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BRIDGING THE GAP: AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA 23 YEARS INTO DEMOCRACY

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in the

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

HOW DO MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AFFECT GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS AND HOW CAN BRIDGES BE BUILT BETWEEN THEM?

DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and all information contained herein is to my knowledge accurate and correctly attributed where relevant.



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex relationship between the media and the government in South Africa during 23 years of democracy, from 1994 to 2017. It analyses the evolution of such relations during this post-apartheid period, examining the perceived tensions between the media and the government. By extension, this also includes relations between the media and the ruling party African National Congress (ANC) – and the impact this has had on the ability of the government to communicate effectively with its citizens. This research further defines what is meant by the media and the government.

The theoretical framework employed in this study focuses on the importance of communications in a democracy and the critical nature of media relations. This is both in helping to fulfil the obligation of the state to communicate as an intricate part of democratic governance, and its mandate as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Theoretical insights were drawn from the Habermasian public sphere to trace the origins of the tension between government and media in their bid to communicate with citizens (Habermas, 1964). Additionally, theorists such as Oyugu, Odhiambo, Chege & Gitonga (1988); Manyozo (2012); Nwagbara (2010) and Cheeseman (2019) aided the researcher to explore the African democratic perspective in order to unpack a decolonised paradigm of the public sphere.

Data from previous studies, interviews with key role players, as well as the Frank Dialogues platform for debate between the media and the government communicators expanded the discourse analysis to answer the question - 'How can the gap between the media and the government be bridged?' The contribution of this thesis is an attempt at identifying tactics to build bridges between the government and the media, while forming a theoretical basis for the best manner to actualise this important intervention.

The study concludes with key reflections on whether it is possible to improve relations between the media and the government. This will, thus, provide explorative suggestions to enhance government communications through, for example, development communication and unmediated communication.

Key words: democracy, government communications, media, public sphere.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the late Parks Mankatlhana, who was the first presidential spokesperson of the first democratically elected South African President Nelson Mandela.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CDWs	Community Development Workers
Comtask	Communications Task Team
Comtask Report	Communications 2000 Report
DFID	Department for International Development
DOC	Department of Communications
EADS	European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ID	Independent Democrat
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
MAT	Media Appeals Tribunal
MDDA	Media Diversity and Development Agency
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NCTT	National Communications Task Team
NDP	National Development Plan
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
POSIB	Protection of State Information Bill
SACS	South African Communication Service
SADC	South African Development Community
Sanef	South African National Editors' Forum
SCOPA	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SOECA	State-owned Enterprises Communicators Association

CHAPTER 1
Bridging the gap: an analysis of the complicated relationship between government and the media 23 years into democracy

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The ability of the government to communicate with its people is pivotal to either making or breaking a democracy. The very definition of democracy, according to the concise dictionary of politics, is a “rule by the people” or, according to normative theories of the media, “popular sovereignty” (Maclean, 2003: 139).

This makes it crucial to understand that a government that does not communicate effectively reverses the very essence of a government "of the people, by the people and for the people". To communicate effectively, the government needs tools and platforms to capture and transmit its message. Such tools and platforms have traditionally belonged to those who own the means of production - such as the media. Controlling the means of production also means owners dictate news agendas (Lippmann, 1922) and the framing of news (Gamson, 1989 cited in Yuksel, 2013). It is for this reason that the researcher has elected print media as the pivot for investigation, as it was a prominent tool of communication during apartheid and post liberation.

It is against this background that this research investigates the link between the South African government’s access to communication platforms and its effectiveness in communicating with its constituencies during the tenures of former presidents Mandela (1994 to 1999), Mbeki (1999 – 2008) and Zuma (2009 – 2018). With the exclusion of former President Kgalema Motlanthe, whose tenure was transitional and short-lived between 2008 and 2009.

In *Media Landscape 2012: Reflections on the Media Environment,* published by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), the late minister responsible for the GCIS Collins Chabane, reflected that "for citizens to be better able to participate actively requires that they receive information around a range of issues, from different viewpoints and opinions. The media were seen as having a critical role to play in creating and sharing information, for educating

and building knowledge among citizens and for facilitating public debate" (Seery & Seeber, 2014).

Since the dawn of democracy in South African in 1994, the government's relationship with the media has been characterised by tension. This has affected its ability to use the media to communicate effectively with its constituencies. A Communications Task Team (Comtask) was commissioned during President Nelson Mandela's administration, which generated a report entitled *Communications 2000: A vision for government communications in South Africa*. It concluded that "government–media relations in a democracy are always sensitive and occasionally acrimonious" (De Villiers, 1996: 2).

These tensions, characterised by poor media and government relations,[1] are not novel to African democracies. It was German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1962) who situated the origins of such tensions to as far back as Ancient Greece. Habermas, known as the pioneer of public sphere, explains that in those days the public sphere meant a space "where citizens directly participated in political decisions" (Habermas, 1962/1995 in Cabanero-Verzosa & Garcia, 2011: 69). Furthermore, in Europe between the 17th and 18th centuries, citizens would meet in coffee houses (England), salons (France) and table societies (Germany) "to share information, to debate, to discuss, or to plan on common concerns" (Habermas, 1962/1995 in Cabanero-Verzosa & Garcia, 2011: 69). Thus, public opinion is formed, which is a product of the public sphere. "Public opinions are important in forming or destroying any government," (Riaz, 2015). This may explain why present day tension between the media and the government is observable.

With the advancement of structured communications platforms such as newspapers, electronic media and social media, citizens have become a captive audience which the media seeks to target. At the same time, good governance in a democracy requires spaces to channel communication, what many would call the public sphere. In essence, the media and the government are at odds because they have different objectives and are positioned in different ways in relation to citizens and the public sphere, as this thesis shall demonstrate.

[1] The conclusion of the Media Tenor Report was that the print media are seen as news leaders. *The Sunday*

Both actors in the relationship hold biases influenced by their professional dispositions. For example, this is demonstrated by South African journalists Ranjeni Munusamy (2013) and Ferial Haffajee (2013) when describing the role of government communicators. On the contrary, the government spokespersons as well as ministers in the referred presidencies have expressed differing sentiments to those of the journalists.

Haffajee (*Sunday Independent*, 19 May 2013) and Munusamy (*Daily Maverick*, 27 October 2013) point out the unprofessional conduct of government spokespersons. They argue that these officials are only interested in playing a gatekeeping role with the aim to shield their principals, and will apply any tactic at their disposal to achieve this. In one public debate on the state of media transformation, Haffajee, then editor of the *City Press,* criticised top government communicators for levelling unwarranted accusations of racism against the media. Haffajee stated:

> It is not the task of employed civil servants to level unwarranted accusations of racism because they are not getting the coverage they desire or because their friends may have quit the newsroom. Talented black people can call their price and title. I thought Oliphant and Lesufi came pretty close to being bullies this week and they hitched a range of disaffected media players to their wagon (Haffajee, 2013).

Munusamy (2013) also had harsh words for South Africa's Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), arguing that they have lost touch with what is happening in government. Munusamy asserted that:

> It is also clear that the GCIS is not privy to what is going on in the presidency. Ahead of major events such as the opening of parliament or cabinet reshuffles, it is clear that GCIS officials have no insight into what would be announced. They also have very little to do with presidency's events and the gulf between the two departments is widening (Munusamy, 2013).

The above journalists' perceptions of government communicators don't paint a positive picture in a democracy. They also demonstrate the gulf between the media and government, pointing to a relationship characterised by tension.

Senior government communicator and spokesperson Panyaza Lesufi, at the time spokesperson of the Department of Basic Education (2011 - 2014), and Lumka Oliphant, spokesperson for the Department of Social Development (2012 - 2019), expressed their views of the media in one publication. In an article in the *Sunday Independent,* Lesufi, when characterising the media, sums up these sentiments:

> The anti-transformation syndicate has four key tactics. The first is to feature service delivery protest marches; who knows, maybe they will lead to our own version of the Arab Spring and topple this hated government?
>
> Second, when the ruling party does good work, it is described as 'electioneering'. Zuma's visit to Eldorado Park was a case in point. When DA leader, Helen Zille, unveiled mobile toilets in the same week, it was 'service delivery'. Third, portray the ruling party and the government as corrupt. Paint all blacks that own flashy cars and luxurious homes as products of corruption. Fourth, portray the government as incompetent. Most articles in newspapers and news items on radio and TV are designed to prove this 'fact' daily (Lesufi, 2013).

In the same publication, Oliphant is quoted, decrying racism in the media, saying:

> This is that subtle racism most of us may not pick up, but it is there. It is time newsrooms started looking at themselves. It is time for black journalists to start changing how not only this black government is portrayed but how the story of the black person is told. As a government communicator, I cannot be proud of private planes landing at Waterkloof, but I need to hear the same outcry when Helen Zille distorts our history and when blacks in the townships of Khayelitsha, Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga are deprived of basic services such as water (Haffajee, 2013).

What the two government mouthpieces - Lesufi and Oliphant – argue is that they are contending with racism, imperialist media ownership and westernised

paradigms. Much the same as the case pre-liberation in most African states. In the case of South Africa, government spokespersons perceptions are informed by how media was repressed, censored and controlled by the colonial apartheid government, thus using it as a tool to communicate its agenda, as the theory chapter sets out to demonstrate.

Under the Apartheid repressive regime of the white-only National Party, which ruled South Africa since 1948 through to 1993, the government of the day used 'a myriad of laws in its books and employed multiple tactics to gag the media. For example, in 1963, using the "ninety-day" detention law, government could arrest journalists at will (Armoudian, 2013). 3) In the Apartheid era government also "used laws such as the Prison Act [1959 & 1965], which outlawed criticizing army or prison officials without permission, the government cracked down on journalists" (Armoudian, 2013). The National Party government used censorship to ensure control over media publications. This included over twenty censorship laws, such as the Publications Act of 1974. This gave the government the ability to confiscate any films, theatre productions or books to ensure they dominated what South Africans could or could not consume[2] (pressreference.com)

Even though the apartheid regime used every possible law in their books to shape public opinion as early as the 1960s, this was met with resistance from journalists who were married to exposing and reporting as freely as possible. "Yet the tradition of defiance and the rise of a strong civil rights movement challenged censorship and nurtured a surprisingly wide-ranging documentary record of the national condition" (Merrett, 2007: 50 - 68). Thus, demonstrating that the tension will persist where media and government hold different views of the ends they want to achieve in the public sphere.

Much has changed under democracy post-1994, wherein "constitutional rights and liberal legislation" (Merrett, 2007: 50-68) protect media freedom and journalists practice their profession uncensored. According Reid (2017), "it is important to acknowledge the advancements for media freedom since those dark times. Today media freedom is protected by Constitutional law". However, the

[2] The third president was Kgalema Motlanthe who was merely a caretaker president for a few months. He did not make any policy interventions in that short time in the same way as Mbeki. Zuma and Mandela – this is the reason for his exclusion.

push and pull effect between lawmakers and the media still exists; and this may well be a permanent state, as both sides are constantly attempting to set their agenda and frame their messaging to shape public opinion.

Reid (2017) argues that “just because things are not as bad as they were during apartheid does not mean that the media system is entirely free or free from threat. Nor does it indicate that the sector is operating as well as it should, according to democratic principles”. Harris (2013) saw the emergence of the Protection of State Information Bill (POSIB), which criminalises activity deemed in the public interest and would adversely affect the manner in which journalists delivered their investigative reports, (Harris, 2013). The bill, commonly referred to as the Secrecy Bill, never gained traction as civil society activism surged and media practitioners interested in protecting public interest, public opinion and the public sphere defied the gagging. Although it has been withdrawn twice from the parliamentary system of processing laws, that doesn’t mean the government doesn’t continue to attempt to subliminally influence public discourse.

In the last two decades, South Africa has seen developments that define the complex relations between the media and the government; for example:

- The inquiry into racism in the media by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), whose report found that there were traces of subliminal racism in the media (HRC, 2009);
- The mooting of the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) by the ruling party following the Polokwane Congress in 2007 (ANC, 2008);
- The report from the Press Freedom Commission on media self-regulation led by late Justice Pius Langa; and
- The skirmishes between President Zuma and various media; including the lawsuit against cartoonist Zapiro, which was subsequently withdrawn.

The diagram below shows that the ability of government to communicate with citizens via the media has been met with resistance. According to the Comtask report, this results from the structural challenges of how the communications function is organised in government (De Villiers, 1996). The diagram (Diagram 1) shows that there are bridges that must be built, as both sides need each other to

survive. However, with what has happened over recent years, one may ask: what is the future of media–government relations?

Communications Tension Triangular Pivot diagram

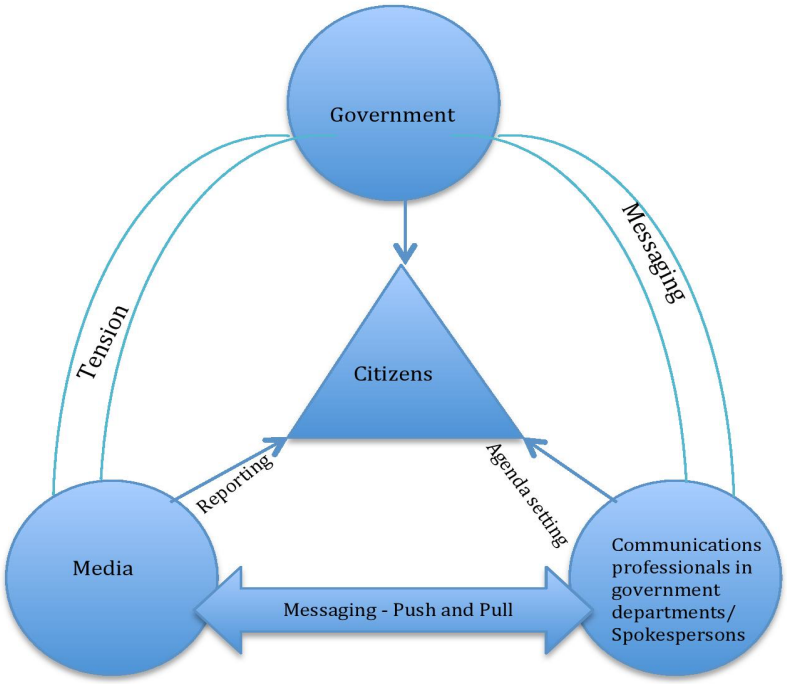


Diagram 1: Communications tension triangular pivot diagram

Demonstrates the roots of the initial causes of tension between media and government in a big to set the agenda for citizens in the public sphere.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1 Main research question

How do media and government relations affect government communications, and how can bridges be built between them?

1.2.2 Secondary questions

- Given this tension between the media and the government, what can be done to improve the state of government communications to fulfil its governance and transformation imperatives?
- What was the media's relationship with the three former presidents of SA, namely, Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma?
- What is the view of media practitioners (journalists, editors and communicators) on how to bridge the gap between the government and the media?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to interrogate and analyse the relationship between the government – specifically the executive arm – and the media. The study will focus mainly on print, with limited reference to broadcast media, mainly because print sets the media agenda and shapes public opinion.[3] This issue is discussed in the chapter dealing with the theoretical framework, examining the normative roles of the media and the government.

This study also identifies and examines factors that have created tension between the media and the government, and ascertains whether this has resulted in an ongoing deterioration of these relations. It further investigates some key turning points in such a relationship through the prism of the first, second and fourth[4] presidencies of the new South Africa. Among historical moments to be examined closely are the following:

---

[3]The Comtask 2000 report investigated the state of government communications including an extensive international comparison of government communications systems in both developed (UK) and developing countries (India).

[4]Anton Harber's article in *Business Day* reflects on the way the media contributes to democracy. He says that in the 1994 election, only the *Mail & Guardian* called on voters explicitly to support the ANC. It is a startling reminder of how the structures of the apartheid media industry carried into the new era. The *Sowetan* made a broader call for a vote for "liberation parties". In 2014, the *M&G* called on people to vote against the ANC. However, a triumphant ANC launched into the media. Malusi Gigaba, Jacob Zuma and Blade Nzimande said that their success was a victory over a hostile media. While there is much to criticise about our journalism, a more mature debate must take place. Source: theharbinger.co.za.p

1.3.1 INQUIRY INTO RACISM IN THE MEDIA (2000)

In many ways, this inquiry defined the Mbeki presidency and its relationship with the press. The inquiry analysed the relationship between a new and emerging society and the media that was still struggling to disentangle itself from an era of racism and activism. It concluded that there were remnants of racism in the media that still needed to be attended to.

1.3.2 LAUNCH OF THE COMTASK REPORT (2000)

The Comtask Report makes recommendations on how government communications should be shaped, thereby providing an understanding of the relationship between the Mandela presidency and the media. It also provides insight into whether the government has either implemented or ignored some of the recommendations in this report.[5]

1.3.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ONLINE PUBLICATION, *ANC TODAY (2001)*

This is a significant development in the interpretation of the strained relations between the ANC – therefore the state – and the media. The first article in *ANC Today*, by President Mbeki, explained the rationale of having its own mouthpiece as a result of the distortion of the national narrative by the media.

1.3.4 THE MAT CONUNDRUM IN 2008/9

The study examines the African National Congress's (ANC) resolution on the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) at its Polokwane Conference, calling for the establishment of a body that would regulate the press by adjudicating between the press and aggrieved newspaper readers. At the Polokwane Conference of the ANC, a resolution was passed that required parliament to investigate the feasibility of establishing the MAT in light of what many in the ANC considered a cavalier attitude by the press towards factual reporting. In an article by Verashni Pillay in the *Mail & Guardian*, the tribunal proved to be controversial, twinned with changes to the Protection of State Information Bill, which threatens draconian

---

[5] Habermas' ***Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*** was translated by William Rehg, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998a, [1992]).

sentences to journalists and others guilty of leaking state information. Such a tribunal would become a post-publication consumption system where the aim would be to correct post facto not to prevent undesirable reporting. This study looks at how this resolution defined and fuelled ongoing tensions between the media and the government.

Although the Protection of State Information Bill was pushed through, the tribunal proposal never gained traction. However, it forced the South African print media to carry out some self-reflection. “In late 2012, the press council revealed a host of changes to its regulations, which moved to co-regulation with the public. The changes took effect in 2013 and seem to have staved off the ANC's proposal, which was dropped from the party's agenda”, (*Mail & Guardian*, 2012).

1.3.5 PRESIDENT ZUMA’S LAWSUIT AGAINST CARTOONIST ZAPIRO, AND ‘THE SPEAR’ CONTROVERSY (2010)

The study shows how this event brought the issue of freedom of expression to the fore and led to one of the lowest points in media-government relations in President Zuma’s era**.** In this regard, reference will be made to the *Fight for Democracy: the ANC and the Media*, (Daniels, 2012).

1.4 RATIONALE

The tension between the government and the media has evolved through various epochs led by presidents Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. As indicated in the aims of this research, various incidents have served to highlight the simmering tensions between the government and the media throughout the first two decades of South Africa's freedom.

These tensions were a genesis to a very difficult relationship between the media and the government, giving rise to the question at the heart of this thesis: To what extent has this tension affected the ability and effectiveness of government to communicate with its citizens? This situation also gave rise to other related questions about citizens’ understanding of the media’s role in building a democracy. The thesis addresses this question in an attempt to provide an understanding of why the media usually seem to be poised to resist overtures

from the government for fear of being co-opted in the name of the national project of reconstruction, development and nation building. The question of conduct in the national interest arises here as a major theoretical matter to be reconciled.

According to Daniels (2012), in her book on media and ANC relations *The Fight for Democracy: The ANC and the Media in South Africa*, the growing mistrust and miscommunication between the government, editors and journalists in post-democratic South Africa led to a major *Indaba* (conference) being held between the cabinet and the South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) in May 2001. President Mbeki remarked that there was a need for interaction, dialogue and a process of engagement "so that we understand each other better" (Daniels, 2012: 10). Mbeki acknowledged that the term - "in the national interest" - was a troublesome one, as we all come from "different angles, different histories and therefore respond in different ways" (Daniels, 2012: 10). What Mbeki did not acknowledge, however, were the different understandings of not only the national interest, but of how democracy and the meaning of a free media is understood by the media itself (Daniels, 2012: 10).

Daniels (2012) further argues that there is a lack of homogeneity of views within the media, but the ANC says this is not so. In this regard, Duarte said:

> We are aware that every Thursday night a group of journalists sits together and decides what stories they will cover. This is very clear when we do our analysis. What we see is a pack approach with a story that breaks in *The Saturday Star*, is repeated in *Business Day* with a slightly different angle and then in *The Citizen* with a slightly different angle and also a slightly new perspective (Daniels, 2012: 125).

Tensions between the media and the government are evident in a number of different events. One can point to the quote from Duarte, spokesperson for the ruling party

Zuma's threatening defamation suits against cartoonists, Mbeki's remarks on the troublesome nature of what "in the national interest" means, and you then have the *ANC Today* on the media - most of which it called media lies and

falsifications (Daniels 2012: 33). This research aims to deconstruct these tensions but goes even further than this and reflects on what can be done to deal with these tensions.

1.4.1 The rationale for this research can be summarised as follows:

- An understanding of how government communications work and how they should work;
- An understanding of how the media works in relation to the government, and its interrelations and concomitant obligations;
- An analysis of the tensions that existed between the two in the first twenty-four years of democracy; and
- Recommendations for actions to be taken to build bridges between the media and the government to build democracy.

If these objectives are achieved, the unique contribution to this space will be a fresh application of the theoretical framework of the obligations that democracy imposes on both the media and the government. This will encompass an understanding of the management of information and its sharing with the citizenry – in a manner that gives meaning to the freedom endowed to them by a democratic dispensation. Finally, an overarching rationale for this research is its advocacy role; namely, its agitation for a better relationship between government and the media, which would also benefit citizens.

A democracy requires information flow to function optimally. In other words, the less information available, the less empowered citizens are. In the context of our history, where there were information strictures, the conduct of government to make information available must be scrutinised, as better is expected in a constitutional democracy.

The geographic realities of a vast country such as South Africa with 55-million people are such that the government needs a comprehensive communications strategy to be in constant contact with its constituencies. To do this effectively, it needs partners such as the media to reach everyone. Even if government has its own resources, such as its own newspaper, it can never reach everyone

because the scope of reach is too wide and it is a government of all South Africans not party members only. Thus, it is apparent that the government needs an extensive media strategy to use the media effectively to reach its people. At the same time, the media, being in the business of selling and disseminating information, needs the government as a key newsmaker in society – a newsmaker that is also in charge of the collective resources of the nation. This is quite apart from government as a big advertising spender speaking directly to the sustainability of media outlets. If both these role players in the public sphere were to work together, citizens would greatly benefit. Both the media and government need each other. The media has a diverse role to play both as a watchdog and information agent. The government has a responsibility to account to its citizens, and to serve them. A relationship that is hostile and unhelpful between these two only hinders both their mandates.

The rationale of this research is to explore what has characterised the tension in this relationship and what can be done to mitigate it by bridging the gap. The ultimate goal is to benefit citizens with information dissemination that can empower them to participate in national life. It is well established that for citizens to access government services, they need to receive the necessary information in an accessible way (be it form or language). This research seeks to develop a new set of knowledge aimed at building bridges between the media and the government. In the process of finding these solutions, it will contribute to the creation of new knowledge borne out of knowledge exchange sessions convened to explore the main question of this research.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

Having used the qualitative research methodology, which combined dialogue analysis as well as a case study approaches to examine the question presented a number of limitations. These include:

There are no measurable and quantifiable results; while there is the body of work by researchers investigating tensions between media and government communication, few have an interest in providing solutions towards the ever-

growing gap between the two. As shall be established in this research, the further the rift between the two, the more opportunities for the citizens to access objective information in a neutral public space diminishes.

The researcher is an active communications professional, who was exposed to information and circumstances that cannot be used in this research, as some of it is anecdotal, shared in a confidential space thus not open to public consumption.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study bases its research on three main bodies of literature. The first group explores the link between democracy, the media and communications, using political economy as a theoretical basis. In this regard, the literature is explored on democratic theory, theory of the press and that which delves into political economy.

The second body reviews issues of the state of government communications in relation to the state of journalism in South Africa, helping to draw parallels between various approaches. The literature demonstrates the role of government communications in a democracy and the state of journalism in the post-apartheid era.

The third body assesses the media and government relations in the three identified epochs through the 23 years of democratic governance, as led by former presidents Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma. These range from official government documents, such as annual reports, speeches by various political personalities and ANC policy documents, and papers by media and communications specialists, opinion pieces and newspaper editorials. Reports of commissions of inquiry also form part of this body of literature.

1.7 FIRST BODY OF LITERATURE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEMOCRACY

The starting point was to examine democracy and its implications on the practice of journalism and government communications. Several relevant essays were

published in the book, *Democratic theory and practice in Africa* (Oyugu et al., 1988). They explore topics such as the idea of democracy, democratic practice, and the link between democracy and national development. The book also sets out to define the role of the state communications machinery and the fourth estate in a democracy.

Most of the literature is centred on Jürgen Habermas's seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). Another six follow-up publications by Habermas addressing the public sphere are explored, along with other critics of the public sphere, such as Robert Fraser. In addition, African theorists were consulted in this regard. For example, Linje Manyozo (2012), and Uzoechi Nwagbara (2010), to look into decolonisation of the African public sphere. Cheeseman (2019), although not an African theorist, his body of academic work on Africa provided useful insights into the progress made in African democracies.

A set of scholarly papers published in *Media and Democracy in South Africa* (Duncan & Seloane, 1998), following a conference hosted by the HSRC and the Freedom of Expression Institute in 1996, are explored in this thesis. The contributions to this publication explore democracy in more detail as a contested concept. The editors of this volume state that "One can simply accept that democracy means government by the people as opposed to a sectional group," (Duncan & Seloane, 1998: 2). The authors explore the distinction between direct, participatory and representative democracies, and how the media relates to a South African context.

Editors in the foreword of this volume highlight that there is also a growing tradition of democratic theory that focuses on the problematic nature of free choice in liberal democracies. In this regard, they argue that:

> Civil society institutions such as the media play a critical role in shaping human consciousness in relation to particular interests and eliciting consent for a form of government based on some of these interests (Duncan & Seloane, 1998: 5).

Other topics explored by various contributors include an understanding of democracy in relation to civil society which provides a liberal normative role of the media – also referred to as the fourth estate – and democracy.

This is the subject of an entire chapter of the research and explores, for example, what is termed the four defences of the liberty of the press. These are the theoretical approach, the natural rights approach, the utilitarian view and, lastly, the view that sees the role of the press as a form of "attaining truth through unrestricted public discussion amongst citizens". There are contributions in this work that highlight the dilemma where, within the media itself, "the activities of certain forms of media can work against the freedom of expression rights of other forms of media," (Duncan & Seloane, 1998: 12).

This points to the fact that "the media cannot be considered a homogeneous enterprise with common interests" (Duncan & Seloane, 1998: 12). The authors reduce the media to roughly three sectors: commercial media, government-funded media and community media. This exposition of different kinds of media, and of the length and breadth of the media was useful to this project. This is because it assisted in focusing the findings and disaggregating them accordingly when assessing the relationship between the media and the state. If, as stated by the authors in this volume, the media is not homogenous, we may have to investigate whether the relationship between the government and the media is dependent on the type of media that is in question. In other words, can the same conclusion be reached about media-government relations when commercial media, as opposed to community media, is considered?

To get a different perspective on further theories of the press, the use of the publication *Four Theories of the Press* applies They explore four major theories about the functioning of the world press, namely: the Authoritarian Theory, based on the idea that truth is the product of a few wise men; the Libertarian Theory, which avers that the search for truth is one of man's natural rights; the Social Responsibility Theory, which focuses on the social obligations of the media; and

the Soviet Communist Theory, which can best be described as a more positive version of the authoritarian theory. (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963).

The Fight for Democracy: The Media and the ANC in South Africa (Daniels, 2012) helped the researcher to explore major themes linking the media and democracy. Specifically, how the ANC as the ruling party has attempted to restrict press freedom in post-apartheid South Africa. This work expanded and deepened the researcher's understanding of the relationship that the Mbeki and Zuma eras had with the media. Daniels (2012) seeks to deepen an understanding of the psyche of the ruling party. She discusses in detail the thinking of the ruling party's approach to media relations and how this inevitably affects the way the state relates to the media, thus resulting in the tensions.

1.8 SECOND SET OF LITERATURE: UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE STATE OF JOURNALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Media Landscape 2012 – Reflections on South Africa's Media Environment, published by the GCIS in 2014 is a local collection of reflections covering the period under review. This work explores thinking on the interface between the media and the state. Issues explored in this volume range from the internet to community media. Some of the authors have operated across the three eras under consideration, and this work highlights the government's thinking across those eras. For example, Vusi Mona, former Deputy Chief Executive of the GCIS, examines and gives insight into the state-owned media as part of the government reducing reliance on the mainstream media to communicate to the population (Seery & Seeber, 2014: 12). Mtimde's paper informs our analysis and the exploration of the outcomes of the Press Freedom Commission, where a system of self-regulation was strongly argued for. A paper by the erstwhile Press Ombudsman, Joe Thloloe, also explores this area in some detail and argues that self-regulation in South Africa is in line with international best practice (Seery & Seeber, 2014: 13).

One of the arguments in the debate about tensions between government and the media, is the rise of tabloid journalism. Herman Wasserman's book (2010),

Tabloid Journalism in South Africa, takes a closer look at the link between citizenship, democratic politics and tabloid journalism in post-apartheid South Africa. This was used to gauge the usefulness of such newspapers as instruments by which the government can reach citizens. The book explains why so many citizens find these newspapers credible and believe that the papers "tell a true story" (Wasserman, 2010: xi). Additional to the book, Wasserman's collection of academic papers on journalism in a new democracy were helpful.

Chapter 4 in this thesis focuses on understanding government communications versus journalism, in the period under review (1994 to 2014). This is a wide-ranging area and numerous articles are explored. The leading text in this regard is Anton Harber's article (2004) entitled *Reflections of Journalism in the Transition to Democracy.* This article, published in *Ethics and International Affairs,* paints a picture of how media operated under apartheid and how this changed under the new regime. Harber's questions include: "What does independence mean in a young democracy which is going to be flawed, troubled and uncertain?" and "Do criticism and scrutiny need to be tempered to promote the very institutions that gave media and journalists their freedom?" (Harber, 2004).[6]

1.9 THIRD SET OF THE LITERATURE: FOCUS ON POLICY AND INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES

This literature ranges from official government documents such as annual reports and speeches by various political personalities on issues relevant to this research; ANC policy documents such as conference resolutions; papers by media and communications specialists; opinion pieces by various analysts; and newspaper editorials in the period 1994 to 2017 Reports of commissions of inquiry also form part of this literature.

The Communications 2000 report, also known as the Comtask report, that was commissioned by the then Deputy President Mbeki was essentially an investigation into the state of government communications. The terms of reference of this report are summarised as follows: To review existing

[6]The summary of a publication by Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* forms the framework of this research. Source: culturalstudiesnow

government communications policy at all levels of government; review structures and relationships in communications across all spheres of government; and to look at issues of capacity building in the profession. The task team was also asked to look at issues of ownership and control of the media in South Africa, (De Villiers, 1996: 10).

“The task team was assigned to conduct research in ‘other democracies’, especially in developing countries, and to look at international communications functions, with special emphasis on information dissemination. Finally, the task team was asked to make recommendations on a new government communications policy, functions, structures, personnel and budgets at international, national, provincial and local levels” (De Villiers, 1996: 10). The task team came up with a set of 38 recommendations to improve government communication structures, functions and training. Recommendations were also made on how South Africa could improve its image in the world, and how it could improve information development and access to information (De Villiers, 1996: 09).

The expansive nature of this report is important in understanding how government communications sought to interface with the media and how it ought to have conducted itself in line with the recommendations.

Several other documents were also reviewed for this research to achieve its objectives. These include:

- The ANC resolution on the media appeals tribunal: This document sheds light on the governing party’s thinking to shape its relationship with the media (The ANC, 2008).
- The Press Freedom Commission: A direct response is given to the intention of the ANC to regulate the press through the MAT that sheds light on how the press sees its role in relation to the government and the ANC.
- The Report of the Human Rights Commission inquiry into racism in the media: The issue of prejudice and lack of transformation in the media was examined to shed light on the state of the post-apartheid media.

- Budget speeches of ministers responsible for the GCIS: Speeches by presidents and ministers responsible for the GCIS in parliament over the period under review were closely reviewed as they reflect the policy trajectory of the government concerning communications matters.
- Numerous opinion pieces, papers and features by journalists, the media and communications professionals: These were reviewed as part of assessing the thoughts on matters pertinent to this research.
- A paper by former CEO of GCIS Joel Netshitenzhe, in which he placed the issues of both national and public interest on the national agenda. In this paper he argued that the media has a culture of solidarity in defending indefensible approaches to the issue of national interests.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction and background:

Chapter 1 covers an introduction to the research, as well as its objectives, rationale, limitations and the literature review.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

It examines the role of the media in a democracy. Furthermore, it looks into the link between media and democracy and deconstructs the public sphere in South Africa. This chapter lays the basis for the assessment of the relationship between the state and the media. It also looks at the chronology of the shifting nature of the media-government relationship over the period under review, particularly in South Africa but also on the African continent. This is done by applying works from various democracy, decolonisation and agenda setting theorists to contextualise the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The study deployed a qualitative methodology to interrogate the research question - How do media and government relations affect government communications and how can bridges be built between them? In addition, Data Analysis served as an anchor to provide a multi-layered research approach.

Chapter 4: The Role of Government Communications in a Democracy: A Focus on the Comtask Report

This chapter looks at the role of government communications in the post-apartheid era. The chapter presents an analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of the Comtask report. The perspectives of both the media and communications professionals on the role of communications in a democracy are also explored.

Chapter 5: Media–government relations in the Mandela era

When Mandela was released from prison, he became the media's focus of attention. Like most entities inside and out of the country, the media were star-struck. Here was a man who had spent 27 years in prison and emerged with no trace of bitterness, and instead preached reconciliation. This chapter examines the relationship between Mandela and the first democratic government. A few case studies in this era are selected for analysis; for example, the media and Mandela magic, the birth of the GCIS and the death of the South African Communications Service (SACS), and the Comtask report. The research also analyses the imposed, expected allegiance to ANC government from black journalists.

Chapter 6: Media–government relations in the Mbeki era

This chapter analyses how President Mbeki and his government related to the media, using several case studies to highlight this relationship. Mbeki's relationship with the media on the Zimbabwean question, the HIV/Aids debacle and the establishment of the *ANC Today* newsletter help us understand how the relationship between Mbeki and the media evolved. Interviews were held with people who worked closely with Mbeki.

Chapter 7: Media-government relations in the Zuma era

During the Zuma years, the hostility between the media and the ANC government escalated, with threats of lawsuits and the possibility of the MAT, which strained an already difficult relationship. Looking at case studies such as the suing of Zapiro and the raging debate on the MAT, this chapter examines

how Zuma's presidency shaped the relationship between the media and the state.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Findings

All media and communications practitioners have strong views about the relationship between the media and government. Views from some key practitioners were elicited through interviews for this research. One of the Frank Dialogues conducted was specifically focused on how bridges can be built to enhance the relationship between the media and the government. This is reflected in this chapter as a way of specifically underlining the views of the media and communications on how to bridge the gap.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter outlines a summary of all the findings presented in this research, and looks at specific recommendations on the research question: How can the media/state relations be improved? In other words, how can bridges be built to connect the fourth estate with government?

The next chapter explores the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework

In this research, the foundational theories are based on Habermas's political economy and the public sphere. These have been employed to contextualise the eco-system within which the media exists. This research also examines the relations between government and media, and how the government use the latter as a communications tool in a democracy. This link is crucial in answering the question around the tensions between the media and the government and the impact of this on society. To this end, little prior research had been conducted, even though such research could be a catalyst in addressing the question of whether the media is in fact obliged to play an active role in strengthening and consolidating democracy.

2.1 PUBLIC SPHERE

This theoretical understanding is guided by Habermas (1989), a renowned German philosopher and theorist, who define the public sphere as a "network for communicating information and points of view" (Habermas & Rehg, 1998: 360)[7]**.** In simpler terms, the public sphere is characterised by voices claiming authority on what might constitute a public sphere. For many, the public sphere is a political sphere, which enables citizens to participate in public dialogue. According to Habermas, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the beginning of a new type of bourgeois public sphere that subsequently declined in the twentieth century.

In Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he explains the development of the public sphere from monarchical and feudal forms that were organised around symbolic representations of power and status (Habermas, 1992). This research applies this theory within the South African political landscape to examine how the public sphere transformed after the demise of

[7] This appeared in counterpunch.

apartheid. In this way, the research examines the media's view of the general transformation project of society.

In another work by Habermas (1962), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, he explains the transition from the bourgeois public sphere to modern mass society. Consumer capitalism began to invade the public sphere in the twentieth century, blurring the separation between private, public, state and civil society. The bourgeois public sphere underwent transformation in a dialectic mechanism (Habermas, 1962).

Habermas was later critiqued for supposing equal and open access to the public sphere, which in reality was exclusive and reserved only for upper class white bourgeois males. To take part in the public sphere, one had to have education and property, thus leaving the majority of the population outside the bounds of the public sphere.[8] Subsequently, there has been much critique of Habermas's work as too concerned with the bourgeois in the public sphere. This was argued by various theorists as being too narrow (Crosley & Roberts, 2004: 11). A closer look at what is known as the Habermasian theory – namely, general accessibility to information, eradication of privilege, the quest for the truth and the quest for general norms – is what presented a frame of analysis on how the public sphere debate can be applied to the South African situation after the attainment of liberation in 1994. However, this represents only one of the three theories of the public sphere.

The postmodern school of thought opens up the public sphere to plurality (Fraser, 1995: 295) and this includes notions of the elimination of systematic social inequality. On the other hand, the relational school designates the public sphere as a contested space with interlocutors as representatives of various parts of civil society in a contested conversation of political and social life (Wodak & Kollar, 2010).

The choice of Habermas as the main theorist to guide this research, was inspired less by his original views on the public sphere, and more by the critical nature of

[8]This was largely in reference to the Irish owned Independent Newspapers at the time of the work of the COMTASK.

the evolution of his views, which take into account the changing face of the public sphere. This research deploys insights from both his seminal work, *The Transformation of the Public Sphere,* and several of his subsequent works that sought to critique his initial views. The research returns later to this dichotomy to demonstrate this evolution of the description and understanding of the public sphere by Habermas.

The research, therefore, creates a framework centred on the work of Habermas but not completely defined by it. The research selects what works to best describe South Africa's national project as anchored by the constitution. Applying this framework deepens our understanding of the state of the media landscape and the communications environment that prevailed post-1994. This theoretical framework is further tested through the questions put to the various participants in the qualitative methodology that gathers empirical data through the Frank Dialogues and the individual semi-structured interviews with media players and government communicators. The input by these participants confirms whether the theoretical framework used to approach this research stands up to academic scrutiny.

In summary, this research used the following questions to establish how the public sphere can be characterised within the South African context and to apply the various theories that underpin this work:

- Is the South African political landscape part of a public sphere that is accessible to all?
- Is the South African environment blind to class positions?

For Habermas, the concept of 'public opinion' is the control and criticism of organised political authority, which is officially manifested by the public during elections. In this chapter, we investigate whether this is applicable in the South African scenario.

2.1 GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION MEDIA RELATIONS

Government communication and media relations have been characterised by tension and complexity in different regimes - democracies, autocracies and anything in between. In examining whether the media is a watchdog on behalf of civil society or lapdog of government's communications propaganda, Whitten-Woodring (2009) and Spiess (2011) have done extensive work on the causes of such tensions in government and media relations. The tension comes when applying the media as a tool for government communication, while the media turns to push back as it observes its liberties to set the agenda are impinged on. This, Whitten-Woodring (2009) and Spiess (2011) argue causes a disjuncture for both actors and their roles in the public sphere. As such, the definition of public opinion could also hold different meanings for both the media and the government communication representatives.

