, the paper’s holding company, ANZ, had become cash-strapped as early as mid 1999. The ambitious plan of rolling out five regional weeklies and a national daily had proved to be unsustainable in a context of an ailing economy. Most of the weeklies were closed shortly after the launch of the *Daily News* in March 1999. By late 1999, a considerable number of senior staff had left the company as it teetered on the brink of collapse. However, the paper’s fortunes improved at the turn of the millennium. The launch of the MDC provided an opportunity to capture a wider, urban-based audience that was clearly anti-Zanu PF and wanted political change. The generally pro-MDC editorial position of the *Daily News* had several benefits.\(^\text{14}\) It enabled the paper to triple its circulation to 129 500 by mid 2000, overtaking both the *Herald* and *Sunday Mail* whose figures tumbled quite significantly (see Ronning, 2003). As noted above, partly as a result of increased circulation, and partly due to its editorial perspective, the paper became the darling of advertiser capital at a time when the predominant players in formal business were local white as well as foreign capital.

Besides increased advertiser support, the *Daily News* also became an occasional recipient of ‘goodwill funds’ and ‘solidarity grants’ from both local and foreign ‘unnamed’ sources usually simply identified in ANZ parlance as “knights in shining armour.”\(^\text{15}\) Among the few that were made public was a US$300 000 soft loan from the Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF) in 1999 when the paper faced liquidation. SAMDEF is part of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Its mandate is to promote the development and expansion of free and pluralistic media in Southern Africa through advocacy and sometimes through financial support for troubled independent media organisations.

\(^{14}\) In interviews with me, both the former Editor-in-Chief and Assistant Editor of the *Daily News* denied their paper adopted a pro-MDC editorial line. However, my analysis of the paper’s coverage of both the 2000 and 2002 elections revealed its partisan endorsement of the MDC’s candidature in many of its stories (See Chapters 7 & 8).

\(^{15}\) Interview, Thomas Deve, April 2004.
The *Daily News* also received major funding from a network of locally based, mostly Western embassies. When its printing press was shattered in a mysterious bombing incident in 2001, the US embassy provided funding for the purchase of a new state-of-the-art printing press from Europe. In 2001 and 2002, amidst a cloud of uncertainty over the future of small newspapers following the escalation of newsprint prices in the country, a coterie of well-wishers from the NGO and embassy communities purchased bulk newsprint for the *Daily News*.

While the degrees of support obviously varied, it can be argued that from the beginning of the new millennium, the biggest independent newspapers in Zimbabwe benefited tremendously from both advertiser support and donor funds for one project or the other. The *Zimbabwe Independent*, for example, secured funding from the Swedish embassy to relaunch itself. These papers also received a substantial financial boost from political advertising by the opposition MDC. On the other hand, state-owned publications benefited from government and Zanu PF advertising, which by mid 2000 had been withdrawn from selected independent newspapers, including the *Daily News*.

6.3.2 The *Zimbabwe Mirror*: A Unique Exception?

An interesting exception to the polarised norm in media-capital-state relations was the weekly *Zimbabwe Mirror*. In a Manichean political context, trudging an ‘independent nationalist’ terrain as a matter of editorial principle proved to be a rather difficult, if commercially risky option for the paper. It required sustaining an intricate balancing act between articulating both the nationalist authoritarianism that had become part of the ruling elite, and the elusive superfluity of the political discourse of good governance and democracy that was the watchword of the opposition movement and sections of civil society. Conversely, it also required an editorial articulation of the merits of the nationalist ‘decolonisation’ project centred on land reform, without falling into the official chorus of labelling the workers-based political movement as being pro-West and therefore anti-Zimbabwe. In premising its editorial perspective on the ‘national question’, the paper made very few friends, and paid dearly for it. It was

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16 I got this information from the director of a local non-profit organization which set up an account through which funds or assistance for the *Daily News* could be channeled. My informant requested anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the transaction.

17 Interview, Geoff Nyarota, April 2004.
viewed with suspicion by both capital and the state. In mid 2001, the paper contracted a local media research company to do a viability study for its envisaged sister daily newspaper. One of the key findings of the study was that the present publication was simply misunderstood by advertisers.\(^\text{18}\) Some readers and advertisers, used to the polarised media context, were not sure about the where the paper ‘stood’ in relation to the Zanu PF-MDC political chasm that replicated itself across the spectrum of political and economic life in Zimbabwe at the time. Partly as a result of its editorial position, the *Zimbabwe Mirror* never broke even commercially, and for most of its existence remained pared back and maintained a thin circulation.