2.1.1 Media role

In his focus on what is referred to as investigative journalism or also known as watchdog media (WM), Spiess (2011) describes this kind of journalism as "reporting that serves" 'the exposure of wrongdoing in the public interest'" (Coronel in Spiess, 2011: 5). Such journalism does "not only provide information but particularly focus on malfeasance" (Spiess, 2011: 5). Media as watchdogs "can therefore contribute to each phase of democratisation and in several ways, including policy-making and law abidance, their main contribution is to hold powerful actors accountable" (Spiess, 2011: 5). Thus the media's watchdog role is foundational to the tension

Spiess (2011: 6) cautions that the media "can also harm fledgling democracies" such as in developing countries, for example on the African continent. [See below under African Democracies]. In a paper entitled *The Role of Media in the Arab World's Transformation Process,* Fahez (2011) argues that the media must not see themselves as political players, but rather as mediators between the state, the opposition and civil society. For instance, in South Africa, the government of the ANC still engage the media as though the governing party has a monopoly on the public sphere in conveying its message rather than

oppositional policymakers. The media must ensure that it can play an almost neutral referee role. However, following the discussions about the possibility of media regulation, the ANC had stated that “the ANC was perturbed by the oppositional stance of some sections of the media. We take serious offence and we need to look at the adequacy of the peer-driven mechanism” (Cele, 2015).
According to Warren Francke in his paper entitled *The Evolving Watchdog*, the media’s role in government ethics can be considered to play two roles in society: that of a watchdog and that of a societal player, as it is part of civil society (Francke, 1995). Francke suggests a role of influence on ethics in public life, which certainly undoes the ANC’s argument of expecting the media to ignore oppositional views to its own strategic messages.

Paul Ansah argues that it is legitimate for the press "to fulfill the role of an opposition in the sense of presenting another side of the story where necessary – that is to say criticising and exposing government decisions that are not in the best interest of the people" (Ansah, 1988: 13). Peter Wanyande (1996) argues that the significance of the media in a democracy derives from its special position, as opposed to other organisations in the democratisation process. The media “acts as a bridge between civil society associations not organisations, the rest of society and the state or government” (Wanyande, 1996: 13).

In its role as a watchdog, it can be argued that the media should exercise vigilance to ensure accountability of political leaders and other players in society. Allegations of corruption are often brought to the attention of the media by anonymous sources. The media are left to follow leads and expose wrongdoing. This can be considered an active intervention, not a passive one. It is debatable whether such a watchdog role is complementary or elevates the media above the other three pillars of the state - the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. There is also the phenomenon of investigative journalism that is taking root as an active intervention by the media in exposing wrongdoing. This suggests that the media has an active role in society, and that it can play a more dynamic role than the one-dimensional role (watchdog or lapdog) that is envisaged by extremists on both sides of the argument.

The second role of the media is that of a pillar in a society that seeks to educate and empower citizens. According to the *Media Landscape 2012: Reflections on South Africa's Media Environment* report,

> The view of how the media would operate [in a new dispensation] was visionary – it would reflect the broad views of South Africans and include a diversity of voices independent of the government and outside state control. Press freedom would be limited in cases where war or violence was incited and when hatred was being advocated against anyone, based on race, gender or ethnicity (Seery & Seeber, 2014: 6).

Thus, the media's role is envisaged to form part of the rebuilding of a ravaged society. The media is not a bystander but part of a society that is undergoing fundamental change. In other words, the media would be a misfit if it did not adapt to the new dispensation in terms of a relevant role in the equilibrium of key role players in society.

2.1.2 Government role

Communications as a tool of democracy is also an entire subject matter on its own. The government considered this extensively in the Comtask report, where a thorough assessment of the pre-democracy communications landscape was undertaken. In addition, a new approach aligned to the new dispensation was crafted and proposed to support democratic governance.

This chapter analyses key aspects of this report to answer the question: How does the government see the role of communications in carrying out its obligations in a democratic society? In the executive summary of the report, the task team made an observation that "the new government communication and information system needs to be better co-ordinated and more focused in its messages. It should strengthen the capability of the government to communicate its policies to the people and be streamlined, credible, cost-effective and highly professional. To do this, it will need to engage better with civil society, creating a dialogue between the government and the public," (De Villiers, 1996: 659). Furthermore, such delivery would require: "leadership from the centre of government – the presidency – but also decentralised implementation through ministries, departments and provincial and local government. For this, a more

professional cadre of communicators is required, as well as better cooperation with the media and community at large," (De Villiers, 1996: 659)

There is a quest for universally applicable concepts that are relevant and explanatory in Africa, and which designate broad processes and functions. This sentiment, voiced by Guy Berger, was key in our choice of African theorists who have articulated views on this subject matter. Berger argues that, theories of the media and democracy entailing concepts such as the public sphere and civil society have been used extensively in western societies. In contrast, analysis of Africa's media has been patchy and lacking in theoretical foundation (Berger, 2002). Through this article, the research will deepen our understanding of African theorists who have influenced this theory chapter.

While the thesis deploys the Habermasian public sphere argument, it is well aware of the shortcomings from a decolonial epistemic perspective. In *De-westernizing media theory to make room for African experience*, Nyamnjoh asks if we should approach Africa's media via western theoretical constructs, given that we are trapped in local and global hierarchies (Nyamnjoh, 2010). Manyozo (Falcon, 2012:3) also cautions that Western news products produce "Eurocentric hierarchies of place and human life". Many African countries are found to be repressive of their people, but liberal democracy has assumptions that we all have equal rights. We must recognise creative ways in which Africans can merge their traditions with exogenous influences to create realities that are not reducible to either but are enriched by both (Nyamnjoh, 2011: 28).

Decolonial theorists such as Fanon (1961: 254) argued that we must not desire to "catch up with Europe" but rather strive to find a different path to advance humanity. This chapter analyses the conundrum of democracy as applied to three case studies, vis-à-vis media freedom, censorship and freedom of expression, from a decolonial perspective. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012), decolonisation as a political and economic liberatory project has remained unfinished business, giving way to coloniality, which is an invisible power structure that sustains colonial relations of exploitation and domination long after direct colonisation.

Besides Fanon, this chapter deploys the decolonial critiques of African and South American philosophers to discuss the three case studies - Mandela (1994–1999), Mbeki (1999–2008) and Zuma (2009–2018) - chosen to make sense of 'media freedom' and 'freedom of expression'.

The decolonial theorists highlight both the big gaps and the assumptions inherent in the grand old narratives of universal truths. The latter tend to cover up and conceal particular struggles and racist stereotypes such as it has taken form in South African media ownership. In this regard, in an article by Willems, (2012), she argues that Mbembe posited hat the relationship "between those who rule and those who are ruled, is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterised as convivial, Willems, 2012: 9). She further says that Mbembe seem to have a point in pointing out that such a relationship "robs both the dominant and those dominated of their agency and makes them both impotent," Willems, 2012: 9). Willems refers to Mbembe speaking of an 'intimacy of tyranny' which according to him inscribes "the dominant and the dominated within the same episteme." Willems says, "while Mbembe does not explicitly claim to build up his theoretical framework around concepts of 'public sphere' and 'popular culture', both implicitly play an important role in his account of the post colony. In his book, Mbembe shows how the rulers make attempts to claim public spaces through their extravagant state ceremonies which display the grandiosity of their power but at the same time, he demonstrates how the ruled manage to carve out a space for themselves, therefore constituting their own alternative popular publics next to official publics. Mbembe's work is also important because it does not uncritically celebrate agency but provides a more complex and nuanced account of power," (Willems, 2012: 9).

2.2 DEMOCRARY

Government media relations is deserving of serious study because it sits at the interface between the executive and journalism, two of the fundamental institutions in a modern democratic society. According to Stier, there is no one way to define democracy, therefore, it is expected that there can be "a variation in media freedom depending on the type of government since political regimes

differ with regard to the political, legal and economic framework in which news coverage operates" (Stier, 2014). Stier continues to point to imperial results which he says demonstrate that

> …democracies lead to significantly higher levels of media freedom than autocracies, with other things being equal. Within the autocratic spectrum, electoral autocracies, monarchies and military regimes have the freest media, whereas the most liberal media can be found in communist idiocrasies, where the ruling party holds a communication monopoly. Media freedom in personalist and non-ideological one-party regimes is on an intermediate level, (Stier, 2014).

It is Whitten- Woodring (2009), who highlights the fact that while it is expected that democracies would "have free media and autocracies to have government-controlled media, some democracies have government-controlled media, and some autocracies have free media. How this mismatch between regime type and media system influences government behavior is a puzzle" (Whitten- Woodring, 2009).

In Greg Mills, Jeffrey Herbst, Tendai Biti and Olusegun Obasanjo's *Democracy Works: Re-Wiring Politics to Africa's Advantage,* the authors argue

> Democracy is fundamentally about the inner working of institutions, the rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, and leadership in government and civil society, as much as it is about values and the welfare and well-being of its citizens. It also demands that local leadership has a plan for the country beyond simply winning the popular vote (Mills et al., 2019).

Michael Welton (2019) looks into four theorists of democracy – Giddens (1994), Bohman (1996), White (1995) and Angus (2001), who all hold the belief that "authentic "rule by the people" is linked closely to the quality and extent of public debate" (Welton, 2019)[9]. All agree that liberal democracies are formally characterised by rule of law, the right to free speech, the right to freely own property, and the right to form political associations and to vote. But they do not

[9]Paraphrased from Page 25 of the COMTASK chapter on Political Systems

believe that simply identifying the formal properties of the political system provides us with a rich account of democracy. All of them counterpoise deliberative democracy to the orthodox understanding (Welton, 2019).

Giddens (1994), the sociologist that he is, has an interest in how dialogic democracy is manifest in four connected areas (personal life, social movements and self-help groups, organisational arenas, and the larger global order) (Welton, 2019). While Angus (2001) says “to rule we must participate in decision-making” and that we must have “power to deliberate and decide what the law will be” (Angus in Welton, 2019).

Thus congruent to Habermas theory of the public sphere, is the argument that to make good decisions, citizens need both to be informed (access to relevant information) and to have access to public places (marketplaces, pubs, street corners, living rooms, and public spheres of different kind). These are essential ingredients for deliberative democracy (Angus in Welton, 2019).

As per referenced in Welton, Bohman defines deliberative democracy as “legislation authored by citizens who are subject to them, the rejection of the reduction to politics and decision-making to instrumental and strategic rationality, and collective decisions which ensure that they are justified by public reasons” (Bohman in Welton, 2019).

Bohman characterises democratic deliberation as follows:

- Inclusion of everyone affected by the decision;
- Substantive political equality includes opportunity to participate in deliberation;
- Equality in methods of decision making and in determining the agenda;
- Free and open exchange of information and reasons sufficient to acquire an understanding of both the issue in question and the opinions of others (Bohman in Welton, 2019).

Welton in referencing other theorists such as Angus who encourages us to extend democracy into the corporate/business worlds, government bureaucracies, and municipal governments demonstrates the importance of access to information by citizens at grassroots level. This research examines as

to whether there is or not free flow of information and if this applies to African democracies.

2.2.1 The media, government communication and African democracies

Gaudi Delgado Falcón in reviewing Manyozo's (2012) work - *Media, Communication and Development: Three Approaches*, points out that he writes that Western news produces "Eurocentric Hierarchies" (Falcón, 2012: 3). Cheeseman (2019) goes on to argue that contrary to popular view, "Africa's past reveals more fragments of democracy than you would think", producing "enduring working multi-party democracies in countries such as Botswana, Mauritius, Benin, Ghana, Namibia and Senegal amid unusual challenges that aren't prescribed by the Western pre-condition of a successful democracy," (Cheeseman, 2019). This is evidence that "in reality, democracy is built from within" (Cheeseman, 2019). Cheeseman argues that Europe is being "convulsed by Brexit and the rise of right-wing populists"; and that America, under Donald Trump's rule, "America's reputation for political checks and balances, Africa's most democratic states have proved to be remarkably resilient" (Cheeseman, 2019). According to Cheeseman, Ghana has experienced numerous transfers of power and in 2016, the first ever defeat of a sitting president. Namibia has consolidated its position as a "free" political system with robust respect for civil liberties according to Freedom House (Cheeseman, 2019). South Africa suffered politically and economically during the presidency of Jacob Zuma, but now has the chance to bounce back after the governing African National Congress (ANC) voted to pursue reform under President Cyril Ramaphosa, argues Cheeseman (2019).

Cheeseman says that the role played by African citizens is deserving of recognition. "It was their willingness to take to the streets that forced democratic openings in the late 1980s. The same has been true in recent years, with mass action challenging authoritarian regimes in Burkina Faso and Sudan" (Cheeseman, 2019).

The role of the media in African democratic contexts has its own ideological challenges. According to Ansah (1988), there are opposing ideological

approaches to understanding the role of the media in a democracy. At one extreme, there is dictatorship and at the other, liberalism.

The Comtask report also concerns itself with the concentration of ownership and control. In the case of South Africa, major media houses are still very much residing in the hands of minorities who previously played a major role in the apartheid era. In the case of the media, there is additional concern for the lack of diversity in allowing for control of opinion and information. The task team argues that media diversity is vital to democracy (De Villiers, 1996). This observation underlines the fact that to play an active role that deepens democracy, the media must be diverse. In this way, its role as a mirror of society makes more sense in a society that is known for its diversity.

The task team was also critical of foreign ownership[10] of the media in South Africa, although cautious that such foreign unbundling may lead to an even worse situation, where the local titles previously owned by foreign investors may collapse. This situation, Comtask argues, may lead to even less diversity.

Finally, the task team concluded that a strong communication and information service could co-exist with a culture that embraces freedom of expression and information, (De Villiers, 1996). The task team underscored the basis for its other policy proposals pertaining to the coexistence of those two essential components of a democratic society.

Gurevitch and Blumler (1990) argue that the existence of a free press enshrines the democratic concept of political accountability of power holders to ordinary citizens. They further point out that the press can be said to embody the concept of citizen autonomy. Citizens are given information whereby they can decide who the good and bad guys of politics may be (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). In short, the media plays the role of a bridge between political developments that are often remote or even boring to ordinary citizens. In this way, the media seeks to simplify politics for citizens.

[10]A national Communications Task Team was established by the Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, to help her restructure communications in line with what the president envisaged in his second term of office.

Claims of media 'dramatisation' of events (often labelled sensationalist in the South African context), must be understood in the context of enticing the public to be interested in politics when previously they could not be bothered (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). However, there was a counter-argument that audiences are often left more confused by news bulletins or articles that seem to only scratch the surface and do not ensure a deeper understanding of the issues. At the heart of the authors' argument is the democratic expectation of media performance. This is expected of the media in society and can be summarised as follows:[11]

> Reporting on developments likely to impinge positively or negatively on the welfare of citizens: This role focuses on ensuring that citizens are kept informed of developments. Information that supports democracy includes information that is purely meant to empower citizens about the economic opportunities available to them. This also includes enabling different political players to reach citizens with their political messages. *Meaningful agenda setting:* Identifying key issues and the necessary role players in those issues (De Villiers, 1996: 25).

The media sets the agenda for public discourse. This is mainly because governments are slow in being proactive and leave this space to the media. Often, politicians or governments end up as mere respondents, instead of being the ones to set the agenda. The government sets the agenda for public discourse in very few cases but reports in a routine way that often looks uncoordinated. The Comtask report acknowledged that government communication suffers from a lack of coordinated central messages. This is a boon for the media, which often highlight contradictions in the higher echelons of government or even the ruling party (De Villiers, 1996). The following sums up what the role of the media in a democracy is.

2.2.1.1 Creating a platform for advocacy by politicians and their spokespersons as well as other interest groups in society: The media has a special place among civil society organisations. Its role is that of a facilitator,

[11]The report of the task team was submitted to the then Communications Minister, Faith Muthambi, but was never acted upon. It was subsequently submitted to the new minister, Ayanda Dlodlo, who also had not acted on the report by the time of completion of the research.

even among civil society organisations. This role is crucial to the building of a democracy, and exploring and accommodating different views. It must be borne in mind, however, that the media is not homogenous and, therefore, their contribution to public discourse will result in a diversity of thoughts (Wanyande, 1996).

2.2.1.2 Creating dialogue across a diverse range of views between holders of power and the public: One of the building blocks of any democratisation system is two-way dialogue that opens conversations between those which are governing and those which are governed. The presence of such dialogue at the heart of a democracy is key. Parliamentary hearings in South Africa, for example, can reach more people through the media, thereby increasing the level of dialogue and national attention that these get in the political system**.**

2.2.1.3 On behalf of citizens, the media can create a mechanism to hold politicians to account about power: South Africa's political system does not lend itself to members of parliament being held accountable by their constituencies. Due to the fact that the system leans heavily on a party system, there is scant accountability. The media creates a platform that ensures citizen representatives can be held to account.

2.2.1.4 A platform for citizen education: The media provides an excellent platform for citizens to learn. Through this platform, citizens are also encouraged to get involved in the political arena, where political choices are made on an ongoing basis. While not exhaustive, these four areas underline what Habermas summarises as the pillars of the public sphere and gives an outline of the key elements that make us understand the role of the media in a democracy. An assessment of the South African context must still be made in order to answer the broader question of whether the South African media has lived up to these expectations. This will be reflected in the findings and conclusions chapters (Wanyande, 1996).

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS IN A DEMOCRACY

The following extract from the Executive Summary of the Comtask report is instructive about the lessons the government should heed from other democracies about an approach to government communications: “The task group surveyed government communication systems in 19 countries including ten developing countries, and found common trends and practices in these countries. Effective media relations are always associated with a recipe of a co-ordinated government messaging, led by professional communication officials with status, who work directly with and have free access to ministers and officials. Most democracies have a central communication institution that handles government-wide services (for example, training, analysis and advertising) but which is not a centralised voice of government. Decentralised communication is the most effective, where information is imparted from that point in government closest to the target audience” (De Villiers, 1996: 661).

2.4 COMMUNICATIONS IN THIS DEMOCRACY: THE PRACTICE

The Comtask report observes that: “Government and media relations in a democracy are always sensitive and occasionally acrimonious. Apartheid weakened the profession in South Africa and there is agreement in the industry that capacity building is needed to improve standards and to open the profession and media management to disadvantaged groups. The task group survey indicated that the South African media, especially the press, lacks experienced journalists able to cover stories in depth and in context” (De Villiers, 1996).

The capacity of the newsroom: Juniorisation

This sentiment was expressed in various interviews held with editors. The area of what is referred to as 'juniorisation of the newsroom' was addressed in these interviews, where editors decried the state of the newsroom. In addition, in a report by media academic and analyst Glenda Daniels’ (2014), the following observations were made regarding the question of capacity of journalists in the

current media landscape. The report noted that only about 23 percent of journalism graduates in South Africa find work right away, while it takes on average close to 15 months to find placements. This may point to the tendency by newsrooms to train and up skill current employees as opposed to taking on new young journalists. The importance of the capacity of the media to do their work well is crucial for the quality of communications that media can capture on their platforms. In other words, weak media will result in poor quality reportage. This is likely to increase tensions between government and the media.

2.5 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS IN A DEMOCRACY

According to the World Bank Report – *CommGAP, 2011, The Contribution of Government Communication Capacity to Achieving Good Governance Outcomes – Communication for Governance and Accountability (CommGAP)* "the capacity to communicate effectively with constituents is a fundamental function of modern governance" (CommGAP Report, 2011: 1). The report cautions that the capacity for communications is not just about pushing information out to citizens, but also an ability to listen to them in order to take into account their needs (CommGAP Report, 2011: 1).

The CommGAP Report further underlines three simple pillars that can help us understand the role of communications in a democracy, namely, 1) enhancing the capability of the state to get things done; 2) making the state responsive to the needs of citizens and upholding their rights; and 3) enhancing the ability of citizens (and civil society in general) to hold the government accountable (CommGAP Report, 2011: 1). This lays a basis for what is known as development communication, where, according to the World Bank, communications are a lever of development. The media are not just used to communicate government messages but rather messages that citizens can use to improve their lives. In an ideal public sphere, this is crucial as it suggests participation rather than one-way information dissemination to a passive citizenry.

In a report by the national Communications Task Team[12] established by the Ministry of Communications in South Africa, the task team outlined the following as guidelines for what is termed 'development communication':

> We must advocate for a government that is responsive, creative, concerned about continuity and sustainability, reliant on feedback and thrives on community participation. Development communication must be shaped by innovation and by a genuine desire to enable communities to improve the quality of their lives. An understanding of both what has been done and what is being done well must be balanced by what still needs to be improved. Telling a good story about the 20 years of democracy is as important as honesty about what is not working (De Villiers, 1996).

Development communication must go beyond simply buying media space for advertisements that do not reach the majority of South Africans or the relevant socio-economic strata of society. Development communication is not about spin-doctoring; especially not about covering up incompetence, non-delivery of services or corruption. Finally, government officials ought to know applicable policies and strategies when communicating with communities (National Communications Task Team (NCTT) report to the Minister of Communications, 2015).

These are recommendations of the NCTT, which are contained in a full strategy developed for the consideration of the cabinet.[13] This lays a basis for the role of communications in a democracy.

Enhancing the capacity of the state

Many people do not understand that communications may simply be used as a way to excuse non-delivery. The World Bank report recommends the opposite – that communications must be used to enhance the capacity of the state to get things done. A closer examination of some of the services expected of the government reveals that several services are dependent on communication with

[12] See Recommendation 34 in the Comtask report.

[13] This is a policy document also referred to as *Guide for Members of the Executive* that governs the work of ministers, as well as setting out their rights and privileges.

citizens. Access to identity documents is a typical example. For the state to provide such a service, citizens must provide extensive information about their personal circumstances and then wait processing and verification, a process, which is communications-intensive. For citizens to be informed of the readiness of their documents and access the complete product, they must present themselves physically to sign for the document. If communications were removed from this process, the service could not be considered rendered.

The report highlights that the desired outcome of effective government communication is the building of broad support for government priorities, policies and programmes. Suggested ways of communicating to achieve this include the establishment of "systems to provide reliable and up-to-date information on available public services, public campaigns regarding priority programmes and projects and tools for persuasion and for leading public opinion", (NCTT, 2016).

Making the state more responsive to the needs and rights of citizens

To achieve this, the government should provide ways for people to say what they think and need. By so doing, the government must "develop the ability to understand and deliver public goods and services founded on an evidence-based knowledge of citizens' needs and preferences" (Department of International Development (DfID) Report, 2006). To achieve this, several mechanisms can be deployed, including consultation regarding participatory decision-making and tools for measuring and analysing public opinion, and continuous media monitoring (DfID report, 2006). This alone creates a two-way stream that gives meaning to democracy as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is through this two-way communication between a government and its people that democracy gets its true meaning.

One of the main tenets of democracy is accountability. Jeremy Waldron is of the opinion that:

> Accountability is a popular idea, though for political scientists it can sometimes seem a tiresome and clichéd aspect of democratic theory. I think we are in danger of underestimating its importance. Too often, accountability is simply identified with elections or with 'catching out' those

> who are charged with public responsibilities, without any sense of its exact contribution to our understanding of democracy, (Waldron, 2014: 1).

Communications must, therefore, offer citizens the opportunity to check the laws and decisions made by governments, parliaments and assemblies, encouraging a free media and freedom of faith and association (DFID report, 2006). In order to live up to the expectations of citizens, the government must set up mechanisms that enable accountability. In the South African context, we can examine how parliament uses mechanisms to hold leaders accountable. For example, the Standing Committee of Public Accounts (SCOPA) enables members of parliament, on behalf of citizens, to hold leaders accountable; as well as public hearings which allow for direct input/participation by the public.

There are many communications interventions that can be deployed to achieve greater public participation, including regular and consistent interaction with members of the media who would not only transmit information to the broader audience, but also ask questions on behalf of their readers and listeners.

2.6 MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS INTERFACE

It should be clear from the expositions presented above, which outline the role of communications in society, that there is a necessary interface between the government and the media to ensure support for democracy. This calls for a deeper analysis of theories around the government and media relationship.

According to Ansah (1988), the relationship between the government and the press in Africa has generally been characterised by tension and conflict. Ansah argues that where there appears to be no tension, the reason is that the press has either been cowed into submission or has become an organ of the ruling party. The situation, he argues, seems to reflect "intolerance and the tendency towards the creation of monolithic political institutions in Africa" (Ansah, 1988: 10). Many governments seek to justify their monopoly over the media by arguing that all resources need to be focused on national development and avoid situations where the citizenry is distracted by ‘false propaganda’.

Bringing it closer to home

Having examined the role of the media generally in society, we need to bring this closer to the South African scenario and ask ourselves whether the communications environment in South Africa has fulfilled what Habermas indicates as the 'ideal public sphere'. The apartheid architecture used government communications as a propaganda extension of its policies. The first job of the democratic government was to change this frame of mind. This is where the Comtask report is crucial in its analysis of the status quo. Comtask contended in the report that the government lacked central coordination of messaging and was riddled with bad planning for campaigns. The task team also highlighted the fact that communications is not seen as a priority by the government, as evidenced by the low budgets allocated for communications work and the status of communicators in the public service.

To change this approach, Comtask recommended an overhaul of government communications. In its array of recommendations, it sought to address the philosophy of communications that is in line with what Habermas calls the public sphere. In his work, Habermas (1964: 2) said: “only when the exercise of political control is effectively subordinated to the democratic demand and that information can be accessible to the public, does the political public sphere win an institutionalised influence over the government through the instrument of institutionalised bodies”.

This essentially addresses the need for public participation and accountability. The formation of the GCIS, in theory, would take the government communications intervention to a new level aimed at the people as a primary focus. Its *modus operandi* is meant to create a bridge between the people and the government. To achieve this, one of the levers has to be engagement with the media.

2.6.1 The new system recommended by the Comcast Report

The new government communications system envisages the Minister of Communications as a chief communicator. This suggests that communication was likely to be more proactive in line with the political programme of a ministry as opposed to being bogged down in government departmental bureaucracy where the release of information is closely guarded. Politicians tend to be more willing to communicate frequently and more rapidly. Having worked as a spokesperson for a minister, the researcher was exposed to this scenario, which meant that there was constant contest between the ministerial communication operations and those of the department.

In the first instance in my experience, the spokesperson for a minister does not report to the head of communications in the department or to the director general (DG), but directly to the minister. To all intents and purposes, the spokesperson becomes an advisor to the minister on key issues of communication. This means that spokespeople add to the complexity of decision-making, as the minister sometimes needs to weigh communications advice coming from his Director General (DG) and that coming from political advisors, including the spokesperson.

The above elaborated illustration is to make the point that communications should sit at the centre of political decision-making. The departmental communication infrastructure may, as a result of this set-up, find itself on the margin of mainstream pronouncements by the ministry. Over 20 years, the situation has evolved as the government has matured. Some government communicators in the Mandela era grew into senior positions where they assumed the role of head of communications. This changed the dynamic, in that departmental communication was taken over and brought into line with ministerial communication. In some instances, officials were appointed to be official spokespersons, while those in senior positions oversaw the strategic functions of communications, making them advisors to both the ministry and the department (www.gov.co.za).

One of the critical recommendations of the Comtask report was that communicators must be appointed at senior level.[14] At that stage, it was envisaged that communicators would lead a chief directorate. With the evolution described above, several departments have elevated heads of communications to the level of deputy director general. Two case studies that can be referred to for shedding light in this regard are those of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and the Department of Social Development. The communicators occupying these positions are trusted advisors to their ministers, and they head combined units of communications in their environment. This assists them in aligning the work of their departments and ministries behind a coherent communications strategy. Such a system also envisages regular interaction with the media. While the media is not the only way of communicating with the public, it is key in reaching the general population.

According to the ministerial handbook,[15] every minister and deputy minister has a media liaison officer. This is over and above the head of communications and is also applicable at provincial and local levels, where every Member of the Executive Council (MEC) and the mayor has a communicator attached to them. According to the Comtask Report, this represents a clear intervention that is meant to deal with the media as a primary mode of political communications.

In terms of a government sanctioned communications strategy[16], the GCIS organises the communicators into a media liaison forum where all spokespersons come together regularly to share strategies. This practice was very intense during the first and second administration, and then dissipated and almost stopped during the latter Mbeki years and the Zuma years. Its value lay in what were termed pre-cabinet briefings. In these briefings, the CEO of GCIS would appraise communicators about matters that they were about to bring to the cabinet, in order to discuss the communications approach to those issues. In this way, the spokespersons were prepared for what messages the cabinet would be

[14]The Cabinet annually adopts a communications strategy immediately after the State of the Nation Address – this guides all communicators on how to craft departmental communication strategies.

[15]The concept is debated in full in Chapter 4: Mandela and the Media.

[16] This information was unattributed but was sourced from http://www.pressreference.com/Sa-Sw/South-Africa.html, an article that gave an analysis of the apartheid and post-apartheid history in South Africa

communicating. In these meetings, it was also decided who would communicate and when and whether, for example, the relevant minister would join the CEO at the post cabinet media briefing or not, (Tyawa Interview, 2016). This practice ensured that the government was ahead in terms of communicating controversial issues likely to arouse public interest. It also ensured that the media were given proper and detailed information to enable them to cover stories emerging from the government such as cabinet discussions.

The GCIS is organised in the form of communications clusters that mirror the DG clusters to coordinate the work of communications among different heads of communications. The clusters typical method of operation involves joint campaigns that have cross-cutting messages. The close coordination of these clusters has not been particularly effective, according to different communicators interviewed as part of this research. Many of them feel that the system does not add value. Mava Scott, former Head of Communications for the Department of Water Affairs for five years, observed that these clusters are more of a routine than a serious effort at strategic communications. Cornelius Monama, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Small Business, was the Head of Communications for the North West provincial government for over five years. He describes the GCIS system as being ineffective under the latter-day leadership, (Scott Interview, 2017 and Monama Interview, 2017).

Finally, the GCIS anticipates a media that embraces a role broader than just that of a watchdog. There was an expectation that the media in a new South Africa would add to the national discourse by underlining its role in the national interest. It is clear, however, that the very concept of national interest is contested.[17]

In considering the oft-criticised elite focus of the Habermasian theory, it is important as an end note to consider what Wasserman has to say in summing up the role of the media in South Africa:

> "For journalism in a new democracy such as South Africa to serve more than an elite, for it to enable citizens to actively practice their citizenship

[17] ibid

through media, for it to treat all South Africans with dignity, it would have to learn to listen across the different lines that continue to keep South Africans apart – journalists would have to learn to listen to the stories of those on the other side of the railway line, the breadline, the picket line, the barbed wire fence," (Wasserman, 2013: 34).

This summarises how, while applying the Habermasian theory to the South African context, we should always bear in mind the local African context. This means understanding how all the assumptions of Habermas should be applied in context.

The Comtask report had this about the relationship between the government and the media: (De Villiers, 1996: 17).

Both points of view can be substantiated and have some merit. In private, leaders in both the media and government were found willing to accept the shortcomings of their own institutions. The consistent repression of the truth by the previous government in South Africa and the subsequent entrenchment of freedom of information and expression in our Constitution have resulted in a media which, quite correctly, jealously guards its newly won freedom.

However, while we believe tension between government and the press is healthy, and indeed inevitable, there is scope for both sides to listen to the other's critiques and for joint efforts to improve respective standards (De Villiers, 1996: 18).

2.7 AGENDA SETTING THEORY

Agenda-setting theory refers to the way the media's news coverage determines which issues become the focus of public attention (Aunur et al., 2015). McCombs and Shaw first introduced the agenda setting theory in 1972. This theory was developed through a study on the 1968 presidential election where American Democratic incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson was ousted by Republican challenger Richard Nixon. In the survey known as the "Chapel Hill Study", McCombs and Shaw sampled 100 residents of Chapel Hill, North Carolina on what they thought were the most important issues of the election compared to what the local and

national media reported. They found that the more issues were made important in the media, the more citizens found them to be important, and the elections favoured that leader whose agenda was covered the most (McCombs & Shaw in Aunur et al., 2015)

In their theory which is also known as agenda setting of the media, McCombs & Shaw suggested that the media sets the public agenda by telling people what to think about, although not exactly what to think. The abstract in their first article about this theory states:

> In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue by also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues – that is, the media may set the "agenda" of the campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 in Aunur et al., 2015: 3).

Two other theorists that Aunur et al., (2015) cite Rogers and Dearing (1988) advanced developments of the theory, identifying three types of agenda setting, "**public agenda setting -** in which the public's agenda is the dependent variable (civil society)**, media agenda setting -** in which the media's agenda is treated as the dependent variable (aka. agenda building) and **policy agenda setting -** in which elite policy makers' agendas are treated as the dependent variable (aka. political agenda setting)," (Aunur et al., 2015: 5-6).

The three agenda setting types are useful in that they point to the reasons there exist tensions between the media and the government, as the three seem to have different agendas. This was further demonstrated by Furman and Šerikova (2007) who studied policy agenda setting in Lithuania in the 1960s. The pluralistic interpretation of the political process received fierce criticism from critics such as Schattenschneider, Cobb and Elder who pointed out that public policy is biased. They argued that some groups, ideas and interests have more influence than others and greater ability to put problematic issues on the political

agenda, thus giving policymakers the most important sources of political power, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 102). This has also been observed in African democracies particularly where the media is concerned.

JJ Jones as cited in Furman & Šerikova (2007: 102), says the beginning of any social emergence on the public policy agenda is the recognition of a particular issue as a public issue, or its identification. How it is defined depends on the way policymakers seek to present a particular phenomenon or event to the public (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 102). In the 1980s, Kingdon formed a concept of public policy issues. He noted that problems on the government agenda arise when proposed solutions are combined with specific societal problems. Kingdon's research on US health and transport policy has shown how unrelated these compounds can be. His study has become one of the most significant theoretical and practical work on the agenda of public policy. It was drafted based on hundreds of interviews with government officials and other senior US officials, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 103).

The Kingdon study states that political actors are looking for popular problems, and events such as natural disasters or airplane catastrophes immediately bring the issue to the public's attention. Thus, the convergence of a number of unrelated factors plays a major role in shaping the policy agenda, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 103). This demonstrates that government agendas are a list of issues to which government representatives attach great importance and give them problem status. Meanwhile, decision agendas are part of the list of problems on the government agenda that have acquired status or become a recognised problem for proactive decision making. Budget reports and resolutions, schedules and meetings of legislative committees and subcommittees are examples of formal institutional agendas. Kingdon suggested that separate agendas (such as ministries) be separately identified and given a different status from government agendas. The political system, according to Kingdon, can only cope with a limited number of recognised problems, so entering that system is tantamount to art, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 103).

Examining agenda setting in the form of the three agendas - public agenda setting, media agenda setting and policy agenda setting - the research manages to pin down how the tension is visible. This is particularly true in African

democracies such as the case with Zimbabwe. Mugabeism and Zanufication were entrenched in public policy that governed different arms of the 'democracy'. This included the fourth estate, turning media into state propaganda apparatus while independent media was suppressed and its practitioners punished severely if they ever showed discernment. Mugabe's government had enablers by way of cabinet ministers, much like there were Members of Parliament who unconditionally supported Zuma's presidency. This research revisits the Mugabeism regime debacle under the Mbeki era analysis in a dedicated chapter.

Similarly an African democracy such as Tanzania is one of many African states that shows the manipulation of government agenda setting insertion in the public sphere to suit itself. The current tenure of Tanzanian president John Magafuli since 2015, popularly known as "The Bulldozer", saw the "Magafulification" era. This saw the introduction of laws that curbed digital media spaces, shutting down of newspapers, as well as an attempt at criminalising data collection for anyone without authorisation, (Dahir, 2019).

Tanzania and Zimbabwe's regimes are reminiscent of the draconian Apartheid system, which suppressed South Africa's media. These tensions between these three governments and the media widened the gap. It also demonstrated that the Habermasian public sphere is complex, as there is contestation from the government capturing and framing public opinion, while pushing to impose the public policy agenda and inserting its own agenda, and wanting to use the media as a tool. South African media having experienced the suppressive regime and transitioning to a liberated dispensation makes for a case to investigate the questions in this research.

2.8 SA MEDIA FROM APARTHEID TO DEMOCRACY

After many years of the racist repressive government under the white only National Party, where media's voice was suppressed and the ideal Habermasian public sphere was populated with propaganda, the country attained liberation in 1994. "Under apartheid, the media operated in a minefield of laws designed to make it almost impossible to publish any information without authorization from

the government, especially on political and national security issues."[18] Newspapers were banned, journalists criminalised and thrown for long terms in jail without trial. All of which was legitimised by the country's public policy agenda through no less than twenty intricately crafted acts, leaving no possibility of escaping the wrath of the brutal and unjust apartheid.

As indicated previously, the apartheid government used censorship to control what the media published, thus "appointed itself as the guardian of public morals and behaviour".[19] South Africa had also "been evolving into a militaristic state, with totalitarian overtones… an increasingly repressive and arbitrary government whose racial policies have made it a unique pariah of the contemporary world" (Hachten & Giffard, 1988: xvi)

Cheeseman argued that for African states that it was "their willingness to take to the streets that forced democratic openings in the late 1980s", (Cheeseman, 2019). South Africa's civil society had a vibrant "tradition of defiance and the rise of a strong civil rights movement challenged censorship ... The advent of democracy in 1994 heralded an era of constitutional rights and liberal legislation", (Merret, 2001).

South Africa's media is today protected by the Constitutional Law, and it "proudly claimed the title of the 'freest in Africa'… "Forty years later, it is important to acknowledge the advancements for media freedom since those dark times", (Reid, 2017)[20]. South Africa's constitution protects a Bill of Rights guaranteeing freedom of expression and of the media. "But just because things are not as bad as they were during apartheid does not mean that the media system is entirely free or free from threat. Nor does it indicate that the sector is operating as well as it should, according to democratic principles", (Reid, 2017).

The Mbeki government had been unhappy about how it was sometimes been treated by the media and how the president was caricatured. However, there has

[18] This information appeared in an article *Restrictions on the media,* published in https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/restrictions-media, not credited however provided insights necessary for the purpose of the study.

[19] amandladurban.org.za

[20] Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) was a result of the process which that was initiated by deputy president Thabo Mbeki as a way to centralise government communication in South Africa.

been no attempt to censor or punish the media or to pass laws to regulate the media or to prevent them from doing their job of making the government accountable for its actions. It was under his watch as deputy president under the Mandela government that the Comtask report was put together and ultimately lead to the formation of the GCIS, (De Villiers, 1996).

Under President Zuma, South Africa saw the emergence of the Protection of State Information Bill (POSIB) in 2013, which criminalises activity that is in the public interest and would adversely affect the manner in which journalists delivered their investigative reports, (Harris, 2013). The bill, commonly referred to as the Secrecy Bill, never gained traction as civil society activism surged and media practitioners interested in protecting public interest, public opinion and the public sphere protested against it. As a result, it was withdrawn twice from parliament, but that doesn't mean the government doesn't continue to attempt to subliminally influence public discourse.

Zuma inserted himself into the public sphere, encouraging and endorsing what were to be his presidency's mouth-pieces, the *New Age* newspaper and ANN7 news channel. These were run by the controversial Gupta family which had close associations with Zuma's family. This case study will see its full extent in the forthcoming chapter.

The theories summarised in this chapter, along with the Comtask report were used to demonstrate the contestation between government representatives and the media evident in Habermas's public sphere. This researcher argues that while both the media and government have accountability to similar publics, there is also a shared responsibility to disseminate information. It is clear that both need each other to that end, because as Cheeseman says, the relationship can make or break a democracy.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study deployed the qualitative methodology as the research question – which underpins this research is explorative. Mukherjee, Hoare and Hoare (2002) refer to the qualitative approach as an interpretative or ethnographic methodology which comes from the domain of the social sciences. They further note that the qualitative approach:

> Emphasise the analysis of subjective accounts that one generates by getting inside situations and involving oneself in the normal flow of activities. In order to gain explanation or understanding, the subject's meaning and interpretational systems are taken into account and the theory is grounded in such empirical observations (Mukherjee et al., 2002: 669).

As per Mukherjee, this type of methodology is multi-layered, and Elliott and Timulak (2005) unpacked it as "encompassing approaches such as empirical phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, protocol analysis and discourse analysis", (Miles, Gilbert, 2005: 147). The researcher believes that it is discourse analysis that will best serve the purpose of investigating what causes the tension between government and media. It will further use Habermas' theory as a foreground to understanding the contestation within the public sphere between government communication and print media agenda setting, with the idea of arriving at findings towards bridging the constantly and ever growing gap.

Given that the researcher is a communications practitioner, empirical observation was acquired over time satisfying the qualitative approach by academic research conventions, thus providing tools for a deeper understanding on the tensions between the government and the media in the public sphere.

The research approach is a discourse analysis, based on philosopher Michel Foucault's work, which provides for multi-textured analysis. In explaining the Foucauldian theory, Graham (2005) investigates the challenge posed by an attempt at trying to be prescriptive in defining the term discourse analysis as it "is a flexible term", (Graham, 2005: 2).This research gathered data points to

Foucault's non-prescriptiveness while venturing into conventional scholarly and academic presentation to respond to the question - How do media and government relations affect government communications, and how can bridges be built between them?

In addition to electing to utilise discourse analysis, the research uses case studies to contextualise and locate the research within the African paradigm and democracy, in particular South Africa. McGrath categorises eight types of research 'strategies' (McGrath, 1982). These are: formal theory, sample surveys, laboratory experiments, judgement tasks, computer simulations, experimental simulations, field studies, and field experiments. This is further advanced by further narrowing it down (Obson, 1993; Yin, 1994; Gill and Johnson, 1997) into three broad categories. In doing so, it is evident that case studies make for a suitable strategy applicable to this research. The three broad categories are:

- **Experiments:** measuring the effects of manipulating one variable on another.
- **Survey:** collection of information in standardised form from groups of people.
- **Case study:** development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case' or of a small number of related 'cases' (Mukharjee, 2002).

In this study's the latter category applies as it looks into three state presidents' tenures (as case studies) - Mandela (1994 - 1999), Mbeki (1999 – 2008) and Zuma (2009 – 2018) as their service during these periods show different approaches to media relations, all of these further detailed. The three selected presidents represent the face of government over the three eras. Discourse analysis was the method used to show what was meant by these relationships, and the ability of government to communicate with its citizens.

According to the Linguistic Society of America, discourse analysis is concerned more with the understanding of how chunks of words and language flow together, compared to other more modern linguistic studies which are concerned with, for example, phonetics and semantics. It is a type of approach used to analyse written, vocal or other languages. One can further note:

> Discourse analysis is sometimes defined as the analysis of language 'beyond the sentence'. This contrasts with types of analysis more typical of

> modern linguistics, which are chiefly concerned with the study of grammar: The study of smaller bits of language, such as sounds (phonetics and phonology), parts of words (morphology), meaning (semantics), and the order of words, (Linguistic Society of America

Discourse analysis is further defined as follows:

> Discourse analysis is not only about method; it is also a perspective on the nature of language and its relationship to the central issues of the social sciences. More specifically, we see discourse analysis as a related collection of approaches to discourse, approaches that entail not only practices of data collection and analysis, but also a set of Meta theoretical and theoretical assumptions and a body of research claims and studies, (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

Discourse analysis was used in this thesis because it facilitated using the words of the three former presidents to understand the approach of their administrations to media relationships. The discourse was also analysed through the eyes of editors and communicators in the different eras.

To adequately dissect the case studies and gain a specific understanding of how the state behaves regarding its politicians, communication professionals, the media and its editors, owners and journalists, several qualitative research instruments were deployed. In addition, a triangulation method - as per Diagram 1 in Chapter 1 - was used in deploying these research instruments. This variety of methods made for a rich blend of tools for understanding the problem. As explained above, applying multiple methods cast a wider net over the history of the complex relationship between media and government.

The reason for the use of these multiple methods was to ensure cross-checking the veracity of some of the claims and counter-claims made. Given that some of the participants had been colleagues in the media space and transitioned to become government communicators, these multiple methods were useful in managing the risk of distortion based on fear of offending other parties.

3.1 RATIONALE

Using the qualitative methodology is most suitable to the desired outcome of this research, which is concerned with the gap and the tension between government communicators and the media and engaged "with a deeper understanding of what is being investigated" (Welman et al., 2005: 8). Welman et al. (2005) make a point that in terms of qualitative research, it "involves small samples of people, studied by means of in-depth methods" (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Sutrisna, 2009: 12).

Additionally, "as far as qualitative data is concerned, validity is considered as more important because the objective of the study must be representative of what the researcher is investigating", (Welman et al., 2005: 9). Table 1 differentiates between qualitative and quantitative research methods, which justifies the choice of qualitative as most data collection was based on dialogues and interviews.

TABLE 1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Aim	Exploration of participants' experiences and life world, Understanding, generation of theory from data	Search for causal explanations Testing hypothesis, prediction, control
Approach	Broad focus Process oriented Context-bound, mostly natural setting Getting close to the data	Narrow focus Product oriented Context free, often in artificial or laboratory setting
Sample	Participants, informants Sampling units such as place, time and concepts Purposive and theoretical sampling Flexible sampling that develops during research	Respondents, participants the term `subjects' is now discouraged in the social sciences) Randomised sampling Sample frame fixed before research starts
Data collection	In-depth non-standardised interviews Participant observation/fieldwork Documents, photographs, videos	Questionnaire, standardised interviews Tightly structured observation Documents Randomised controlled trials

Analysis	Thematic, constant comparative analysis Grounded theory, ethnographic analysis etc.	Statistical analysis
Outcome	A story, an ethnography, a theory	Measurable results
Relationships	Direct involvement of researcher Research relationship close	Limited involvement of researcher Research relationship distant
Rigour	Trustworthiness, authenticity Typicality and transferability	Internal/external validity, reliability Generalisability

Source: Flick (2002)

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with journalists and editors and dialogues which were inclusive of panellists ranging from government communicators, editors, journalists and analysts and thought leaders in government and media.

3.2.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with journalists and media practitioners who occupied decision-making positions that afforded them agenda setting powers. In this regard, high calibre editors participated. A selection of government representatives in the form of communicators were interviewed. Since the researcher is a communications practitioner actively involved in the daily discourse, this gave access to roundtable conversations, as well as dialogues with key players.

Since neither the government nor the state are homogenous bodies, it was important to assess the extent of the findings from the eyes of the key role-players, therefore, their assertions about the relationship between the media and the state were crucial.

This research used the following data collection instruments:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with communicators, analysts and media practitioners. This method worked best because people in this profession tend to digress a lot in conversations, and it was important to allow that

kind of interaction in order to gather more information than strictly structured questions would elicit.

- **Dialogues** through a platform called 'Frank Dialogues'. Frank Dialogues took the form of three-a-side debates, where editors were pitted against communicators to debate a set of questions about media state relations.
- **Document** reviews offered greater breadth and depth for analysis with information from diverse sources including government, media, communications practitioners and recipients of government services.

3.2.1.1 Semi-Structured interviews with former CEOs/Deputy CEOs of the Government Communication and Information Systems

Interviewees were selected based on the central role these officials played in shaping the new system of government communications at the dawn of the democratic dispensation and beyond. [See Annexure 1: Semi-structured Questions]

A brief profile of each of the selected GCIS officials is given below:

TABLE 2: Semi-Structured Interviews with Former CEOs/Deputy COEs of the Government Communication and Information Systems

#	INTERVIEWEE	RATIONALE
1	**NAME: Baby Tyawa** **DESIGNATION:** Former Deputy CEO of GCIS **ERA:** Mandela and Mbeki	Ms Tyawa was the deputy director general of the GCIS and deputised the first CEO of the GCIS Mr Joel Netshitenzhe. Ms Tyawa, who is currently the secretary of Parliament, worked under all three administrations under review and her insights were highly insightful in regards to understanding the difference in approach of the three presidents and how they helped or hindered the relationship between government and the media. Over and above her role as DDG straddling these three presidential eras, Ms Tyawa was also recently a member of the national communications task team tasked with evaluating the work of government communications since the establishment of GCIS. Her insights in the assessment of the implementation of the COMTASK recommendations were invaluable as they were a first-hand account of the recommendations aimed at improving

		government.
2	**NAME: Themba Maseko** **DESIGNATION:** Former CEO of GCIS **ERA:** Mbeki	Maseko was the CEO of GCIS under Thabo Mbeki, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma terms of office. His exposure to government communications at the helm of GCIS is of huge significance in understanding the challenges that government faced under three presidents. He was also responsible for the 10 year review of the GCIS work since its establishment. His insights have given the work a depth necessary for a good understanding of what shaped the relationship between government and the media. (Maseko was fired from GCIS in the wake of his refusal to co-operate with the Guptas at the instance of president Zuma).
#	**INTERVIEWEE**	**RATIONALE**
3	**Mzwanele "Jimmy" Manyi:** **DESIGNATION:** Former CEO of GCIS **ERA:** Zuma	Manyi was appointed CEO under the Zuma administration and was seen as an enforcer of a hostile relationship between government and the media. Although his tenure was short it is significant in understanding how the Zuma administration conducted its relationship with the media. Manyi was no stranger to controversy through his career and is known to speak his mind as he did also in the interview he granted me for this research. The examination of how Zuma related with the media would not be complete without his output.

3.2.1.2 Semi-Structured interviews with various government spokespersons

Seven spokespersons of government across the three Presidential eras in review were chosen. Those selected had at least served under two administrations and held more than one position in government communications. This helped in a comparative discourse in relation to the topic of how the relationship between government and the media evolved from administration to the next. [See Annexure 1: Semi-structured Questions]

A brief profile of each of the selected spokespersons is given below:

TABLE 3: Semi - structured interviews with government spokespersons

#	INTERVIEWEE	RATIONALE
1	**Sipho Ngwema** **Former Spokesperson:** National Prosecution authority - Mbeki era	Ngwema was a key spokesperson of the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) under the Mbeki administration and after a short stint in the private sector re-joined the public sector as a spokesperson for the Competition Commission. He has enormous experience in crisis communications given the high profile work he had to communicate in crucial agencies of government.
2	**Makhosini Nkosi (now Mgitywa)** **Former Spokesperson:** Gauteng Premier - Mbeki era and NPS - Zuma era	Makhosini is a trained journalist who joined the public service as the spokesperson of the then Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshega under the Mbeki administration. He succeeded Ngwema as the spokesperson of the NPA under the Zuma administration. He has held short stints as spokesperson of water affairs under both the Zuma and Ramaphosa administrations. He also worked as a crisis communications expert in both public and private sectors.
3	**Mayihlome Tshwete** **Former Spokesperson:** Home Affairs and Treasury - Zuma era	Tshwete is a young "new generation" communicator who held a position under the Mbeki and Zuma administrations as a spokesperson of the ministries of Home Affairs and Treasury. He has since left the public sector and works as an independent consultant. He participated in one of the Frank Dialogues exploring the topic of this research.
4	**Cornelius Monama** **Former spokesperson:** Provincial Government of the North West - Mbeki era And Reserve Bank; Ministry of Small Business - Zuma era	Monama brings to the research a wealth of communications experience rooted in his long stint as a spokesperson of the provincial government of the Northwest under the Mbeki administration. He also served as a spokesperson of the Reserve bank and the Ministry of Small Business in the Zuma administration.
5	**Thabo Masebe** **Spokesperson:** Gauteng Provincial Government,	Masebe is the spokesperson of the Gauteng Provincial Government, a position he has held under the Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma administrations. He has invaluable experience in the implementation of the Comtask recommendations and also served as spokesperson of the Deputy President Kgalema

		Motlanthe. He added huge value in the Frank Dialogues about the state of government communications. Masebe was also chosen for his role in the committee tasked by the GCIS to conduct a 10 year review of the work of GCIS.
6	**Mava Scott** **Former Head of Communications:** Water affairs - Mbeki and Zuma eras	Scott gained his experience in government communications for over 20 years, starting his career as a communicator for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the year 2000 and then working as head of communication for the Department of Water Affairs under the Mbeki and Zuma administrations. He also worked as a communicator for the Competition Commission, the Ministries of Communications, Home Affairs, DPSA and State Security. This vast experience being under different ministries is why he was chosen for this study.
7	**Luzuko Koti** **Director of Communication:** Nelson Mandela Foundation	Koti worked for the presidency of Thabo Mbeki and was responsible for the organisation of "Izimbizo". The study sought to understand this form of unmediated communications and its impact on the relationship between government and the media. Koti, who was also a broadcaster by profession, is now director of communications for the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

3.2.1. 3 Interviews with analysts and thought leaders in government communications and media

TABLE 4: Analysts and thought leaders in government communications and media

#	INTERVIEWEE	RATIONALE
1	**Mathatha Tsedu** **Editor:** *Netwerk 24* *Former SANEF Executive Director*	Tsedu is a respected figure in the media in Africa having held positions in the All Africa Editors Forum as well as the SA National Editors Forum. He was selected for this study primarily for his participation in the COMTASK report a cornerstone of the government communications system. He has interacted in various capacities with all three presidents under review.
2	**Ryland Fisher** **Former editor:** *Cape Times*	Fisher is a communication specialist and has also been editor of the *Cape Times* and *New Age*. He was chosen for this because he had the privilege

	and New Age	of interviewing all the heads of state but also served on the board of Brand South Africa - a body tasked with the international marketing of South Africa. A task that relies heavily on a good relationship between the government and the media. His insights were invaluable both on a one on one basis and in one of the dialogues he participated in as part of this study.
3	**Janine Hills** **Founder:** *Vuma reputation management and a professional in communications business*	Hills is the founder of Vuma reputation management and a professional in a communications business. She was chosen for this study as a figure that often has to build bridges between media practitioners and communicators. She also served on the board of trustees of Brand SA. Her insights were particularly useful in the Frank Dialogues between media and communicators covered to address the question of how to bridge the gap between them. Her input was invaluable for this study giving an impactful view of the relationship straddling the two decades of her own career in public affairs.

3.2.1.4 Semi - Structured interviews with editors and political editors chosen from South African daily and weekly newspapers

A deliberate choice of editors was made to focus on the leadership of, in particular, print media which narrowed it down to agenda setters. Most of the editors interviewed for this study started their careers in the media under the Mandela administration and continue to practice. In selecting the editors, attention was also paid to their track record as most moved around from one publication to another in the period under review. In line with the study, they tended to set the agenda and frame news in a manner that influenced the tone in coverage.

While her study was on South Africa's #FeesMustFall student movement and investigates how an online publication – The Daily Vox - rattled the agenda setting position of conventional print publications and reset it during the 2015 student revolution, Doreen Zimbizi's work can be summoned to aid in an understanding of the theory and its applicability to this research. Zimbizi cites Walter Lippmann's 1922 iconic book *Public Opinion,* as the origins of agenda setting and further pointing to the argument that the media constructs the world's

view (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009: 147; McCombs, 1997; Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009).

She further studied how the theory of agenda setting has evolved several decades after Lippmann's book was published. Bernard Cohen (1963), who built upon Lippmann's notion, argued that, "The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about" (Cohen in Zimbizi, 2017: 15). This explains the tension between government communicators and the media as both are contesting the space - one as an agenda setter (media) and the other as a propagator (government).

Table 5 lists the editors which participated in the research and whose interviews demonstrate the contestation in the public sphere.

TABLE 5: Political editors chosen from South African daily and weekly newspapers

#	INTERVIEWEE	RATIONALE
1	**Mondli Makhanya** **Editor:** *City Press*	Makhaya was a journalist under all three presidents and worked as editor of the *Mail and Guardian*; the *Sunday Times,* as well as the *City Press* where he is still currently the editor at the time of this research. Makhaya was chosen for his fearless critique of the presidency across the publications that he had the opportunity to lead.
2	**Ferial Haffajee** **Former editor-at-large:** *Huffington Post*	Haffajee is also a media professional who was editor of the respected investigative publication, the *Mail & Guardian*. She also edited the Huffington Post SA and now writes for Daily Maverick. She was chosen for her fearless voice through investigative journalism including her editorship of the *City Press* newspaper.
3	**Songezo Zibi** **Former editor:** *Business Day*	Zibi, an author of the book "Raising the bar", has a career that spans corporate communications. He worked for organisations such as GLENCO and VWSA as a communications professional before he ascended to the helm of *Business Day* as editor. He was chosen to help us understand the perspective from both sides of the spectrum.

4	**Adriaan Basson** **Editor:** *Media24*	Basson is also author of several books that look into South Africa's political economy. His most powerful work was on Zuma's corruption. He worked in the Afrikaans press such as *Rapport*, a weekend paper of significance, as well as *Beeld* and now currently Media24 where he is editor. He was chosen for this study to expand analysis into the Afrikaans press as well.
5	**Brett Horner** **Editor:** *Netwerk 24*	The inclusion of Horner helped the study to expand geographically to examine whether the assumptions and conclusions made can find resonance in a province such as the Eastern Cape where he was deputy editor of the *Daily Dispatch* the subsequently *PE Herald* across the Mbeki and Zuma administrations.
6	**Jovial Rantao** **Former editor:** *Sunday Independent*	Rantao's profile is an interesting one, also having practiced his craft across all three presidential terms. He was also chosen to give more perspective in the Mbeki presidency as a biographer of Mbeki. Rantao's profile as editor of the *Sunday Independent*, deputy editor of *The Star* and head of All Africa Editors forum meant he understood the relationship between government and the media. Something he would have to love since his days as a parliamentary correspondent during the Mandela Administration.
7	**Tim Cohen** **Editor:** *Business Day*	How does the business press relate with government given their hunger for statistics and economics data? Cohen as editor of *Business Day* was suited to help answer this question. He was chosen to partake in the Frank Dialogues to explore solutions on how to bridge the gap.

3.3 DIALOGUES

3.3.1 FRANK DIALOGUES

Dialogues were convened between government communicators and editors to discuss media-government relations and assess the impact of government communicators over the past 20 years. These were conducted in the form of conversations entitled "Media state relations – quo vadis?" The outcomes from these debates were considered in the study research. Data from these debates will be produced to provide insightful assessments.

In 2012 the researcher launched a media and communication colloquium under his company Oresego Holdings. The colloquium brought together media and communications practitioners to debate issues of mutual concern. The colloquium was later renamed Frank Dialogues and became a platform for debate in the industry. It is the successful and fruitful exchange that was the reason for using such a platform as opposed to traditional focus groups. In essence, these were a version of focus groups, structured to include communicators and journalists/editors.

Three such dialogues were conducted for the purpose of this study.

3.3.1.1 Frank Dialogues 1

The first dialogue was held on the 19th October 2017 as part of the researcher's radio programme on Power 987 named Power Perspective. This dialogue took place in the context of Black Wednesday[21] commemorations, and was specifically staged and broadcast as part of this study. The participants were made aware they will be quoted in the research report to fulfil the requirements of the researcher's doctoral studies.

The participants were largely government communicators and media as follows:

TABLE 6: Frank Dialogues participants session 1

#	PARTICIPANT	RATIONALE
1	**Thabo Masebe** **Head of communications:** *Provincial government in Gauteng*	Head of communications for the provincial government in Gauteng. Masebe was chosen for his extensive experience in government communications having operated at provincial and national governments across all three presidential eras under review.
2	**Ryland Fisher** **Former editor:** *Cape Times*	Fisher's profile is an interesting one also having been former editor of *Cape Times* and *New Age*. Fisher was a professional communications

[21]There were 83 recommendations from the Comtask report on how ideal government communications would function. For purposes of this study, not all the recommendations were analysed, but most of them were assessed and, where possible, the analysis was clustered according to closely related themes. Later in this chapter, a tabulated assessment of these recommendations is presented as a summary, from both desktop research and interviews conducted with various role players, to assess the extent to which some of these recommendations were implemented over the past two decades.

	and New Age	consultant in his own right, also a board member of Brand SA. His extensive experience in journalism across all eras was invaluable in this research.
3	**Mahlatse Gallens** **Former head:** *SA National Editors forum*	Gallens was the head of the SA National Editors forum and joined the dialogue to shape perspective from the view of the editors.
4	**Lumka Oliphant** **Former spokesperson:** *Ministry of Social Development*	Oliphant was a spokesperson of the Ministry of Social Development. She had recently written a piece critical of the news media. As a former journalist now turned spokesperson, she was well placed to comment on both the state of the newsroom and the state of government communication.

3.3.1.2 Frank Dialogues 2

An extensive on-air interview on Power987 radio programme held on the 20 October 2017 was held with the acting director general of the GCIS Donald Liphoko, as well as the Press Ombudsman Joe Thloloe. This dialogue aimed to understand both sides of the relationship under review. The two participants are reputable representatives of both organisations and their input was highly invaluable in understanding the relationship between the government and the media.

3.3.1.3 Frank dialogues 3

A special dialogue to specifically deal with how to bridge the gap (the topic of this thesis) was convened and included the following participants:

TABLE 7: Frank Dialogues participants session 3

#	INTERVIEWEE	RATIONALE
1	**Makhosini Nkosi Mgitywa** **Former Spokesperson:** *Gauteng Premier - Mbeki era* *and* *NPS - Zuma era*	A reasoned media professional who held various positions in government (see Table 3 above)

2	**Mayihlome Tshwete** **Former Spokesperson:** *Home Affairs and Treasury - Zuma era*	Tshwete was spokesperson of the Treasury and was chosen as a participant on the dialogue because of his diverse skills and career in Home Affairs, Treasury and other government agencies. (See Table 3 above)
3	**Sipho Ngwema** **Former Spokesperson:** *National Prosecution authority - Mbeki era*	Ngwema was a spokesperson of the Scorpions as well as the Completion Commission. He shed light on how independent public sector bodies shaped the relationship with the media.
4	**Tim Cohen** **Editor:** *Business Day*	The editor of *Business Day* gave a perspective on how business media relates with government communicators.
5	**Denzil Taylor** **Editor:** *Power 987*	Taylor had numerous stints in government communications before joining the media fraternity and his insights were useful in this debate.
6	**Janine Hills** **Founder and CEO:** *Vuma Reputation Management*	Hills is a consultant for both the government and private sector and her insights having advised government at various levels was useful for this dialogue. She consulted for the Presidency and relevant agencies such as Brand SA

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher successfully applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the University of the Witwatersrand that approved the research as submitted as a proposal that outlined the purpose and the methodology to be followed. All the participants were formally informed about the research and its purpose, and the fact that their contributions will be made public in the research. A letter was written to all the participants to formally seek their consensus. The ethics certificate is attached as Annexure 2 to this thesis.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Findings from interviews of various players- editors as agenda setters and government spokespersons as propagators of the administration's message show the root of the tension in the relationship between the media and the government. In addition, the Frank Dialogues platforms were non-prescriptive but

they too showed the contestation between the media and government communicators creating a push-pull effect in the public sphere. This helped to distil the real opinions and the final reality of media - relations, and how they have affected the ability of the government to communicate its message over the past twenty-three years.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS IN A DEMOCRACY:

A FOCUS ON THE ON COMTASK REPORT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 of the thesis, the researcher documented tools utilised to arrive at results that propel the discourse regarding government communications and media relations during South African's presidential tenures of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma between 1994 and 2017. Since this research is based on a qualitative methodology, the researcher employed discourse analysis, which includes analysis of semi-structured questions as well as the documents, which were reviewed and offered greater breadth and depth for analysis with information from diverse sources. The Comtask report of 1996 was also pivotal to this research as it shows how the independent South African government moves away from the apartheid dictatorship and media censorship that was characterised by the clampdown on media prior to democracy.

The research is anchored in investigating the government during the Mandela era. At the time, Mbeki, who was serving as a deputy president and under whose supervision the communication task team, also known as Comtask, was commissioned to look at how government communications were to be re-imagined. The report that came out of this process, which would recommend the formation of the GCIS[22], is the centre of this chapter as the research explores the mandate of the task team, which was intended to shape government communications.

Analysis of the Comtask report included reviewing the government communication policy and structures at national, provincial and local levels; the assessment of relationships between government communications function

[22]As part of a ten-year review of its work, the GCIS gathered a group of experts – for example, Mathatha Tsedu and Tshilidzi Ratshitanga, to assess its work. The researcher served as part of this ten-year review panel and was also requested to workshop the GCIS on its outcomes and how they could take these recommendations forward in 2007. Given the imminent change of guard in government ahead of President Mbeki's resignation, very few of these recommendations were implemented.

across all spheres of government and the assessment of financial and personal resources dedicated to the communication function. In addition, the task team was mandated to examine the relationships with government communications structures and non-government communications service providers. Finally the task team were to examine issues of training and capacity building as well as matters of ownership and control and clarify how all of these affects government communications. (De Villiers, 1996)

"The task team was to define existing information delivery mechanisms and examine international communication functions and use the lessons learnt from that and male necessary recommendations on new approach to government communications" (De Villiers, 1996: 10).

In fulfilling this mandate, the task team produced a comprehensive report that analysed the problems and the proposed solutions to deal with centralising government communications.

It is important to note that the recommendations of the task team only became applicable long after the end of Mandela's administration. The purpose of this was to map out government communications in relation to the media, which makes it crucial to unpack key recommendations[23] and their practical implementation during these key epochs. Whether the referred report's desired results were achieved by the ten-year review by the GCIS[24] is examined to gain a good sense of how the government fared in implementing the Comtask recommendations. The report gives an indication of the extent to which elements of the ideal public sphere as defined by Habermas have been achieved. It also tests assumptions made by Habermas as critiqued by other scholars as it factors in parts of the data analysis results on both ends of the government and media.

This chapter will, therefore, help in answering the question: Is government communication effective in communicating and empowering citizens with

[23]The South African Communication Service was established as a propaganda arm of the apartheid government.

[24]A budget vote is a presentation by the executive member responsible for a department to the legislature for assessment of work done as well as a request for further funding. This is a most accurate reflection of whether certain policies were adequately implemented. However, it must be understood as a subjective account through the eyes of the executive. If possible, it should be tested against responses from other members of parliament if a balanced perspective is sought.

information that impacts on their lives? Borrowing from Lippmann's body of work will aid the researcher to establish how government communication attempt to shape the 'public opinion', (Lippmann, 1922, 1961).

In this regard, the research found that the then Minister in the Presidency during the Mbeki's presidency, Essop Pahad, articulated the purpose and reason for the establishment of the GCIS and presented the government's view on what the body was to achieve. In his GCIS budget vote speech in the national assembly in 2003, Pahad said:

> Its task was the antithesis of what had been known as information in the apartheid era. It was proactive instead of defensive, economical instead of spendthrift, soundly accountable instead of corrupt, transparent instead of secretive. It was a totally new era in information, in line with the democracy accepted by the nation in 1994, building on the first moves out of the information morass immediately following our new order, (Pahad, 2003).

Thus, giving reason and purpose for the existence of the government information system, which was meant to be a complete departure from its apartheid counterpart – the South African Communication Service (SACS)[25]. The difference was that while the SACS was meant to prop up an illegitimate regime whose purpose was to oppress the majority of the population including the media, the GCIS was meant to empower people with the free flow of information in their newfound freedom. In the budget vote referred to above, Pahad was beginning to take stock of whether these 'lofty ideals' were beginning to take shape 10 years into the establishment of GCIS.

4.2 REVIEWING KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In Table 10 annexed at the end of this chapter, the researcher selected some of the recommendations that serve the purpose of this research and are outlined in considerable detail. These recommendations are accompanied by commentary

[25]The National Communications Task Team was tasked by the Minister of Communications in 2014 to advise her how to streamline government communications. The NCTT had 12 sub-committees; one of these sub-committees was tasked to look into the question of development communication. This is the kind of communication in line with the development state that South African considers itself to be.

on the levels of success drawn from various budget votes of the GCIS,[26] but most notably the five- and ten-year review budget votes presented by the then Minister in the Presidency, Essop Pahad. Interviews with key players in the government communications space, notably the CEOs of GCIS at various times were also conducted. This included with Themba Maseko and Mzwanele 'Jimmy' Manyi in particular.

The researcher also sought the views of communications specialists and former government communicators such as Mava Scott, Cornelius Monama and Sipho Ngwema. Themba Sepotokele opinion piece published in the *Mail & Guardian* was useful in providing a balance in the analysis of Comtask. Finally, reference was made to various media statements by the GCIS announcing implementation of some of the recommendations of Comtask. The interviewees and participants in the Frank Dialogues contributions are situated in Chapter 8, to demonstrate reasons the tensions between government and media exists, and ways in which such a gap can potentially be lessened.

4.2.1 Overview of Comtask recommendations

Several selected recommendations under broad themes give a sense of the implementation of the Comtask report, as shown in Table 10.

4.2.1.1 Analysis

The main question is whether these recommendations encourage a more elitist public sphere approach or a legitimate public sphere that lends itself to more inclusive public participation. It is important to point out that the report's recommendations attempt to regulate the relationship between the elite, political government communications professionals, described as policy agenda setters, (Rogers & Dearing in Aunur et al., 2015) and the media, the latter made up of journalists and editors, known as agenda builders, (Rogers & Dearing in Aunur et al., 2015). This explains the tension and the gap this research is attempting to find a solution to, as it is evident that the understanding seems to be on polar ends of the public sphere spectrum. Thus, prompting the researcher to examine the positives and negatives of the Comtask recommendations.

[26]The 10-year review of the GCIS cluster communications was highlighted as ineffective, leaving government communications vulnerable.

4.2.1.2 Positives

The main recommendation to be put forward by Comtask was the establishment of a new government communications system. This was fully implemented to the point where the apartheid era SACS was replaced by the GCIS in 1996; fundamentally changing the way the government set itself up to communicate with citizens. This was crucial to achieve, as the GCIS would champion all associated recommendations which were in line with the goal of establishing an ideal public sphere. Habermas asserts that there should be a quality of participation by the public in the public sphere, (Habermas, 2006 in Mustapha, 2008: 1). However, he leaves the action to participants, thus, neglecting to highlight the nature of instruments available to them to aid participation.

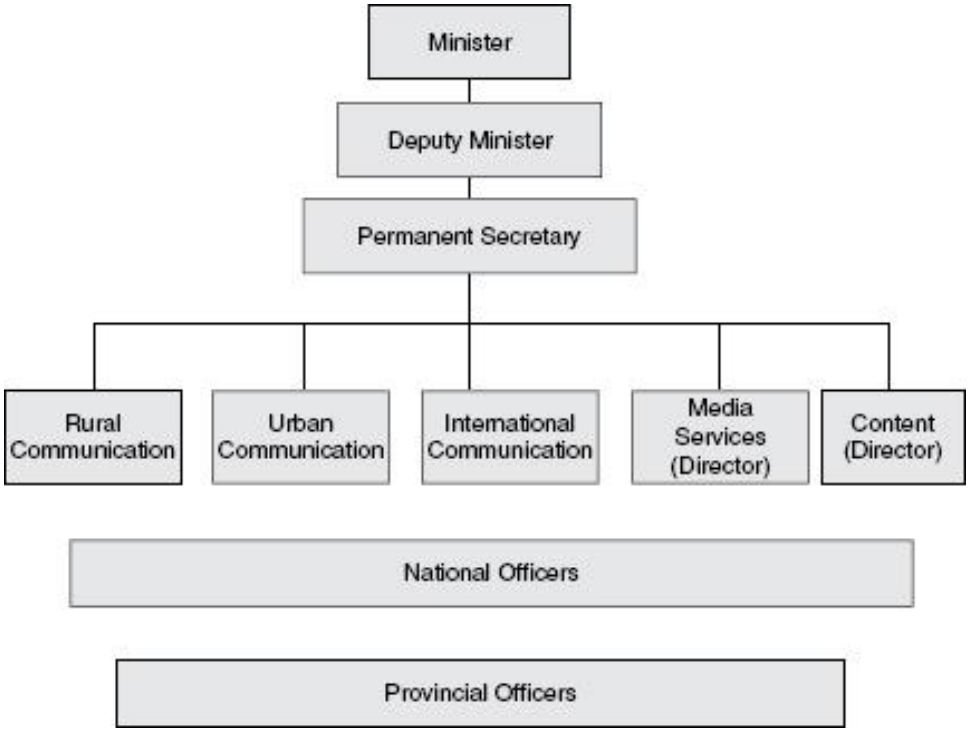
Another recommendation was the establishment of a cabinet committee to oversee the function and evolution of communications in the government. In the Zuma administration, a version of this has also been put in place as the cabinet committee on publicity, chaired by the President.

Also worth highlighting was another key recommendation dealing with the positioning of government communications in relation to decision-making structures. This recommendation, although adopted by the cabinet, has not been implemented consistently across government departments. The invitation of the CEO of the GICS to sit in cabinet makes for efficient and seamless communication and needs to be cascaded to all levels of government to ensure that communicators can contribute towards the shaping of decisions and have adequate space to consider the communications implications of these decisions.

While the establishment of GCIS was positive in driving the Comtask report recommendations, it is also important to not get lost in the government side of agenda setting. Schattenschneider, Cobb and Elder point out that public policy has a tendency of being “biased … thus giving policymakers the most important sources of political power”, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007: 102). This is a familiar challenge, particularly in African democracies such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania, where Mugabeism and Magafulification respectively had enablers in government, (Dahir, 2019).

Below are the hierarchies of government communications structures of Zimbabwe and South Africa as presented in Maqeda and Makombe (2013), which is the antithesis of the Habermasian public sphere's westernised approach. The African approach not only serves the elite but leaves ample room for interpretation, and can therefore be open to government manipulation, amplifying policy agendas (lawmakers) over public agendas (civil society) and media agendas (Furman & Šerikova, 2007). Nymanjoh and Manyozo (2012) caution of liberation governments playing into the trappings of western theoretical constructs within the African public sphere context.

TABLE 8: Structure of government communication in Zimbabwe



Source: Maqeda and Makombe (2013)

TABLE 9: South Africa government communication structure.

Chief Executive Officer		
Deputy CEO Communication & Content Development	**Deputy CEO Corporate Services**	**Deputy CEO Government & Stakeholder Engagement**
2010 Government Communication Project Management This was a special position created specifically to manage government communication	**Finance, Supply Chain & Auxiliary Services** Chief Financial Officer	**Cluster Supervision: Human Development; Social Protection & Community Development; Governance &**

around the 2010 World Cup Chief Director		**Administration Clusters** Chief Director
Communication Service Agency Chief Director	**Human Resources Chief** Chief Director	**Media Engagement** Chief Director
Content & Writing Chief Director	**Information Management & Technology** Chief Information Officer	**Provincial & Local Liaison** Chief Director
	Internal Audit Chief Audit Executive	
Policy Research Chief Director	**Property & Facilities Management** Chief Director	

Source: Maqeda and Makombe (2013)

4.2.1.3 Negatives:

One of the crucial recommendations of the Comtask report envisaged a GCIS that would improve efficient interaction between government structures and civil society. While this was a good recommendation, it did not come to pass in the manner envisaged by the task team. The GCIS was treated more like a department rather than a system. This meant that it remained slightly disconnected from the line departments in exercising authority over the communications function. The poor implementation of this recommendation meant that the appointment of communicators, for example, did not seek involvement from the GCIS, but was left as a prerogative of the responsible line department. This resulted in poor quality appointments and poor alignment between departmental strategies and the centrally determined communications strategy.

Furthermore, the development communication subcommittee of the National Communications Task Team (NCTT) established by the former Minister of Communications under the Zuma administration, Faith Muthambi (2014 – 2017),

undertook an assessment of the work of this task team at the 22-year mark.[27] It was noted that an emphasis on development communication was missing. The report made the following observation:

> It is clear from the analysis of the Comtask recommendations that much still needs to be done to bring government communication to the required level to match the developmental state that South Africa as a country has set itself. There is poor coordination[28] of messages and poor resourcing,[29] if the financial resources are anything to go by. The absence of a permanent head since 2012 demonstrates, without doubt, that the GCIS is not top priority for the government. There is no comparable neglect in other departments in the period under review, even when you compare the balance of the twenty-four years under review within the GCIS itself, (NCTT Report, 2013: 11).

Mandy de Waal, a journalist writing in the *Daily Maverick*, argues that even though Comtask advocated for transparent, open and free communication, the introduction of the Protection of State Information Bill (Secrecy Bill) would have allowed the government to stray from its original objective. It also would have reversed the Promotion of Information Act No.2 of 2000 (PAIA), through which any information could legitimately be requested by citizens. In her article, De Waal argues that:

> In principle, what Comtask did was to reject the view of the government as a strong controller of media, or an owner of media in its own right. The idea was to establish a Ministry of Communications rather than a Ministry of Information[30], because the old information ministry was really all about one-way communication from government to the people, where the state told people what to think (De Waal, 2013).

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[27] The GCIS budget for the entire period is only 70% of the total budget of the department, from the expected 10% of serious marketing quota often applied in the private sector.

[28] Ministry of Information existed during the apartheid National Party government rule.

[29] Andries Tatane (22 February 1978 – 13 April 2011) was a 33-year-old South African citizen who was shot and killed by police officers during a service delivery protest in Ficksburg. Seven police officers accused of his murder and assault were acquitted in the Ficksburg Regional Court in March 2013 and the media covered the shooting live. Source: wikipedia.org

[30] polity.org

A good example of De Waal's point is a different article she wrote in 2013 capturing how democracies can apply autocratic tendencies and find themselves in the propaganda trap. Even though the GCIS was meant to root-out state propaganda such as the SACS used by apartheid government, the remnants of such practices can be found in the Free State, one of the nine provinces in South Africa. It was here where its premier's office sought to use the media to present a false picture of government progress while hiding major corruption. Dubbed Operation Hlasela, a slew of PR activities were conducted at the insistence of the premier's office, such as millions of Rands spent on newspaper advertorials, including fully-fledged inserts. De Waal (2013) states how this disturbing trend unfolded:

> The Free State, under the premiership of Magashule, has been beset with service delivery protests which have intensified since 2004, and which led to the death of Andries Tatane.[31]
>
> Magashule has proved to be quite controversial, and in many places highly unpopular, so I think it's not coincidental that state spending in that province is increasing on media coverage of the premier and the provincial government; and that there's also what seems to be an increasing attempt to launch a government media in that region seems to be quite telling that the State is getting more involved in the media in a variety of ways, but this seems to be quite a seasonal thing and generally happens ahead of an ANC elective conference or ahead of the national elections. It seems to be designed to shore up support for a party that is gradually losing support at the polls (De Waal, 2013).

The same province spent over R40 million of taxpayers money on building a website that would have cost a developer $40 in a WordPress template to build, in an attempt to insert itself in the public sphere as an agenda setter to influence people "what to think about", (Cohen in Zimbizi, 2017: 15).

[31] The traditional way of Southern African meetings, especially a gathering called by a traditional leader. However, the ANC uses these as a type of consultation with the community, which has the potential to help with gathering community concerns before they turn into a crisis, thus situating Habermas' public sphere within the African paradigm.

Mills et al. (2019) argues that “a democracy demands that local leadership has a plan for the country beyond simply winning the popular vote”, Mills et al., 2019)[32]. Yet, with the Free State, according to De Waal’s articles, there is evidence that should politicians have delivered the services for which they were elected, social activist Tatane would not have in the streets protesting and there could have been no need for government to seek to insert itself into the public sphere in a bid to shape public opinion.

It is, thus, ironic that the post-apartheid ANC government seeks to supress a spirit of activism in South Africans that took to the streets to hand it the power to govern in the new dispensation. In Cheeseman’s words it was “their willingness to take to the streets that forced democratic openings in the late 1980s”, (Cheeseman, 2019).

4.3 THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND AFRICA

As demonstrated under section 4.2, the public sphere as defined by Habermas (1962) should not be 'cut and paste' into the African context. Suleiman (2017) argues that the Habermasian theory must be made more relevant to African historical and contemporary democratic realities. However, African decolonisation theorists such as Cheeseman (2019), Manyozo (2012), Oyugu et al. (1988), and Nwagbara (2010) advocate for a redefinition as per the African paradigm and reality.