However, the paper qualifies as a partial exception to the ‘norm’ because in fundamental terms it remained closely identified with the leftist, and technocratic wing of the ruling Zanu PF. Chan (2003) describes Ibbo Mandaza, the *Zimbabwe Mirror* boss, as part of a network of factions and power blocs within the ruling party, and “the most visible spokesperson” of the intellectuals and technocrats (Chan, 2003:114). In treading a line of ‘constructive’ criticism of the government and largely veering away from outright condemnation of the same, the paper maintained certain organic links with the state, which proved vital for its survival. Launched with insufficient capital in December 1997, much of the paper’s operating capital over the years came from an overdraft from the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ), which is majority-owned by the state. The continued leniency of CBZ in the wake of no signs that the paper would break even soon could, arguably, be attributed to political rather than economic logic.\(^\text{19}\) By early 2004, Southern African Printing and Publishing Company (Sappho), the *Mirror’s* holding company, owed CBZ close to Z$2 billion.\(^\text{20}\) Besides CBZ, the paper also enjoyed regular credit facilities at the Zimpapers-owned printing company, Natprint. A perennially bad debtor, whenever the *Mirror* found itself kicked out of private commercial printers—which was often—it consistently got a reprieve from Natprint. Management attempts to demand cash upfront in respect of unsettled previous debts were overridden by the political majority shareholder, the Department of Information.


\(^{19}\) In September 2005, the Zimbabwe Independent revealed that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIO) had taken over ownership of the *Mirror* newspapers in a deal facilitated by the CBZ. In restrospect, it appears the ‘overdrafts’ were actually capital injections by the shadowy owners.

\(^{20}\) Interview, Innocent Chofamba Sithole, April 2004.
6.4 Structure versus Agency in Contested Times

The dynamic tension between organisational or institutional structures and constraints and the agency of professional journalists is a subject of key interest for a critical political economy of the media (see Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; Graham & Murdock, 2000). It is important to briefly examine how this dynamic played itself out in the ‘third’ transition in Zimbabwe.

The ‘third’ transition witnessed the erosion of the nominal agency powers of journalism practice, leaving the profession largely at the mercy of political and socio-economic power hierarchies. The ownership factor became a much more pronounced one in journalistic practice. Mano (2005) has observed that both public and private media owners during this period “created ‘regimes’ that undermine professional and ethical roles of journalists”, leading to a scenario where journalists themselves “resigned to these developments, seeing them as ‘normal’” (p.56). In interviews with journalists, the issue of their declining powers of professional agency during the ‘third’ transition also came up. According to ZUJ’s Matthew Takaona, the fact that unemployment in the media industry was high and that employed journalists were generally wretchedly paid, contributed to their easy subordination by structural constraints in order to remain employed and survive. He noted:

One of the biggest problems in the media now is that we are so insecure and financially weak. As a result when one is kicked out of an organisation the next thing is probably to go back to your rural home or find a plane ticket and leave the country. You cannot go to the courts because access to lawyers is very expensive (Interview, April, 2004).

Takaona also argued that in a context where the levers of power were heavily skewed in favour of owners, even propaganda and hate journalism easily thrived for as long as these owners sanctioned it.

The Sunday Mail editor, William Chikoto, explained the bifurcated media framing of political contestation after 2000 thus: “It’s not us journalists who are polarised…[it] is the forces behind the media that are polarised…if these forces converge, you’ll find
that there’ll be convergence in the media as well.” Another editor, Innocent Chofamba Sithole of the *Zimbabwe Mirror* noted that his owner/publisher’s harsh responses to negative coverage of some political parties often instilled self-censorship among mostly young and vulnerable reporters.

Although throughout the post-colonial transition the press played subordinate ‘partner’ in its relations with capital and the state, it was arguably in the ‘third’ transition that journalistic agency became almost completely subdued by structural constraints. Rather than being sites for critical-rational debate, the press during this period largely and in varying degrees became tribunes for competing elites in capital, civil society and the state. The *Zimbabwe Mirror*’s model of ‘independent nationalist’ journalism was a brief exception in 2000, but degenerated into ‘patriotic’ journalism in its framing of the 2002 elections.

### 6.5 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that in times of serious political competition, ownership of the press became a significant definer of political representation. Within the private press, newspapers became identified or identifiable in terms of their owners and their positions vis-à-vis the ongoing contest for control or influence of state. In the public press sector, as the *Sunday Mail* editor acknowledged, “the major shareholder became much more visible than ever before”.

The same applied to sections of the private press, as argued above. The pre-eminence of the shareholder—whether private capital or the state—had profound implications for the manner in which different newspapers framed the critical elections of 2000 and 2002.

In the next two chapters, I will examine the framing of the 2000 and 2002 elections by the newspapers under study. The discussion will be informed by the socio-political context informing press-state-capital relations discussed in this chapter.

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22 William Chikoto, Interview, April 2004.