In this regard, one of the recommendations of Comtask focuses on outreach to communities in a manner that resembles, in part, how traditional leaders used to convene community meetings. For instance, the South African government uses the concept of *Izimbizo*[33]*,* which is a classical way that places the public sphere theory in the African context. This is the direct opposite of the Habermasian ideal of exclusive coffee shops and salons being places of public discourse. The *Izimbizo* sees thousands of people gathered at one time to engage with their

32 Homogeneous Models and Heterogeneous Voters John Bartle Volume: 53 issue: 4, page(s): 653-675 Issue published: December 1, 2005

[33] *The relevance of the public sphere*; Facebook post by Anne-Katrine Arnold on the UN Communications Programme. Accessed 16 September 2017.

leaders. The effectiveness of which is questioned by one of the interviewees, a former local government and public broadcaster Luzuko Koti (2017).

The Habermasian assumption of consensus in the public sphere requires thorough testing in the South African context, especially the period after the 1994 elections when new players entered the political arena. With multi-party political players such as the United Democratic Movement (UDM), Congress of the People (COPE) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), as well as a rapidly transforming Democratic Alliance (DA), clawing back what initially was seen as a homogenous black vote in the South African body politic.[34]

This is crucial to understanding the role of government communications in a democracy, as the diversity of voices must be taken into account when broadening public participation. The appetite of both the Mbeki and Zuma administrations to control the fourth estate, as shall be outlined in chapters 6 and 7, and gear the communications machinery of government into defensive mode, reflects how diverse the public sphere has become. It highlights the fact that that it may require a different response from political and civil society players.

The Comtask report also examined contexts outside of South Africa for lessons that could be relevant to this country. The report produced showed that the relationship between the media and the government in different countries have different dynamics even in long-established democracies in the West. As well as in new democracies that are in the formative stages and are still emerging from the corrosive past of colonialism. According to Willems, Ellis 1989; James & Kaarsholm 2000; Schulz 1999, 2002; and Spitulnik 2002, all make a case on:

> A focus on a unitary public sphere such as Habermas recommends then prevents us from appreciating alternative publics that emerged, for instance, both during Rhodesia's settler regime and in post-independent Zimbabwe. It is therefore more useful to speak of publics in the plural sense than to construct a single public, as it will bring to light the different

[34]The documentary - *Mandela's Relationship with the Media* - was aired on 12 December 2013 after Mandela's passing.

> publics, which contest each other. Apart from Ekeh's work, scholars working on popular culture have also – albeit implicitly addressed the issue of publics in Africa, (Willems, 2012: 21).

Ekeh's article Colonialism and the two publics in Africa corroborate Ellis's view*: a theoretical statement*, where he argues that "a unified public sphere is not reflective of African social spaces" (Ekeh, 1975: 91-112). [35]He further argues that it is the colonial past that has defined for us the spheres of morality that have come to dominate our politics. This is in line with how the public sphere in South Africa has evolved to a point where it expects different views to live side by side.

Finally, Tavernaro-Haidarian refers to the philosophy of *Ubuntu* that characterises African thinking promotes as an "organic worldview of harmony and cohesion and operates from the premise that human nature is profoundly relational and other-oriented, collective decision-making can be seen as the most appropriate strategy for social progress", (Louw, 2001 in Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018).

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the role of communications in a democracy, focusing on the mandate of the GCIS, which was anathema to its predecessor the SACS. To answer the overall research question about the relationship between the government and the media, it was crucial to understand the state of government communications in the new South African context. The extent to which the media itself understands the government, is key to understanding how the media currently relates to the government and how it will relate to it in the future

The establishment of this government information system was intended to be a total departure from its apartheid counterpart – the SACS. The cardinal difference was that, while the SACS was meant to prop up an illegitimate regime whose purpose was to oppress the majority population, GCIS was intended to empower the people with newfound freedom. This research analysed in detail how the recommendations of the Comtask report, which gave birth to the GCIS,

[35] Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 17, No. 1. (Jan., 1975), pp. 91-112

have been implemented by the government since the report's release in 2000. Over the seventeen years to date, there are fundamental recommendations that have been left unattended; this, therefore, affects the ability of government to be effective in its mandate to communicate with its citizens.

Chapter 2 examined how the Habermasian theory accounts for the role of the media in a democracy. To reach the level of an ideal public sphere, much must change in the state of government communications. A government communications system that is dysfunctional will not aid growth towards an ideal public sphere. According to the Habermasian theory, the big question of public participation is directly linked to the development of a communications approach to government communications.

The Comtask report spent considerable time on the question of coordination of government communications. Most of the resolutions provided a solution for government communications coordination. In this regard, this chapter has highlighted obstacles that stood in the way of a coordinated system of government communication. According to the GCIS Budget Vote, the main obstacles were lack of coordination and focus in government communications, and the legacy of severe imbalances in access to information, (GCIS Budget Vote, 2003).

The Comtask recommendations were set out to address this lack of coordination. The recommendation to elevate the role and status of communicators was aimed at addressing the proper crafting of messages and their dissemination. However, this was not the only recommendation improperly implemented, and it resulted in discord stemming from poor message coordination. An analysis of the recommendations was made in this chapter, based on the views of numerous stakeholders and experts. The analysis makes clear that without a properly informed champion who is included in the policy development loop, there is no hope for improved government communications that take into account the nuances of the public sphere.

The analysis of the Comtask recommendations also highlights that much still needs to be done to bring government communication to the required level to match the developmental state that South Africa as a country has set itself.

There is poor coordination of messages and poor resourcing, if the financial resources are anything to go by. The absence of a permanent head of the GCIS since 2012 demonstrates without doubt that it is not a top priority of government. There is no comparable neglect in other departments in the period under review, even when one compares the balance of the twenty-second year under review within the GCIS. The research also found that there is a lack of interest by existing government representatives to hear the 'voices' of South African communities. There is an absence of resource allocation to institutions and individuals for communicating the government's programmes to communities in general.

To live up to an ideal public sphere that highlights the quality of participation of public engagement, it is vital that government communications be organised in a manner that allows for their efficient and effective operation. This research shows that the current state of government communications it is hindered in living up to the expectations of an ideal public sphere. From an African perspective, it is correct to conclude that such emphasis on public participation is in line with the African approach of *Izimbizo* – where the broader community is summoned by the traditional leaders to deliberate together on matters that affect their community.

Finally, the research indicates that the importance of communication infrastructure can improve the quality of communication especially when it comes to improve a broader population beyond those who can physically interact with the political leaders. This is clear from the Comtask deliberations on the enablers of efficient communications. At the time Comtask wrote the report, the issue of digital communication was a priority. The Comtask research raised the issue of social media's part in citizen journalism. In present communications, media systems are too weak for a democratic public sphere in which citizens build public will and in which public officials are accountable for their actions.

This chapter has shown that government communicators and journalists generally agree that there is a direct correlation between government effectiveness and its capacity to communicate with its citizens. There is a need, therefore, to improve the capacity of communications in order to achieve two-way communications between the government and its people

ANNEXURE 1 TO CHAPTER 4: COMTASK RECOMMENDATIONS: AN EXPOSITION

Table 10: Comtask recommendations: An exposition

RECOMMENDATION	PURPOSE SUMMARY	REMARKS ON IMPLEMENTATION
[The following recommendations are an extract from the Comtask Report. (Communications 2000) **Recommendation 1:** "A cabinet Committee of the Information Economy be established to ensure top-level consideration and inter-ministerial coordination of all relevant aspects in this sector".	For coordination purposes.	According to the cabinet statement of August 2014, a cabinet committee on communications was formed. (Source: GCIS media statement accessed July 2016).
Recommendation 3: "A comprehensive GCIS be established, within which a framework of all government communications and information will be coordinated."	For building bridges across society and within government.	The GCIS was established as per this recommendation and commenced operations on 18 May 1998. Eight years into its existence, Pahad was able to report that a system that integrates provinces had been established and was also extended to the local sphere of government. (Source: Minister Essop Pahad, Budget Vote Speech, and 17 May 2006).
Recommendation 4:	Structure of GCIS to result	The assessments of communications experts

"That the GCIS be designed in such a way that it is geared for the optimisation of relationships and partnerships within and between the structures of government, as well as between government and civil society."	in good relations between government and civil society.	Sipho Ngwema and Themba Sepotokele do not think so. (Source: Questionnaire answers administered to these experts).
Recommendation 5: "That the GCIS be coordinated from the presidency".	Centralisation of communications to increase common messaging.	This was implemented for 20 years and changed only recently when the President announced a new Ministry of Communications. (Source: Cabinet Announcement, 8 July 2014 and Government Gazette 37817, placing the GCIS under the new ministry). This recommendation has been implemented for most of the 22 years of democracy.
Recommendation 6: "That the Head of Communications also be the head of communications in the presidency."	To avoid mixed messages and poor coordination.	This has not been implemented consistently through the years. During the Mandela era, the presidency did not have a separate head of communications. During the Zuma era, a separate head of communications for the presidency was appointed. (Source: Organogram of the presidency in 1998 and in 2009).
Recommendation 7: "The head of communications maintains close links with and communicates decisions taken by cabinet."	To ensure alignment between cabinet decisions and messages with those communicated by the various departments.	For the first 20 years of the new dispensation, the head of the GCIS sat in cabinet. This practice was implemented until 2014. The current acting head of the GCIS does not sit in cabinet. The work of keeping close links with what is happening in cabinet has been left to the Minister in the Presidency or occasionally, the Minister of

		Communications, who briefs the media after each cabinet meeting. (Source: Interviews with former GCIS CEOs Themba Maseko and Mzwanele Manyi).
Recommendation 9: "The GCIS develops an infrastructure to ensure coordination between national departments between the three tiers of government and between government bodies and parastatals."	Coordination across the spheres of government.	This recommendation was implemented by developing clusters coordinated by the GCIS. The establishment of the Government Communicators Forum went a long way throughout the years to coordinate the work of different government departments and agencies. In 2015, SOECA – The State-owned Enterprises Communicators Association – was formed with the aim of improving how the work of the government through state-owned enterprises is communicated. (Source: Budget vote speech by Minister in the Presidency, Essop Pahad).
Recommendation 10: "The GCIS encompasses three main areas: media liaison, communication services and provincial and community liaison."	Key focus of the structure of GCIS.	These areas have been reflected in the organogram of the GCIS throughout the years. (Source: Organogram of GCIS as per gcis.gov.za. Accessed on 16 September 2016).
Recommendation 11: "A weekly post cabinet national meeting of liaison officers be held and chaired by the head of the GCIS."	High-level coordination between cabinet and government communicators.	The meetings, known as 'pre-cabinet briefings', took place once every two weeks ahead of cabinet meetings, where the head of the GCIS briefed government communicators about matters they would have to bring before the cabinet. (Source: Interview with Themba Maseko, Former GCIS CEO). In the present administration, this practice is no longer happening, according to the acting head of the GCIS. This may well have a direct correlation with the weak link between what the cabinet

		decides and how this eventually goes out to the public. (Source: Acting GCIS Head, Donald Diphoko).
Recommendations 12 and 13: "Regular forums be established to coordinate government messages."	To avoid contradictory messages among government departments, given the overlapping mandates of the spheres of government.	The government established numerous forums, such as the Government Communicators Forum, where heads of the GCIS meet. According to the GCIS website, other forums that have been established for this purpose include, but are not limited to, communication clusters that are linked to cabinet and DG Clusters. (Source: GCIS website: www.gcis.gov.za).
Recommendations 14, 15 and 16: "Establishment of an agency within the GCIS."	To improve efficiency in government departments.	This was not established. Its purpose was fulfilled by a chief directorate within the GCIS. (Source1: See envisaged organogram in the Comtask report, page 6). (Source 2: Interviews with former CEOs of the GCIS, Themba Maseko and Mzwanele Manyi).
Recommendations 17, 18 and 19: The establishment of CSA.	A system of networking across government communicators	These recommendations were implemented through, inter alia, the establishment of the government communicators.

Recommendation 21: "That the management and direction of the communications line function be transferred from the department to the ministries reporting directly to the minister whose responsibility it is to determine overall communications policy."	Positioning of the communications line function.	According to various interviews with communicators and current and former heads of the GCIS, this is uneven across the government. In some departments, the head of communications remains located in the department. (Source: Interview with current GCIS Acting Head, Donald Liphoko).
Recommendation 22: "That the minister shall have a responsibility to appoint a head of communications."	Right of minister to appoint a head of communications – a reflection on the status of communicators.	The status of communicators is uneven across the departments. Many departments have their heads of communicators as chief directors, while others have them at DDG level. A list of all 35 government department communicators indicates how many there are, and at which levels. This has evolved over the years.
Recommendations 27, 28, 29 and 30: The head of GCIS: criteria, appointment and function in relation to cabinet.	GCIS establishment.	All these were implemented. Joel Netshitenzhe was appointed the first CEO of the GCIS. Others in the period under review were: Themba Maseko, 2006-2010; Jimmy Manyi, 2011-2012; Phumla Williams (Acting, 2012-2014); Donald Liphoko (Acting, 2014 to the present).(Source: www.gov.za)
Recommendation 39: It is proposed that the GCIS establishes an annual cycle	Planning cycle of the GCIS.	This was implemented through the GCIS being established as a vote in the parliamentary system. (Source: First budget vote speech of GCIS by Minister Essop Pahad as the minister responsible

of planning.		for the GCIS).
Recommendations 59 and 63: "The role of the department of foreign affairs in communicating South Africa's story abroad."	To ensure a coordinated approach in international marketing and the positioning of South Africa.	These recommendations were implemented through the establishment of the IMC and eventually Brand South Africa. (Source: Brand South Africa).
Recommendations 81 and 82:	To pursue media diversity in the country, given the monopoly ownership of the media.	This was implemented through the establishment of the Media Development and Diversity Agency. (Source: MDDA).
Recommendation 83: "It is proposed that parliament institute an investigation of a C-Span type parliamentary TV service for South Africa, to be conducted by the SABC with appropriate funding appropriations and via satellite."	Government-owned media.	This has largely not been implemented in the originally envisaged form. The government has its own *Vuk'uzenzele* as the nearest approximation of what is spoken of in this resolution. Parliament has a dedicated channel on 408 that is really closed-circuit television as opposed to anything with editorial capacity. (Source: GCIS Website).

CHAPTER 5
Mandela era and the media – abandoning propaganda and embracing information for empowerment

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The relations between government and media were complex even during the Mandela era. Despite his charm, these tensions were evident post 1994, wherein he was elected the first democratic president. A documentary, *Mandela's Relationship with the Media* aired on eNCA[36], asserted that "throughout his political career, Mandela had the media dancing to his tune". The documentary described him as a 'master media strategist', and according to Rich Mkhondo, a veteran journalist and communicator, the media loved the president Nelson Mandela. He explains that Mandela did not like photo opportunities, instead advocated that the media captured the story that informed citizens on the business of government in relation to their social concerns, (eNCA, 2013).

Jeremy Maggs, a media commentator, who narrated the documentary, said that "during the Mandela presidency, it was difficult to cover Mandela critically without being in awe of him", (eNCA, 2013). Apart from his larger-than-life stature, his humour, candour, humility and insistence for fair media coverage in a democracy engaged journalists. John Battersby, former editor of the *Sunday Independent* and Head of Brand South Africa in the UK, opined in the documentary that Mandela believed that the media needed to be a watchdog for society and that he felt that politicians needed to be able to take criticism to remain accountable. As former journalist Sue Valentine wrote:

> there are countless stories of Mandela's grace and charm, which he used to good effect during South Africa's fraught political transition in 1994 and during his single five-year term as the first democratically president elect of South Africa. Mandela died on 5 December 2013. A free and vibrant press is one of his many cherished legacies, (Valentine, 2014).

[36]This case study is recorded extensively by the *Rhodes Journal Review,* published in December 1996. This article has been heavily relied upon to record Mandela's meeting with the Sanef and is entitled *Media on the Menu*.

“As the country's first democratic elections approached in 1994, Mandela, in one of his most frequently quoted speeches, told the International Press Institute in Cape Town:

> A critical, independent and investigative press is the lifeblood of any democracy. The press must be free from state interference. It must have the economic strength to stand up to the blandishments of government officials. It must have sufficient independence from vested interests to be bold and inquiring without fear or favour. ... It is only such a free press that can temper the appetite of any government to amass power at the expense of the citizen. ... The African National Congress has nothing to fear from criticism. I can promise you, we will not wilt under close scrutiny. It is our considered view that such criticism can only help us to grow, by calling attention to those of our actions and omissions which do not measure up to our people's expectations and the democratic values to which we subscribe” (Mandela, 1994 in Daniels, 2012: 128).

Valentine (2014) further pointed out that “Mandela did not always support freedom of the media. In 1996, Mandela's criticism, especially of those black journalists and editors he viewed as disloyal, set off alarm bells among press freedom advocates. According to Valentine’s article - *Mandela's Legacy of Media Freedom Stands its Ground* - in June 1997, Mandela met members of the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF) in a tense standoff, the exchange which was captured and published in the *Rhodes Journalism Review*, Mandela charged that black journalists did not write freely because to earn a living, they had to “please their white editors. Mandela also complained that editors ‘suppressed’ ANC responses to critical articles. (Mandela, 1997 in *Rhodes Journalism Review*, 15: 34)

The former editor of the *Sowetan*, Mike Siluma, questioned Mandela's emphasis on race, arguing that the focus should be on the role of the media in a democracy. Siluma wrote in the *Rhodes Journalism Review* that: “you can genuinely change the colour of owners, and the publications will not

automatically see eye-to-eye with government, because there will still be disagreements – as there ought to be when the need arises. We lose the bigger picture when we get obsessed by the racial one" (Valentine, 2014).

These are some of Mandela's views as expressed (and hereunder paraphrased) in a meeting between him and the South African National Editors' Forum while he was president of South Africa. Mandela expressed that black companies are heavily indebted to white companies and, therefore, cannot claim to be in charge. He further expressed that black journalists are hostile and do not say what they want to say – because they must earn a living and please white bosses. Mandela's view was that white editors suppress black journalists in the newsroom and this affected content. He said that the media tend to cut ANC's responses to critical articles. Finally, Mandela made no distinction between himself and the ANC in addressing the fact that the media characterised the ANC as dishonest. He said this broke the relationship and went beyond criticism into questioning the integrity of the organisation.

Analysis

The polar views expressed by different commentators in this chapter regarding government media relations during the Mandela era are proof that attaining independence does not equate to liberation of the mind from disposition. With the suppression of the media, especially black media and, therefore, voices of the majority, during the apartheid government, liberation movements used alternative media to counter repressive rule and carved an allegiant disposition to the liberation movements. Liberation movements, including Mandela's ANC, pioneered alternative media. Therefore, freedom from colonialism does not seem to often translate to a sudden transformation of using media as a propaganda tool. The media was utilised for good during the liberation movement, thus building automatic expectation. In terms of South Africa, it presented itself in racial tone as the country emerged from an era of racial discrimination.

According to Ansah (1988), the role of the media in a democracy in the African context has its own ideological challenges. Ansah (1988) says there are opposing ideological approaches to understanding the role of the media in a

democracy (Ansah, 1988). Mandela's suggestion that black journalists could not be independent disregarded veteran journalists such as the likes of Mathatha Tsedu who had been advancing the African democracy narrative. These are journalists who would take umbrage at being conflated, lumped together with journalists who were regarded as not independently-minded from their employers. During the special South African Editor's Forum (SANEF) meeting between Mandela's administration and editors in 1996, two years into the democracy, editors were arguing that it was inaccurate for the Mandela government to place all black editors in the same category and unfair to characterise all newsrooms as strangled by racial undertones.

Mandela's strongest rebuke was about a supposed campaign against the ANC government, (Daniel's, 2012: 132). The editors rebutted this strongly, some saying that there was no such campaign. Ryland Fisher, former editor of Cape Times said Mandela's reaction at the meeting opened him up to criticism that, "he is trying to manipulate the media through intimidation", (Daniels, 2012: 133). The editors argued that the media had hardly ever attacked the integrity of Nelson Mandela himself.

It is important to understand the context of these remarks as the democratic government had just been handed the reins of power and was finding its feet, and it was crucial that the government reached its constituencies. Ahead of the first election, there was no room for error. The culture of closing ranks was also rife and, therefore, the threshold for criticism was low. There was still a lot of euphoria surrounding Mandela as the leader of the ANC, and criticism towards him was always tempered. It is the researcher's view that he was a revered president and the media separated him from the rest of the ANC leadership. Mandela was conscious of this and actively tried to counter it whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The ANC was coming out of a period where they were on the same side as a media that had thrown its weight behind the cause of freedom. With the dawn of a democratic government – even under Mandela – the media actively sought to define a new role for themselves in the democratic dispensation. At this dawn of the democratic state, the media were completely white-owned. According to

research conducted by Adriaan Hadland in pursuance of his PhD thesis entitled The South African print media, 1994-2004: An application and critique of comparative media systems theory. The four big media groups - Naspers now Media24, the Independent Group, Times and Caxton - were not under any black ownership, (Hadland, 2007: 11), During Mandela's governing term of office, there were a few black editors,[37] and this made the democratic government nervous about the narrative of transition being in white hands, (Hadland, 2007: 18).

This background serves as a backdrop to the way in which the Mandela administration related to the media. However, several other factors needed to be considered. Among these was the fact that the Mandela communication machinery was at its highest level in the person of Joel Netshitenzhe, who was head of GCIS as well as the cabinet spokesperson. This ensured an effective alignment of the government's message (www.gcis.gov.za). The relationship between SANEF and the government was structured and sound.

Regular meetings were held with Sanef, where members of Mandela's cabinet communicated directly with the cabinet. The communications machinery of the government was inherited from the previous regime under the aegis of the apartheid SA Communications Service (SACS). This created a basis on which a change in approach could occur. While the SACS had been purely a propaganda tool for the apartheid regime, the new approach culminated in the establishment of the Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS). This thesis examines two case studies namely the relationship between the Mandela administration and editors as well as the debate on national vs public interests both of which can be said to have defined the Mandela presidency.

5.2 CASE STUDY 1: RELATIONSHIP WITH EDITORS

The section assesses the relationship between South Africa's prominent editors in Sanef and the Mandela administration, which was shaped by the conversations that ensued during a series of meetings held between 1996 and

[37] During the first five years of democracy when Mandela was in charge, the media were owned primarily by four big conglomerates – the Times Media group, Naspers (Now Media 24 group), The Independent Group – then owned by the Irish, with numerous titles – and Caxton. The statement by Mandela that there was a 'perception' was merely polite, as all these groups were white and foreign-owned. (Hadland, 2007: 11)

1997. These conversations, recorded by the *Rhodes Journal Review,*[38] describe what defined the relationship between the democratic government and the media. While the conversations were not conclusive, they outlined the key themes that can be used to understand the contentious issues defining the relationship.

5.2.1 Media Ownership and Diversity

In the meeting with Sanef held in 1996, Mandela started his discussion with the controversial question of media ownership. He stated that there was a perception that the minority of the population controlled the media.[39] Mandela stretched this ownership logic to suggest that this influences the narrative in newspaper editorials. The issue of representatively of the media in relation to the demographics of the population, was of prime importance in Mandela's expression. Mandela would launch into a lashing towards the journalists as if wagging a finger, like a school principal towards learners saying, "There is no need to bit about the bush with this problem. Whatever measures have been taken, the truth is that the media is still in control of whites, conservative whites, who are unable to reflect the aspirations of the majority," (Daniels, 2012: 129 - 130).

He further made an observation, regarding the delegation that had come to see him. "There are 20 members on this council and I find that 12 – the majority – belong to the minority," (*Rhodes Journalism Review,* 1996; 7)

Based on this, he sought to demonstrate that the media were paying lip service to the very transformation that they demanded of the government. This did not deter editors from engaging with Mandela, who continued to challenge them to be representative of the population. Thami Mazwai, then chairperson of the newly established Sanef, was quick to respond that affirmative action featured high on the agenda of the new body. The body had been launched two weeks prior to the meeting with Mandela and he had pleaded that it should not be judged according to its two-week track record of existence, but rather given time to implement its transformation plans. Mazwai asserted that "the media is the

[38]This is what gave birth to the MDDA – The Media Diversity and Development Agency.

[39]The most significant 'transformation' was accomplished by Media24 – owned by Naspers, the media representative of Afrikaner capital and responsible for the publication of Afrikaans language newspapers.

mirror that the outside world used to understand our country and that it should reflect the whole country", (Daniels, 2010: 198).

Editors also raised the issue of their inability to find black journalists who could join the ranks of the Afrikaans newspapers. For example, they claimed that these journalists were either unaffordable or were 'grabbed' by the private sector. Editors proposed the establishment of a media diversity trust to tackle the issue of media transformation and diversity.[40] This followed a discussion about the attitude of what Mandela called the conservative press. He expressed that this media was trying to preserve the status quo and that editors would try to justify their conservative views. He was at pains to use the *Sunday Times,* an English medium weekly, as an example. The aim was to demonstrate that despite a meeting between the *Sunday Times* and the ANC, the newspaper wrote an adverse editorial, accusing the ANC of not being honest. This infuriated Mandela who said, "if a paper like *Sunday Times* can accuse an organisation like ours of dishonesty, you destroy the relationship... The real problem is not black journalists but conservative whole journalists who are able to instruct their colleagues under them" (Daniels, 2012: 131).

5.2.2 Transformation of the Media

In the first democratic administration, transformation of the media was one of the biggest issues that characterised the relationship between the media and the government. According to Wasserman (2018), "the political economy of the South African Media in the post level apartheid period continued to militate against the democratic gains made on a constitutional level…the commercial media outlets remain dominated by an elite who can afford to pay" (Wasserman, 2018; 4).

In an article by Lynette Steenveld (2012), *The pen and the sword: Media transformation and democracy after apartheid*, the following is articulated about the issues of ownership:

[40] The 'Third Force' was a term used by leaders of the ANC during the late 1980s and early 1990s to refer to a clandestine force believed to be responsible for a surge in violence in KwaZulu-Natal, and townships around the south of the Witwatersrand (or "Rand") (https://en.wikipedia.org)

> The current ownership patterns reflect the complex relationship between economics and politics, so that ethnic ascriptions of particular newspapers refer to their readership, regardless of who owns, manages and staffs the papers. Significantly, Anglo-American mining capital 'unbundled' its interests in the 'English' press (now the Tiso Blackstar Group), and the foreign-owned Independent Newspapers (Tomaselli, 1997). Tiso Blackstar is now not only the main player in the economics journalism market with *Business Day* and *Financial Mail*, but also owns the largest circulation Sunday paper, *The Sunday Times* (circulation 504,000 with 3.9 million readers), *The Citizen*, the regional *Daily Dispatch* (which has a weekly isiXhosa supplement) and *The Herald*. The group also entered the black market by buying *The Sowetan*, the leading black daily newspaper (circulation 130,000 with 2.1 million readers) and the *Sunday World* (circulation 181,200 with 1.9 million readers) to challenge the hegemony of *City Press* (circulation 197,112 with 2.5 million readers). Independent Newspapers, the foreign owner of most of the English language daily newspapers, also repositioned itself economically and politically by entering the tabloid market with the *Daily Voice* for Cape Town's working-class readers (circulation 41,900, with 325,000 readers), and by starting the isiZulu newspaper, *Isolezwe* (circulation 99,100 655,000 readers), and its Sunday companion, *Isolezwenge Sonto* (circulation 60,568 with 205,000 readers)[41] (Steenveld, 2012: 127).

Thami Mazwai indicated that the media were aware that transformation was one issue they should prioritise. According to Mazwai, Sanef had established five working groups focusing on various areas of transformation. Mazwai further acknowledged that Sanef recognised that they could not criticise others for not changing when they themselves were not making an effort to change. Mazwai said, "We cannot have one standard for one group and another standard for others", (Rhodes Journalism Review 1996: 47).

Transformation conversations also tackled how the government and media could engage in robust debates without considering these discussions ideological

[41]Case law regarding the issue of sources is littered throughout the South African jurisprudence.

attacks on each other. Mandela felt very strongly that journalists should also accept criticism from the state. Editors made it clear that a link between advertising and positive coverage should be discouraged. They told Mandela: 'This is the price of democracy', said Raymond Louw, then editor of *Africa Report.* It is clear from this that there was still much to learn about how a democratic government should relate to a media if it could no longer see it as the ally it used to be, ` (*Rhodes Journalism Review,* 1996: 7*)*.

Transformation conversations also tackled how the government and media could engage in robust debates without considering these discussions ideological attacks on each other. Mandela felt very strongly that journalists should also accept criticism from the state. Editors made it clear that a link between advertising and positive coverage should be discouraged. Mandela said there was an attempt to destroy the transformation project, "There is an attempt from traditionally white organizations... to resist transformation. Some of the newspapers that used to support the apartheid regime ... give unqualified support to transformation," (*Rhodes Journalism Review* 1996 in Daniels, 2012: 129).

5.2.3 The Media and Government Communications

The issue of bad coverage by the media brought up the question of the quality of government communications. Mandela conceded that government communication was not at its best.

In interviews with various media and communications practitioners, there was an appreciation that government communication was doing its best to move away from the propaganda approach to communications, to a more 'information for empowerment' approach. The South African Communications Service was still very much in place under the Mandela administration, but it was clear that it was placed on notice. Thabo Mbeki, who was then Deputy President, commissioned the Comtask report to examine at the ways government communications could be re-imagined. The work of the task team was described and analysed in Chapter 4. It is important to note that the recommendations of the task team only became applicable after the end of Mandela's administration.

5.2.4 Mandela and Freedom of Expression

Given that some laws used to repress the media were still on the statute books, editors raised the contentious issue of freedom of the media in a new South Africa. They referred to Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act (1977), which related specifically to the propensity of the courts to summons journalists to reveal their so-called secret sources. The matter triggered spirited discussions with Mandela and he questioned the wisdom of protecting these sources, (*Rhodes Journalism Review,* 1996: 7). As far as journalists were concerned, this was sacrosanct.

He challenged the media on how they would mitigate this matter. Anton Harber, the editor of the *Mail & Guardian*, argued that sources were necessary to expose corruption. He argued that were it not for these sources, scandals such as 'Watergate' in the United States or even 'third force'[42] exposure before South Africa's first democratic election would never have been exposed to the public.[43] In response to Mandela's pleas for a guarantee on reducing the damage done by secret sources, the *Sunday Times* editor, Brian Pottinger, indicated that such a guarantee would lie in training journalists not to rely on single sources for stories, *Rhodes Journalism Review,* 1996: 7).

While this issue was contentious, discussions were cordial, indicating that the media were confident that their concerns were being taken into consideration. On the other hand, according to Sean Jacobs, the nature of state-media relations was characterised by suspicion. "The media is not seen to be a political actor in its own right, but rather as a cog in the machinery of democracy. Hence, there is a concern about protecting the media and building its capacity," (Jacobs, 2001).

5.2.5 Building Bridges with the Media

One of the crucial building blocks in building a relationship with the media is a constant meeting to exchange information and views. This is one area where all

[42]A Frank Dialogue was held on a radio programme, Power Perspective (On Power FM 98.7) to mark Black Wednesday on 19 October 2016 as being part of the completion of this research, and partly to assess media-state relations over the first 20 years of democracy.

[43]Further reflections on the Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma presidencies follow in Chapters 5 and 6, where the differences between their presidencies in the context of the Habermasian approach to the public sphere are elaborated upon.

media agrees that Mandela excelled as a leader of the first democratic dispensation. In the Frank Dialogues on Power Perspective,[44] Ryland Fisher, former editor of the *Cape Times* and the *New Age*, indicated that he had met Mandela at least 30 times during his tenure, while only managing to meet Mbeki twice or thrice – although Mbeki was in office longer than Mandela. In meeting with editors, Mandela agreed that he and Sanef should hold monthly meetings, which did occur during the Mbeki and Zuma administrations (see Chapters 6 and 7) it is clear from accounts by Fisher (2016) and Tsedu (2017) that there was a significant difference pertaining to accessibility between the Mandela administration and the two that followed - Mbeki and Zuma.

The editor of *DieVrye Weekblad* indicated that the Mandela administration was very accessible. In the Free State, led by the then Premier Terror Lekota, the relationship was based on an attitude of outreach on both sides. This changed very quickly under Mbeki, Zuma and provincial premier Ace Magashule. The editor of *Netwerk 24* and the former editor of *Die Beeld* gave an example of the cooperation that used to be enjoyed by the media regarding crime reporting.

Under the Mandela administration, the media were given information by the local police, who were in touch with the details of crimes being investigated. This served to strengthen their relationship with the media and gave the impression of the administration's transparency, especially on subjects as sensitive as crime. As is shown in the following chapter that focuses on the Mbeki administration, it is important that this transparency should not be taken for granted. This conduct was stopped and centralised, making the work of crime reporters difficult. Everything had to go through a central point before comments could be given.

5.3 CASE STUDY 2: THE DEBATE ON NATIONAL VERSUS PUBLIC INTEREST

During the first administration of the new democratic dispensation, the debate on the distinction between public interest and national interest shaped the conversation around the role that the media should play in a democracy. In 2003,

[44]This refers to the monopoly of ownership of the media during the transition.

years after the debate, the then CEO of the GCIS. Joel Netshitenzhe, had this to say on the matter when summing up his view of the establishment:

> And so we are challenged to reflect on whether there is a distinction between national interest and public interest, and how each of these relates to the question of national consensus ... National interest cannot and is not defined or decreed as such in any statutes. One can refer to it as a nation's sixth sense, which evolves out of experience, with the evolution of a nation and a nation-state. Often it is invoked by an ultimate social authority, which is the state. It is viewed as being of a higher social order, and appeals to practically everyone within a given nation.
>
> On the other hand, public interest can be viewed as being in the interest of a section of a polity or nation-state, usually civil society or the aggregate of individuals who make up society as distinct from state institutions. It eschews formal authority and expresses itself as being autonomous of government. It is not decreed, and one can say it also expresses itself as a sixth sense. In the extreme, it is seen as a challenge to government: only the media or civil society or the Courts (to buttress their judgements) can invoke the public interest! Like the national interest, public interest evolves with a nation – it is not decreed – but it requires conditions of democracy and freedom of expression or the struggle for such, to express itself (Netshitenzhe, 2002).

"It is in this context that the issue of public interest should be treated. Public interest entails such issues as the public's right to know, speaking truth to power, and exposing malfeasance. In a truly democratic society, this should not be in contradiction to the national interest, but ultimately, even the public interest should be informed by the question: How does the exercising of democracy raise it to new heights, and how does it contribute to the quest for improving peoples' quality of life" (GCIS, 2003).

It is clear from this exposition that the key disagreement between the media and the government of the time was whether the media should somehow be guided by a national agenda. Netshitenzhe continued:

> If we agree on the Constitution as the basis of our national interest, if we agree on the issues that Judge Goldstone identified as an elaboration of the constitutional imperatives, if we agree that defining national interest is a joint national task, and if we agree that national interest and public interest may be distinct but not necessarily contradictory – what then is the role of the media!
>
> A genuine national interest in a democratic society cannot of necessity be contradictory to the public interest. Within the parameters of the Constitution and the strategic national programmes of social change, no one has to be anything other than oneself to play a role in promoting and defending the national interest. There will (and should) be differences on many questions of detail. (Netshitenzhe, 2002)

The media has a different approach to the matter and sees any imposition of a national agenda as an attempt to force them into some kind of 'sunshine journalism'. This could also be seen as an uncomfortable alignment with the national agenda of the ruling party along the lines contained in documents such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that were the 'flavour of the month' in the first years of the new administration.

In an article by Zukile Majova an alternative view is represented as follows:

> In 2002, Netshitenzhe argued that the "dichotomy between national interest and public interest does not mean that the two are contradictory, let alone antagonistic: inasmuch as the dichotomy between the state and the people does not mean that the state is necessarily anti-people or that the people are necessarily anti-state.
>
> In a consistently democratic dispensation, the state exists not for its own sake but to serve society. Legitimate states derive their mandate from the people, and they have the right and the responsibility to exercise leadership. Similarly, the governed have a right to contribute on how they should be governed.

> Thus, to counter-pose national interest and public interest could in fact mean that civil society cedes to someone else the right to define the national interest: instead of the people governing, some elite governs and the people protest! (Majova, 2007).

Majova best articulates what applies with the South African public sphere, which dispels the debate that public interest should have to be an antithesis to national interest. This enriches the public discourse as Majova aids Netshitendze's thesis and anchors it on the symbiosis of both which allows for a healthy public sphere where the contestation of either interest is unnecessary thus both the government and the governed will contribute and guide the process of leadership, without either party feeling the need to protest in the case of the led or imposition in the case of the elected leaders in a democracy.

5.4 REFLECTIONS

This chapter elucidated how Mandela shaped the relationship of his government with the media. This was achieved through understanding how he was viewed in society as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. The aim of the chapter was to answer the questions: How did Mandela lay a basis for new relationships to ensure that fresh bridges could be built between the media and the government so that crucial information can reach citizens? And, How does Mandela’s approach compare to Habermas’s public sphere theory?

Mandela’s approach can be said to be the closest to the ideals of the public sphere. For Habermas, “the success of the public sphere depends upon the extent of access (as close to universal as possible); the degree of autonomy (the citizens must be free from coercion); the rejection of hierarchy (so that each might participate on an equal footing); the rule of law (particularly the subordination of the state); and the quality of participation”, (Rutherford, 2000: 19).

Using these broad criteria, it can be argued that Mandela’s approach sought to give more access to information instead of less. There was less emphasis on concealing information or being concerned about state security, where there was a recognition that information to the public needed to be released. Mandela’s

willingness to engage with the media directly and frequently, taken for granted at the time of his presidency, was to be a thing of the past when analysing his successors in office.

In an interview for this research, Luzuko Koti, who worked in the Mbeki presidency commented on what he called "The uneasy but necessary love affair of South African presidents with the media" (Koti, November 2016), and further said:

> The South African media found itself in a rapidly changing space in the late 1980s as the pressure for government to ditch apartheid and unban liberation movements mounted, and the realisation dawned that a new era was upon us. The media – particularly conservative and largely sympathetic to the nationalist agenda – swiftly repositioned itself as a likely ally of the masses. It did this by giving an unprecedented amount of coverage to the pro-liberation movement, mass-based activities on the ground, and goings-on in abroad bases of the ANC. This cordial relationship transferred easily into the democratic era. President Nelson Mandela had a surprisingly high sense of regard for the media.
>
> He also knew how to draw the line or call them out when he felt they had gone too far. But Mandela has always been aware of the importance of the media as a tool to reach out to constituencies that ordinarily would have been difficult to access. He used the media for this purpose with a great sense of wit and charm (Koti interview, 2016).[45]

5.4.1 The impact of Mandela's communications approach in society

From the information analysed in this chapter, it seemed that the relationship between the media and the government was influenced primarily by the persona of Nelson Mandela as the founding father of our democracy. It also seemed that the policy approach of his government followed by his practical example of embracing the press as part of civil society that needed to be engaged in the reconciliation project was palpable during his leadership.

[45]The Media Development Trust was a precursor to the MDDA, as explained below.

However it was ironic that he sought to place black journalists in a different category to their white counterparts – something that alarmed them, as the extensive account recorded in the *Rhodes Review Journal* shows. Black journalists took great umbrage at being reduced to mere conveyor belts for their white counterparts who operated within an environment of white domination. There were also objections to radicalising the approach to this relationship, something akin to the divide and rule approach.

5.4.2 Transformation of the media landscape

The contentious issue of media freedom helped raise the issue of transformation of the media referred to in this research. White domination of the media in South Africa became glaring as racial inequality which had characterised apartheid spilled over into the new South Africa. The nature of media ownership immediately after the coming of the new dispensation[46] inhibited media transformation and, therefore, diversity of content.

South Africa as a country has had the debate about the extent to which such media could reflect a society in transition. At the time of the conversation that Sanef held with Mandela, Sanef was only a few weeks old and had already committed to some transformation interventions. This included working groups tasked with looking at various aspects of diversity, such as leadership of the newsrooms and ownership of the media.

The media, through Sanef, took the lead in the establishment of the Media Diversity Trust[47], which would tackle the issue of diversity, with the media contributing to this effort on a central basis. It was Mandela himself who acknowledged that a key achievement of this administration would be to lay the basis for such change to occur. The conversation between the media and Mandela administration saw the establishment of the Media Diversity and Development Agency (MDDA) that laid the foundation for diversifying the media.

[46]The MDDA was established in 1999; its first Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) allocation was R30 million (Source: GCIS through gcis.gov.za. Accessed 10 November 2016).

[47]Source: GCIS. Another mechanism in place was the existence of the government communicators' forum, where communicators from across all spheres of government were brought together at least once a quarter. Having been a government communicator during this era (1998), the researcher was able to experience this method of ensuring transparent government in concert with other government communicators. He held the position of ministerial spokesperson and head of communication in 1998 and 1999 when Mandela was still in charge, and from 1999 to 2003 when Mbeki was in charge and thus can compare the levels of transparency and whether they changed from Mandela to Mbeki.

A closer analysis of the resources allocated to the MDDA reveals that it was allocated an annual budget of R30 million.[48] The funds we allocated to emerging media players mostly rooted in community media.

5.4.3 The quality of government communications

Mandela acknowledged that the quality of government communications "left much to be desired" *(Rhodes Journalism Review,* 1996:47*).* The acknowledgement was a crucial aspect in solidifying the relationship between the media and the government. The media relies heavily on the government as one of the foremost newsmakers to obtain information about policy issues that affect people.

While Mandela referred to communication achievements, the key focus of government communications lies in the fact that it empowers the people. Given the new dispensation, the following issues were wholly dependent on an effective government communications system:

- an understanding of human rights, especially communicating what the new constitution would impose as responsibilities of citizens;
- an appreciation of the services that the government would offer, given the new approach of a government for the people;
- access to justice and outreach by the legislature to engender public participation in the development of new laws and regulations; and a sense of accountability for different promises made by the executive as part of the election manifesto. (De Villiers, 1996).

5.4.4 The policy impact: Preparing for the birth of a new era in government communications

The Mandela administration laid the basis for building a new approach to government communications. The commissioning of the Comtask report was meant to refer to the experiences of the Mandela administration. These were used as a foundation to create a framework that would shape a new approach for government communications, which would contribute to the strengthening of the relationship between government and the media.

[48]These were top professionals who were appointed at the highest levels of GCIS to complement the work done by the CEO.

5.4.5 Trial and error: Nurturing a new communications culture alongside building a new nation

The Mandela presidency did not have a blueprint on how a democratic South Africa would communicate in this new era, where the people and their government were in tandem. In a way, the communications strategy of the government, then led by erstwhile freedom fighters, was a basis upon which a new culture could be built. The new government and the fourth estate needed to find a new way to relate to those who were fellow travellers in the struggle against apartheid, without forgetting the distinct roles that now had to be played. Unlike his successors to the presidency (to be discussed further in this thesis), Mandela was a standard-setter and standard-bearer who was somewhat allowed a free hand by the media and society on how his government chose to communicate with the public, (Fisher Interview, 2016).

5.4.6 Key lesson from Mandela: A long walk lies ahead

What lessons did the Mandela administration leave behind to guide the evolution of the relationship between government and the media? Mandela was considered an open book. When he believed that the government was not ready to share information, he was candid about it, obviating the need for journalists to seek information from secret sources. As a result, there were few exposés during his term of office. It was also because there was less corruption in the new government, which was focused on fixing a broken government, (Haffajee Interview, 2017).

Information flow mechanisms were put in place to ensure that the media were informed in a systematic manner; for example, there were regular and standing media briefings after every cabinet meeting. GCIS-convened post cabinet media briefings were unheard of during the apartheid regime. To prepare for these briefings, the head of government communications at the time briefed spokespersons and heads of communications in what were known as pre-cabinet briefings to prepare them for decisions that would be made by the cabinet.[49]

[49]Every year the GCIS produced a communication strategy following the State of the Nation Address – this was to serve as a guide for all government departments. This strategy contained a communications cycle that gave guidance of the messages of government communications.

Transparency is key in moving towards the ideal public sphere. This is a key ingredient of participatory democracy. Events in subsequent years suggested that transparency diminished due to the proposals for secrecy legislation, among other things. This is explored in detail in the following chapter, which examines the Mbeki and Zuma relationships with the media.

5.4.7 Consistency of communications between the media and the government

During the Frank Dialogues held on Black Wednesday, former editor of the *Cape Times,* Ryland Fisher, indicated that while he was editor he met Mandela over 30 times, (Frank Dialogue, 2016). He compared this with the few occasions he was able to meet the other two presidents. Meeting with the media was seen by Mandela as a necessary interaction with the public and not as something he did so seldom that it could be mistaken for a mere public relations exercise. The institutionalisation of meetings between the press and the government at the highest levels was complemented by a highly professional[50] core of communicators who were appointed to run communications under the leadership of Joel Netshitenzhe.

5.4.8 How did this relationship aid the government to communicate with citizens?

Government departments were made to follow a cycle[51] of regular communication with the public. This promoted a good relationship with the media on a one-on-one basis and through editorial bodies such as Sanef and the Parliamentary Press Gallery in Cape Town, ensuring that there was a regular information flow. The government set out these strategies to communicate with the public in a national communication strategy, often following directly after the

[50] The African Renaissance is the concept that African people and nations shall overcome the current challenges confronting the continent and achieve cultural, scientific, and economic renewal. In the article Thabo Mbeki and the idea of the African Renaissance Prof William Gumede explains: 'Basically, they meant that the end of apartheid in South Africa would usher in the political, social, economic and cultural renewal of the African continent. Such an African Renaissance would, they argued, would be propelled by a new democratic South Africa. To be fair, long before the emergence of democracy in South Africa, ANC leaders wondered how a democratic South Africa could repay Africans who played an important role and sacrificed a lot in the anti-apartheid struggle. So, the idea of an African Renaissance publicly embraced by Mandela and Mbeki, had much to do with a democratic South Africa's historical obligations towards Africa." http://africultures.com/thabo-mbeki-and-the-idea-of-an-african-renaissance-5740/

[51] Retrieved from The Conversation, see references.

State of the Nation address and the Provincial and Local State of the Provinces and Cities addresses. All these received extensive coverage by the mass media.

5.5 CONCLUSION

An analysis of how the media reported on the Mandela's presidency provides a sense of a healthy relationship between the government and the state. Overall, both sides believing in each other's bona fides guided that relationship broadly. By analysing how each party viewed the other, it seems that a locus existed in which an amicable relationship was nurtured. The chapter demonstrates that even with charisma and a committed cause to a free media, Mandela's era was not free of post-struggle allegiance expectations from the media, especially from black journalists.

It was Valentine (2014) who made a balanced case of all three presidencies studied in this research. She avers that Mandela left "a free and vibrant press … one of his many cherished legacies", (Valentine, 2014). Yet, in the same article, she indicates that Mandela "did not always support freedom of the media. In 1996, his criticism, especially of black journalists and editors he viewed as disloyal, alarmed press freedom activists (Valentine, 2014).

Chapter 6 and 7 illustrate how Mbeki and Zuma have carried the thread through to their presidencies. For instance, Mbeki's use of race as political capital against black journalists (see subsequent chapter) was a mere extension of Mandela's racial stand-off at the 1997 SANEF. Siluma, then editor at the *Sowetan* explained that if the race debate as removed from the table there would "still be disagreements -as there ought to be - when the need arises", (Valentine, 2014).

Apparent was how key editors who read Mandela's warm demeanour, charm and amicableness as agreeable, which African democracy theorists and African public sphere scholars caution against. Makhanya, former editor at the *Sunday Times* and now editor at *City Press* was recorded in Valentine's article as saying. "Nelson Mandela taught us what a free society looked like,' even when he 'was challenged by the media, but he became one of our biggest defenders", (Valentine, 2014). When Mandela was released from prison after 27 years of

incarceration, many expected him to be vengeful, but instead he showed a very different attitude, and one surmises that it influenced his approach to the various stakeholders he had to work with to make the new South African project work. Whether this consensus in the public sphere was going to last or would be seen as a 'forced consensus', given the gap between the needs of the poor represented largely by the government of the day and the rich represented by a white dominated media, was yet to be seen in the years following the Mandela era.

The personality of a government leader should not have to be the barometer with which the tension between government-media relations is measured.

Some of the characteristics described exhibit themselves in the ANC party as the subsequent chapters - Mbeki and Zuma shall demonstrate.

Ansah (1988) says the role of the media in a democracy in the African context has its own ideological challenges. He further argues that this reflects "intolerance and the tendency towards the creation of monolithic political institutions in Africa", (*Ansah*, 1988: 9); pointing to the fact that Mandela was an extension of his party - the ANC.

While it could have been taken for granted that a democracy means a free media, Whitten-Woodring (2009) argues this may not be the case as there exists free media in autocracies who have government-controlled media. And, "some democracies have government-controlled media, and some autocracies have free media. How this mismatch between regime type and media system influences government behavior is a puzzle", (Whitten- Woodring, 2009).

Habermas's theory of the public sphere found huge resonance under the Mandela administration for reasons already explored in section 5.3. The theme of reconciling diverse cultures in society were not the only way Mandela was known, but also influenced how he related to stakeholders. The media were the key stakeholders which benefited from his approach and they, therefore, ensured that the relationship was built on a solid foundation of mutual respect and benefit.

Nwagbara (2010) is amongst a few African scholars who studied the public sphere within the African context, in particular within the post conflict era in the

Niger region in Nigeria. Nwagbara (2010) argued that the relationship of partnership between the media and the public sphere is crucial for understanding the ideal public sphere. ", (Nwagbara, 2010).

In Chapter 6, the research focuses on how the administration that followed Mandela, led by President Thabo Mbeki, related to the media. One would have thought that given the smooth transition between the two administrations and Mbeki's hands-on work as the defacto prime minister, the approach would be similar due to the assumption that the approach to the media during Mandela's presidency was crafted with full consensus between Mandela and Mbeki. However, while Mandela's sense of charm, his larger-than-life personality, and his ideological position regarding the constitution, free speech and democracy deeply influenced media and government relations, wherein no journalist was threatened with being thown into jail should they not tow the government's line, his government still wasn't free of inserting its own agenda in the public sphere as it sought to reshape the public opinion. These personal values rubbed off onto his political approach, which ultimately anchored his attitude to the media. Mbeki's personality was unique and this too permeated into his approach to media relations, similarly to how traces of Zuma's personality played itself out in his conduct towards the media.

CHAPTER 6

Mbeki and the media: a contest of thoughts

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Former president Thabo Mbeki's tenure was guided by the African Renaissance[52] philosophy. Adebajo (2016) posits that:

> Mbeki's foreign policy was in part driven by his vision of an African Renaissance. He encouraged South Africans to embrace an African identity and sought to promote the continent's political, economic and social renewal. He also sought to reintegrate Africa into the global economy. Mbeki urged Africans to adapt democracy to fit their own specific conditions without compromising its principles of representation and accountability. He further challenged them to discover a sense of their own self-confidence. This, after centuries of slavery and colonialism which had systematically denigrated their cultures and subjugated their institutions to alien rule (Adebajo, 2016)[53].

This chapter demonstrates how the African Renaissance shaped media government relations during his presidency. When Mbeki commenced his second term of office in 2004, the media landscape was beginning to transform, and he was at the centre of this change. Two significant events marked his impact on the media landscape and the change in the way the government related to the media. For example, Mbeki led the formation of the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), which was eventuated by the Comtask report, the process that started when he was still deputy president during the Mandela tenure. This provided a radical departure from the colonial SACS that existed until the demise of the apartheid government and had been

[52] ANC Today is a weekly web-based newsletter published by the African National Congress (ANC). It consists mainly of updates on current programmes and initiatives of the ANC. It was launched in 2001 to offset the alleged bias of the white-controlled press.

[53] According to www.anc.org.za, Mbeki page (Accessed December 2016).

established for propaganda purposes with the ultimate goal of suppressing information flow and severe punishment for the media that was not in line with Apartheid government's dictates. SACS was, during apartheid hoisted by the racist and repressive National Party government's policies. Under the National Party, the black majority population of Africans had no sovereignty. Mbeki's African Renaissance philosophy was an antithesis to that system, (Gumede, 1996).

6.2 INTRODUCING ALTERNATIVE PLATFORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Mbeki would go on to introduce the unmediated media strategy that sought to counterbalance the mainstream media, which the ANC contended was largely in the ownership of white monopoly capital. Unmediated platforms would set a renewed political agenda. The birth of *ANC Today*[54] newsletter in this regard, and the use of Izimbizo's as alternative platforms of communication are noteworthy. As in his first letter, Mbeki verbalised the dilemma faced by his ANC governing party:

> We are faced with the virtually unique situation that, among the democracies, the overwhelmingly dominant tendency in South African politics, represented by the ANC, has no representation whatsoever in the mass media. We therefore have to contend with the situation that what masquerades, as 'public opinion', as reflected in the bulk of our media, is in fact minority opinion informed by the historic social and political position occupied by this minority.
>
> By projecting itself as 'public opinion' communicated by an 'objective press', this minority opinion seeks to get itself accepted by the majority as the latter's own opinion. With no access to its own media, this majority has had to depend on other means to equip itself with information and views to enable it to reach its own conclusions about important national and international matters. These have included direct contact with the leadership and membership of the ANC at public meetings.

[54] Comtask recommendations focused on how the government should deal with the question of media relations, among other areas important to government communications. The report also contains some of the best practices from countries such as the UK, the USA and India, describing how they keep the media in sight to ensure that governmental messages are not lost in the transmission.

> Although very important, this means of mass communication can never be adequate as a means of communicating our views and information to the millions of our people and others in the rest of the world. *ANC Today* will make an important contribution towards filling the void of the voiceless millions of people that is a direct legacy of more than three hundred years of colonialism and apartheid.
>
> I hope that the journal will make a special effort to ensure that the news and views reach more citizens. Of special importance, the people must be informed of the progress we are making with regard to the social transformation of our country and continent, the obstacles and opposition we have to overcome and our programmes to achieve further progress.
>
> The world of ideas is also a world of struggle. *ANC Today* must be a combatant for the truth, for the liberation of the minds of our people, for the eradication of the colonial and apartheid legacy, for democracy, non-racism, non-sexism, prosperity and progress, (*ANC Today*, Volume1, Number 1, 2001).

This inaugural letter in the agenda setting publication points to the fact that while the ruling party's former president was at the helm of engineering Comtask, its 83 recommendations underlie the philosophical dichotomy that suggests that those who govern are the only ones best placed to communicate information to the "masses of our people", (Mbeki, 2001). Habermas argues that this monopoly of thought and action may result in entrenching the elite public sphere and could tamper with the democratic liberties of all role players.

South Africa experienced Mbeki's era as defined by two major issues that shaped the tone of his presidency: the Zimbabwean quiet diplomacy issue and the communications on HIV/Aids. Both of these epitomise a philosophical approach embedded in the African solutions for African challenges approach, which would come to show a disjuncture between his vision and universal understanding. These two matter - Quiet diplomacy on Zimbabwe's deteriorating politics under Mugabe and HIV/AIDS - are case studies used to deconstruct Mbeki's relations with the media during his seven-year tenure. The research, therefore, asked the questions: How did the Mbeki era meet the criteria for an

ideal public sphere in a growing democracy beyond the euphoria of the Mandela years? Was the honeymoon of public sphere consensus over, to be replaced by the transformation of the public sphere, which was being carved into the African renewal narrative under Mbeki? The Habermasian public sphere criteria which has been the barometer to measure consensus, was the same tool used under Mbeki's administration. It was used to analyse his style of governing effectiveness and whether it was transparent and inclusive, and ensured citizen participation in a bid to find solutions to African challenges.

The disjuncture between Mbeki's philosophical basis of the African Renaissance and the general understanding defined his administration's media-government relationship. The relations were tense during his tenure, due to Mbeki's expectations of the media in a democratic state. According to Gevisser, the ANC government was very disappointed in how the media portrayed the country and by extension the ruling party (Gevisser, 2007). *ANC Today* was born out of that frustration.

Mbeki participated in penning and/or editing each of the letters before publication, and presence was felt across the media. Communications and media academic Tawana Kupe wrote in a favourable opinion piece published in *Mail & Guardian* in 2005 that he was "quite sure a lot of journalists will be annoyed with me for declaring President Mbeki 'communicator of the year' for 2004. On what grounds do I give him this award, they might ask?", wrote Kupe. Kupe said that Mbeki's strategy was masterful, particularly during the 2004 pre-election campaigning. "Mbeki and the electorate set the agenda, not the media. As a result, some of the issues the media had put forward as key to the election, like HIV/Aids and Zimbabwe, did not quite feature," (Kupe, 2005). Kupe posits that in that year a,

> number of newspaper columnists … found themselves having to comment on Mbeki's column in the online ANC publication *ANC Today*. One complained that it was too long and needed an edit. An interesting view, given that most columnists (myself included) begrudge the immense powers editors have to cut columns or even can them altogether. Mbeki does not have to suffer the dictatorship of an editor and his subs, or the

> commercially calculated tyranny of the owner – which journalists call 'space constraints' (Kupe, 2005).

Another point Kupe made about the President's column was that in this unmediated column, the president's "'no-holds-barred approach consistently gets into the weekend newspapers in an abridged version. This was certainly the case in November, when Mbeki took on Archbishop Desmond Tutu after the annual Nelson Mandela lecture", (Kupe, 2005).

"Tutu had lamented the lack of free public debate, in part caused by sycophancy, and questioned government policies on black economic empowerment, housing, social welfare, HIV/Aids and the crisis in Zimbabwe. Mbeki's letter, which suggested he wanted open public debate but that it should be based on respect for the truth, left almost all gasping for breath. The Arch himself was reduced to mock prayer as a counter response", (Kupe, 2005). Kupe argued that "whether you agree with him or not, quite clearly President Mbeki has his own media strategy. It's a strategy that eschews the conventional press conferences and bland statements and instead raises the temperature and level of debate by not fearing to court controversy," (Kupe, 2005).

Contrary to the favourable opinion in Kupe's column, former *Cape Times* editor, Ryland Fisher pointed out that during the Mbeki era, government communications was characterised by "the politicisation of government communicators". He asserts that these communicators "were less concerned with media relationship building than being gatekeepers who would focus on shielding their political principals. There was a growing awareness, especially in Mbeki's second term, that there was a real climate of, 'Let's take more control of the message", (Fisher, 2016).

In addition, Adriaan Basson, former editor of *Die Beeld and Rapport* newspapers and had worked for *City Press* during the Mbeki era, pointed out that the key difference between media and government relations was related to extreme centralisation of information from the administration's side. This made the flow of information impossible under Mbeki, as everything had to be referred to some central place of information for clearance, (Basson, 2015). Such over-centralisation, Basson argued, is not ideal for any party that seeks to

communicate effectively. “There is always going to be a natural tension between the government and the media, but it is in the government’s interests to communicate bad news as well,” (Basson, 2015). Basson also said in an interview, that with Afrikaans media, the language was always a barrier to accessing information. He further argued that events such as a corruption arrests created great stories and shouldn’t have to be the source of tension as the media is responsible for reporting what is in the public interest and holding officials accountable, (Basson, 2015).

Songezo Zibi, former editor of *Business Day* says “There was criticism that the *ANC Today* letters should have been done in his capacity as head of state and not as ANC president. These letters showed his thinking, and some of the most profound things he wrote were in his capacity as ANC president”, (Zibi Interview, 2016).

6.3 WHERE IT ALL BEGUN

Mbeki, unlike Mandela before and Zuma after him, was embedded in the Department of Publicity for the ANC ahead of the democratic dispensation[55]. His role as advisor and speechwriter to Oliver Tambo, the then President of the ANC, meant that he was accustomed to setting the agenda during the liberation movement. Mbeki’s biographer, Gevisser (2007), in his book *The Dream Deferred,* explains the influence Tambo had on Mbeki, and vice versa. He notes that Mbeki spent the last three hours of Tambo’s life at his bedside, indicating that the relationship had transcended mere politics and had become that of father and son, (Gevisser, 2007: 641).

A classical case of liberation movement’s use of alternative media as a tactic to overthrow colonial rule and wanting this approach to permeate into the democratic state to carry out government messaging unquestioned, making the transition to the new dispensation a challenge.

[55] The report had 11 recommendations that covered other areas. In the report, the commission further stated: "The central issue for this inquiry, therefore, is racism. But this right to equality and to human dignity must be balanced against the right to freedom of expression which includes freedom of the press and other media" (Section 16 of the Constitution).

In his book, Spiess (2011) tells the story of the government's ability to insert itself in the public sphere in an attempt to turn the media into lapdogs. Spiess (2011) continues to argue that watchdog media (WM) is "reporting that serves' and gives the exposure of wrongdoing in the public interest", (Coronel in Spiess, 2011: 5). Such journalism does "not only provide information but particularly focus on malfeasance", (Spiess, 2011: 5). Media as watchdogs "can therefore contribute to each phase of democratisation and in several ways, including policy-making and law abidance, their main contribution is to hold powerful actors accountable", (Spiess, 2011: 5). This sentiment also came through from Basson's interview.

This is not unique to Mbeki. In the preceding chapter, reference was made to the June 1997 meeting between Mandela and members of the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF), wherein a tense standoff ensued.

Similarly this would be no different with the Zuma era, which sought to gag the media through its Secrecy Bill and MAT, as it shall be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter.

In the days leading up to 1994, Mbeki had played a pivotal role in shaping ANC communications about developments that were about to change the face of politics in South Africa, (Gevisser, 2007). It is no wonder that when he occupied his first position in the government, he took a keen interest in how the ANC was going to tackle the challenges of communications by establishing Comtask that was tasked with assessing the communications landscape. Some of the proposals in the Comtask included the need for government communications to keep regular contact with the media to ensure constant influence over how the media covered the work of the government.[56]

Mbeki's immediate focus was on the transformation of the economy. According to Gevisser, this is what set him on a collision path with big business and, therefore, the media, (Gevisser, 2007: 641). Similarly to Mandela's views expressed at the meeting with SANEF, Mbeki's views were also informed by the theory that the media was influenced by a white minority agenda, a matter explored in more detail in the next section of this research.

[56]Directors General were organised according to clusters of government departments – such as the social cluster, security cluster and economic cluster. These were meant to coordinate the work of government.

6.4 THROUGH RACE-TINTED GLASSES

Mbeki's African agenda and racial discourse influenced his relationship with the media. Before Mbeki became head of state, the Human Rights Commission had conducted an investigation into racism in the media. Although inconclusive, this report gave credence to the fact that racism had afflicted the newsroom the same way that it had afflicted society. The report concluded that there was 'subliminal racism' in the media.

The following extract summarises the observations and findings of the commission:

> To the extent that expressions in the South African media 'reflect a persistent pattern' of racist expressions and content of writing that could have been avoided, and given that we take seriously the fact that complaints that such expressions cause or have the effect of causing hurt and pain, South African media can be characterised as racist institutions, (Goldberg, 2007: 370). This finding holds, regardless of whether there is conscious or unconscious racism – direct or indirect. The cumulative effect of persistent racist stereotypes, racial insensitivity and at times reckless disregard for the effect of racist expressions on others, amounts to racism.
>
> We urge Sanef and the Institute for Advanced Journalism to offer racism awareness training for journalists at all levels of the industry. It is believed that this report will be a valuable resource for discussion and debate. Editors should be encouraged to organise newsroom discussion groups with a view to sensitising journalists to the manner in which racism creeps into their copy. Schools of journalism and media studies at universities and technikons should consider a module on racism in the media in the academic training of journalists and media workers.
>
> Having found that racism exists in the media, it cannot and must not be equated to bad journalism. What makes for bad journalism is hardly ever the racist content or the effect of particular copy. It is true that

> double-checking sources might ensure a more balanced presentation of the issue, but failure to do so need not amount to racism.
> There is concern that resorting to an explanation of bad journalism might be another form of evasion and denial of racism.
>
> Attention is drawn to institutional and structural forms of racism. The Commission did not undertake an examination of staff levels and how various race groups are represented. Many companies are complying with the employment equity plans required by the Employment Equity Act, 1998, but much racism occurs at the institutional or structural levels, because historical reliance is upon common sense methods and systems, without interrogating what messages these conveyed about the cultural diversity of our country, the history of inequality and the dominant knowledge systems that create a unipolar view of the world. Journalists should be exposed to the cultural diversity that forms the fabric of our society.
>
> There are many agencies in our country that organise 'plunges' and trans-cultural dialogues. These would help all South Africans understand and appreciate the value of cultural diversity in our country. (Extract from The Human Rights Commission (HRC) report, *Fault lines: Inquiry into Racism in the Media*, August 2000: 89).[57]

From these findings of the HRC commission, it is apparent that the media did not escape the scourge of racism that was still prevalent in the country, despite the dawn of 1994.

In his address to a forum of black journalists, Mbeki made his views on the media clear. He accused the mass media of "harboring a tendency to look for crisis and to look for faults and mistakes", (Gevisser, 2007: 644). Mbeki deliberately sought to divide journalists according to race by saying that he expected Anton Harber, who was present at the gathering, to be critical of the government, especially the transformation agenda, and did not expect such behaviour from Mathatha Tsedu, then a political editor of *The Sowetan*. In a clear message to black journalists,

[57]The GCIS reported to the presidency and was administratively provided for in the organogram of the presidency as such. Pahad presented the budget vote of the GCIS in parliament and was deemed the political head of government communications.

Mbeki said, "'Roll up your sleeves and stop whining like a whitey. Get with the programme'. Any black journalists critical of the ANC were already being characterised by the Mbeki spin machine as 'Uncle Toms, trapped in their own slave mentalities", (Gevisser, 2007: 644).

As expected, the journalists did not respond well to this characterisation or a similar accusation by Mbeki's predecessor. Kaizer Nyatsumba, the then political editor at *The Star*, who was considered a supporter of Mbeki, led the charge to dismiss Mbeki's utterances as overarching paranoia. Many more commented on what they called a trend of paranoia and attempted subjugation of the media, (Daniels, 2010: 208).

6.5 THE BIRTH OF THE GCIS: FEW OR NO BIRTH PAINS

During Mbeki's tenure as president, the GCIS was led by a respected communicator Joel Netshitenzhe as its first CEO. According to Tyawa who deputised him (Tyawa, 2016; Omar, 2016), the GCIS had a solid leadership and consistency of message under Netshitenzhe. Netshitenzhe had a dynamic team of communicators who were consummate professionals with solid contacts and relationships within the media, posited Tyawa, (Tyawa, 2016).

According to Scott and Monama, two communicators who operated in the Mbeki era, government departments cooperated with the GCIS to create a uniform message. This built bridges with the media, which in turn assisted the government in reaching its constituencies, (Scott, Monama Interviews, 2016).

Pre-cabinet briefings were another key intervention established by the GCIS. In this regard, the GCIS convened heads of communications and spokespersons to brief them on what was to come from upcoming cabinet meetings, in order to prepare them for the work of communicating the cabinet outcomes. This ensured that there were no surprises, and communicators and their principals were better prepared to explain cabinet decisions, (Maseko interview, 2016). To further align communications across government, clusters that mirrored the DG clusters[58] of

[58] The *Sunday Times* ran a few headline stories about the Minister of Health being a liar, a drunk and a thief. This was quite apart from the coverage they ran on her stance on HIV/Aids (Source: *Sunday Times*, August 2005; article written by Ray Hartley, *What the Manto Ruling means*).

the government coordinated emerging messages.

A fully functional GCIS gave the relationship between the government and the media under Mbeki's administration a chance for improvement. Regular media briefings were structured to follow major events, such as the SONA and cabinet meetings, ensuring that the media were familiar with the government programmes that were in place. However, this was not enough to deal with the tensions at high political levels, which came to a head in 2001 under the Mbeki administration.

6.6 THE PARANOIA AGAINST THE MEDIA

One of the factors that defined Mbeki's presidency was the role of Essop Pahad, his Minister in the Presidency. Pahad was Mbeki's right-hand man in his relationship with the press; he was also the minister responsible for overseeing the GCIS.[59] Pahad had an abrasive relationship with the press, but the research looks at his notorious proposal to punish the media by withdrawing government advertising spend should they not tow the government's agenda line. This proposal followed the adverse coverage that the then Minister of Health received from the *Sunday Times*.[60] Although the court ruled that the media had every right to publish what they deemed to be in the public interest, Pahad expressed that the *Sunday Times* had to be punished. Pahad had waged a similar campaign against the *Mail & Guardian.*[61] By 2004, the owner of the *Mail & Guardian* had to embark on a road show to convince government departments to work with the publication.[62]

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[59]This is according to the owner of the *Mail & Guardian*, Trevor Ncube.

[60]At the time, the researcher was Vice-President of Communications for South African Airways – a state-owned enterprise – and hosted Ncube at several meetings where he sought a new collaboration with the airline following the widespread ban. SAA entered into new agreements with the *Mail & Guardian* that saw Business Class passengers receiving the *Mail & Guardian* as one of the newspapers distributed on board.

[61]At least two ministers of the Zuma administration – Blade Nzimande and Lindiwe Zulu – have been quoted as extensively lobbying for government advertising to be used as leverage to tame the media (Source: *City Press*). The Minister of Communications had been asked on a few occasions to work out how advertising could be drastically reduced regarding publications seen to be hostile to the government. Unlike the Mbeki era, where this was implemented unofficially, there was a determination in the Zuma administration to formalise such a slash in advertising. One of the ways this would be achieved was to direct government departments to advertise less in the commercial media and more in the in-house government publication, *Vuk'uzenzele*, as well as in community media where a directive was issued that at least 30% of government expenditures had to be redirected. (Source: *City Press*).

[62]As a good example of this inaccessibility, Ratshitanga declined to participate in this study despite repeated requests. He claimed that to answer questions sent to him would amount to 'doing your

This ban indicates what Maqeda and Makombe (2013) caution in their comparative study on the state of media and government relations between Zimbabwe and South Africa. They illustrate that government ministers can be enabling instruments, inserting the public policy agenda in the public sphere above that of the media and civil society, all of which is antithesis of the Habermasian public sphere's westernised approach. The normative public sphere approach does not only serve the elite but leaves ample room for interpretation, and therefore can be open to government manipulation, amplifying policy agendas (lawmakers) over public agendas (civil society) and media agendas, (Furman & Šerikova, 2007). Nymanjoh and Manyozo' (2012) works explored the phenomenon of African democracies media being captured by western principles often characterised by elements of propagating government's messaging.

While the thesis deployed the Habermasian public sphere argument, its shortcomings from a decolonial epistemic perspective are evident. Manyozo (2012) also cautions that Western news products [media] produce 'Eurocentric hierarchies of place and human life', (Manyozo, 2012).

The campaign against the media was to be resuscitated during the Zuma era, in line with the worsening of relations, as this research shall demonstrate in Chapter 8.[63] Pahad was also known for often dictating to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) on how to cover the government's critical events. His interference was a blot on an otherwise cordial relationship between the GCIS and the media under the leadership of Joel Netshitenzhe. These sentiments were further reinforced by William Mervin Gumede (2005) in his work on Mbeki. He wrote:

> Mbeki dislikes the media and rarely speaks to journalists. He has an excellent media team headed by the urbane Bheki Khumalo but direct access to the president even if only in the form of regular media conferences would do much to dispel his image as a secretive, unapproachable elitist, (Gumede, 2005: 61).

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assignment for you' – a far cry from all kinds of high-profile people who gave their valuable time to help create new knowledge through this research.

[63] Sourced from www.thelancet.com Vol 370 July 7, 2007.

Mbeki's saving grace was spokesperson Bheki Khumalo, who was affable and had a good relationship with the media. While Mbeki was considered inaccessible, Khumalo was one of the most accessible government spokespersons under that administration. He even defended Mbeki at the height of the HIV/Aids controversy. This was when Mbeki was alleged to have had a contrarian view to the scientists with the claim that 'HIV doesn't cause AIDS', which is revisited in section 6.7. When interviewed for a position on the SABC board, Khumalo stated that Mbeki was one of the most misunderstood presidents and one of the best presidents the country has ever had, especially on issues of economic policy, (Mkhwanazi, 2007). However, when Ratshitanga took over as spokesperson, he was seen as inaccessible as he shared Mbeki's approach to the media. Ratshitanga continued to be Mbeki's spokesperson for years after he was no longer president. They shared a philosophy on how to treat the media.[64]

6.7 HIV AIDS – A DEFINING MATTER

Mbeki's second term was affected by the HIV/Aids controversy and the manner in which government handled the matter. A civil society group, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), was at loggerheads with Mbeki's government, campaigning for provision of Nevirapine drug for pregnant women to prevent unborn children from contracting HIV. The TAC's activism led to the organisation winning the battle in court alongside the subsequent court case on the provision of HIV Anti-Retroviral (ARVs) drugs. Furman & Šerikova's (2007) work show the battle of agendas at play - that of public policy, as well as of civil society. The ultimate being civil society's triumph over the government, all while the media continued to cover the unfolding AIDS story.

For instance, in November 2008, *The New York Times* reported that due to Thabo Mbeki's rejection of scientific consensus on Aids and his embrace of AIDS denialism, about 365 000 people had perished in South Africa, (*Dugger*, 2008). Another study in *African Affairs* (2008) found that Mbeki's government could have prevented 171 000 HIV infections and the deaths of 343 000 during his tenure,

[64] Allister Sparks was a South African writer, journalist, and political commentator. He was the editor of *The Rand Daily Mail* when it broke Muldergate, the story of how the apartheid government secretly funded information projects. (wikipedia.org)

had it followed the more sensible public health policies that were applied in the Western Cape Province (Nattrass, 2008).

Paul Zeitz, co-founder and Executive Director of the Global AIDS Alliance, explains in his article *Lessons from South Africa's experience of HIV/AIDS* that while living in Zambia in the late 1990s he witnessed devastating effects of HIV/AIDS "on individuals, families, and communities… I met some young Zambians and was stunned when one man emphatically declared; 'Mbeki says HIV doesn't cause AIDS, so why should I wear a condom anyway?' Until that moment, I hadn't understood the ripple effect of South Africa's policy on individual behaviour elsewhere", Zeitz (2007). [65]

Yet, years later, using his own newsletter in 2016, which is embedded in his foundation's mbeki.org website (www.mbeki.org), Mbeki's attempt to clarify what he had meant with the 'HIV does not cause AIDS' statement , the results of which were headlines in media, was met with pushback by civil society and the media. An online publication *The Daily Maverick* columnist Richard Poplak, wrote,

"but the most recent letter was a killer, even by the former president's standards. The issue that we have all been dreading – Mbeki's unforgivable policy decisions during the country's HIV/Aids crisis – finally received its roller-coaster ride entitled *A brief commentary on the question of HIV and Aids* … the most absurd and tragic monstrosity that I have ever encountered on the internet," (Poplak, 2016).

Allister Sparks[66] describes Mbeki's association with dissidents as "an African intellectual independence, to show that he is not simply a captive of Western thought systems", (Sparks, 2003: 291).

Additional to this issue, there was Zimbabwe and Mbeki's diplomatic approach.

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[65] Source of the story of Zimbabwe under Mugabe as told by the *Mail & Guardian*, *City Press* and the *Sunday Times*.

[66] Khampepe Commission report on the 2002 elections in Zimbabwe, drawn up by Constitutional Court judges Dikgang Moseneke and Sisi Khampepe, slams the Zimbabwean electoral process, and says that given the intimidation of the opposition and the redrawing of electoral boundaries to favour the ruling Zanu-PF, the elections were neither free not fair. This was in contrast with the assessment of a South African election observer mission that was sent there by Mbeki, then president and mediator in Zimbabwe, which found the elections to be 'legitimate'. (issafrica.org)

6.8 ZIMBABWE'S QUIET DIPLOMACY: FURTHER DAMAGE TO GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Another dark spot on Mbeki's relationship with the media was furthered by his approach to Zimbabwe's dictatorship in the hands of Mugabe. South Africa's neighbouring country encouraged land repossession from white minorities by military veterans, bringing the country to crisis point of implosion around the year 2000.[67] This was the result of a slow paced land redistribution process as was promised to Zimbabweans as part of the liberation settlement, linked to what was called the Lancaster House Settlement back in the early eighties. During this time lives were lost and people displaced.

The matter generated an international outcry because South Africa was expected, at the very least by the West, to intervene as the regional economic powerhouse nearest to Zimbabwe. There were also African interventions expected under the auspices of the African Union, specifically the South African Development Community (SADC), which delegated Mbeki as mediator. This fact prevented him from criticising the developments in Zimbabwe – a policy that was loosely known as 'quiet diplomacy'. Political analyst Chris Landsberg (2004) explores this policy in full in his book, *The Quiet Diplomacy of Liberation: International Politics and South Africa's Transition*, where he goes behind the scenes to decipher South Africa's approach that he argues can be summed up as African Solutions for African problems., (Landsberg, 2016).

In an interview with senior journalist Rantao, one of Mbeki's biographers admitted that his readers were concerned about what he termed 'a human drama unfolding north of our borders', and that the local media also took a lead from international media in the likes of the BBC, which focused on white people being bullied in that country (Jovial Rantao interview, 2004). The tension in this matter was caused less by the lack of information about the view of the government than about the agitation of the media on behalf of its readers. The case study of Zimbabwe turned Mbeki's relationship with the media into a contest of thoughts rather than a simple relationship of information exchange. Tsedu, at that time a political editor for the *Sowetan*, argued that the media found it easy to make calls

[67] Ubuntu stands for a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity.

that were less than diplomatic because they “don’t have to live with the consequences of their calls”, (Tsedu Interview, 2015).

Through the GCIS, Mbeki attempted to clarify his administration’s approach to the Zimbabwe question. Mbeki’s approach can be best understood through his words in one of his letters published in the unmediated *ANC Today*, entitled: *The People of Zimbabwe must decide their own future*. The following extract from that article sheds some light on Mbeki’s adamant approach to this matter:

> In this regard, the people and leaders of Zimbabwe are neither more nor less human than anyone among us. As has happened with us at various times, they too will have to break the vicious cycle.
>
> I am certain that they will sit together as Zimbabweans and Africans to listen to and hear one another and take the difficult decisions that will say, practically, that none among them was born to impose an intolerable burden of suffering on the people of Zimbabwe. The rest of us have an obligation to work with them as they strive to overcome their immense difficulties, faithful to the spirit of human solidarity. As immediate neighbours, we have no choice in this regard. As patriots who occupied the same trench of struggle with the people of Zimbabwe when we, together, battled to end white minority rule in our region and continent, we have no choice but to lend a hand to the effort of the people of Zimbabwe to enjoy the fruits of their hard-won liberation, of independence, freedom, democracy, peace and stability, and prosperity. Righteous and self-serving indignation and the attitude of superior rectitude will not give us this outcome, (*ANC Today*, Vol 3: 18).

Mbeki’s characterisation by the media in the Zimbabwe ‘quiet diplomacy’ was described by the then editor of the *Sunday Times* Mondli Makhanya as a viewpoint generally held by media leadership that the president "could not be bothered about what the media writes. His approach was that of asking: 'Why doesn’t the media understand?' instead of taking them along with him as he implements this policy", (Makhanya interview, 2004). The extent of criticism that the media meted out to Mbeki on this issue illustrates the fact that the media felt

left out of the latest thinking on the Zimbabwe issue, and resented having to scrape for information.

The editorial of the *Mail & Guardian* following the release of the Khampepe Commission[68] sums up the media's overall attitude towards Mbeki that may well have stemmed from the protracted contestation of thoughts between Mbeki and the media:

> The Khampepe report underscores Mbeki's betrayal of our Constitution's values. It shows that he condoned the theft of the election and lied to the people of Zimbabwe, to South Africans and to the wider world by actively promoting the idea that the poll was the legitimate expression of the will of Zimbabweans.
>
> Here was a leader who had fought and sacrificed for South Africa's freedom, yet who connived in the subversion of democracy in a neighbouring state. He publicly denounced calls for regime change in Zimbabwe but defended a fraudulent solution that kept Mugabe's despotic government in power. And his successors, Kgalema Motlanthe and Jacob Zuma, were party to his cover-up by opposing this newspaper's efforts to expose the truth, (*Mail & Guardian*, 2014).

The editorial in the *Mail and Guardian* resulted from the tension between the government and the media, showing that agenda setting and framing of content is not the sole prerogative of the government, that there are multiple players in the public sphere, and that there is no hegemony of thought.

The Zimbabwe issue seemed to exaggerate the already negative perception that the media had of Mbeki and his administration. Sparks (2003) defined the Zimbabwe issue as "the most burdensome albatross" to Mbeki's tenure, (Sparks, 2003: 306).

[68] The African Renaissance is the concept that African people and nations shall overcome the current challenges confronting the continent and achieve cultural, scientific, and economic renewal.

6.9 CONCLUSION

For Habermas, “the success of the public sphere depends upon the extent of access (as close to universal as possible); the degree of autonomy (the citizens must be free from coercion); the rejection of hierarchy (so that each might participate on an equal footing); the rule of law (particularly the subordination of the state); and the quality of participation”, (Rutherford, 2000: 19). This research demonstrates that whether it was Mandela by way of convening a meeting with SANEF, Mbeki with Comtask, with his approach of unmediated platforms - ANC *Today or Izimbizos – or* Zuma’s presidency with the favourable Gupta-family owned media platforms, there existed in all three presidencies sentiments of reigning in the media that didn’t toe the line of the imposed government agenda. Pointing to the source of tension between the two players.

Mbeki’s African renaissance approach seemed to have unsettled the western public sphere status quo as was defined in the Habermasian theory and its permutations. Echoing *De-westernising media theory to make room for African experience*, Nymanjoh asks if we should approach Africa’s media via western theoretical constructs, given that we are trapped in local and global hierarchies, while Manyozo (2012) cautions African democracies against potentially adopting Western news agendas that may not necessarily serve Africa.

Fanon (1961) has also argued that Africans must not desire to “‘catch up with Europe” (Fanon, 1961: 254) but rather strive to find a different path to advance humanity. Mbeki sought to do this, however, it was far too philosophical and lacked clarity. This is one reason that tensions heightened in his tenure, and the fact that most compared him to Mandela didn’t help. This research will turn to Zuma’s administration in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

Zuma and the media: no love lost

7.1 INTRODUCTION

While Mandela's presidency was anchored on *Ubuntu* and Mbeki's the African Renaissance[69] philosophies, Zuma's was driven by populism which would prove destructive to the country's domestic and international perceptions. According to sahistory.org.za "Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma ascended to the South African presidency on 9 May 2009 on a wave of popular euphoria fuelled by voters and fellow party politicians alike. A controversial candidate", (sahistory.org.za).There is no question that he was controversial. Former editor of the *Sunday Times* Ray Hartley provides succinct evidence in his article - *How Zuma lost control - and the people who let him down*. In it, he provides the extent and depth of Zuma's strategy to weaken arms of the state – the judiciary, security, treasury, as well as the media – with what Dahir (2019) referred to as enablers. These were Zimbabwean and Tanzanian Mugabeism and Magafulification, and his loyalists all in tow.

According to Hartley, Zuma's four-fold strategy involved reorganising the South African intelligence, bringing "to heel the remaining parts of the media that were critical of him"; taking the "sting out of the Judiciary"; and taking over the public purse by way of capturing the treasury department, (Hartley, 2018). This demonstrated how Zuma masterfully exploited three agendas that theorists Rogers and Dearing (1988) defined. These are: first, Public Agenda Setting, in which the public's agenda is the dependent variable (civil society); second, Media Agenda Setting, in which the media's agenda is treated as the dependent variable (aka. agenda building); and, third, Policy Agenda Setting, in which elite

[69]In his second term of office, Zuma sought to reconstruct the Communications Ministry as a mammoth communications machine that included several agencies such as the GCIS, Brand SA, the SABC, ICASA and the MDDA, aimed at improving the cohesion of the ministry. This proved to be a failure, resulting in a new Minister of Communications being appointed by Zuma halfway through his term of office (Source: GCIS).

policy makers' agendas are treated as the dependent variable (aka. political agenda setting), (Rogers & Dearing in Aunur et al., 2015).

The three agenda setting types are useful in that they point to reasons there exist tensions between the media and Zuma's government. Of all three Presidents studied in this research, Zuma's presidency has all elements of influencing and imposing itself into the public sphere contrary to the Habermasian theory, and attempting to shape public opinion to suit his administration's agenda. He used government policies to push the ANC agenda, and his populism to influence part of the civil society agenda during his rape case. He also attempted to ensure that the media agenda is weakened, discrediting media at every possible turn.

Zuma's history in the liberation movement served his cause to build a critical mass loyalty from enablers - government officials and civil society alike. He served in the ANC since his teenage years in various capacities in the liberation movement. He also spent 10 years incarcerated on Robben Island and had been in exile until the early 90s, during which time he had worked for the liberation movement. In the early 90s, he became instrumental in quelling political violence between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)[70] in the KwaZulu Natal province pre-1994 elections. Post 1994, when Mandela ascended to the first democratically elected presidency with Thabo Mbeki as his deputy, Zuma was appointed the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Economic Affairs and Tourism in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. In the same year, he was elected National Chairperson of the ANC and chairperson of the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal, and was re-elected to the latter position in 1996. In 1997, he was elected Deputy President of the ANC at the elective National Conference in Mafikeng, which automated him to Deputy Presidency of the country to serve under the Mbeki administration from 1999.

By the time Zuma made entry into his first term as president, he had been courted by a litany of newsworthy events that led to an already bubbling under tension between himself - either in his personal capacity or as a public official -

[70]This was the crime-fighting unit attached to the National Prosecution Authority, and the resolution passed was to disband it completely and replace it with something that would be less hostile to the political leadership and be more subject to political authority.

and the media as coverage was robust where he was concerned. The following are but a few of the newsworthy events that the media shone the spotlight on.

7.1.1 The Arms Deal Saga

The arms deal, which was initiated during the Mandela era, was concluded in 1999, just on the cusp of Mbeki's presidency. At the same time, Zuma was transitioning from serving as Member of the Executive Committee (MEC).He had also been elected deputy president of the ANC in 1997 and became deputy presidency to Mbeki in 1999. While serving as deputy president, Patricia De Lille, at the time minority parliamentary leader of the Independent Democrats (ID), led the call for an investigation into alleged corruption in South Africa's purchase of weapons from European companies which cost the taxpayers almost R60bn at that time. She would release what is now known as the De Lille Dossier implicating very senior ANC members, some of whom served in parliament. The De Lille Dossier led to the successful prosecutions of Zuma's former finance advisor Shabir Shaik and ANC Chief whip Tony Yengeni, (De Lille, 2008).

European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) had admitted to facilitating a process that allowed over approximately 30 South African officials to secure luxury vehicles, for which Yengeni was the beneficiary of a discount. The *Cape Times* in 2001 reported that "30 politicians and VIPs got discounts on luxury vehicles from Daimler-Chrysler" (Corruption Watch News, 2014). Yengeni was subsequently charged "with defrauding parliament by accepting a discount on a luxury car during the tendering process for a controversial arms deal while he was the member of a parliamentary committee reporting on the same deal", (Corruption Watch News, 2014). One Member of Parliament even suggested that Yengeni was being offered up as a scapegoat for the arms deal scandal, so that others could avoid being charged, (Van der Westhuizen, 2001).

Yengeni eventually entered into a plea agreement in which various corruption charges were dismissed in exchange for his pleading guilty to one count of fraud (Mail & Guardian, 2003). In March 2003, the court entered a conviction against Yengeni for fraud and sentenced him to four years in prison (Rory, 2003). After failed appeals (Mail & Guardian, 2006), Yengeni entered Pollsmoor Prison near Cape Town on 24 August 2006. He was immediately transferred to the more

modern Malmesbury prison, but was released on parole on 15 January 2007 — after completing a mere four months of the four-year sentence, (The Guardian, 2007).

By 2005, there was growing pressure from disgruntled opposition parties over Zuma's presence in parliament as an executive member of government, who was alleged to have been involved in the arms deal scandal from which he financially benefitted through his financial advisor Shabir Shaik's company Nkobi Holdings. As a result, Mbeki would request that Zuma step down from his deputy presidency. Shaik had been convicted to a 15-year sentence through the courts for bribery. "The deal, which involved accusations of bribery levelled against Zuma as well as his financial advisor Shaik and several others, concerned the purchase of military equipment required for replacing the country's dated existing arms. The alleged bribes amounted to what was almost R2-billion", (Brümmer & Sole, 2018).

The arms deal scandal reverberated beyond the borders of South Africa as Zuma was a key figure mentioned in the Schabir Shaik trial.

> Shaik, a Durban businessman and his financial advisor, was questioned over bribery in the course of the purchase of Valour class frigates for the South African Navy, a proposed waterfront development in Durban, and lavish spending on Zuma's residence in Nkandla. In the trial, Shaik was shown to have solicited a bribe of R500, 000 per annum for Zuma in return for Zuma's support for the defence contractor Thomson-CSF, documented in the infamous "encrypted fax". On 2 June 2005, Shaik was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years in prison, ("Encrypted Fax", 2016).

Judge Hilary Squires had not minced his words, placing Zuma at the centre of his verdict against Shaik and his fellow accused, saying "all the accused companies were used at one time or another to pay sums of money to Jacob Zuma in contravention of section 1(1)(a)(I) or (ii) of the Corruption Act" (Hartley, 2018). It was so damning a verdict, that after a week of dithering, Mbeki announced to parliament that Zuma had been fired. "The circumstances dictate that in the interest of the honourable deputy president, the government, our young

democratic system, and our country, it would be best to release the Hon Jacob Zuma from his responsibilities as deputy president of the republic and member of the cabinet" Mbeki told a special sitting" , (Hartley, 2018). Zuma was charged with 700 corruption charges by the National Prosecutors Agency (NPS) in 2005. The same year he faced allegations of raping a woman - the daughter of a friend - at his home in Johannesburg, (Hartley, 2018). The watchdog media followed these stories closely.

7.1.2 Alleged rape charges

"In 2005, then vice-president, Zuma had been stripped of his rank following allegations of rape and corruption", (BBC News, 2008). Four months after he was fired by Mbeki, Zuma had to fight off rape charges by an HIV positive activist (only known as Khwezi for protection of her identity). While he would be acquitted a year later, it was not before some of his statements were damaging in a country whose HIV positive population was escalating rapidly. He said "he had sought to diminish the likelihood of infection by taking a shower", (Adiel, 2016). This resulted in satirist cartoonist Zapiro planting a permanent showerhead above Zuma's head in every illustration with him as a subject. This would lead to Zapiro suffering a spate of court litigations in the hands of Zuma. Never retreating in shame, "Zuma used the trial to bring his rag-tag army onto the streets. Young militant supporters laid siege to the High Court in Johannesburg, screaming their hatred for Khwezi and singing Zuma's trademark struggle song, Umshini wam, a militant elegy to the AK47", (Hartley, 2018). The media followed the rape allegations story diligently as it was charecterised by newsworthy angles possible.

7.1.3 Corruption Charges

Although Zuma stepped down as deputy president in 2005 with 700 corruption charges on his head and having come out of a bruising rape litigation with an acquittal, his down fall was short lived. His populism would surge prior to the ANC elective conference in 2007 in Polokwane, where he would defeat Mbeki to party presidency that would propel him to the Country leader in the 2008 elections. However, with the corruption charges hanging like an albatross around his neck, he would not as yet take the helm as the country's president, rendering

Kgalema Motlanthe an interim presidency between 2008 to 2009, all of which came about as a result of the ANC national executive removing Mbeki from office. Zuma had been handed a lifeline to the presidency by Judge Chris Nicholson, who had cited “Mbeki's interference with the prosecution”, and thus ruled that the decision to prosecute Zuma was “invalid and is set aside”, (eNCA, 2016).

The Motlanthe presidency, acting on instructions from ANC headquarters, “disbanded the Scorpions, the independent FBI-style unit that was responsible for dealing with high-profile corruption cases. It was the first action taken to keep Zuma out of jail, (Hartley, 2018). With the national prosecutor under political pressure, his office would announce that there would be no pursuance of Zuma’s corruption charges, thus freeing him to assume his role of President of the South African Republic in 2009. Again, the media relentlessly investigated corruption even after the case had been dropped. The corruption charges have since made their way back to the Pietermaritzburg Court after South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal upheld an April 2016 ruling by the High Court to reinstate corruption charges against Zuma.

7.1.4 Nkandla Homestead Security Upgrades

During his presidency, Zuma’s transgressions were momentous, and to which media could not turn a blind eye. The president courted controversy yet again when fresh allegations over his alleged misuse of state funds relating to the development of his private residence in Nkandla came to light between 2011 and 2012.

The charges against Zuma continued to alienate political opponents as well as large sectors of the media and the public. The public protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela’s investigation found that Zuma had to take responsibility for misuse of state funds, which the Constitutional Court also found, concluding that he had to repay a reasonable amount to be determined by Parliament. The debacle would be a bane of his existence as well as a feast for opposition political leaders, until he acceded to paying a percentage of the money. Opposition parties such as the EFF, led by Julius Malema, whom he had kicked out of the ANC, made sure of making his life as president difficult, and led a campaign ‘Pay

back the money' straight to the Constitutional Court. The court would rule that Zuma failed to uphold the constitution, (State of Capture Report 2017).

Chief Justice Mogoeng drew a sharp line in the sand, informing Zuma that as president, he was "a constitutional being by design, a national pathfinder, the quintessential commander-in-chief of state affairs and the personification of this nation's constitutional project", (Hartley, 2018). He further said: "The president thus failed to uphold, defend and respect the constitution as the supreme law of the land. This failure is manifest from the substantial disregard for the remedial action taken against him by the public protector in terms of her constitutional powers", (Hartley, 2018).

7.1.5 Cabinet reshuffling

When Zuma assumed office in 2009, he recognised the executive powers that had been handed to him, and he would use these effectively to his advantage, leading to the down grading of South Africa's economy by three credit ratings agencies - Moody's, S&P and Fitch - by 2017, (Vollgraaff & Mbatha, 2017). Once his reign begun,

> He could appoint a new police chief, a new national director of prosecutions, a new head of the secret service and the head of the new Hawks unit, which would replace the Scorpions. In addition to this, the position of chief executive at the state-owned enterprises Transnet and SAA were vacant and he would be called on to appoint a new board to the South African Broadcasting Corporation, (Hartley, 2018).

His four-fold strategy of reorganising the South African intelligence, went to work as he begun to replace those who had been disloyal to him, worked his way into taking over the public purse by way capturing the treasury, (Hartley, 2018).

For example, his mission to capture treasury saw him reshuffle cabinet several times. Hartley notes:

> In December 2015, Zuma stunned the nation when he fired [the incumbent Finance Minister Nhlanhla] Nene, replacing him with Des van Rooyen, a backbench MP. This was too much, even for the usually acquiescent leaders of the ANC. After the Rand plummeted against the Dollar and

> European currencies, and business, union and civic leaders united in expressing horror. Ramaphosa and the ANC's treasurer-general, Zweli Mkhize, encouraged by business leaders, persuaded him to relent. Three days later he re-appointed Gordhan to the finance ministry [with Mcebisi Jonas as deputy minister] - a move which began to rebuild confidence in the country's financial management, (Hartley, 2018).

Deputy Minister Mcebisi Jonas would reveal that he was offered the position of Minister of Finance by Zuma's associates in the controversial Gupta family, and "Zuma was exposed as having "outsourced" cabinet appointments", (Hartley, 2018). Hartly further writes that "In March 2017, Zuma fired Gordhan and Jonas and appointed Malusi Gigaba finance minister … an ambitious and relatively young minister who had been playing on his side since the Polokwane victory", (Hartley, 2018). Again, these reshuffles gave the media appetite for news attached to Zuma.

7.1.6 His close relations with the controversial Gupta-family

7.1.6.1 The former president inserting himself in the public sphere

In order to influence the establishment of purportedly alternative media - *New Age* Newspaper and ANN7 news channel – Zuma inserted himself in the public sphere. The latter is the subject of what has come to be known as the State Capture Corruption Commission, which was one of the recommendations made by the public protector Adv. Thuli Madonsela prior to her final days of serving in office. Former editor of the now-defunct ANN7 Rajesh Sundaram explained during the State Capture inquiry that Zuma played a major role, even laying editorial policy for pro-ANC news coverage on the channel. For example, Bhengu argues that

> 'Former president Zuma was allegedly heavily involved in the building of the station from the ground up, so much so that Sundaram said Zuma even named the station. "Ajay was telling the president that we are calling it ANN just as Zuma suggested, he seemed to appreciate that." Sundaram said the "7" was added because there was already a news channel with the name ANN', (Bhengu, 2019).

7.1.6.2 The family deciding on government minister's portfolios

The Gupta family prevailed. The media reported that they even decided on who should occupy certain portfolios in government such as when Deputy Minister of Finance Mcebisi Jonas was approached by the family and was offered a new position. However, Bezuidenhout writes that

> The strings attached to the R600-million bribe offer to former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas involved the decimation of the top structure at National Treasury. Gupta patriarch Ajay Gupta sought to buy Mcebisi Jonas for R600-million so he could help boost the family's State Capture loot to R8-billion. Part of that plan entailed the firing of Director General Lungisa Fuzile, Head of Tax and Financial Sector Policy Ismail Momoniat, senior technocrat Andrew Donaldson and the former chief procurement officer Kenneth Brown, (Bezuidenhout, 2018).

7.1.6.3 Changing the public discourse narrative

When approximately 220 000 fabricated social media postings and a cache of 200 000 internal documents were leaked in emails in what would be referred to as the Guptaleaks landed on the watchdog investigative journalists inboxes, it was discovered that the Gupta family had been working with London-based PR company Bell Pottinger. The leaked documents showed they worked to contaminate messaging to amplify the 'white monopoly capital' narrative (an action that took Bell Pottinger out of business once South African activism took root), thus, worsening race relations in a fragile democracy that has come out of a severe racially divided oppression which had used the media as a propaganda tool to wreak havoc. The Guptas, three brothers - Ajay, Tony and Atul Gupta - from India, had built a multibillion-dollar corporate empire - Oakbay with subsidiaries, and "had earned fantastic sums leveraging their friendship with President Jacob G. Zuma. By bullying officials and bending regulations to their will, they secured contracts in fields as varied as armaments, mining and railways", (Segal, 2018).

Similarly to Muldergate, "the #GuptaEmails, as well as reports into state capture, show that the Gupta family's business empire was enabled by diverting funds from the government and state-owned enterprises. Both the New Age newspaper and the television station ANN7 are heavily reliant on government advertising", (ANCIR, 2017). The hundreds of documents were produced between 2016 and

2017. The scale of damage to the South African race relations was grave. From the cache, it was evident that the tactics were similar to the apartheid government propaganda mechanism operated in the 70s. It is argued that:

> The Information Scandal, or Muldergate, of the 1970s … an explosive exposé of how the apartheid state raided the fiscus to run a propaganda campaign which included funding the Citizen newspaper. It involved placing propaganda in international media to gloss its image, which was growing murkier as the anti-apartheid movement gained ground. The name was coined for then information minister Connie Mulder whose secretary, Eschel Rhoodie, masterminded the campaign to divert funds from a defence project to fund the disinformation campaign. When the Rand Daily Mail and the Sunday Express, leading titles of the time, broke the story, all hell broke loose, (ANCIR, 2017).

In present times, the damage can be far reaching as the means to propagate is "more powerful as it rides on the back of a digital explosion that enables fake news (or propaganda) to travel more widely, cheaply and lethally", (ANCIR, 2017). In the Gupta-Pottinger racial propaganda campaign, they used the "multi-channel media [GUPTA] empire that includes mainstream news outlets *The New Age* [newspaper] and *ANN7* [TV channel], alternative news websites, and a vast number of contributors to social media including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram", (ANCIR, 2017). They produced more than 220 000 tweets and similarly hundreds of posts on Facebook to influence the public, (ANCIR, 2017). "The largest period of sustained activity was spent attacking former finance minister Pravin Gordhan in the second half of 2016 to create a climate conducive to forcing his removal as finance minister", (ANCIR, 2017). Only to disrupt treasury department.

In addition to this, the campaign had coined a phrase "White monopoly capital," along with hashtags #WhiteMonopolyCapital and #RespectGuptas, #HandsofftheGuptas, "an array of bogus social media accounts", (Segal, 2018) and many others to shape the public discourse, that is public opinion, in the public sphere. Bell-Pottinger was eventually ejected from the Public Relations and Communications Association (P.R.C.A) as a result of South Africans protests, in both South Africa and in London.

South Africa's watchdog media recorded every step. Their coverage did not earn them any favour, but rather gained them a lifetime of animosity between them and the president. This was evident in an interview with Zuma in 2012 with journalist Moshoeshoe Monare. This was at a time when the media continued to be critical of the government under his leadership. In the interview, the former president said: "the judges were … "influenced by what's happening and influenced by you guys". By "you guys", Zuma meant the media", (Hartley, 2018). He had also attempted to muzzle the media. Hartley argues:

> In 2010 - barely a week after thousands of international journalists had left the country after covering the 2010 football World Cup - through draconian "protection of information" legislation which would make it illegal for journalists to be in possession of leaked documents that "threatened state security", with a possible jail sentence of 15 years. Government officials would be able to designate material "classified" at their will. At the same time the ANC released a discussion paper on a proposed "media appeals tribunal" [MAT] that would oversee complaints about press reporting. The moves against the media followed sustained reporting on abuses of state money spent on constructing Zuma's Nkandla, (Hartley, 2018).

This chapter shows that the tensions between the media and government pre-dated Zuma's ascendency to the presidency in 2009, during the time that he was serving in other executive capacities, thus flowing into his tenure as president. This research notes new proposed propaganda ministry that was predicted would be worse than the SA Communications Service under the apartheid state.[71] This chapter uses the proposal for a MAT as a case study to help understand the reasons for the fractured relationship between the media and the government. The second case study looks at the alternative media that the ANC government, led by Zuma, attempted to introduce into the public sphere. The research focuses on the birth of *The New Age* newspaper and subsequently ANN7 television channel that were owned by the controversial Gupta-family with whom the president and his family had close relations. The research will also examine the impact of the change of ownership at the Independent Newspapers (Pty) Ltd.

[71]The *Sunday Times* reported extensively about the state capture by the Guptas. Themba Maseko was one of the key witnesses who confirmed that the President had instructed him to cooperate with the Gupta family.

According to the Habermasian theory of the public sphere, the success of the public sphere depends upon the extent of access, the degree of autonomy, the rejection of hierarchy, the rule of law, and the quality of participation. The study attempts to answer the question: *Did the Zuma administration respond to the theory of public sphere of consensus?*

This chapter has thus far shown that, unlike Mandela's approach that sought to give the public more instead of less access to information, the Zuma administration made attempts to conceal rather than make information more accessible to the media and the public. How did this shape the Zuma administration's relationship with the media?

7.2 STARTING FROM THE BEGINNING: WHERE WAS THE SEED OF HOSTILITY PLANTED?

Zuma's relationship with the media in the new South Africa can be traced back to the moment he was charged with fraud and fired from the Mbeki cabinet in 2005. In an article published by the *Daily Maverick* in 2014, Stephen Grootes, a senior political writer and talk show anchor, gave an analysis of where it all began:

> It is important here to examine the roots of this dynamic, as they go back a long way. In 2005, Zuma was charged with rape and therefore had to undergo a humiliating trial that must have deeply affected him and his family before he was acquitted. Looking back on those events now, it seems likely that considering the weakness of the case against him, there might well have been no trial if the *Sunday Times* hadn't got hold of, or been given, the charge sheet. In other words, if it were not for that action by the media, Zuma might well have avoided that trial and the embarrassment it led to. Don't forget, Zapiro's lasting depiction of Zuma with a shower-head is a direct result of that case.
>
> The ANC itself has always believed it is up against a hostile media. In 1990, just about all the commercial media in this country were white-owned and white-controlled. While people may still keep the front page of

> *The Star* from the day of FW's speech, in fact those newspapers grew rather critical of the ANC pretty quickly.
>
> In 1997 Nelson Mandela said it was perfectly clear that 'the bulk of the mass media in this country has set itself up as a force hostile to the ANC'. According to some, the dynamic then wasn't complex, the media represented people who benefited from apartheid, and the ANC was breaking all of that down, (Grootes, 2014).

Daniels (2012) further concluded that the media's hostile relationship with Zuma did not start when he assumed office, but was shaped by the ANC at its Polokwane (December 2007) and Mangaung (December 2012) national policy conferences, by proposing the MAT as a resolution of the ruling party. The MAT proposes statutory regulation of the media to be overseen by Parliament. Daniels (2012) argues that the Mangaung conference firmed Zuma's hold on the media, and furthered the 2007 resolution to investigate the establishment of the MAT, thus shaping what was to be a permanent tension between the media and the Zuma administration. In addition, the 2012 Mangaung Conference reached a resolution to disband the Scorpions,[72] giving Zuma power beyond measure. However, these were only the first of a litany of developments that were to take this relationship from bad to worse, (Daniels, 2012).

In his first letter to the party after his election as ANC president, Zuma described the relationship between the ANC with the media as hostile and almost beyond repair. Daniels critiqued the thrust of Zuma's assertions and the following shows how the stage was set for a strained relationship between the Zuma administration and the media. Zuma said:

> In a discussion document entitled Transformation of the Media, circulated as part of preparations for the ANC National Policy Conference in June 2015, it was said that:
>
> The reality is that the media in South Africa, as in every other society, is a major arena in the battle of ideas. All social forces are – to varying

[72]The Government Communications Forum was a meeting of government communicators from all spheres of government. These meetings were convened quarterly for communicators to interact with one another and receive key briefings from the GCIS.

degrees and with differing success – engaged in efforts to ensure that the media advance their ideological, political, social, economic and cultural objectives.

The media is consequently one of the sites of ideological struggle with which the ANC, like other social actors, has sought to engage.

Contrary to what some may claim, the media is not simply a product of the work of disinterested observers – professionals who are able to detach themselves from their personal views, interests, prejudices and social positions and present the world as it objectively is. It is instead a product of the various political, social, economic and cultural forces that exist within a society. It is a battle of ideas and, as such, the media is part of the battle for power. Those with power, particularly economic power, are keen that the media serves to reinforce their privileged position, while those who seek a more equitable distribution of resources campaign for a media that serves the cause of a more equitable society.

The media, viewed in its totality, should be as diverse as the society, which it serves and reflects. This is clearly not the case in South Africa, where the media sometimes functions as if they are an opposition party.

In part, this can be explained by the structure, culture and values of the media inherited from apartheid, and by the commercial forces that drive most media institutions.

As we observed in the discussion document cited above: The freedom of the South African media is today undermined not by the state, but by various tendencies that arise from the commercial imperatives that drive the media. The concentration of ownership, particularly in the print sector, has a particularly restrictive effect on the freedom of the media. The process of consolidation and the drive to cut costs through, among other things, rationalisation of newsgathering operations, leads to homogenisation of content, (ANC Today, January 2008).

In her book, Daniels analyses these assertions and indicates that they do not make sense and are, at best, a departure from the ANC's commitment to freedom of expression.

7.3 THE ZUMA ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH TO RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

This section of the research demonstrates how the power bestowed upon Zuma as president was utilised to destroy the professionalisation of government communications under Mandela and Mbeki. The semi-structured interviews with media commentators, as well as the Frank Dialogues were used in examining his tenure.

7.3.1 The destruction of the GCIS

When he assumed office, Zuma quickly eroded the credibility of the GCIS by firing Themba Maseko, the CEO at the time. According to reports in the *Sunday Times*, Maseko had been put under pressure to work with the notorious Gupta family, who were preparing to launch *The New Age* newspaper. Maseko had declined to comply with the directive from the President to help the Guptas and as a result, when his contract expired it was simply not considered for renewal.[73]

The Zuma administration replaced Maseko with the controversial Mzwanele 'Jimmy' Manyi, who had just been fired as Director General of the Department of Labour, and held very strong views about media relations. In chapter 5 of this research, he is quoted as saying "the media must know that it is not parliament", (Manyi interview, 2016). This kind of approach permeated throughout his tenure, further damaging the little that was left of government and media relations. Manyi's sentiments echoed the propaganda model characteristics. Chomsky & Herman (1988) explained that: "Propaganda campaigns in general have been closely attuned to elite interests." This includes policy-makers. Chomsky & Herman (1988) say that propaganda disinformation is often used to avert eyes from something they would like to conceal from the public. In South Africa's case, it is evident that the Zuma administration had desired to use the tactic which, had it worked, would have hidden the government's corruption under his watch.

[73] *Vuk'uzenzele* is a free government newspaper.

In interviews with former government communicators Mava Scott and Cornelius Monama – both senior communicators when Zuma took over – their chorus of discontent was the same regarding Manyi's hostile approach to the media and communicators within government. Monama said: "during the Zuma administration, communicators stopped attending Government Communications Forums (GCF)[74] and became demoralised, with no sense of direction, and we felt we were on our own. Government communication was on auto pilot", (Monama Interview, 2016). Monama further said:

> In less than a year, Manyi single-handedly destroyed the solid foundation laid by Joel Netshitenzhe and his successor, Themba Maseko. GCIS was downgraded from a think-tank of government communication to junk status. It will take years and dedicated efforts for GCIS to reclaim its former glory … He was extraordinarily interested in controlling advertising budgets of departments. On Zuma and *Vuk'uzenzele*[75], he once told GCF that communicators must not apologise for having Zuma faces on every page of their publications. 'He is Head of State!' Whether said in jest or not, this defined his understanding of government communication. For him it was more about Zuma and less about the citizens' rights to access government information (Monama, 2016).

Monama's interview indicated that Manyi sought to reinforce an approach to government's relationship with the media that departed from a posture of political hostility and non-bridge-building.

In an interview with Manyi, he confirmed this observation by Monama. In response to the questions - What is your comment on the issue of media relations during your tenure? Is your view that they improved, and what would be a few indicators in that regard? He replied as follows:

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[74] Oliphant speaks for the Minister of Social Development who has been engulfed by numerous scandals and is famous for saying that the Zuma administration is so full of corruption that there is no point in isolating the President. With such a profile to protect, it is no wonder that Oliphant would be dismissive of Masebe's concern that the GCIS is ineffective. (Source Bathabile Dlamini's 5 most infamous scandal 2018 article by Mahlohonolo Magadla)

[75] In interviews with various communicators, this matter came across very strongly and pointedly as making the work of communicators difficult. Sandile Memela – communicator at Arts and Culture and later at SARS – described this situation as untenable; as giving communicators 'third-hand information' and still expecting them to be effective communicators (Sandile Memela Interview/Questionnaire, December 2016).

> There was a complete misalignment of expectations. From the government side, we thought media was a conveyor of government information and that they came to the briefing to get content. On the other hand, the posture of media was that if government wanted to communicate through the media, government must pay for advertising space. So as cabinet spokesperson I would read 10 pages of weighty government information. Without fail the next day I would be lucky to get one sentence in the papers unless the issue either coincided with the agenda of the media or a negative deviation.
>
> By way of building relations, government would call various engagement meetings with either journalists or media owners. These would be chaired either by the President or his deputy. These sessions did very little to improve relations at operational level.
>
> I had vowed *not* to be transformed by media but that I would transform it. This posture created a stalemate situation. Media distorted what I said about how advertising expenditure would be applied. The essence was that the expenditure would be in line with the communication strategy. I did not think it made any sense at all to spend millions on publications that were not interested in carrying developmental content of government. They twisted that to mean I was blackmailing them to report about matters they were not interested in. My view was that to communicate even the mundane content was, in itself, service delivery, (Manyi interview, 2017).

In the Frank Dialogue held on Power 987 during Zuma's tenure, to commemorate Black Wednesday on 19 October 2016, Masebe, an experienced government communicator and head of the Gauteng government's communications, strongly asserted that the GCIS is 'virtually non-existent'. This shows the extent of incoherence in the communications machinery of the government. Masebe added that it was important to build good working relations with the media. "The GCIS has concentrated a lot of its energy on building good relations. This changed when government started fighting with the media …we have neglected this system called the GCIS – I don't remember when last I was called by the GCIS to a meeting", (Masebe Frank Dialogue on Power Perspective, 2016).

Masebe argued that during the Mandela administration, communicators reached out to journalists to build trust. He commented that while the GCIS did not exist during Mandela's time, there was a sense of goodwill that was carried on by Netshitenzhe's successor, Maseko, who continued the good traditions. In contrast, the Zuma administration appointed Mzwanele 'Jimmy' Manyi whose view of the relationship is autocratic, and plays a government propaganda enabler. Masebe further indicated that the GCIS gravitas was no longer as it had been when it was established during the Mbeki era. "It is there in name only", he said. Masebe offered some advice to his colleagues in the Zuma administration: "It is important that the government should continue building relations. If a journalist does not know it is gold, you cannot influence through a media statement", (Masebe Frank Dialogue on Power Perspective, 2016).

Participating in the same dialogue as a panellist, spokesperson for the Department of Social Development, Lumka Oliphant[76] disagreed with Masebe saying, "I speak to GCIS all the time. Our duty to communicate as one government is the reason for having clusters. There is an IMC (inter-ministerial committee) on publicity chaired by Jeff Radebe [Minister in the Presidency]. Where I am sitting, I am in communication constantly with the Head of GCIS about what is going on," (Oliphant Frank Dialogue on Power Perspective, 2016).

In the same Frank Dialogue, Ryland Fisher, former editor of the *Cape Times* and *The New Age,* indicated that the government is its own worst enemy when it comes to communicating its story. The relationship is very tense. The head of Sanef Mahlatse Mahlase, indicated that there would always be a love-hate relationship. She also argued that the relationship has deteriorated, compared to how things were in the Mandela era when she was a young journalist. "There is always space to improve the relationship. We should not place all communicators in one category. It is not fair", (Mahlase Frank Dialogue on Power Perspective, 2016).

7.3.2 Failure to Implement the Comtask Recommendations

[76]See full assessment of implementation in Chapter 4, where most of the Comtask recommendations are assessed for implementation.

The Zuma administration neglected the implementation of the Comtask Report recommendations outlined in Chapter 4, including recommendations that were meant to improve the relationship with the media. Communications remained poor, with many senior communicators not being part of the decisions of the administration.[77]

In the Zuma administration, the CEO of GCIS was no longer a cabinet spokesperson; rarely sat in on cabinet discussions and was, therefore, not empowered to deliberate on behalf of cabinet in the public arena. The introduction of the Ministry of Communications was expected to improve this situation. However, it sought to dissolve the GCIS – a move that had to be reversed - much to the deepening confusion in the ranks of government communications. In an article entitled, *Minister of spin out of control*, the *Mail & Guardian* reported the chaos that ensued following the purported dissolution of the GCIS, (Hunter & Mataboge, 2015). The resultant poor communications affected the relationship that the Zuma administration could have had with the media, which inevitably felt under-serviced by the administration, especially when it came to transparency and information flow. According to Tsedu, who was the executive director of SANEF, the media were left in a position where they often had to rely on private and confidential sources within the ranks of government to get access information, (Tsedu interview, 2016). Under Zuma's administration, there was insurmountable failure to implement Comtask recommendations posing adverse impact on government media relations.

TABLE 11: Some of the key areas that Zuma's administration failed on.

Comtask recommendation	Implementation assessment[78]	Researcher's comment: Implications for the Zuma Administration
Government communicators must be appointed at the	This has been implemented inconsistently across the	There are few communicators at the senior level (namely DDG). (Donald

[77]See the remarks by former editor of the *Cape Times*, Ryland Fisher, about how inaccessible Zuma was to editors compared to Mbeki. He expressed this during the Frank Dialogue on Power Perspective on 19 0ctober 2016. The full transcript of the Dialogue is attached as Annexure B at the end of the research report.

[78]These were across all major newspaper titles, questioning the integrity of the government, especially as commentary following each scandal that characterised the administration.

most senior level of the government.	government. (See Chapter 4: Analysis of Comtask recommendations).	Liphoko Frank Dialogue).
Government Communications must be centralised.	Every government department has a stand-alone Communications strategy. The GCIS has a cluster system that is considered ineffective by communicators.	The implications of this are that there is no coherence of messaging across the government. Government agencies can end up contradicting each other.
Government ministers must be media trained.	Most ministers are not media trained and do not prioritise media relations. Most stick to strictly arranged media conferences.	The result is poor investment in media relations. Some ministers in the Zuma administration have never informally discussed their work with editors.

7.4 THE MEDIA'S PERCEPTION OF THE ZUMA ADMINISTRATION

The media's perception of the Zuma administration was characterised by a trust deficit and a propensity for satire and ridicule. Another worrying trait in the relationship was poor communication with the leadership of the media, which in turn made the relationship tense at best and non-existent at worst.[79]

7.4.1 A Trust Deficit

A slew of editorials included questioning the integrity of the administration.[80] The overall coverage of the Zuma administration was headlined by scandals. In his book, *When Zuma Goes,* Ralph Mathekga, dedicates an entire chapter to the characterisation of the Zuma administration. In a chapter aptly named *Firepools*

[79] Waterkloof Air Base is an airbase of the South African Air Force, a national key point which is meant to have heightened security. It is situated on the outskirts of Pretoria and is the SAAF's busiest airbase. However, the Gupta brothers had landed a jet filled with some 200 guests attending the four-day wedding of a Gupta niece, as they were given permission by a highly placed official to land at an air force base that disturbed the official business of South Africa. (www.nytimes.com accessed 28 December 2019)

[80] The cartoon depicts future South African President Jacob Zuma unbuttoning his pants whilst four men representing key Zuma supporters within the African National Congress (ANC) led tripartite alliance hold down a woman representing Lady Justice indicating that Zuma was about to rape lady justice with the assistance and encouragement of the other four men depicted. (www.wikipedia.org accessed 22 December 2019).

and Lies, Mathekga describes how this one scandal (the building of the Nkandla homestead at almost R246 million) sunk all credibility of the Zuma administration and threatened the young democracy. He argues:

> When journalists from the *Mail & Guardian* stumbled upon the Nkandla building project, the picture started to emerge that R65 million was being spent on construction. Had it not been that chance visit, the system of accountability might never have picked up the large sums of money…this system would never have detected that the amount totalled an enormous R246 million, (Mathekga, 2016:116).

During the Zuma administration, the following scandals shaped the media coverage and, therefore, the government's relationship with the media. The press focused its watchdog role at these and many other scandals:

- The landing of the Gupta family plane at the Waterkloof Air Base[81] for their relative's wedding party (Source: *Mail & Guardian*, 22 May 2013);
- The allegations of state capture where at least three cabinet ministers were rumoured to have been appointed by the Guptas (Source: *Biznews*, 21 September 2016).
- The president's impregnation of his friend's daughter (Source: The President issued a media statement in this regard, confirming this fact on 3 February 2010);
- The inexplicable firing of finance minister Nhlanhla Nene, replaced by the lesser known Des van Rooyen, and the reversal of this decision within four days, causing the rand to plummet and the loss of billions of Rands (Source: *Mail & Guardian*, 9 December 2015);
- The charging of the Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan with fraud following allegations of impropriety at the SA Revenue Services (Reuters, 2016);

[81] The Spear is a painting by Cape Town-based South African artist, Brett Murray. It depicts former South African President Jacob Zuma in a pose reminiscent of Lenin, with his genitals exposed. The painting triggered a defamation lawsuit by Zuma's party, the African National Congress (ANC), and was vandalised on 22 May 2012. (www.wikipedia.org accessed 22 December 2019).

- Inserting his cronies in key positions such as chief executives at state-owned enterprises such Transnet, SAA and Eskom, as well as appoint a new board to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (Hartley, 2018);
- The declaration by the Constitutional Court that Zuma had acted inconsistently with the Constitution, and Zuma conceding that he would pay back a portion of the money spent on non-security upgrades of his residence in Nkandla (Source: Constitutional Court Judgment on Nkandla, in EFF vs Speaker of the National Assembly and others).

In a *Sunday Times* article, the editor-in-chief of *Business Day*, Peter Bruce, summed it up thus: "We don't trust the president", (Bruce, 2016).

7.4.2 A propensity to elicit satire and ridicule

Most of the media coverage of the Zuma presidency has been characterised by satire and ridicule. Cartoonists have had a field day characterising some of the developments in his presidency. Popular cartoonist, Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro), led the pack with his cartoon known as the 'Lady Justice'[82] cartoon, (Sunday Times, 2008) that earned him a lawsuit from Zuma. The issue of freedom of expression was highlighted in public discourse by these cartoons. Another example was artwork by Brett Murray named 'The Spear which showed the supposed former President's gentiles in a Lenin pose. The painting was exhibited at the Goodman Gallery in Parkwood, Johannesburg and a review published in the Sunday newspaper *City Press* online. However, news coverage of the painting caused an uproar, leading to the newspaper's website removing the commentary and the image of the art piece. Its editor at the time, Ferial Haffajee said: "I had to make a decision for the safety of my staff when I saw copies of the *City Press* being burnt at a political rally and some of my staff started receiving death threats. The removal was therefore an act of coercion rather than an act of persuasion".[83] The government considered the cartoons of Zapiro, among others, downright disrespectful. Dr Jack's cartoon after the ANC won the elections did

[82]Colloquium, May 2012: Freedom of Expression: How far can we go?

[83]The Gupta Family owned the *New Age* and set it up as a pro-government newspaper. In an article by its editor, Rajesh Sundaram, he says: "It is fair to say that the *New Age,* out of about 30 daily newspapers in South Africa, is broadly supportive of the ANC government. This is surprising when more than 62% of the population voted for the ANC at the last general election". (Sundaram, 2018)

not improve matters. Entitled ‘The peopholes must govern’[84], the cartoon was interpreted as dismissing ANC voters as ‘peopholes’. This instigated a march to the offices of Prime Media, and Eyewitness News (EWN) issued an apology the following day as follows:

> Yesterday we published a cartoon that sparked debate and criticism. We have read and heard many views, received much feedback on this matter and taken all of them to heart.
>
> We recognise that a political cartoon is open to individual interpretation. We accept that, however unintended, the commentary contained in the cartoon has offended some of our valued listeners, followers and readers, and we at EWN apologise for any unintended offence caused. We have referred this feedback to the cartoonists for further discussion and consideration. We at EWN will continue to strive for free speech and editorial independence and realise the responsibility we carry.
>
> Below is part of a statement from Dr Jack and Curtis the EWN cartoonists in question:
>
> We sincerely regret any offence that Tuesday's cartoon has brought to our readership and the trouble it has brought for Eyewitness News who publishes many of our cartoons. We had hoped that the cartoon would be seen as it was intended – comment on President Jacob Zuma's recent cabinet announcement and some of the ministers in it. The cartoon was also meant to convey that in a constitutional democracy, we, The People (the electorate), ultimately get the government that we deserve, and the punch line, 'We the Peophols’, was intended to hold us collectively accountable for this, (EWN, 2014).

The apology shows that while the media often pushes the bounds of freedom of expression, there is a willingness to listen to other parts of society – in this case

[84]The *Mail & Guardian* reported speculatively about the establishment of the so-called propaganda ministry. While they did not get it right, various elements of a reconfigured ministry that would elevate government's attention to communications were introduced. Source: State’s new propaganda plan to hurt media budgets. Mail and Guardian , 16 July 2015)

the governing body.

7.5 LACK OF DIVERSITY– CORRECT DIAGNOSIS, POOR MEDICINE

One of the major debates to shape the Zuma years was the transformation of the press. The launch of the *New Age* newspaper in 2013[85] was meant to introduce a new narrative into the South African media, with more sympathy or recognition of the achievements of the new government. The subsequent launch of the news channel ANN7, also introduced an ANC-biased news commentary. In 2014, when Zuma entered his second term, he issued a directive for a reconfigured Ministry of Communications, largely seen as a ministry of propaganda by many observers[86]. Such a ministry would have under its ambit the public broadcaster (SABC), the international marketing arm of the government (Brand SA), the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), and the MDDA responsible for media diversity (GCIS, 2000).

The first editor of *ANN7*, Rajesh Sundaram's book *Indentured: Behind the Scenes at Gupta TV*, revealed that President Zuma was editorially involved in shaping its content, which in itself compromised the channel's editorial independence. The level of President Zuma's involvement boiled down to the naming of the channel. According Haffajee, Sundaram says Zuma wanted the channel named *Africa News Network,* and when Ajay Gupta discovered that this name was already taken, they merely added '7' to it, to "make the President feel that his suggestions are taken seriously", (Haffajee, 2018). According to Sundaram at the first meeting between the ANN7 team and the President, Zuma made it clear that he did not want a channel that would ask politicians difficult questions. He said to the team, "I think you should keep the funny shows out. Lampooning politicians for cheap humour is not news. I hate the ones they have on eNCA," (Haffajee, 2018).

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[85]Iqbal Survé is an entrepreneur with very close links to the ANC. According to the Independent newspaper website (IOL), he was affectionately known as 'the struggle doctor' for his provision of medical care for victims of apartheid brutality, including those imprisoned on Robben Island. He is owner of Sekunjalo Group and led the consortium that purchased the Independent Media group, with some 10 million readers and 24 different titles.

[86]In his book, Malala tells in full the story that showed that there were people who wanted to do what they were accustomed to at the SABC i.e. to control the content of the eNCA and eTV news coverage. See chapter entitled 'The media and its discontents' in his book, *We have now Begun our Descent.*

The Zuma administration arrived with single-minded strategy when it came to power in 2009 – to own and control the media, then squeeze out all independent journalism while starving independent newspapers of advertising. The result was what Dahir (2019) referred to as Mugabeism and Mugulification of the media. The Zuma administration aimed to turn South African media landscape into a dictatorship model similar to Zimbabwe's and Tanzania's, where the public broadcaster, the press and any of their journalistic outlets take their orders from the government. Malala said that had it not been for push back by the vigilant watchdog media, the result would have been "deafening of debate, a chill which leads to a 'yes sir' type of media", (Malala, 2015: 74). Malala also pointed out that Zuma's approach was different to the administrations under Mbeki and Mandela, saying under him the SABC "is today a demoralized, divided, mediocre product where senior staffers cannot work, and junior staffers live in fear of prosecution", (Malala, 2015: 76).

In his book, he says under Mandela, the SABC had been a credible institution that sought to meet its public service mandate, and where politicians and ordinary people alike were held accountable. However, this had changed to reflect what used to happen under the apartheid regime. "Think back to the SABC of the 1970s and 1980s. This was the institution so deep in the pockets of the National party ... For lessons on how not to run a public broadcaster, the SABC of the 1980s stands today as a powerful example", (Malala, 2015: 76).

Dr Iqbal Survé[87] owner of the Independent Group of Newspapers, during an interview with De Waal of the *Daily Maverick* said:

> The decision about what goes into the newspapers won't be mine … I have gone on record as saying that there will be an editorial advisory board that will be independent…anyone who suggests otherwise clearly does not know who I am, (De Waal, 2013).

Malala suggested that Dr. Survé did exactly the opposite, reporting that Survé fired the editor of the *Cape Times* because she led with a front-page story

[87]The GCIS spent R10million of advertising revenue in 2013 on both the *Sowetan* and the *New Age,* when there were no audited circulation figures for the *New Age*. The owners of the *New Age* refused to subject themselves to any scrutiny concerning circulation figures and instead pulled out of the association that verifies circulation figures. Source www.gcis.gov.za)

implicating Survé's company, instead of leading with Mandela's death and ignoring the fact that the newspaper on the same day had a wrap prepared specially to mark Mandela's death, (Malala, 2015: 79).

The media credibility had begun to be compromised within the SABC, ANN7, *New Age* and the Independent Group, all of which fitted into the Zuma strategy of taking over the media for propaganda purposes. Stories about how eTV was also facing interference from the unions that had invested in the group continued to paint a picture of the independent media under siege.[88] Largesse was now used for these news outlets to encourage them to continue with what the government felt comfortable with. Parastatals could spend millions of Rands of their advertising budget on the *New Age*, despite its circulation figures being suspect.[89]

An even bigger feature of the Zuma administration was fear. Malala concluded that "fear is a word that journalists have come to associate with Zuma's ANC. In the governing party's increasingly paranoid worldview, the media had become the single greatest enemy of the ANC", (Malala, 2015: 84).

This fear gave rise to desperate attempts to gag the media, represented by the introduction of the debate to establish the MAT, as well as the passing of what Malala describes as "the draconian Protection of State Information Bill, otherwise known as the Secrecy Bill", (Malala, 2015: 84). Malala averred that through this bill, the press would be bullied into not exposing corruption. The research found that the ANC resolution for the establishment of the MAT was a defining feature of the Zuma administration's relationship with the media.

7.6 CONCLUSION

According to Habermas's ideal expected standards of the public sphere, this research shows that the gap between the Zuma administration and the media

[88]The key pieces of legislation under dispute include: The Film and Publications Board's desire for pre-publication censorship; The Protection of Information Bill, also called the Secrecy Bill; and the mooted Media Appeals Tribunal that remains a threat hanging over the media, despite the fact that there have been no details of how it will work.

[89] The National Development Plan (NDP) is a long term South African development plan, developed by the National Planning Commission in collaboration and consultation with South Africans from all walks of life and aims to eliminate poverty and inequality by 2030. (www.poa.gov.za)

widened. This is because under his leadership, attempts to control the public opinion were made, as is evident in the introduction of the so called Secrecy Bill and the MAT. During his administration, the media that didn't report favourably were to be punished by withholding advertising spend from their products, the head of his GCIS, Manyi said. The Zuma administration fell foul of the public sphere criteria of rejection of hierarchy.

One of the key indicators of the inability to live up to the ideal public sphere is the question of respect for the rule of law. In this regard, the Zuma administration had experienced many brushes with the law and this negatively impacted on media coverage. The Nkandla homestead security upgrades that cost the taxpayers up to R246 million showed Zuma's defiance of the rule of law and constitutional obligations. The destruction of the GCIS, which was underpinned by a lack of proactive communication across all spheres of government and a lack of permanent leadership, with the vacancy of the post of head of GCIS for more than five years, meant that there was no cabinet spokespersons to ensure smooth communication between cabinet and the media. Those placed in the position were either out of their depth, as in the case of Phumla Williams (whose background is in corporate affairs and finance, not in communications), or Donald Liphoko (whose strength was in media buying, not in PR or any communication-related discipline). Liphoko was elevated to two levels above Chief Director, to act as DG, where the DDG, to whom he had previously reported, was suddenly reporting to him. This situation collapsed the efficacy of the GCIS to a point where the Minister in the Presidency became responsible for the post-cabinet media briefings that for years had been handled by the head of the GCIS. Crucial Comtask recommendations were not implemented. Instead, a new Communications Ministry introduced to run parallel communications functions as the GCIS, leading to failure of the 'propaganda ministry' and the disintegration of the GCIS.

The deteriorating relations with the press was as a result of the discussion on the MAT and other legislation or similar suggestions that would result in gagging the

press.[90] One of the biggest departures of the Zuma administration from the Mandela administration on the issue of the relationship with the media was its insistence on regulating the press instead of forging amicable relations. It wasn't helpful that the Zuma administration presented the media major and unavoidable scandals that could not have been revealed were the proposed secrecy legislation - meant to intimidate journalists and their sources - in place. The scandals fed watchdog journalists newsworthy coverage.

Ferrial Haffajee, associate editor at *The Daily Maverick.* former editor-at-large of the *Huffington Post* and former editor of the *City Press,* mentioned that the media became vigilant on corruption in South Africa, which reached epic proportions during the Zuma presidency between 2008 - 2016, and stated that, "in an era of looting and state capture that we now see, it is very difficult to build relationships because scandal coverage is high, and trust is low", (Haffajee Interview, 2016).

Regarding the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT), Haffajee said even if it were to be tabled, "we (the media industry) have a court appeal almost good to go and it would end up tangled in court for years", (Haffajee Interview, 2016). According to Spiess (2011), watchdog media is not only interested in providing information. This was the view of the Zuma administration through its GCIS head - Manyi, who had hoped for its use as a conduit of relaying its message. Instead, it is committed exposing wrongdoing in the public interest, added Coronel (2009). Such journalism does "not only provide information but particularly focus on malfeasance", (Spiess, 2011:5). Media as watchdogs "can therefore contribute to each phase of democratisation and in several ways, including policy-making and law abidance, their main contribution is to hold powerful actors accountable", (Spiess, 2011:5). Chomsky and Herman, in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, say: "media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth, and that they do not merely reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived", (Chomsky & Herman, 1988).

All the elements of watchdog media are situated in the Zuma administration which was scandal-ridden. These scandals ranged from the arms deal,

[90] *Mail & Guardian* is an investigative weekly in South Africa which is known to practice watchdog investigative journalism and had broken stories on government corruption, thus being seen as hostile towards government by government. www.mg.co.za and wikipedia.org

corruption, alleged rape of a friend's child, spending public money for personal use at his Nkandla homestead, impregnating his friend's daughter, befriending the controversial Gupta family who had free reign in the state purse and much more. In addition, all of these were veiled behind his attempt at Radical Economic Transformation 'rhetoric' towards the end of his tenure, which was punted by PR spin doctors Bell Pottinger and the fake news and hype they created, much to the detriment of the fragile racial challenges the country faced.

During a heated panel discussion on Radical Economic Transformation (RET) chaired by Associate Professor Mills Soko, the director of the Graduate School of Business at University of Cape Town, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) Member of Parliament and chief whip Nqabayomzi Kwankwa was forthright in referring to RET as a narrative that "at the moment was being used, perhaps abused, by ANC factions jostling for power ahead of the party's elective conference in December", (Kwankwa, 2017). "He said leadership failures had contributed to policy failures, and while economic transformation was long overdue, the current discussion in government around the issue was mere rhetoric used for political mileage", (Kwankwa, 2017).

Aspects of the public sphere that bear reference to *Ubuntu* in Mandela and an African context during the Mbeki administrations were in fact reversed during the Zuma era. Zuma hadn't prioritise outreach to the people, neither through a good relationship with the media nor through direct means to citizens in the form of consistent programmes of *Izimbizo* (mass gatherings), that could be considered meaningful public participation. The ideal public sphere of consensus was not achieved under Zuma, as the administration was the classical example of government inserting its agenda at all costs in spaces to influence the public opinion.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings from semi-structured interviews, Frank Dialogues with editors, journalists and government communicators as recorded in chapter 3. The process was guided by the Habermasian theory of the public sphere, which examined possible solutions towards building bridges that can close the gap in government and media relations and communication. All participants were requested to respond to the question: What can be done to build bridges between the media and the government? This was in a bid to respond to the main research question - How do media and government relations affect government communications and how can bridges be built between them? This question was the prodding tool to examine the Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma relations with the media and ways in which they conducted themselves to create the rift or to build bridges. In this section, journalists and editors and government communicators displayed the fact that government and media relations are complex. In addition, based on the findings, this chapter attempts to find links between the literature and research outcomes.

8.1 DISCUSSION

8.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

8.1.1.1 Media Representatives

Having applied the qualitative methodology anchored in the discourse analysis approach provided room for non-prescriptiveness and flexibility, (Graham, 2005). With the data collected through semi-structured interviews, Frank Dialogues in responding to the question - What can be done to build bridges between the media and the government? - editors and journalists express varied views. These are, however, pivoted on accountability to public opinion as well as media agenda setting guided by their editorial framing. At the same time, their responses show, in the current South African environment, common ground.

Ferrial Haffajee, Associate Editor at daily maverick and former editor-at-large of the Huffington Post and former editor of *City Press* mentioned that trust had been lost between the media and the government, as the media is vigilant in reporting corruption in South Africa. Corruption reached epic proportions during the Zuma

presidency and Haffajee states that, "in an era of looting and state capture that we now see, it is very difficult to build relationships because scandal coverage is high, and trust is low" (Haffajee Interview, 2016). Haffajee believes that the blueprint for good relationships that were witnessed in the earlier democratic era, seem to have dissipated. "When I think about it, there were regular briefings, building of relationships, and invitations to lunch meetings with political principals that were not only around a crisis", (Haffajee interview, 2016). Makhudu Sefara, award-winning editor of *The Star* and former head of communications for the City of Johannesburg, shares similar sentiments as Haffajee, as he says:

> It would do government a lot of good to revive get-togethers between cabinet and SANEF leadership. Government can use these [platforms] to table media-related challenges it faces and then ask editors how they suggest government must deal with the challenges. In that safe space, government can then share its suggested solutions and get feedback before such suggested solutions are made public. In this way, the media will feel and think that the government is not out to annihilate it but is a partner in the broader communication chain, (Sefara Interview, 2017).

Haffajee says instead of opening itself to scrutiny, the present day government of the ANC “is so busy ripping itself apart in a ruthless fight for the good of incumbency that it has forgotten about it. The tribunal has been long on the table, but the idea has not gotten anywhere. Even if it were to be tabled, we (the industry) have a court appeal almost good to go and it would end up tangled in court for years” (Haffajee Interview, 2016). Sefara says, “the government must understand that when it single-handedly tries to impose solutions to challenges, the signal received by the media is that the exercise is about controlling or rather taming the media”, (Sefara Interview, 2017).

When the researcher started a career in government communication in 1998, Jovial Rantao, former editor of the *African Independent* was already a seasoned parliamentary reporter and executive of the parliamentary press gallery. In that role, he dealt with a significant amount of government communicators and liaison between the press gallery and government communicators. Rantao has played roles of leadership in the African Editors’ Forum for almost two decades. His view is that government communications under Zuma's administration was at its

weakest in years of democracy. He believes that the GCIS, which was meant to strengthen government media relations “was allowed to disintegrate and allowed to go for long periods without leadership”, (Rantao interview, 2017) Rantao argues that people with critical skills left the GCIS, and for years South Africa was without a clear united government message about its core programmes such as the National Development Plan (NDP) He said:

> To get government communication to be as effective as it ought to be, the GCIS would need to be strengthened at all levels and required to come with a comprehensive plan on how government communication can be integrated and strengthened, (Rantao interview, 2017).

Rantao believes that one of the biggest developments that crippled the relationship between the government and media was the call for a Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT). Rantao argued: “This continued call is, in my view, irrefutable proof that the call for a tribunal is nothing but a political whip which the ANC uses when it wants to act against the media. It is also proof that the ANC will not rest until they have control over the media”, (Rantao interview, 2017).

In Rantao's opinion, media freedom, which is the ability of citizens to access verified and reliable information that helps them make decisions about their lives and gives them a voice through the various media platforms available, is a cornerstone of our democracy. He noted the ability to seek and find redress is also paramount and I believe that between the Press Council/Ombudsman and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, South Africans have sufficient mechanisms to ensure fair coverage by the media. Moreover, the usual legal remedies are still open to aggrieved parties through our courts of law, (Rantao interview, 2017).

Although this may have been an observation expressed by Rantao, the government had also seen a need to review the state of the GCIS as far back as 2013. The state of the GCIS can best be described over the past decade by the following extract, from a report of the national communications task team subcommittee on development communication, which reported to the former Minister of Communications Faith Muthambi in the Zuma administration. It

presents this perspective of how the effectiveness of government communications is viewed:

> From a national government communication perspective, the problem statement is that there is a nationwide perception that the government is disconnected from the people/communities/South Africans. This 'disconnect' is not the result of a lack of performance, but is due to one key aspect namely, the government's inability to communicate its plans and programmes to the public/community.
>
> The latter refers to the incompetence and/or lack of interest of existing government representatives to prioritise the communication of government initiatives to inform the public/community about the government's plans; incompetence and/or lack of interest by existing government representatives to hear the 'voices' of South African communities; the lack of resource allocation to institutions and individuals for the communication of the government's programmes to the public/communities, (NCTT Report, 2013: 11).

8.1.1.2 Government Communicators

In response to the question: What would be three top suggestions to build relations between the government and the media? Mzwanele Manyi, former GCIS CEO (2012) argues that: "the media must know that it is not parliament" and that "This thing of media posturing as a place for public officials to account to is wrong. Media is a private sector business for profit and thus cannot appropriate to itself moral authority equivalent to that of a democratically elected parliament." He furthermore says "media is not a conveyor for mundane report-back content", (Manyi interview, 2016).

According to Manyi, "the media needs to be exposed to the intricacies of how government works, so that they can appreciate that current affairs are perhaps 20 per cent of cabinet briefing; the rest is a product of weeks of engagement both at DG cluster and cabinet committee levels", (Manyi interview, 2016). He furthermore suggests that to build bridges, "the government must spend time with editors in the newsroom to appreciate the dynamics of the challenges of media", (Manyi interview, 2016). Much as the journalists interviewed expressed trust

deficit, Manyi confirms that the media continues to treat the government with suspicion, “to an extent that a media house like *M&G [Mail & Guardian*][91] is anti-press release. It is a misconception to think that a press statement is just propaganda”, (Manyi interview, 2016).

Themba Maseko, former CEO of GCIS during the Mbeki and Zuma eras, asserted that he had the best media team in the GCIS, both at head office and in the provinces. According to Maseko, the team understood the communications environment and had excellent communications skills. Maseko also highlighted that in terms of nurturing the relationship with the media, weekly strategy and planning meetings with all communicators from other departments were arranged, but not all communicators attended. “Many of those who failed to attend these meetings also tended to be the ones who had the most challenges with the media”, Maseko said. Thus, underlining one of his crucial suggestions to build the bridges between the media and government, (Maseko interview, 2016). Maseko further suggested “the appointment and training of professional government communicators” was important, (Maseko interview, 2016). On the side of the media, he argued for the appointment and training of professional journalists.

Another interviewee was Baby Tyawa, former Deputy Director General of the GCIS during the Mbeki era, currently Deputy Secretary to Parliament, the first-generation communicator who worked in both the Mandela and Mbeki administrations. Instead of responding, she probed: “Are there ways of mending and building relationships with the media houses? Maybe there are. If the purpose of media houses is to carry the news as objectively as possible, to inform the public as objectively as possible, then both government and the media houses must go back to the basics”, (Tyawa interview, 2017). This is instructive, given her experience with the media over the 23 years under review in this research.

8.1.2 ANALYSIS

[91]The Frank Dialogue convened had the following participants: Sipho Ngwema (Competition Commission), Mayihlome Tshwete (Treasury), Makhosini Nkosi (Previously with the NPA), Janine Hills (CEO Vuma Reputation Management).

Only one former communicator during the Zuma era, in particular Manyi (2016), held an extreme view of the media's role, while the two Tyawa (2017) and Maseko (2016) held a very conciliatory perspective, even suggesting that tensions could be mitigated. Thus, demonstrating that the communicators are not singing from the same hymn sheet, and are, therefore, not homogenous in their approach to government communications, defeating the very end that the GCIS was established to achieve. Manyi is recorded in this research's semi-structured interview as saying: "This thing of media posturing as a place for public officials to account to is wrong. Media is a private sector business for profit and thus cannot appropriate to itself moral authority equivalent to that of a democratically elected parliament", (Manyi Interview, 2016).

Given the comparison this research drew earlier from African countries such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania where government communication structures are fashioned in such a way that there are enablers of autocratic policies, this communicator's views are leaning towards policy agenda setting. The sole objective of which is for elite policy makers to dictate how public opinion should be shaped and influenced in the public sphere, using the media as its tool of communication (Rogers And Dearing, in Aunur et al., 2015). Manyi further argued that, "If the media were to accept a broadening of its role from being just a news agency and include government content that would fundamentally change the relationship. There would be more trust by the government" (Manyi interview, 2016).

Manyi's brand of politics, by way of contrast, seems to call for a pliable and uncritical press; which would be defeating the purpose of building cordiality between the government and the media. It is not surprising that he holds such views as he was the chief advocate of the MAT, which sought to control the press and which the media pushed back on. This was alluded to by journalists such as Haffajee in her interview. Haffajee said that the ANC ruling party was "so busy ripping itself apart in a ruthless fight for the good of incumbency, that it has forgotten about it (MAT)" which has been on the table for a while without any traction, (Haffajee interview, 2016). She says, even if it were to be tabled, "we (the media industry) have a court appeal almost good to go and it would end up tangled in court for years", (Haffajee interview, 2016).

When Manyi moved on from being a government communicator, he went on to acquire the Gupta-owned media stable TNA. This included a national daily newspaper *New Age* and ANN7, a TV channel broadcast to the African continent on the DSTV bouquet. This was acquired under his company AfroTone Media and he then changed the TV channel's name to Afro Worldview. Both these media products were established as mouthpieces of former President Zuma's presidency, where he and his family, and the now self-exiled Gupta family[92] played a pivotal role in getting them started.

It is no wonder that the business liquidated in 2018, as Manyi was recorded as saying in an interview with Justice Malala on a rival eNCA TV channel's programme Justice Factor that ANN7 would be 'a conveyor belt' for government information, and that they would not be in the business of simply supplying 'news', but also 'information', (Manyi's interview on The Justice Factor, Monday 14 August 2017).

Manyi's approach is contrary to the ideal public sphere, where there is an independent existence of societal players with distinct roles in public discourse and, therefore, a healthy democracy. His approach gives credence to the suspicion that the government prefers a pliant press whose focus is less on malfeasance and societal ills, and more on what is mistakenly labelled as national consensus. Manyi's input underlines that the public sphere is contested terrain where the governed and the governors fight over space and for attention. It is clear that while consensus is ideal, it is not always a reality in public discourse and that each participant would rather see their perspective dominate. Manyi linked the public sphere contest to decoloniality. In fact, in 2013 he established what was known as the decolonisation foundation as a precursor to his acquiring media assets that he renamed Afro World View – a clear posture that sought to promote a pan-African approach to news gathering, reportage and public dialogue. His attempts were unsuccessful, as both properties went into

[92] The Democratic Alliance (DA) is the main opposition in the parliament of South Africa, previously named the Democratic Party (DP), was formed on 8 April 1989, when the former Progressive Federal Party, Independent Party and National Democratic Movement merged. However, the history of the DP goes back to 1959 when a number of liberal members of the United Party (UP) broke away to form the Progressive Party (PP). The cause of the split was the UP's inability to find a clear-cut alternative to the National Party's apartheid policy. (www.sahistory.org).

liquidation. However, it may be something to consider as a gap in the public sphere – a focus on a decolonised public sphere.

Manyi's, Tyawa's, and Maseko's responses only show that there hasn't been the existence of homogeneity in government communicators in understanding the role played by media versus government communications. They recognise that media sets its agenda and the government has its policies on communications to reach citizens, and that both need each other. This demonstrates that the convergence of the three agendas is necessary in a healthy democracy

Ansah argues that, unlike Manyi, it is legitimate for the press "to fulfill the role of an opposition in the sense of presenting another side of the story where necessary – that is to say criticising and exposing government decisions that are not in the best interest of the people" (Ansah, 1988: 13). While Wanyande (1999) argues that the significance of the media in a democracy derives from its special position, as opposed to other organisations in the democratisation process. The media "act as a bridge between civil society associations not organisations, the rest of society and the state or government", (Wanyande, 1999: 13).

8.1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Far from Manyi's views of reigning in the media is Mava Scott and Luzuko Koti. Scott is one of the longest-serving communicators within South Africa's government, with a career spanning approximately two decades, and straddling the presidencies of Mbeki and Zuma's. Scott was also former Spokesperson for the Department of Water Affairs and the Competition Commission. Luzuko Koti is currently Head of Communications and Outreach for the Nelson Mandela Foundation, with experience in local government and within the public broadcaster. Both Scott (2017) and Koti (2017) have volunteered remedies to the current uncordial state of media and government communication.

Scott says it would serve South Africa's young democracy to host 'State meets the Media' annual conferences, accompanied by an exhibition, as one of the practical intervention strategies for dealing with the relationship between the media and government. He notes:

> An annual conference convened by the Press ombudsman and a GCIS that brings together senior state officials (cabinet, parliament, DGs) and senior media practitioners and owners (editors, publishers, media owners and selected senior reporters). The focus of the conference would include for example, the State of the Nation in SA, the state of media and reporting, bridging the gaps between the media and the state, capacity building initiatives, development of a press/state relations code (this will be accompanied by an action plan that should be monitored by a committee) and strengthening of the presidential press corps.
>
> The conference should include parallel sessions, for example, on media training, case studies and presentations on media relations from other countries (Scott interview, 2017).

He further advocated for the introduction of a compulsory media training course for all senior managers in the public service, coordinated by the GCIS. Scott continues to argue for the establishment of a press relations office at the GCIS to monitor the implementation of the press/state relations code, saying: “a dedicated capacity to monitor the relationship between the press and the state and submit quarterly reports to the minister of monitoring and evaluation will expose the gaps in the implementation of the code”, (Scott interview, 2017) The code, on the other hand, would place responsibility in the hands of Sanef to establish some monitoring mechanism by the press to ensure that media houses adhere to it.

Koti says that South Africa should employ a deliberate approach driven by the two sectors. More or less aligned to Scott’s sentiments that an annual seminar could be helpful, also driven by Sanef and a functional GCIS. Furthermore, he argues: “this seminar would create a platform of both review and direct engagement. It would assist in dealing with many issues that emanate in the course of work of the two. The seminar must advise on policy ideas and act as a platform for self-correction”, (Koti interview, 2017).

Koti believes that to deal with the dissatisfaction of the public sector about poor coverage in the mainstream press, public service pages should be introduced in news organisations. This would be a practice where space is provided in kind to

government or public institutions to allow them to express themselves editorially. “Thus, in the same way as papers are critical of the state, the state must be given uncensored and unmediated space to reflect on the criticism. This approach would quieten the noise about the need to over- regulate media by the state”, (Koti interview, 2017). In the same breath, Koti argues that media regulation should be left to the fourth estate, as is the norm in democracies, as this will improve the sour relations between government and the media.

An ideal public sphere according to an African paradigm advocates for deepening instead of diminishing dialogue in a democracy. For instance, in the case of South Africa wherein the government had introduced the *Izimbizo*, if they were used optimally, they would serve the African paradigm. Thus, an indigenous public sphere would begin to introduce new knowledge, questioning the bourgeois public sphere as defined by Habermas (1962). That would make space for plurality of voices in the public sphere.

8.2 FRANK DIALOGUES

8.2.1 On bridging the gap between government and the media

A Frank Dialogue between selected media personalities and government communicators was convened to assess the relationship between the media and communicators, and to come up with ways that can effectively bridge the gap between the media and the government. Tim Cohen, former editor of *Business Day* was part of the Frank Dialogues held on 28 November 2017[93] where the question of building the relationship between government and the media was posed. Cohen said:

> On the question of whether the relationship is unhealthy bordering on disastrous, I think it’s unhealthy**,** but not disastrous. We’re not at crisis point, it is certainly not the worst,(Cohen, 2017). He further noted that ‘this debate is very familiar because we have the same debate with business, we have the same debate with other political parties, that familiarity is based on the conflict modus operandi of the organisation. At *Business Day*, our first responsibility is to our audience, and next to that

[93] *The Public Sphere*, an encyclopaedia article, was accessed on 8 September 2017 referencing Habermas & Lennox 1964, 1974. Also, listed in the references section.

> everything else is secondary. For government communicators, their first responsibility it is to present the ministers' aims all in the most positive way possible. So, we have to get past that because that's a natural tension, (Cohen, 2017).

Cohen further argued that the key determinant of his newspaper's attitude is the needs or views of their readers. All they care about is information within their news coverage will benefit them. In this regard, he said:

> We are in an economic crisis mode and that actually makes a much bigger difference than you think. Because we are in an economic crisis, our readers are telling us … just get them to do something different. The temperature coming at us from the audience is very high, and that temperature is translated into our relationship with government. I hate to say this, but the way to improve government and press relations is just to run government better, (Cohen, 2017).

Cohen went on to argue that where corruption is concerned, if there were less of it there would be less coverage of it by the media. He also noted that:

> It is important not to judge the relationship on the conflict points, but it is important to judge the relationship as a whole. So, if I look at *Business Day* and I look at what we cover on the business pages, not in the commentary pages, in 80 percent of it, we are reflecting, we are reflecting critically sometimes, we are getting it right in different voices. As far as government is concerned, we are putting them in their position, (Cohen, 2017).

In terms of building bridges, Cohen argued that communicators and journalists approach their work differently and it is in understanding these differences that bridges could be built to close the gap. He noted in this regard:

> You guys will tell me if I'm wrong, but journalists come to events from the perspective of data. Different organisations have different approaches. We particularly are after data, and government communicators are approaching the problem from the perspective of ideology or a position or an idea, and it is a very frustrating difference because communicators

> think that we in the press are not reflecting their ideas. From the journalists' point of view, we are frustrated by the fact that we are not getting data. So, if I would add to your recommendation, I would say that the whole process of having data at hand, having facts, figures and new information, then filtering in is much more important than I think it is, (Cohen, 2017).

One of the major debates during the dialogues was whether the media has an agenda. In the early chapters of this thesis, the researcher sought to find out what government communicators thought of journalists. It became apparent that communicators believed the media were hostile towards the new administration post 1994. In disagreeing, Cohen said:

> I disagree with the notion that the media has an agenda. It is true that the media has an agenda, but it's a different kind of agenda to that of the government, and it is important for both of us to make sure that you are as sceptical as you can possibly be. I think government communicators have to appreciate that they are responsible not only to their political party, but to the country as a whole.
>
> They are representing the country as a whole, in the same way that newspapers represent that position too. We try to do it because on our leader page we try to keep the scope of people writing in it as broad as possible. We will have someone from COSATU's economists and others.
>
> So, it must be a real forum, a real discussion. Is that an agenda? I get upset when people say: 'you've got an agenda'. Well, I do have an agenda in the sense that I want the country to do well. But I don't have an agenda in the sense of a political actor. Lots of people say: 'Ooh, *Business Day*, you're basically the DA in drag,' but you should see the fights we have with the DA[94] , (Cohen, 2017).

[94]Last year, Corruption Watch received a record number of complaints since its inception in 2012, and the organisation has highlighted the role which civil society, the media and an independent judiciary have made in fighting corruption. In its latest report entitled *The Time is Now*, the organisation said that 5, 334 complaints were lodged in 2017 – 25% more than the previous year. The report notes how, over the past decade under former president Jacob Zuma's rule, key institutions such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS), the National Treasury, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the South African Police

Sipho Ngwema, one of the longest serving communicators in democratic South Africa, having served the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) as a spokesperson from 2006 to 2009 before his role as head of communications for the Competition Commission and who also participated in the same Frank Dialogue, retorted:

> I know in this country we have made the term 'agenda' taboo. It is not that there is nothing wrong with having an agenda. Remember, I said it is okay for the media to have an agenda, and this is an ideological agenda. There was a time when I struggled to read the *Business Day* because it had a communist agenda when Karima and Vukani were there. Every time you read it, it had the line of the SACP. I said here is a business newspaper that should have a profit agenda, yet if you want to know about the communist party you must read the *Business Day*. Now all the political journalists today have the same agenda. In fact, the ones I am talking about were in one rally with T-shirts, and there is nothing wrong with that, (Ngwema, 2017).

In characterising the relationship between the media and the government, Ngwema said:

> ...for me the most fundamental thing is to define the relationship. What are the values and principles that inform that relationship? – so that once you know and are content with the roles that each institution must play, I think that the relationship becomes clear. My understanding of our relationship – of whether it is government communications or communications with the media, is that we are all communicating to the people. But it is about packaging and the facts, (Ngwema, 2017).

This observation contradicts Cohen's, which points to the fact that when you have media's agenda, policy agenda setting advocated by elite policy makers, tensions would be present, (Rogers and Dearing in Aunur et al., 2015). Furthermore, Ngwema emphasised that:

Service (SAPS) and the Hawks, have experienced an onslaught. (*Increase in Cases of Corruption in 2017*, Media 24, 4 April 2018, accessed 9 June 2018).

> We are also pushing an agenda. Either my agenda as government communicator or the media has got an agenda, and it must have an agenda. So when you don't accept those things or you don't understand them, you get a situation where when you cannot answer those questions being asked, you get angry because you could not give credible information, you could not give timeous information, and you could not give the facts, and that relationship becomes ruined, (Ngwema, 2017).

Ngwema argues that all of us are "accountable to the people... However, as government communicators we do not have access to the masses; we rely on the press. So, there must be principles in this relationship", (Ngwema, 2017). He further notes that:

> So, the press becomes a conduit. But a conduit for what? We need to earn the credibility and the respect in terms of what we give them and figure out, is it timeous? Is it true? Does the media know better than we do? This is so that if we are able to confront them we confront them as peers, to say 'but the information that you gave is not what we gave you as the department, and we believe that you have distorted it' and the commentary is not a problem because it means that the journalist comes from a particular agenda, (Ngwema, 2017).

According to Ngwema, certain values need to underpin the relationship between the government and the media. These values are honesty and credibility. He further notes:

> We need to believe that this is a dual relationship because there is a dual dependency in terms of the media getting credible information from us and all the media disseminating the information given to them.
>
> There may be other underpinning values but at the end of the day, if those roles were set out clearly, I wouldn't argue with Tim when he plays his watchdog role because my peers have leaked information about corruption, (Ngwema, 2017).

Ngwema also concurs that the relationship can be better served if there is little or no corruption happening in government. He said:

> Anywhere where there is good governance you hardly get this kind of tension because there is no information that is in conflict with our role as government that goes out to the public. But in desperation, when we are unable to defend, we fight, and that is why fundamentally we have to look at that first and then the rest follows. We lose respect for each other when we discover that this guy is not honest and the information he has given me is not credible; in fact, he doesn't know what is happening in his or her department and therefore most of the time the media will decide 'I won't speak to you. I want to speak with someone more senior because this person is ignorant', (Ngwema, 2017).

New generation government communicator Mayihlome Tshwete, former head of Communications in the Ministries of Home Affairs during the Zuma era, addressed the issue of the media or government having an agenda and noted:

> I agree with some of the points that my colleague is raising here, and it is important to say that, yes, an agenda is not a bad thing. It is a view. Sometimes journalists try to take this approach that they are apolitical or that they don't have any opinion on any issue. I just think that they are misleading themselves and us on that particular issue. They do have an opinion, they do have a view, and they do have a particular slant that they are pushing. So, you can call it an agenda or an opinion, but ultimately it is a posture on certain issues. Similarly, because of our work, we have the same thing, (Tshwete, 2017).

Tshwete also addressed the issue of how to understand the relationship between government and the media, arguing for the acceptance of a natural tension between the two. He further acknowledged that:

> The relationship between media and government has to have tension or else it is not going to function. We are on the same playing fields, but we are not shooting at the same goals.
>
> So, we do have to have natural tensions, and it can be healthy. So me calling Tim and having a difference of opinion with him on something does not mean I won't call Tim tomorrow and ask him to please assist me in covering something, because I have an appreciation that for the

> work I do at national Treasury, I need *Business Day*, I need *Business Report*, I can't do my work without them. So even though we have a difference of opinion, we always have to go back to the table and find a way to work with each other, (Tshwete, 2017).

Tshwete observed that there was a trust deficit between the government and the media during the eight years of the Zuma presidency, while admitting that the Zuma-led administration saw some failings in terms of the trust deficit between not only themselves and the media, but between business and other sectors. "So, this has made all of our jobs quite difficult and all of us not trusting of each other" he said (Tshwete, 2017).

8.3 CONCLUSION

The semi-structured interviews with the editors and communicators reflect that that there is a need for dialogue between government communicators and the media. Koti's proposal to hold a national seminar between the two sides, or Manyi's impractical suggestion for exchange programmes where communicators can spend time in newsrooms, or the proposals to have a forum where expectations can be clarified, show that most of the suggestions are characterised by a desire from both sides to find each other and bridge the gap.

The editors' views fall squarely within the realm of the bourgeois public sphere. Put more directly, there is an insistence on freedom of expression to the exclusion of all else, and suggestion of a different role for the media, especially in line with the national project of reconciliation, although this is not uppermost in the minds of the editors. If implemented, the editors' perspectives will increase consensus in the public sphere, but are they realistic in an environment poisoned by a trust deficit between the government and the media? The reality is that South Africa's constitution isolates, identifies and singles out freedom of the press as a special right with special protection, and the public sphere already elevates it above many other rights of privacy and dignity. The editors did not seem willing to consider transforming South Africa's public sphere to take into account the different challenges that face our politics.

The extract below invites reflection on the current positioning of the newspapers. It represents the media as a key component of the public sphere. The media has not changed over the years, but simply evolved to meet new challenges that are shaped by the public sphere:

> At the same time, daily political newspapers assumed an important role. In the second half of the eighteenth century literary journalism created serious competition for the earlier news sheets which were mere compilations of notices. Karl Boucher characterised this great development as follows: "Newspapers changed from mere institutions for the publication of news into bearers and leaders of public opinion–weapons of party politics. This transformed the newspaper business. A new element emerged between the gathering and the publication of news: the editorial staff. But for the newspaper publisher it meant that he changed from a vendor of recent news to a dealer in public opinion, (*Habermas & Lennox, 1964, 1974 in The Public Sphere: An encyclopaedia article)*.[95]

Cohen's perspective draws from the Habermasian notions of consensus and the ideal public sphere where everything is above board and is meant to work towards the goal of a transparent society. The research into the Zuma era shows that such discourse and the relationship that flows therefrom was not transparent. He notes that one of the ways to improve government relations with the media is to govern the country well and that the way to deal with the coverage of corruption is to stop the corruption, (Cohen, 2017). The reality on the ground is that there will always be a level of corruption in society as per the evidence published by Corruption Watch. There will also always be challenges for governance, and it is the failure to deal with them that will differ from government to government.

A more reasonable proposition that will make this relationship live up to the ideal public sphere must be considered. Cohen's argument that the relationship must have a necessary tension is as sensible as it is apt. Given the different 'agendas'

[95]Directors General usually have between two and six direct reporters on their staff who are deputy directors general. If they take communications seriously the rest of the department will follow suit, and this will improve the state of communications awareness and proper implementation in the department.

of both sides, it is crucial to understand that there is bound to be a standoff where the journalist may want information that communicators are not able to give, and that the journalists may not reflect the story in the way the government communicators believe properly represents the government's view. The natural tension that Cohen describes is in line with the ideal public sphere, where there is a contestation of ideas, even in the midst of consensus. However, Cohen concluded that this state of the relationship is not disastrous.

Cohen's view that communicators focus more on ideology than data may well give the impression that the communicators are not fond of facts and do not rely on data to do their work. There is little or no evidence to support this contention. It may well be Cohen's assessment that in many approaches to a story, communicators present communication that is not backed by facts. This is wholly untrue. In the same dialogue where Cohen made these assertions, communicators from government (in the Treasury where data and facts are the basis of communication) and from the Competition Commission (where hard facts about business conduct are the basis of communication) were present. These communicators always work with data and facts.

Finally, the question of whether the media has 'an agenda' seems to rely on the definition or specific understanding of the word. Cohen took great offence at being labelled 'a newspaperman with an agenda' and sought to define the word in a non-partisan way. He specifically used the example of being labelled a supporter of the opposition, the Democratic Alliance (DA) in particular. Ngwema, on the other hand, supported by Tshwete, insisted that the media cannot claim to be politically neutral, and cited examples of the influence of political editors Karima Brown and Vukani Mde during their stint at *Business Day*, when they used the paper to articulate the political stance of the SACP on numerous issues. It seems that there was a deadlock over this in the Dialogue. Denzel Taylor, the political editor of Power 98.7, gave a different explanation of what he considered agenda-influenced coverage due to shallow analysis. He believed that the shrinking newsroom alluded to by Cohen may well be where the answer lies. That having to run multiple 'beats' instead of having a focused area of reportage is likely to affect the quality of coverage. This may be a contributory factor, but it

should be viewed as an additional factor rather than an alternative explanation for biased coverage.

Central to Ngwema's argument is the question of values that can define the relationship between the media and the government. He argues that once the values are in place, it is easier to engage with each other without suspicion, and any errors that are bound to happen will not be mistaken for malice or a underhanded agenda. This is akin to an analogy that Cohen made about a good marriage – the fact that as a married couple, you know you will have the fight; the question is, how fast will you get over the fight? Ngwema sees this as it should be seen, as a dual or mutual relationship where both parties recognise that they need each other.

The question of a trust deficit is a key factor in either building or destroying the relationship with government and the media. It is clear from Tshwete's observation that the absence of trust between the government and the media makes it difficult for the communicators to build a convivial relationship between the media and the government. He goes further to say that this relationship of mistrust extends to what he terms 'other sectors of society.' This admission of the difficulty is a good starting point to find solutions for rebuilding the relationship and bridging the gap. An extract from Ngwema's final input summarises the dialogue:

> Communicators are not magicians, you can't turn dishonesty into honesty. You can't turn disorganisation into organisation, and this is why the business is made difficult –because you can't tell a credible story because, you must remember, one of the key virtues that you must possess as a communicator is honesty. Credibility is the second one. So, once you lose your credibility, no one is going to believe you. Mayihlome made an example about the two Public Protectors. I'm sure if they were to say the same thing on different occasions, the other one won't agree with the other because she doesn't have credibility, (Ngwema interview, 2017).

From both the semi-structured interviews and dialogues, findings point to the fact that tensions will forever exist between the media and the government

communicators in a healthy democracy. Both sides need to manage them. Tshwete's argument is that the relationship between media and government has to have tension because they are playing on opposite sides, yet when there is a need for the public interest there had to be meeting of minds and hearts to service the citizens. 'We are on the same playing fields, but we are not shooting at the same goals … even though we have a difference of opinion, we always have to go back to the table and find a way to work with each other,' (Tshwete interview, 2017). Ngwema says in South Africa the term 'agenda' is taboo as though having one is wrong, when in fact it isn't. He argued that the sooner this is recognised, the better the foundation of democracy will be solidified.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion and recommendations

9.1 THE THEORY

This research set out to investigate the cause of tension between government communication and the media, and ways in which the ever increasing gap can be bridged to create a healthy transference of information to civil society. The aim was, therefore, to identify a public sphere where a plurality of voices have a place as the contestation in the space occurs to ensure that the public opinion is free of agendas impositions. The researcher's choice of media were newspapers, while reviewing the 23 years of post-apartheid presidencies of Mandela (1994 to 1999), Mbeki (1999 – 2008) and Zuma (2009 – 2018). The study was based on the theoretical framework of the Habermasian public sphere situated in the 18th century where coffee houses, literary and other societies, and voluntary associations were rallying socialising spaces and the press was progressively growing, (Habermas, 1992).

With the contextual situation of this research being an African democracy, Nwagbara's African scholarship on the public sphere within post conflict era of the Niger region of Nigeria aptly points to the Habermasian public sphere evolution from the 18th century. His work was useful to arrive at the conclusion that in contemporary times, the public sphere is correlative of the media and that in the 21st century "it needs the media, one of the agencies of the civil society to flourish and to impact on democracy in the final analysis", (Nwagbara, 2010).

Yet, different theorists cited in the literature review of this research, particularly because it is pivoted on African democracies and decolonisation, have argued that the shape the public sphere assumes is dependent on the type of leadership within a specific democracy. Revisiting Stier (2015) and Whitten- Woodring (2009) is worthwhile as they built arguments that while it is expected that democracies would "have free media and autocracies to have government-

controlled media, some democracies have government-controlled media, and some autocracies have free media. How this mismatch between regime type and media system influences government behavior is a puzzle", (Whitten- Woodring, 2009). This was evident in the referred presidential case studies in chapter 5, 6 and 7. For instance, Valentine (2014) amid praises bestowed on Mandela's tenure and his approach to media relations, averred that while he had left "a free and vibrant press … one of his many cherished legacies", in the same breath he "did not always support freedom of the media. In 1996, his criticism, especially of black journalists and editors he viewed as disloyal, set off alarm bells among press freedom advocates", (Valentine, 2014).

According to Valentine (2014), Mandela had met members of SANEF in a tense stand-off and somewhat pointing to Mandela's presidential successors, both of whom 'bridled consistently against press criticism, arguing that the country's newspapers in particular are biased against the ANC,' (Valentine, 2014).

In fact former editor of Sowetan, Siluma, who was present at the one of the meetings held between Mandela and SANEF, for which he served as member of the executive, was not having Mandela's line of reasoning, he questioned Mandela's emphasis on race, arguing that the focus should be on the role of the media in a democracy, not an expected appropriation and automated allegiance.

Chapter 6 and 7 illustrate how Mbeki and Zuma have carried the thread through to their presidencies. For instance, Mbeki's use of race as political capital against black journalists was a mere extension of the Mandela's racial stand-off of the 1997 SANEF meeting. While Zuma's various tactics from using a propaganda machinery by way of British PR outfit Bell Pottinger to manufacture racial tensions through hundreds of fake social media posts, captured media mouthpieces - ANN7 TV channel and New Age newspaper - advocating for Radical Economic Transformation and going after White Monopoly Capital was not far-fetched as the racial card was still being put to use by the ANC party.

Having applied what Mukherjee refers to as multi-layered - the interpretative qualitative methodology - with discourse analysis as a tool, helped to anchor the public sphere within the South African and by extension the African context.

Discourse Analysis provided the flexibility the researcher required to gather non – prescriptive data applying semi-structured questions, dialogues and archival documents, mostly engaging government communicators, journalists, media commentators to gain insights that would inform this research and provide space to examine and draw conclusions. Additionally, data gathered pointed out that where there is no room for contestation of ideas to inform distinct agendas even within a democracy said to support media freedom, there is prone to exist tension.

This research found that the root of the tension between government communication and the media existed across all three presidencies to various extents. While there were middle-of-the-road views on both ends of the media and government communicators, an extreme example of government communicator Manyi and contrasting view of journalist Sefara, encapsulate strong sentiments from each end. For example, Manyi, in the findings in Chapter 8 gave an extreme view that 'the media must know that it is not parliament … this thing of media posturing as a place for public officials to account to is wrong … thus cannot appropriate to itself moral authority equivalent to that of a democratically elected parliament," (Manyi interview, 2016), while journalist Sefara argued that when government 'single-handedly tries to impose solutions to challenges, the signal received by the media is that the exercise is about controlling … the media,' (Sefara Interview, 2017), and that may be incongruent with a free press in a democracy.

Ansah in *In Search of a Role for the African Media in the Democratic Process*, investigating the role of media in Africa's transformation argues that the media should in fact "fulfil the role of an opposition in the sense of presenting another side of the story where necessary – that is to say criticising and exposing government decisions that are not in the best interest of the people," (Ansah, 1988:13). Yet the research shows that in their aim to insert a policy agenda in the public sphere to shape public opinion, the ruling ANC party's parliament and its representative agencies sought to undo and muzzle media and civil society using MAT and The Secrecy Bill.

Melber's work (2017) with Zimbabwe as a the case study points to how public

policy can turn even the fourth estate, into a propaganda apparatus while independent media is suppressed. Mugabeism and Zanufication were entrenched during Mugabe's reign, with his enablers (cabinet ministers) in tow, who emboldened his actions of dominating the media. Mugabe was the only news in Zimbabwe. In addition, Dahir (2019) studied Tanzania, another African democracy that saw the country's president John Magafuli era referred to as "Magafulification". He had used the introduction of laws that shut down newspapers as well as making an attempt at criminalising data collection for anyone without authorization, (Dahir, 2019). In South Africa, the referred two pieces of legislation - MAT and The Secrecy Bill - had they passed, could have turned South African media into lapdogs such as had happened in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, rather than the watchdog it had fought apartheid to become.

Rutherford, drawing from Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, is a useful way of demonstrating how Habermas's definition of public sphere in a democracy particularly during the referred presidencies is measured. He argued that "the success of the public sphere depends upon the extent of access (as close to universal as possible); the degree of autonomy (the citizens must be free from coercion); the rejection of hierarchy (so that each might participate on an equal footing); the rule of law (particularly the subordination of the state); and the quality of participation", (Rutherford, 2000: 18). Three of the areas Rutherford referenced in relation to Habermas's definition of the public sphere stood prominent throughout the research and did aid in anchoring the researcher's work as it relates to the three presidencies - access, autonomy and hierarchy.

9.1.1 The extent of access (as close to universal as possible)

While the Promotion of Access to Information Act (2000) under the Mbeki Administration was a positive development, the passing of the Protection of State Information Bill - also known as the Secrecy Bill - in parliament (which is still to be promulgated into law) during the Zuma administration, was referred to as an attempt to muzzle the media. Thus, highlighting the threats and hindrances to access to information. The Mandela administration gave an impression of accessibility, while Mbeki's and Zuma's administrations were seen as inaccessible, as they both restricted watchdog media driven by blatant agendas

as detailed in chapters 6 and 7 that defined their presidencies. In the case of Zuma, Spiess' (2011) definition of the responsibilities of watchdog media, which "hold powerful actors accountable", (Spiess, 2011), was defied, all of which amplified the tension.

9.1.2 The degree of autonomy (citizens must be free from coercion).

The adoption of the resolution at the Polokwane ANC party National Conference in 2007 of the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) during the Zuma era sought to curtail the degree of autonomy of journalists. With the MAT, parliament would have powers to censor the press, taking away the very free press the media fought for during apartheid. This research found that this alone deepened the tension between the media and the governing party, and the government itself. Even though the party resolution has not yet been implemented, it remains a source of contention that has led to an unhealthy relationship. Haffajee, former editor-at-large at Huffington Post in South Africa, currently associate editor at Daily Maverick, when responding to the MAT as a bane of the media's existence, said "…the tribunal has been long on the table, but the idea has not gotten anywhere. Even if it were to be tabled, we (the industry) have a court appeal almost good to go and it would end up tangled in court for years," (Haffajee Interview, 2017)

9.1.3 The rejection of hierarchy (so that all might participate on an equal footing).

Throughout the three presidencies, three players in the public sphere were hardly participating on an equal footing. The government constantly exhibited the top of the hierarchy. Even where there were community consultations through the *Izimbizo*'s during Mbeki era, government officials were present to report back rather than use the space as an exchange of ideas and recognise it for the public sphere it is. The media recorded the inequities in such engagements. While the Mandela era attempted to flatten the bureaucratic hierarchy, with the administration extending a hand to the media and civil society, the Mbeki posture and the outright hostility of Zuma's administration were invested in upholding leadership to shape public opinion to their favour, which was rejected by the vigilant media. Thus, the tension.

Maqeda and Makombe's (2013) who studied government hierarchies in South Africa and Zimbabwe displayed the Habermasian public sphere's westernised approach which does not only serve the elite but leaves ample room for interpretation. This means it can be open to government manipulation, amplifying policy agenda by lawmakers over civil society's agenda, while it attempts to obliterate the media agenda.

Nymanjoh and Manyozo (2012) argue that liberation governments play into the trappings of western theoretical constructs within the African public sphere context. This is the reason tensions are heightened, and illustrate why this research is an important contribution to the African critical knowledge base and public sphere within the African context.

9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS ON BRIDGING THE GAP

Throughout the research, it was evident that government communications and media relations are characterised by a universal tension. However, the semi-structured interviews and dialogues were useful in situating the debate on whether the media and government tensions can be remedied as in a healthy democracy, the relationship is necessary. Former government communicator, Tshwete crystallised the tension arguing that the relationship between media and government has to have tension because they are playing on opposite sides. However, when there is a need for the public interest there had to be meeting of minds and hearts to service the citizens. "We are on the same playing fields, but we are not shooting at the same goals … even though we have a difference of opinion, we always have to go back to the table and find a way to work with each other", (Tshwete interview, 2017).

Journalists who participated in the semi-structured interviews and dialogues such as former editor of multiple publications Sefara, Haffajee and some of their peers, have expressed that possibilities exist for a much healthier relationship between government and the media. However, it is crucial for both to respect each other's boundaries.

In the course of studying South Africa's three presidential tenures over 23 years, government communicators and the media provided suggestions. These

translate into recommendations that could be applied to bridge the gap, and resurrect the trajectory of what used to be a model, free media in Africa, showing that both sides take responsibility for the state of the relationship. While both government communicators and journalists who participated in the research pointed sharply to the fact that there is bound to be tension, they agreed on one thing - that it is possible to build bridges. This is because there already exists a blue print which was carved and witnessed in the early period of South Africa's democratic era. The research found that both government commentators and journalists shared similar remedies and recommendations that would create an understanding of a public sphere free of battling to have an upper hand. This would make provisions for a plurality of voices which could co-exist even when there is a contestation of ideas and agendas.

9.2.1 Recommendations by government communicators and journalists

The semi-structured interviews with the editors and communicators reflect that that there is a need for dialogue between government communicators and the media. Manyi's impractical suggestion for an exchange programmes where communicators can spend time in newsrooms, or the proposals to have a forum where expectations can be clarified suggests a desire from both sides to find each other and bridge the gap. Mava Scott and Luzuko Koti have volunteered remedies to the current uncordial state of media and government communication, (Scott interview, 2017; Koti Interview, 2017).

9.2.1.1 Practical Interventions

Scott suggested that it would serve South Africa's young democracy to host 'State meets the Media' annual conferences, accompanied by an exhibition, as one of the practical intervention strategies for dealing with the relationship between the media and government.

> An annual conference convened by the Press ombudsman and a GCIS that brings together senior state officials (cabinet, parliament, DGs) and senior media practitioners and owners (editors, publishers, media owners and selected senior reporters). The focus of the conference would include for example, the State of the Nation in SA, the state of media and reporting, bridging the gaps between the media and the state, capacity

building initiatives, development of a press/state relations code (this will be accompanied by an action plan that should be monitored by a committee) and strengthening of the presidential press corps.

The conference should include parallel sessions, for example, on media training, case studies and presentations on media relations from other countries, (Scott interview, 2017).

He further advocated for the introduction of a compulsory media training course for all senior managers in the public service, coordinated by the GCIS. This would ensure that both parties study and understand the press/state relations code. Scott continues to argue for the establishment of a press relations office at the GCIS to monitor the implementation of the press/state relations code, saying: “a dedicated capacity to monitor the relationship between the press and the state and submit quarterly reports to the minister of monitoring and evaluation will expose the gaps in the implementation of the code”, (Scott interview, 2017) The code, on the other hand, would place responsibility in the hands of Sanef to establish some monitoring mechanism by the press to ensure that media houses adhere to it.

Haffajee says in the early democratic years “there were regular briefings, building of relationships, and invitations to lunch meetings with political principals that were not only around a crisis", (Haffajee interview, 2016). In agreement with Haffajee, Maseko highlighted that in terms of nurturing the relationship with the media, weekly strategy and planning meetings with all communicators from other departments were held. Additionally, they were trained to understand the importance of media relations with government.

9.2.1.2 Provide space for media and government engagement

Koti says that South Africa should employ a deliberate approach driven by the public and private sectors. More or less aligned to Scott’s sentiments, an annual seminar could be helpful, also driven by journalists and government communicators. Furthermore: “this seminar would create a platform of both review and direct engagement. It would assist in dealing with many issues that emanate in the course of work of the two. The seminar must advise on policy ideas and act as a platform for self-correction”, (Koti interview, 2017).

Koti believes that to deal with the dissatisfaction of the public sector about poor coverage in the mainstream press, public service pages should be introduced in news organisations. This would be a practice where space is provided in kind to government or public institutions to allow them to express themselves editorially. "Thus, in the same way as papers are critical of the state, the state must be given uncensored and unmediated space to reflect on the criticism. This approach would quieten the noise about the need to over- regulate media by the state", (Koti interview, 2017). In the same breath, Koti argues that media regulation should be left to the fourth estate, as is the norm in democracies, as this will improve the sour relations between government and the media.

An ideal public sphere according to an African paradigm advocates for the deepening instead of diminishing dialogue in a democracy. For instance, in the case of South Africa, wherein the government had introduced the *Izimbizo*, if they were used optimally it would serve the African paradigm. Thus, allowing for an indigenous public sphere, which would begin to introduce new knowledge, questioning the bourgeois public sphere as defined by Habermas (1962). That would make space for a plurality of voices in the public sphere**.**

9.2.1.3 Information sharing

Former *Business Day* editor Cohen (2017) said at one of the Frank Dialogues, that there have been worse relations between media and government communications. That South Africa's relations may be unhealthy "but not disastrous. We're not at crisis point, it is certainly not the worst", (Cohen interview, 2017). He said bridges could be built if communicators and journalists recognised that their approaches are different. He says "the whole process of having data at hand, having facts, figures and new information, then filtering in is much more important than I think it is", (Cohen interview, 2017).

Sefara noted that the media already views the government as a potential threat rather than a partner. Further, that by reviving get-togethers between cabinet and SANEF leadership, government could use these [platforms] to table media-related challenges it faces and then ask editors how they suggest government must deal with the challenges. In that safe space, government can then share its suggested solutions and get feedback before such suggested solutions are made public. In this way, the media will feel and think that the government is not out to

annihilate it but is a partner in the broader communication chain, (Sefara interview, March 2017).

9.2.1.4 Stick to the facts

Tyawa argues it is pivotal that media houses carry news and inform the public as objectively as possible. Ngwema suggests that the relationship can be better served if there is little or no corruption happening in government. He said: “Anywhere where there is good governance you hardly get this kind of tension because there is no information that is in conflict with our role as government that goes out to the public”, (Ngwema interview, 2017).

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

Government communications and the media will always have a fractious relationship, characterised by a certain level of tension. This research has explored the nature of those tensions prevailing over the past 23 years, and thus provides a basis upon which bridges between the parties can be built. The following sections elucidate recommendations to be considered by both the government and the media.

9.3.1 Recommendations for government

Given the findings of this research, the relationship between the media and the government has clearly been fractious and clouded by mistrust. Factors that aggravate this are the declining status of communications in the government and declining standards in the newsroom. The research, therefore, argues that both sides are responsible for the state of their relationship. This tension has resulted in the inability of citizens to access information they need to improve their lives.

In dealing with the recommendations, the research considered the Habermasian theory of the ideal public sphere, as well as the views of other African theorists on the question of bringing an African flavour or perspective to the discussion. Most of the literature examined was centred on Habermas’s seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962*)*. Six follow-up publications by Habermas addressing the public sphere were explored.

African theorists consulted in this regard include Walter Ouma Oyugi, who deliberates extensively on democracy in Africa and its impediments; and Afrifa Kintongo, through whom the researcher sought to understand the meaning and foundation of democracy. These and other African debates on the link between democracy and the media are to be found in the book *Democratic Theory and Practice in Africa* (1988). While we do not consider Habermas's work to be perfect, he helped focus the research on what can be considered the universal principles of the public sphere. The African theorists' views were considered in the analysis, to create a balanced view on the critique of the assessment of Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma.

The following recommendations look at how an ideal public sphere can be achieved, and foreground the rebuilding of relationships between the media and the government on principles articulated by Habermas, blended with some African theorists' views on democracy.

Recommendation 1: The status of communications in the government should be elevated

This research has shown that the status of communications has diminished since democracy was introduced in South Africa. To change this situation, the government must take drastic steps to adopt a new culture of communications in which the position of communications would be raised to the strategic level that it deserves. Communications should feature as a key performance area of all government ministers, premiers and MECs. In the civil service, all accounting officers – such as directors general and heads of departments – need to have this aspect included in their performance contracts. The weighting of such inclusion can be finalised by the Public Service Commission but should be no less than 25% of the total deliverables of the said officials. This will ensure that the implementation of communications is taken seriously and is cascaded in all direct reports,[96] so that communications will be considered a vital performance area by all key personnel who report to the executive authority.

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The implications for communications should be confirmed as a standing item in all memoranda tabled before executive committees of government entities such as agencies, departments and national and provincial cabinets. This practice, which is already part of cabinet memoranda, should be cascaded across all levels of government. This will ensure that 'communications' is considered in all decisions of the government and will improve the consciousness of communications in government decision-making.

The practice of approving communications strategies as part of all government business plans needs to be tightly managed. This will ensure that all business planning considers the specific communications resources needed. All budgets must reflect resource allocations to communications, marketing or branding. This will ensure that 'communications' is not an unfunded mandate where activities are expected without the required funds or resources.

In line with the Comtask recommendations, communicators should be appointed at the highest level in government departments. The appropriate level should be determined in consultation with the GCIS, depending on the size of the department. This should be either a chief director or a DDG position with a direct reporting line to the minister/DG/MEC and HOD. In other words, communications should be managed by the political head of the department with an indirect reporting line to the accounting officer, regardless of level. This will ensure that communicators are able to influence decisions of the organisation, and their strategic function will be taken much more seriously.

The head of GCIS should be reinstated as a cabinet spokesperson and should attend all cabinet meetings. This principle should be cascaded to all layers of the government, where a head of communications sits on the highest decision-making structures of the organisation and is empowered to articulate positions of that structure to the public on a regular basis. In this capacity, the head of the GCIS should brief relevant communicators on their areas of responsibility before cabinet pronouncements, to ensure smooth follow-up of decisions made by cabinet and are announced at the post-cabinet briefings. This would go a long way towards ensuring that communicators are taken seriously within government decision-making structures and are consulted while decisions are being taken,

rather than being presented with impractical decisions to communicate after the fact.

The GCIS needs to approve all appointments in senior communications posts across government departments at determined levels, such as spokespersons and heads of communications. This will elevate the role of the GCIS as a clearing house for the standardisation of communications. The GCIS should also form part of the orientation and performance management of all communicators who join the government, and these functions should be performed jointly with the department concerned. The exclusion of the GCIS from these processes side-lines their role to the periphery and causes the departments and ministries to ignore the crucial coordination and messaging role that the GCIS should be playing.

Recommendation 2: The government should invest heavily in capacity-building in communications

A full and detailed training course of government communication training needs should be developed, possibly under the auspices of the Public Service Commission. The manual for such a course, targeted at communications professionals within the public sector, needs to contain a framework for government communications that would serve as a standard guide to the conduct of the profession across the sector. All government communicators should be compelled to complete this course before assuming their positions in government postings in communications. This would illuminate gaps and blind spots in the practice of this craft and ensure uniformity when implementing the government's communications strategy. It could be used to develop an orientation programme for government communicators.

A suitable communications training course for non-communicators must be created for all senior managers in government, including all politicians, accounting officers, communicators and community development workers. This would be used as a basis for media training for the cabinet and all other politicians across the government.

- Media training should be made compulsory for all politicians who are tasked with public interaction, in order to equip them to implement the communications strategy of the government. This will assist in getting executive teams of government to be 'on message', and to take a professional approach to conveying official information in a coherent and consistent manner. A full partnership should be struck with universities to create academic programmes that can be used to improve the capacity of communicators. These courses should cover the full spectrum of government communications including, but not limited to: Media liaison
- Issues/crisis management
- Stakeholder management
- Parliamentary liaison
- PR/advertising agency management
- Marketing for the public sector
- Corporate social investment
- Community liaison management
- Labour relations management
- Use of digital media to enhance communications strategies

This list is not exhaustive and can be further developed in conjunction with partner universities both in South Africa and abroad. These must be at all levels of academia – from first degrees and diplomas to postgraduate diplomas and postgraduate degrees. Universities should also create short communications courses/seminars and colloquia that can be used as refresher interventions by the public sector.

The Public Service Commission should consider the establishment of a communications academy to focus on this important area of government work. Such an academy would be tasked with coordinating this capacity-building work on a continuous and consistent basis in conjunction with the GCIS and partner universities, as envisaged in Chapter 4.

Recommendation 3: The government should invest heavily in building relations with the media

The government should adopt a new culture of relations with the media by insisting that political principals invest time in engaging with members of the media. This must go beyond media conferences, which are impersonal and do not provide an atmosphere that encourages the flourishing of good relationships. This will ensure that the principals incorporate communications in their diaries without viewing this as an additional burden and obligation.

Media liaison officers need to go back to the basics of engaging the media in a professional manner, including daily, weekly and monthly contact with relevant media, keeping them informed on departmental work. The GCIS should create a Media Liaison Officer (MLO) forum where media liaison officers can exchange views on how to engage the media outside the formal structures of the GCIS clusters. This will also ensure that MLOs can use their association to engage with media organisations such as the Press Gallery Association (PGA). Clarification of standards and expectations is crucial in building new bridges that can repair the relationship between the government and the media.

Quarterly meetings between the cabinet and Sanef should be reinstated. These meetings, held at the highest level, will ensure that any issues of discomfort are cleared up before they become issues of conflict between the two parties.

The government should adopt a full public relations strategy and customer relations management (CRM) strategy to tackle the relationship with the media. This should include, but not be limited to: exchange programmes with local and international media houses; interaction with local and international media owners; regular interaction with editors and news/political editors for background briefings; interaction with specialist publications/publishers to strike good relationships; and, finally, engagement in media partnership agreements that could combine editorials and advertorials as special projects aimed at information dissemination.

Recommendation 4: Take steps to promote media transformation

Diversification of the media is the single most likely implementation to help build the relationship between the media and government. The ANC should abandon the resolution for a MAT and instead open a constructive dialogue with media owners to tackle the issues of media diversity with a programme of change. Such a programme should include revising the mandate of the MDDA to be much more aggressive in implementing programmes of media diversity, as well as acceptance of the work done by the press commission to strengthen self-regulation in this respect.

The government should create a media development fund to maintain new and innovative media projects that will diversify the media. This can be done through development funding institutions such as the Independent Development Corporation or the National Empowerment Fund. The fund should operate across the media landscape and set targets for empowerment and the establishment of new media properties and platforms.

The building of relationships with community media must also be intensified and should include increased advertising spend by public sector agencies and government departments. Special projects should be entered into with various community media. The decision of the government to spend 30% of its advertising spend on community media should be monitored closely for implementation and even eventually increased to 50%. This is considering the argument that although community media reaches more citizens than commercial media, they receive less advertising spend from government. While this is a good start, research has shown that very few government departments spend anything close to this in this area.

The empowerment charter for the communication and media industry should be revived, reintroduced and adopted, as a matter of urgency. The government should not deal with untransformed media without holding them to account. The same standards that are enforced for private sector companies doing business

with government should apply to media organisations. The fact that government needs these media organisations has made them complacent.

Recommendation 5: The government should strengthen its own media

The government should innovate much more to develop its own platforms for communications. This could include, but not be limited to, the strengthening of *Vuk'uzenzele* in terms of appealing content and extended reach through digital means, as well as expanded reach to rural areas. *Vuk'uzenzele* could also be converted into a weekly newsletter. This research has established that *Vuk'uzenzele* prints about 1.8 million copies monthly; this could be reduced and made into a weekly publication to increase relevance.

Secondly, the mandatory inclusion of government job advertising in the publication would ensure that citizens see it as essential reading. Radio and TV channels can be launched, to live on government websites and YouTube channels. *Vuk'uzenzele* can be turned into live radio programmes on all community radio stations – even on the SABC on the back of a SABC–GCIS memorandum of understanding. Finally, a well-structured partnership with the SABC would improve government commissioned programmes both on radio and television and may also include different packaging for TV and radio.

The ruling party should strengthen its own platforms, such as *ANC Today,* to be more appealing and agenda-setting, as originally envisaged by President Mbeki when it was launched. This will go a long way towards making the public understand some of the ANC's own policies and government actions. This is crucial, especially as the ANC intends to make some policy shifts and explain the success or failure of its policies since 1994.

Recommendation 6: Establish brand extensions for government publications

Key publications produced by government departments for stakeholders need to be converted to digital format for broader distribution. Initiatives could include turning publications like *Vuk'uzenzele* into digital format, establishing Facebook

and Twitter accounts for these publications, and turning print publications into audio-visual material in line with citizen consumption patterns. These could be distributed through community radio and community television in the first instance, and then through online platforms such as YouTube.

Finally, sister programming could be commissioned through the SABC, following the example of Soul City, where the Department of Health simplified health messages.

Recommendation 7: Reform public broadcasting

The government should implement the recommendations of the parliamentary ad hoc committee on the fitness of the SABC board to hold office. It is crucial to elevate the credibility of the SABC as a public broadcaster on which citizens can rely. This involves the rebuilding of their credibility as a public and not a state broadcaster. In simple terms, the SABC must be accountable to the people and not to the ruling party. The critical indicator is the extent of powers of the Minister of Communications. The attempts by the then Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, to usurp the powers of parliament to select the SABC board must be reversed.

Parliament must carry out its oversight role. Secondly, the SABC must defend the court ruling of December 2012, that the minister should not interfere with the board's role to appoint the executive members of the board. Remarkably, the Minister of Communications appealed this sensible ruling. Firm action is required to ensure that there is no executive interference, such as that of former Minister of Communications Muthambi, in the process of appointing the SABC's Chief Operating Officer. This ended disastrously, as chronicled in the parliamentary inquiry. (Parliamentary Inquiry on the SABC 2017) Finally, in line with the ideal public sphere, the SABC should appoint appropriate people to its newsroom and align its editorial policies with the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry. The interference that was exposed at the inquiry must become a thing of the past.

Recommendation 8: Establish an aggressive digital strategy for the government

This research took place at a time when digital migration was about to be embarked upon. Change in the digital environment has yielded opportunities that the government and the media should consider when reviewing their relationship. The government should devise, as a permanent pillar of government communication, a thorough digital communications strategy that would include but not be limited to the following:

- hiring full-time social media managers to manage and monitor social media;
- adopting a fully-fledged social media policy at all levels of government, ensuring that communicators and their principals are trained to use social media to enhance their engagement with the public;
- ensuring that government websites are revamped to be interactive and up-to-date;
- ensuring more effective use of multimedia to communicate government messages; and
- confirming that communicators devise a strategy for maximum use of social media to create an 'information community' through blogs/WhatsApp groups with interested journalists and communicators in their industry/WhatsApp groups of clusters under the GCIS system for rapid communications coordination.

9.3.2 Recommendations for the media

Recommendation 1: Media transformation must be taken seriously

The process of the media transformation charter must be revived urgently to ensure that parameters are set for the transformation of media ownership. The industry must be put under pressure to ensure the compliance of all their members to the various empowerment legislations.

Recommendation 2: Review the policy regarding 'bids'

The newsroom must review its policy regarding specialised reporting, to improve the quality of reporting. This can be done according to clusters of subject matter – such as the economic, social peace and justice clusters, and so on – to equip journalists with levels of specialisation.

Recommendation 3: Embark on an information exchange programme

The media must extend a hand in its relationship with the government. The media should embark on an information exchange programme with the government to better understand how government processes work. At the same time, government communicators and principals should be invited to spend time in the newsroom to understand how the news is compiled and how the news cycle works.

Editors and owners need to meet regularly with government leaders to discuss ways of dealing with differences in the process of engaging in the national discourse. Differences must never be ironed out in a democracy, as a democracy depends on differences. These interactions can also be used to clarify any misunderstandings that may arise relating to their expectations of one another while doing business.

Capacity building programmes for the media should include training in governance that takes the journalists covering the public sector into the architecture and workings of the public sector. This should include other arms of the state, namely, the judiciary and the legislature. For example, the process of law-making is not to be taken for granted; and understanding how laws are made can ensure a better appreciation by any journalist who is tasked to cover it.

Community media should be taken more seriously and not treated like a poor cousin in its relationship with the government. A more concerted effort to strike a lasting partnership with local government in particular, is crucial in building a new paradigm from which to view the media. In this regard, a cordial relationship could then be built.

Recommendation 4: A better sense of checks and balance

In this era of social media there is pressure to be first with the news, especially with citizen journalism taking centre stage. This means that the media must be more rigorous in checking its sources to ensure that they are not misled by sources that have an ulterior motive and seek to use the media as a negative tool to fulfil that agenda.

9.4 CONCLUSION

One of the main benefits of this research is that it aids in the advancement of understanding the complex relationship between the South African government and the media, and adds to the scholarship of the African public sphere. Having researched, interviewed, observed and engaged in a round table talk of Frank Dialogues with government communicators, media commentators and journalists, it is evident that the gap exists and most role players have intimated that bridge both in perception and in reality warrants building, as it will be of benefit to society. The research has shown how the existing gaps caused huge misunderstandings that led to a collapse in relations, as was witnessed under the Zuma administration.

Similarly, the Press Freedom Commission concluded that the mooted MAT, which seeks to change the regime of media regulation, would not under any circumstances achieve the desired results. It is clear that such a 'command and control' route is neither prudent nor desirable for rebuilding bridges that were progressively burnt over the 23 years under review.

In this final chapter, recommendations have been made to government, which include taking proactive steps that will act as a catalyst in transforming the media. While recommendations were made within the context of newspapers, it will be crucial for the office of the current President Cyril Ramaphosa to borrow from this research and spread insights acquired across media including the transformation of the broadcasting space and the strengthening of its own media in order to fill the communications gap with its own citizens. Given this digital age, government will be best served by implementing a more aggressive strategy that will take their communications to a new level, made possible by the dawn of the digital migration that South Africa is about to enter.

In the final analysis, in Nwagbara's (2010) words, a healthy public sphere needs the media in contemporary time as one of the agencies of the civil society to flourish and to impact on democracy. Spiess (2011), in his book titled *From watchdog to lapdog? The impact of government intimidation on the public watchdog performance of peace media in processes of democratisation*, says the media needn't be government's lapdog as its watchdog duty is "reporting that serves' and gives the exposure of wrongdoing in the public interest", (Coronel in Spiess, 2011). Such journalism does "not only provide information but particularly focus on malfeasance", (Spiess, 2011: 5) also holds water, with no side yielding to each other's agendas, yet agreeable to finding common ground for ensuring that civil society participate in the shaping of public opinion. Cheeseman, who has written positively about the continent's resilience, says, a relationship between media and government can make or break a democracy, certainly a subject for another research. This research has demonstrated part damage and suggests the road to recovery is possible to remedy the gap.

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Annexure 1

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Editors/ Journalists:

1. What is your perception of Government Communications over the last 24 years?

2. What is your perception about how Mandela handled the media?

- Are you familiar with the Comtask report?
- If so, what are your perceptions about it?
- What is your assessment of the work of the GCIS throughout the past 20 years?
- How can you describe your interaction with the GCIS?
- Any event that stands out for you in the Mandela presidency?

3. What is your perception about how the Mbeki era related to the media?

- What is your view on how the AIDS debacle was handled by Mbeki?
- What is your view about how he handled the Zimbabwe diplomacy question?
- How did Mbeki interact with you as a journalist?
- How did the GCIS under Mbeki work with you as a journalist?
- Do you have any anecdotes to share about working with Mbeki?
- What is your view of the launch of *ANC Today* newsletter?

4. What is your view about how Zuma handled the media in his term of office as President of the Republic?

- What was your relationship with Zuma's spokespersons?
- What was your access to President Zuma when you needed interviews?
- Any interview with President Zuma that stands out for you?
- What is your view on 'The Spear'debacle surrounding the President?
- What is your view about the handling of the Media Appeals Tribunal?
- What are the issues in the Secrecy Bill that stand out for you and would influence media state relations negatively?
- Do you believe that Zapiro's conduct is representative of how the media should deal with the President?
- Do you believe that satire should be extended beyond the initial criticism it isintended to highlight? Case Study: Zapiro's shower head, a constant

reminder and ridicule. Do you think this is fair? Shouldn't the issue of respect for the office come in?

- What is your objective understanding of why the ANC wanted the Media Appeals Tribunal?

5. What is your perception about how the media has evolved over the last 20 years?

- Do you think prejudice in the media has changed?
- What of racism in the media?
- What about ownership changes?
- Do you think the owners influence the media content?
- Do you believe that there are some among the media who are driving anti-government agendas?
- Do you believe that the government is out to gag the media?
- How would you characterise the relationship between the media and the state over the past 20years?

6 What is your assessment of how government has communicated to its citizens in relation to its stated objectives?

- What do you think are the key factors that influenced such a characterisation?
- What are two things you believe government could do better in improving its communications?
- What can the media do to be a better partner with government in reaching out to citizens?

Annexure 2: Ethics Clearance Certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Tabane

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/06/36**
PROJECT TITLE	Bridging the gap: An analysis of the complicated relationship between the government and the Media24 years into democracy
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr O Tabane
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Media Studies/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 June 2018
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved
EXPIRY DATE	03 October 2021

DATE 04 October 2018 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor G Daniels

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES