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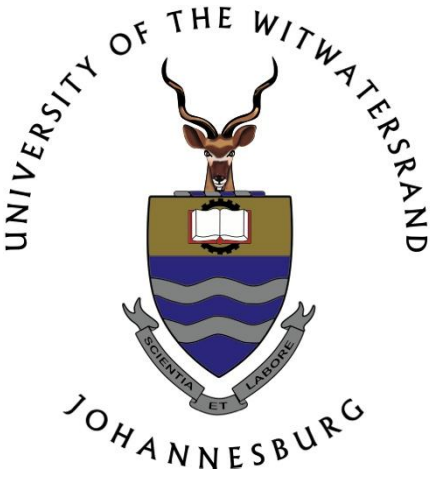

SWAZI MEDIA AND POLITICAL JOURNALISM: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN ELECTIONS COVERAGE

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BY

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGE AND MEDIA, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES BY COMBINATION OF COURSEWORK AND RESEARCH

MARCH, 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

_____

_____ of _____

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE: _____**

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my dear mother, Ntombi Ginindza whose struggle as a single parent made me who I am today. I hope with this, she can reach the fulfilment that she toiled for good reason. I also dedicate this dissertation to my loving family, especially my wife and friend Primrose, who has supported and encouraged me throughout and whose love and strength saw me through this gruelling period. In addition, I would like to dedicate this work to my two children, Vuyo and Lwandzilelwethu who continue to motivate and inspire me to want to reach greater heights and for who I try to be a better person. Hopefully, this makes up for all the time I was away from home and all the good times we missed because I had to focus on this assignment. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Nomalungelo Dlamini whose love and patience meant I could always have a place to stay when attending class, and often unannounced. To her I wish to say thank you for everything you did for me, for opening up your place for me to call my own. This project is a measure of my hard work, my determination to improve my work as well my passion for this field. I have sacrificed a lot to get to this level and I hope that my perseverance will inspire others to believe that there is nothing that we cannot achieve once we put our minds to it. I am grateful to God for the strength that He gave me to see through this difficult stage. I would also like to acknowledge that one could never have made it without the support of my colleagues and many others who were willing to assist me whenever I knocked on their doors.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank God for offering a roadmap about my purpose in life and directing me to where I should be headed. I draw strength from knowing that this is God's will who has seen me through difficult circumstances while I pursued this degree. I would also like to particularly single out Wits University for affording me this life-changing experience. I learned a lot through this gruelling process and appreciate fully that I would not have accomplished it were it not for the contribution of others who assisted me with their wealth of knowledge and experience to finish this project.

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ABSTRACT

When Swaziland went to the polls in 2013, the world cast its eyes not just on the elections being free and fair, but more importantly if they were democratic. Responding to a wave of protests from banned political parties and civil society, the international community called on Swaziland to allow for political inclusion. King Mswati III's response was to rename the system of governance a "Monarchial Democracy", which he described as a marriage drawn between the monarchy and the ballot box. The media is central to society, not least for deepening democracy, but also for the role it plays in the political process – a primary reason freedom of the press has been thought a necessary safeguard in a democratic society. This study analysed the representation of political parties in the media, assessing whether or not the Swazi press legitimises royal hegemony through its coverage of political party issues and to what degree it is independent from state influence. A qualitative research method was used, employing a meta-analysis approach to contents obtained from both the *Times of Swaziland* and the *Swazi Observer* of the coverage of the 2013 national elections.

The general findings of the study indicated that the print media privileged the ideology of the ruling regime's Monarchial Democracy, while marginalising alternative or counter political ideologies. It concluded that there was not much difference between the commercial independent media and state-owned media and that the usual critical political economy and liberal pluralism debates and analysis don't really apply to countries such as Swaziland where there is no complexity of the economy of developed nations.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The prodemocracy Tsunami unleashed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, so starkly illustrated by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, crashed into Swaziland with a force that shook the Kingdom to its foundations. That same giant wave had smashed into Southern Africa with an angry ferocity that shattered the established political order, sweeping away socialist autocracies, segregationist regimes, one-party states and life presidents into the dustbin of history. In one season, racist South Africa released Nelson Mandela from Robben Island and entered majority rule; Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda tumbled out of power to be replaced by Frederick Chiluba; Malawi's 'Life President' Ngwazi Hastings Banda was swept away; Kenya's Daniel Arap Moi was replaced. Only Julius Nyerere in Tanzania took a dignified exit, going into retirement after four successive 5-year terms as President.[1]

The groundswell of a trade union movement led popular revolt and appeared to be a perfect fit to replace the absolute Monarchy of the Kingdom of Swaziland, where democracy was still anathema. Even though the roots of the Monarchy proved strong enough to withstand the seismic shocks, the Swaziland that emerged into the new Millennium was not the same country that had entered the 90s. Though largely subsided, the pro-democracy message continued to be carried in the spirit of the unions' 27 (political) Demands of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU)[2] continued to bubble under the surface. This challenged the Monarchy to strike a balance between meeting the international community's expectations of political inclusion on the one hand and introducing reforms that would continue to preserve the centuries old monarchical order. The ultimate outcome of the Pro-Democracy Movement pressure was the re-introduction of a National Constitution in 2005. On its own, the Constitution was a major advance in the democratisation agenda, especially as it re-introduced fundamental human rights.

At the same time, a clause in the Constitution still prohibited democratic elections through popular contestation for government. Successfully preventing democratic mechanisms for good governance by enabling citizens' space to influence public policy and determine the content of institutions responsible for their quality of life proved to be its most controversial drawback.

In the Cold War era, the Kingdom was firmly in the Western bastion against socialism. Success of its small but frugal government, open free market economy and healthy race relations under the previous Monarchy confirmed its capitalist credentials and helped drive foreign direct investment and growth. Early exploitation of iron ore and asbestos as well as efficient sugar-led agriculture

[1] www.britannica.com/biography/Julius-Nyerere

[2] Jan Sithole who served as the secretary general of the trade union was seen as a driving force. He later emerges as the President of the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA) which took part in the 2013 National Elections.

propelled the Kingdom into the World Bank Middle Income Country (MIC) category at a time when almost all of sub-Sahara Africa were Least Developed Countries (LDC) and basket cases dependent on donor aid (IMF Article IV Report). In the years that followed, as protest demonstrations and strikes discomforted the authorities, public investment in security increased as focus on other areas of development deteriorated, as did performance in key sectors in agriculture, education, health and economic growth barely hovered above negative territory. Effectiveness of key governance institutions degenerated. The ugly head of corruption began to rear its head everywhere from the executive, the judiciary and the legislature.

Clearly, the elephant in the room was the quality of political leadership. Expectations anticipated the constitutional reforms would target restoration of those elements in the independence constitution that allowed for the deployment of the best brains for development. But it was not to be. The constitution blocked precisely that element that would have re-introduced competition, effected dynamism in freedom of speech and press freedom that provide the transparency and accountability necessary for efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions.

However, five years into the new Constitution, an unusual challenge for the Monarchy emerged. The delayed impact of the 2008 Global Economic Crisis hit Swaziland's fragile economy, forcing the government for the first time in 2011, to seek world financial assistance to stave off a severe fiscal disaster (Zwane, 2014). According to Dube (2014), during this period, the country emerged from obscurity to close scrutiny as the flow of stories from all media sectors headlined a number of newspapers, reporting on a country fast deteriorating to a position of a failed state. The pleas for help provided a new leverage for the international community to pointedly demand multi-party democratisation as a key condition for assistance. Although the King baulked at these demands, Swaziland's fiscal crisis cured itself. However, the spectre of the large expectation to respond to the global demand for democracy did not.

On the eve of the 2013 general elections, King Mswati III declared that Swaziland would become a Monarchial Democracy that would infuse the principles of a participatory democracy with the traditional governance values demanded by a Swazi Monarchy (*Times*, 2013). In essence, this was the compromise the world wanted, elections that are democratic, free and fair and had a unique distinction of not abandoning tradition and culture. In short, this was an offer of democratic electiomns.

This placed the Swazi media firmly on the spot. A growing consensus on the role of the press in modern political context is that it must promote good governance by speaking truth to power. This demands that journalists have the courage to take a stand on behalf of inconvenient truth, often requiring comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the comfortable. The discourse about the relevance of political parties in Swaziland is a difficult one. There is a red border delineating two defined positions. One is the space covering the scope of establishment politics. The other is the representation of opposition political views and activities in the mainstream media.

This research is an investigation into the representation and coverage of political parties in the Swaziland news media as viewed through the newspaper coverage of the Swaziland General Elections of 2013. It is motivated by a desire to contextualise the role of Swaziland's print media in the debate over constitutional rights. Swaziland's progression towards a universally acceptable democracy is not without controversy. While the 2005 Constitution provides for Freedom of Expression, of Association and of Assembly, Section 79 states that "the system of Government for Swaziland is a democratic participatory, *Tinkhundla*-based system which emphasises devolution of state power from central government to *Tinkhundla* areas and individual merit as a basis for election or appointment to public office".

This confines the political space to appointive government and removes any consideration of popular opinion to elect a government of their choice. It also forbids free citizens' public participation in the choice of government and underlines the irrelevance of public opinion to the conduct of public institutions and their sensitivity to good governance. Civil society is certainly riled by the denial of the citizen's right to choose a choice of government and to choose policies and programmes they agree with. Thwarted from the opportunity for fair competition for government leadership, political parties continue to reject the *Tinkhundla* system reforms. In 2013 as in 2008, political parties advocated for a boycott of the General Elections to highlight the elections' lack of democracy.

Hence the spotlight on the media; to what extent has it balanced its political coverage while retaining its professional responsibility for impartiality and objectivity within the unique policy context of Monarchial Democracy? The study also seeks to establish the media's role in disseminating the ideology of the Monarchial Democracy and thereby contributes to a critical understanding of the country's political environment through critical analysis of the mainstream media's coverage of the elections.

As it denied them a role in the country's governance architecture, political parties rejected the King's political construct of a marriage drawn between the monarchy and the ballot box and continue to call for a boycott of the elections. The political parties' and civil society advocacy for a boycott of the elections provides the background to the thesis and contributes to an understanding of the critical role of the media in this contested domain. This study takes into consideration theories that combine hegemony and ideology, normative media theories, critical political economy and theories of news production. It used a qualitative research method to determine the themes from the stories published by the *Times of Swaziland Group of Newspapers* and the *Swazi Observer Group.*

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Swaziland was formally declared a British Protectorate in 1881 and gained its independence from Britain in September 1968 under a constitutional monarchy (Daniel, 1983). It remains the only country in Africa ruled by an absolute monarch whose political and ideological beliefs can be traced to the 16th century. Hobbesian medieval political thought argues that kings were answerable to the divine powers from above and everyone else was to submit to the king's rule (Greenleaf, 1964; Mzizi, 2004; Dube, 2014).

The country uses a political system called *Tinkhundla*[3], which Dube (2014) defines as a combination of the bicameral Westminster Parliamentary system and traditional monarchy. Resistance to the royal hegemony is evident from the early pre-independence period, becoming more active in the 1970s when King Sobhuza II, impervious to world opinion on its domestic affairs, scrapped the British Westminster constitution and declared a state of emergency on April 12, 1973, through a Royal Proclamation that outlawed political parties and transformed the constitutional monarchy into an executive monarchy (Davies, 1985:6). In the five years that followed, human rights were suspended, political parties banned, opposition political leaders jailed. In 1978 the king confirmed the new style of Executive Monarchy by introducing a governance system called *Tinkhundla* which allowed him to appoint the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, the judges and heads of the House of Parliament.

Political parties defied this ban and continue to call for multiparty democracy. They include the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC), formed in 1962, which became the official opposition to the Royalist Imbokodvo National Movement (INM) formed by King Sobhuza II which swept the elections in 1967 and 1972. Despite the State of Emergency which forbade political parties, the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) launched itself in February 1992[4]. The formation of PUDEMO took place in the same period of the early 90s trade union movement and popular revolt and whose aim to replace the absolute Monarchy of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

A new constitution that underpins the position of the Monarch came into force in February 2006. Although the Constitution declares that people are endowed with individual and collective rights and freedoms that are enjoyed by most of the people of Southern Africa and much of the rest of the world, two of its most important sections (Ch. III, s.25 and Ch. VII, s.79) contradict each other. On one hand, section 25 provides for freedom of assembly and association, while on the other, section 79 requires that individual merit be the basis of election and elevation to public office. This

[3] *Tinkhundla* as system of governance emphasizes decentralisation of state power from central government to constituencies, whilst individual merit is a basis for elections and appointment to public office. As a political structure *Tinkhundla* refers to the 55 constituencies that are formed through the assemblage of a group of 5 or more chiefs per constituency.

[4] PUDEMO as a party was founded in 1982

effectively prohibits the registration and operation of political parties as the basis for election and access to public office.

The political arena took a decidedly violent turn in September 2008 when terrorists planted a bomb on the bridge barely 500 metres from the Lozitha Palace. It blew prematurely, killing two and seriously injured the bomb mastermind (Mbedzi was at Lozitha Bridge, Times, 2011). Amos Mbedzi was subsequently sentenced to 26 years in jail having admitted to being a trained cadre of the South Africa African National Congress's (ANC) military wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe supporting PUDEMO establish a military wing, Umbane, which had been blamed for a series of smaller bomb attacks on government infrastructure (*SA man sentenced over botched bomb for Swazi king*, *M&Gonline*). The attack spurred the government to introduce the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA) of 2008 and to declare PUDEMO and its youth wing, Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), their South Africa based agency the Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN), the afore mentioned NNLC and Umbane terrorist organisations. The STA has a significant and direct implication for journalists and media reporting on the activities or communication of PUDEMO as proscribed entity, exposing the media to possible criminal charges under the terrorism law. Significantly, both PUDEMO and SWAYOCO have continued to ignore the ban and participate in political protests against the system of governance, including calls for regime change. They are also active in consistent calls for a boycott of the elections.

In 2011 a new wave of political revolts demanding democratisation swept through Africa and the Middle East. This time, the campaign centred on African Arab countries Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. The so-called Arab Spring came at a time when Swaziland was again in the global spotlight in an effort to borrow funds to resolve a crippling fiscal liquidity crisis (Dube, 2014). Swaziland civil society took the opportunity to draw the energy of the Arab Spring closer by mounting 12 April demonstrations to commemorate the Declaration of the 1973 State of Emergency. European Union (EU) member states started a bombing campaign to incapacitate the Libya Government air force claiming to support forces of democracy. Shortly thereafter President Muammar Gaddafi was shot and killed on 20 October, 2011 after he was captured in an underground culvert.

The development sent a chilling shock wave in Swaziland. The Swaziland Monarch had a close relationship with the Libyan leader who had visited Swaziland in 2010. Also, the EU is the source of the bulk of development support to Swaziland and regularly despatches ambassadors for a political dialogue seeking democratic reforms. The Libya bombing indicated an unnerving twist to the democratisation campaign.

In the backdrop to the Arab Spring and the liquidity crisis, the 2013 elections put Swaziland in an uncomfortable spotlight. Evidently reacting to pressure from the calls for democratic reform, King Mswati III announced that the country had become a Monarchical Democracy, which he described as a "marriage between the Monarchy and the ballot box" (Hlatshwayo, 2014:1). The

announcement raised expectations on how this would be implemented to reform the conduct of the National Elections process to align with new Monarchical democratic ethos.

Even though political parties were no longer illegal under the new Constitution, enactment of the 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act had reintroduced the conditions under the 1973 decree. The elections political discourse also put a spotlight on how the press would navigate coverage of the political parties within the larger picture of the general elections process. As Curran (2005) argues, the function of the media must be conceived as their being the watchdogs of all authorities in both the public and private realms. They are expected to check on abuses of power.

Although banned, PUDEMO and SWAYOCO continue to claim the right to be actors in the polity and continue to express themselves and join civil society campaigns for multiparty democracy in Swaziland. Similarly, the NNLC is active, as well as the quasi-cultural political movement Sive Siyinqaba. Against this backdrop the question of how the media reports politics and its political journalism is relevant in part as much to assess the relationship between the media and political parties as it is to gauge the media's role in the discourse on the political situation in Swaziland. As Cuthbert (1979) says, the way in which the press reports the news is extremely important if readers are to have informed opinions.

The two mainstream newspapers that dominate the media landscape are the privately-owned *Times of Swaziland Group of Newspapers*, and the state-owned *Swazi Observer Group.* A study of both newspapers on this topic could be useful in determining not just their independence from the state, but the scope of freedom they enjoy in the coverage of political issues. Equally significant, would be an understanding of their role and its extent in sustaining Monarchical hegemony.

As the sentinel and watchdog of society, the media narrative should be indicative of their independence by the degree to which newspapers reflect the views and voices of political parties and of the civil society coalitions that express themselves on the political discourse of the nation.

1.3 RATIONALE

The aim of this study is to contribute to the emerging body of research on the topic, an area that is still under-researched. It is based on the premise that newspapers play a significant role in influencing public perceptions of reality by the way they organise images, the voices they select and the narrative they choose to project to reflect the public discourse as argued by Murdock and Golding (2005). The study is therefore interested in the continuous debate about whether the media has a more or less powerful effect in the Swazi context—in the broader framework of ideology and hegemony. According to Lichtenberg (1990), each election year renders the role of the press self-evident, hence the primary reason freedom of the press has been thought a necessary safeguard in democratic society.

This study draws on a liberal-pluralist position that considers the media to play an important role in democracy and accorded the status in relationship to the three arms of state power as the 'fourth

estate' that represents the public. It therefore seeks to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge on the relationship between the media and the political systems of Southern Africa countries. In this context, the media is viewed not just as mirror or reflection of society, but as valuable source of information and powerful mode of communication. This power controls much of what people understand of events that occur around the world on a daily basis.

In this way, there is a greater demand on the media to not just present the mirror of how the society looks but to go beyond by enriching the political discourse by offering a multiplicity and diversity of views and opinions.

Given that Swaziland's system of governance is not a multiparty democracy and therefore widely viewed as undemocratic, it raises many questions of how the media navigates its role of reflecting dissenting views that call for a democratisation of the system. It also seeks to understand to what extent South Africa's transformation from apartheid and its transition to liberal democracy is useful as a model to motivate the Swaziland case.

Similarities can be drawn between the Swaziland context and the role of the (black) press in the struggle against apartheid, which as Berger (2000)[5] states, 'like most social movements, had its press', in relation to the role of the black conscious movement. At the height of apartheid, repression peaked during the 1980s and government targeted what it dubbed 'the revolution-supportive press with a plethora of media controls under the State of Emergency (Tomaselli and Louw, 1989a; Louw and Tomaselli, 1991a; TRC report, 1998). In turn, the question of loyalty is relevant, as well as careful analysis of who, in the case of the Swaziland, does the media serve. Just as there is a general consensus on the degree of censorship of the Swaziland media, much can be learned from a comparison with the then South African government which employed such strategies of censorship 'as major disinformation initiatives that included approaches to isolate the alternative media (Berger, 2000). In the South Africa case, a convergence of minds on the evil of censorship culminated in the mainstream media and its Media Council rejecting the expectation they would police the professional practice of non-Council members.

Berger (2000), however, asserts that such texts as the analysis of the black press during apartheid are weighed towards the description of the politics and the struggle that shaped the fate of the newspapers. They convey vibrant images of the creativity of the media, the journalists and the editors in times of harassment. The analysis of the South African alternative press invites us to focus on the relationship between the political struggle and the print media, assessing how it facilitates the discourse in the political domain.

[5]Cited in Publishing for the people: the alternative press 1980-1999

1.4 Justification of period and media

The year 2013 is an ideal period for this study. Swaziland held its 10th general elections in 2013 – the second under the 2006 Constitution. Expectations of likely democratic reforms to bring the Kingdom's systems more in line with universal principles were very high. It was postulated that insufficient time in between introduction of the Constitution and the 2008 elections had made it difficult to institute relevant reforms. One of the major expectations was that political parties would be allowed to take part in the elections as the country now had a new constitution. However, no reforms were introduced in time for the 2008 elections, two years after the coming into force of the Constitution, which proved a contentious issue as the Constitution does not prohibit political parties. However, section 79 of the Constitution states that the basis for election or appointment to public office is individual merit. Civil society groups nonetheless pressed the issue with a Supreme Court application (*Jan Sithole and Others v The Prime Minister and Others* Appeal Case No. 50/2008). The Supreme Court held that the Constitution does not allow political parties to field candidates in national elections.

The Arab Spring Uprising in Tunisia in January 2011 contained the explosive seeds of a major global revolt. The self-immolation of a youth fruit-and-vegetable vendor who set himself on fire in front of a government office in protest after being mistreated by police struck a chord with deeper discontent over the corruption and police repression under the authoritarian regime of President Ben Ali and his clan. Considered in Western political circles as a model of liberal economic reform in the Arab world, Tunisia suffered from high youth unemployment, inequality, and outrageous nepotism on the part of Ben Ali and his wife.

The Tunisian grievances resonated with masses across the Arab world toppling leaders from Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Yemen, forcing even countries outside the Muslim world to brace against likely revolts. The Moroccan response to the crisis was however instructive. Morocco that is a Monarchy like Swaziland was swept by more than a year of protests. King Mohammed VI responded with an honesty and commitment that helped diffuse the crisis. He promised a comprehensive constitutional reform to improve democracy and the rule of law as well as acknowledged the undercurrents of the revolt with a "firm commitment to give a strong impetus to the dynamic and deep reforms... taking place". He then formed a commission to work on the constitutional revisions leading to a referendum on the draft constitution.[6]

The Moroccan model appeared to offer a relevant positive example for addressing the Swaziland situation. To what extent the Arab Spring Uprising influenced the course of events in Swaziland is not clear. A year after Libya's Gaddafi was toppled, Swaziland political parties mobilised a 'Swazi Uprising' which they said sought to raise domestic, regional and international public opinion on

[6] Rabat: Google News. Agence France-Presse. 24 April 2011.

their demands for policy reforms. They intended these reforms to be included in the 2013 elections. The advocacy certainly resonated with the donor community and other international partners who indicated they were keeping a close eye on the elections being democratic, free and fair. Expectations were therefore heightened when Parliament passed the Elections Act 2013, one of six new laws to regulate the upcoming elections. However none of them referred to the registration of political parties or their involvement in the forthcoming elections. It was a crushing disappointment with political parties not hiding their resolve not only to agitate for a boycott of the elections but also to disrupt them. The state on the other hand was equally determined to showcase to the world that their version of democratic elections met the requirements of modern day democratic elections, and would be free and fair.

Notably, the 2013 elections were a disappointment as key international bodies criticised them. The Commonwealth Observer Mission concluded that the elections were not credible. It cited the impact of the constitutional and legal frameworks on the electoral system and noted that Parliamentarians continued to have severely limited powers, while political parties continued to remain proscribed. "Overall, the elections were well conducted but we strongly believe that there is considerable room for improving the democratic system, in light of Swaziland's international obligations. We therefore cannot conclude that the entire process was credible."[7]

The European Union, Swaziland's most important development partner, also sent an observer mission that noted that the state was denying its citizens constitutional and fundamental political rights. "Even if the government enacted a political party registration law and allowed for the participation of political parties in the 2013 because while the Constitution provides for the existence of political parties, there is no subsidiary law that regulates the formation and registration of political parties," it said in its report. It also noted the electoral legal framework did not conform to international principles for the conduct of democratic elections, since it does not respect the freedom of association. It also cited poor women's rights and their empowerment who are still considered "second class citizens" in common law that does not empower women with the same rights as men and alluded to their status for the decrease in the number of elected women.

The United States Government went even further by withdrawing Swaziland eligibility to the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). It said the decision to withdraw Swaziland's AGOA eligibility "came after years of engaging with the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland on concerns about its implementation of the AGOA eligibility criteria related to worker rights". After an extensive review, the United States concluded that Swaziland had not demonstrated progress on the protection of internationally recognised worker rights (Dlamini, 2014). In particular, it said, Swaziland had failed to make continual progress in protecting freedom of association and the right to organise, adding that, 'of particular concern is Swaziland's use of

[7] Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission SWAZILAND NATIONAL ELECTIONS 20 September 2013

security forces and arbitrary arrests to stifle peaceful demonstrations, and the lack of legal recognition for labor and employer federations'. AGOA benefits, the USA said, would be accessed if Swaziland workers and civil society groups could freely associate and assemble.[8]

The African Union observer mission was equally critical of the election[9], urging Swaziland to review Article 79 of the Constitution to be in conformity with the Human Rights Provisions in Articles 14 (1) (b) and 25 which enshrine the fundamental freedoms of conscience, expression, peaceful assembly, association and movement. It also called on the country to conform with international principles for free and fair elections and participation in electoral process, specifically the OAU/AU Durban Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa. The Durban Declaration called on Swaziland to implement the African Commission's Resolution on Swaziland of 18th April – 2nd May 2012 taken in Banjul, the Gambia calling on the Government of the Kingdom to respect, protect and fulfill the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Most relevant for this study is the AU observation of the low regard authorities have for the role of the media in the elections processes. The AU underlined that the media has an important role in modern democracy and noted the absence of a code of conduct for the regulation of media reporting during electoral processes as significant. The AU also underlined the lack of specific laws granting elections candidates' equitable access to State owned and other media during the electoral process. It urged Swaziland to develop an enforceable media code of conduct on elections.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) was however more muted in its comments. It noted concerns about the limited number of print and electronic media in the country and the coverage of the elections in the region and beyond. Questions were also raised on the impartiality of the existing media in terms of its coverage and providing opportunity for candidates to campaign. It highlighted in particular censorship in State broadcast media where elections candidates' messages had to be approved by the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC) before publication. It considered this an infringement on the freedom of expression of the candidates. Nonetheless it concluded that although some of the concerns raised during the elections were pertinent, they were nevertheless not of such magnitude as to affect the overall electoral process.

The elections therefore produced a discourse with two distinct themes. One was the international community's assessment of the elections and their calls for democratic reforms. The other was the State's narrative aimed at legitimising its hegemony particularly through the media. In contrast to the observation by both the AU and SADC observers that the State apparently did not perceive a role for the media in the election by not providing for any guidelines for access to the media by elections candidates or a code of ethics to provide fair coverage of the election, the State conveyed

[8] ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2014/June/President-Obama-removes-Swaziland-reinstates-Madagascar-for-AGOA-Benefits

[9] African Union Election Observer Mission to the 20th September 2013 national elections in the Kingdom of Swaziland

its messages both to the international and domestic audience through the media. This again brought the perceived role of the media into sharp focus and demonstrated that the media was considered contested domain.

The media's own perception of its role during the elections and its aftermath was equally telling. Even though the majority of elections observers had rejected the elections as undemocratic by international standards, this theme was not seriously explored but superficially reported by the Swaziland newspapers. Notably, the worldview of Swaziland and its elections did not feature in any significant way in the domestic discourse about democracy, democratic reforms, human rights or the contradictions in the elections that have the impact of denying citizens' rights.

This study only concerns itself with the press firstly because the press has a history of playing an important role in political processes. However more relevant is the fact that government owns and manages the electronic media and assigns them the mandate of promoting the advocacy for the executive and the image of Kingship. The broadcast media is reserved for government exclusive use. As noted by the elections observers, even key stakeholders in the election process required permission before they could access the government media. Their messages had to be submitted in advance for censored which is a violation of constitutional rights.

This research therefore seeks to analyse how the media conducted reporting of this period and seeks especially to create understanding of media reporting of the role of political parties; of civil society advocacy for political reform and their contribution in participation in the 2013 elections.

1.5 CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS

For a proper context of the topic, and its political players, this section seeks to define the political parties, for an easier understanding. The use of political parties in this study refers to the oppositional organisations that were proscribed under the Swaziland Terrorism Act of 2008. I have also used the phrase of prodemocracy groups or organisations to refer to the body of civil society that is inclusive of the political parties and trade union organisations as they also form part of the prodemocracy organisations.

It is important to state that the *Tinkhundla* system will be also used interchangeably with Monarchial Democracy. Elections regulations provide that political parties cannot participate in the national elections where individual merit is the basis of election and elevation to public office.

The Swaziland legislature is a two chamber House of Parliament made up of a partly elected House of Assembly and a review House of Senate. Members of the lower House of Assembly are nominated in community wards. In the rural areas where over 80% of the population lives, traditional chiefs that directly report to the King oversee each of these 350 or so wards. There are 55 Electoral Constituencies, each formed of between five to seven wards where Parliamentary

candidates are first nominated at meetings at their chief's homestead. Nominated candidates then participate in a runoff primary election to select the ward candidate. At a subsequent secondary election, Ward representatives contend for the Constituency Parliamentary seat for that constituency and become one of 55 elected MPs in the House of Assembly. Once elected, candidates then await the King's list of 10 appointed MPs for that chamber. It is customary that after the elections the King summons the Nation into the national ceremonial Sibaya (cattle kraal) where he then names the Prime Minister. This process is customary after a consultative process that involves the King's advisory body.

There are, as mentioned in the introduction, four political entities that were proscribed under the Suppression of Terrorism Act, as the country's response to the threat of terrorism, and especially the bombing of the Lozitha Bridge. In the years before the 2013 general elections, a wave of petrol bombings hit various government infrastructure and those of traditional authorities across the country. These were suspected to be part of the "struggle" adopted by the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) to force democratic change. In one of these spate of bombings the Lozitha Bridge was bombed just hours before the King was to use that same bridge on his way out of the country to attend the United Nations Assembly in New York. The message to the government was loud and clear, and it moved swiftly with legislation to deal with terror attacks which included banning political entities suspected associated with the bombings.

1.6 THE CASE OF JAN SITHOLE

The case of Jan Sithole is important to this study. A long-time trade union leader, Jan Sithole is emblematic of the prodemocracy movement in Swaziland. As Secretary of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) for almost 25 years, Sithole built a stronghold in the agriculture sector and became the face of the decade long series of strikes and demonstrations demanding democratic reforms. Shortly after the 2008 elections, he stepped down from union politics and founded the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA). While other political parties insisted on boycotting the elections in protest at their exclusion, Sithole opted to take part in the elections as an individual as per the constitution and was elected as a Member of Parliament in the Manzini North Constituency in Swaziland's commercial capital. He was criticised by the prodemocracy camp who saw his participation as legitimising the status-quo and selling out on the principles he had advocated over the decades.

It is worth mentioning that once Sithole won the election, he made it known that he was entering Parliament as the leader of a political party. Sithole has made no secret that he would seek to change the system from within, and pledged to table a Motion for legislation for a Bill of Rights in Parliament.

In this study it is key to analyse how the media gave coverage to his elections participation and elections victory as well as subsequent Parliament contributions.

1.7 OBJECTIVES

Drawing on the concepts identified in Chapter 2, this study attempts to look at how the print media covered issues of the political parties in relation to the national elections. As stated in the introduction, little research attention has been given to this area.

The study therefore has two principal objectives:

1. To find out the dimensions of the political parties' representation in the mainstream Swaziland newspapers.
2. To establish whether and how the two major newspaper groups in Swaziland differed in their coverage of and representation of the political parties in their publications.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has contextualised the background for the topic, locating it in the interest of the national elections in 2013. It has provided the justification for the study on the coverage of the representation of political parties by the Swazi media. The chapter has also laid out the significance of the role of the media in this topic, laying out two significant periods from which it can be assessed; the wave of democracy protests in the region in the 90s and the Arab Spring uprising in 2011 as being symbolic in the manner in which the media covers the contested political domain. Further background has been provided on the key definitions so as to provide full understanding of the events.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

To consider the question of the representation of political parties in the media I draw on the ideology and hegemony as the main literature and theory. These theories are combined with normative theories, which describe how the media is expected to behave in societies; critical political economy theory, which examines the impact of the commercial imperative of the media; and the theories of news production, which deals with the selection of news.

2.1 IDEOLOGY AND HEGEMONY

Waldhal (2004:13) observes that the average citizen might find themselves too limited in their understanding of the political climate to get independent answers to all current political questions. The media's intervention is to analyse the situation and independently assess political developments for the benefit of their readers. By monitoring and tracking the statements and actions of different parties and politicians, the media is able explain what causes different political parties represent.

By assessing the policy implications of different parties against a country's development challenges, the media is able to help their readers with potential future scenarios based on an analysis of the trajectory plotted by different political parties. This helps the public understand the likely priorities of respective political parties were they to achieve power as well as what groups would likely benefit most from their policies. The media then must keep a watchful eye on the present political life, penetrate beneath its surface and refuse to take politicians' assurances of good will at face value (Waldhal 2004:13).

The theory of hegemony has a bearing on the discussion of the establishment and maintenance of the 'hegemony of the monarchy'. Antonio Gramsci's 'Prison Writings' (1971), argue that the relationship between hegemony and that of monarchy be described as social group or class exercised dominance in part by force, but more importantly by consent, by obtaining the consent of the majority. Gramsci's point of argument brings out the notion of judging the ideology to be effective if it is able to connect with the 'common sense' of the people. The media is an important battle site in the establishment of central and dominant ideas and ways of looking at the world.

According to Marx and Engels (1876), the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; that is, the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. Gramsci (1971) points out that diverse social groups attained "hegemony", or dominance, at different times through inducing the

consent of the majority of subaltern, or subordinate groups to a given socio-political constellation. In his *Prison Notes*, he points out that while the unity of prevailing groups is usually created through the state, the institutions of "civil society" also play a role in establishing hegemony. Civil society, in this discourse, involves institutions of the church, schooling, the media and forms of popular culture, among others. It mediates between the private sphere of personal economic interests and the family and the public authority of the state, serving as the locus of what Habermas described as "the public sphere".

For Gramsci, societies maintained their stability through a combination of "domination," or force, and "hegemony", defined as consent to "intellectual and moral leadership". In this conception, social orders are founded and reproduced with some institutions and groups violently exerting power and domination to maintain social boundaries and rules (that is, the police, military, vigilante groups, etc.), while other institutions (like religion, schooling, or the media) induce consent to the dominant order through establishing the hegemony, or ideological dominance, of a distinctive type of social order (that is, market capitalism, fascism, communism, and so on). In addition, societies establish the hegemony of males and certain races through the institutionalising of male dominance or the rule of a specific race or ethnicity over subordinate groups. Hegemony theory, based on Gramsci's concepts therefore would be seen as a theoretical notion that involves both analysis of current forces of domination and the ways that particular political forces achieved hegemonic authority, *and* the delineation of counter hegemonic forces, groups, and ideas that could contest and overthrow the existing hegemony.

For classical Marxism, the ruling classes employ intellectuals and cultural producers who both produce ideas that glorify the dominant institutions and ways of life, and propagate these governing ideas in cultural forms like literature, the press, or, in our day, film and television. The concept of ideology accordingly makes us question the naturalness of cultural texts and to see that prevailing ideas are not self-evident and obvious, but are constructed, biased, and contestable. This notion makes us suspicious and critical, putting into question regnant ideas which often serve the interests of governing groups.

Hegemony, on the other hand, is attained through a large number of ways in which the institutions of civil society operate to shape, directly or indirectly, the cognitive and effective structures whereby people perceive and evaluate social reality (Femia, 1987:24). Coercion on the other hand is reserved to what Gramsci refers to as the "political society" which includes the police, army and the law (Femia, 1987:24). Stuart Hall (1987) defines hegemony as existing when a ruling class or rather an alliance of ruling class fractions (an historic "bloc") is able not only to coerce a subordinate class to conform to its interests, but exerts a "total social authority" over those classes. He states: hegemony is in operation when the dominant class fractions not only dominate but directly lead: when they not only possess the power to coerce but actively organise so as to command and win the consent of the subordinated classes to their continuing sway.

Hegemony thus depends on a combination of force and consent... consent is normally in the lead, operating behind armour of coercion (Hall, 1987:318). On the other hand, Adigun Agbaje (1992) argues that even though hegemony may have its forcible and direct component which consists of elements in the drive toward domination, hegemony has to do with the non-forcible and subtle elements of society (Agbaje, 1992:10) He also asserts that the more forcible and less subtle elements of hegemony belong to the realm of the construction and contestation of dominance and domination, while hegemony, at its most pristine, refers to the construction of consensus (Agbaje, 1992:10). Therefore, the more successful a hegemonic enterprise is, the less it is likely to depend on the direct use of any form of coercion (Agbaje, 1992:10).

Hegemony is therefore historical process in which one picture of the world is systematically preferred over the others (Tomaselli et al., 1987:14). Hegemony is therefore never a 'once-and-for-all' achievement, but its internal structures have to be continually renewed, recreated, defended and sometimes modified (Tomaselli, 1987:16 Eagleton, 1991:115). No single mode of hegemony can exhaust the meanings and values of any society and any governing power is forced to engage with counter hegemonic forces in ways which are partly constitutive of its own rule (Eagleton, 1991:115).

Given how the Swaziland press legitimises the Monarchical hegemony through its coverage of political party issues, the media can be viewed as reflecting an achieved consensus and, thereby, as strengthening the core value system which holds the Swazi society together.

2.2 NORMATIVE MEDIA THEORIES

In addition to these frameworks, it is essential to employ the six normative media theories for this study. The six normative theories are the authoritarian theory, the soviet or Marxist-Leninist theory, the developmental system, the social responsibility system, the democratic-participant system and libertarian system (Siebert et al.).

The authoritarian theoretical framework is especially relevant given that this theory prevails in monarchies as the country is not a recognised democracy

Fourie (2001) describes normative media theories as ideal views on the role of media in society. The theories define the ideal media systems suitable to the political systems (Oosthuizen 2002; Ronning 2002; Baran and Davis 2009). The normative press theory indicators — later developed into six by further research — argue that the most 'free' press can be found in a liberal state, which is one that is not subject to government intervention.

Although King Mswati III espouses a Monarchical democracy, this framework contrasts sharply with the Western notion of democracy that shape the dominant principles governing the practice of journalism in democratic settings. Monarchical Democracy therefore fails the democratic principles tests; hence the authoritarian framework is the most applicable theory for this thesis.

The authoritarian theory is viewed as the oldest of the media theories prevalent in monarchies and dictatorial societies. Authoritarian theory holds the media as a very powerful instrument of government, which Oosthuizen (2002) states invariably leads to the suppression of the media and media freedom in particular.

The authoritarian theory holds that journalism should always be subordinate to the interests of the state in maintaining social order or achieving political goals (Siebert et al. 1956). At a minimum the press is expected to avoid any criticisms of government officials and to do nothing to challenge the established order. The press may remain free to publish without prior censorship, but the state retains the right to punish journalists or close media outlets that overstep explicit or implicit limits on reporting and commentary.

Another form of the authoritarian theory, which arguably fits in the Swaziland case, is the development theory, which is often described as authoritarianism for a good cause because it supports the economic development and nation-building efforts of impoverished societies (Schramm 1964; MaQuail 1983). The development media theory applies in countries at lower levels of economic development and with limited resources.

At the other extreme, the libertarian theory advocates a totally free media. This theory sees the government as the primary, if not the only threat to press freedom. John Locke and other liberal philosophers of the eighteenth century conceived of the libertarian theory (Siebert et al. 1956),

which posits that the press should offer a marketplace of ideas, pursuing profits in a natural process believed to support democracy. Siebert et al. (1956) originally described this theory as the social responsibility theory which conceived the chief responsibilities as factual accuracy, promotion of open debate, representation of diverse views, and protection of individual rights by serving as a watchdog that guards against government abuses and power.

The representative liberal theory (Ferree et al. 2002) or democratic elite theory (Baker) 2002 proposes that democracy works best with highly educated elites and specialised technicians in charge. The primary duties of the press are to chronicle accurately the range of competing elite perspectives, to examine the character and behaviour of elected officials, and to monitor closely their activities for corruption and incompetence (the watchdog function). In other words, the press should adopt a critical, serious tone in covering public affairs, defined as the activities primarily of government but also in principle, of business or other powerful social institutions.

In democratic participation theory, journalism is called upon to promote actively political involvement of citizens. The theory emphasises principles such as popular inclusion, empowerment and full expression through a range of communicative styles (McQuail 1983; Ferree et al. 2002). In participatory theory, small scale, segmented media, commercial as well as non-profit, are best for promoting grassroots citizen involvement (Keane 1991; Grassroots media; Citizens' Media; Citizen Journalism).

Jurgen Habermas's public sphere theory (1989) combines concerns for quality with quantity (broad representation and participation) of discourse that journalists mediate (Calhoun 1992). This theory, also referred to as the discursive (Ferree et al. 2002)) or republican (Baker (2002) places the greatest emphasis on quality, narrowly conceived: the press should create a domination-free environment where the better argument can prevail in a quest for social consensus.

McQuail (1987) summarises the main principles of the authoritarian theory as follows: One of them is that the media should do nothing to undermine the vested power and interests. The other principle is that the media should always (or ultimately) be subordinate to established authority. Another one is that the media should not contravene prevailing moral and political values. The authoritarian theory is expressed in a wide variety of forms in society. Among these include direct state control of news production, legislation, codes of conduct, taxation, other kinds of economic sanction and controlled import of foreign media. It is also enforced by government's right of the appointment of editorial staff and suspension of publication (McQuail 1987). Swaziland is rooted in the authoritarian tradition, which defines media freedom as the right vested in the state. Article 24 (3a) of the 2006 Constitution of Swaziland restricts media freedom in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or health.

It can be argued, as Oosthuizen (2002) does, that the media theories are not mutually exclusive; countries rarely reflect all the characteristics of one particular theory and often have characteristics

in common with other theories. Therefore, it is essential to draw the linkages of how these theories complement each other. The media in all these media systems is to disseminate information to the public. The only difference lies in the purpose of the information. Another connection is that the content of the media always reflects the interests of those who finance the press (McQuail 1987). In all the media systems, the media are agents of those who exercise political and economic power.

2.3 THEORIES OF NEWS PRODUCTION

How the news is selected, framed and presented to the reader is important to this study, and Zaller (1999) avers that media politics is, like other forms of politics, driven most fundamentally by conflicts in the goals and self-interests of the key participants. Media politics is driven by the self-interest of the public at least as much as by the self-interests of other actors (Zaller, (999). According to Manning (2001:51), recent studies in news production have moved from considerations of individual bias in selection decisions to the concept of organisational bias arising through the production process. News organisations are seen as cultural carriers, a set of genres of public meaning-making.

As the study is an analysis of representation, this theory fits the Swaziland case firmly. The notion that the act of news-making is the act of constructing reality itself, a representation, rather than a picture of reality has been argued by many theorists (see Tuchman; 2000, McNair; 1998, Lichtenberg; 2000, Gieber; 1964), thus, how Swaziland rulers have successfully maintained hegemony despite the era of constitutionalism and the persistent calls from the international community to democratise. The 'reality' that the media portrays is always in at least one sense fundamentally biased, simply by virtue of the inescapable decision to designate an issue or an event newsworthy and then to construct an account of it in a specific framework of interpretation. Using a sociological studies basis, Schlesinger (1978) found that the existence of editorial policies implied that news organisations construct news in identifiable ways in terms not only of selection of news but also their angling and mode of presentation.

Media critics would argue that the angling of news constitutes bias. The current discourse in media evolution of news dissemination practices is witnessing a nuanced shift to rephrase the concept of bias to framing; an ideal that Schudson (2003:35) claims this move seeks to distance news decision-making away from the idea of intentional bias. He notes that to acknowledge that news stories frame reality is also to acknowledge that it would be humanly impossible to avoid framing. Schudson elaborates that framing diminishes the event to which evidence of selection can be automatically read as evidence of deceit, dissembling, or prejudice of individual journalists; it also draws attention to ways journalists select certain traditions and routines of the culture at large and the news business specifically.

Cottle (1997) found that media texts are produced by determined ideological, institutional, commercial, technological, statutory and professional conditions and arrangements, all of which

inform the production, organization and delivery of media texts (cited in Macgregor, 1997). This concurs with Manning's view, the notion that the practice of news journalism is far from mirroring reality; it is more of a manufacturing and fabrication process (2001:50). The belief is that journalists rely on their routine organizational procedures to get the news out to the public instead of recording facts as they are.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003) found that the metaphor of news as a mirror no longer works as it excludes some positions and only reflects a small section of the society. The objects reflected are not passive and are usually images reflecting the relative power of actors in our society rather than some 'objective' reality. News then is the product of a social process through which media personnel make decisions about what is newsworthy and what is not. The important question is whether these decisions are made by individual journalists or by editors and other individuals of a higher hierarchical order.

Broder (1987:18) has claimed that in recent years the reporting of government and national politics has narrowed to coverage of the insiders by the insiders and for the insiders. TV and newspapers do not just report but also directly influence the dynamics of the campaigns, which he believes corrupts people's character, diverting journalists from serving the broad public and instead favouring a few (1987:18). The manner in which political news is covered has a lot of bearing on citizens of any country. Accordingly, Splichal and Wasko (1993) argue that all citizens in the democratic polity should have equal opportunities for political participation and influence and should have equal access to communication resources and competencies. Ideal democracy therefore requires that communication "be organised as a public good and managed and controlled neither by private or state (that is pluralistic) interests, but rather by society as a whole." Their definition of democracy was that it represents a set of values which aim to create the best circumstances for people to develop their nature and express diverse qualities as well as prevent people from arbitrary use of political authority and coercive power.

2.4 POLITICAL JOURNALISM

Tuchman (1978:156) asserts that a society's mass media necessarily legitimates its status quo... through limiting the frames within which public issues are debated. McNair (1995:45) conceives political journalism as verbal, written and symbolic 'commentary about' politicians, political actors and allocation of public economic, social and cultural resources. Political journalism is thus viewed as a process through which media 'transmits, reconstructs, transforms and mediates' messages of and about political organisations through 'commentaries, editorials and interview questions' (McNair 1995).

Given that Swaziland's system of governance is described as 'Monarchical' not a multiparty democracy, the bulk of the body of work that currently exists in the field of critical political reportage, while relevant, is not directly applicable to the Swaziland context, particularly as the

country's media does not fit neatly into most of the normative structures as defined by global literature or any of the later additions to this field of research. Liberal Democratic theory generally posits that society needs a journalism that is a rigorous watchdog against those in power and who want to be in power; can ferret out truth from lies, and can present a wide range of informed positions on the important issues of the day (McChesney, 2008). This is premised on the notion that journalism should be politically neutral, nonpartisan, professional, and even objective (Hlatshwayo, 2014).

2.5 CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA

The political economy of the media approach is a big part of the examination of media which in its original state refers to the production, distribution and consumption of wealth (Hardy, 2014). This view seeks to analyse how processes of internationalisation, diversification and commercialisation impact content and media practices in the quest for capital gains. Mosco (1996:24) provides two approaches to political economy namely the social relations perspective which in its narrow sense, perceives political economy as the study of social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communications resources. But in its more ambitious form it is the study of control and survival in social life. This ideology has a divergent view of things with regards to the views of the political point and that of the general society. These two divergent views eventually bring about a force of resistance in harmonising the views of the two different opponents.

However, this explanation is insufficient according to some critics such as Hardy (2014) who argue that such concepts do not take into consideration the role of advertising as the main source of funding as well as public ownership or government ownership and its effects on products. Mosco (1996) explores the relationship between audiences and advertising and notes how it influences media products or promotes commercialism. The original thinkers of classical political economy theory like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, James Mill and Jeremy Bentham are perceived to have been interested in the study of wealth and political decision making to ascertain how mankind makes economic sense of scarce resources to fulfil certain desires over others under capitalism (Hardy, 2014).

Marx and Engels (1876)'s examination of the theory carries a more radical view that infuses elements of power relations, for they see it as part of bourgeois economic theory (Garnham, 2011; Hardy, 2014; McChesney, 2004). Marx's argument is founded on the philosophy that class dominance over means of production extends to dominance over mental control of the working class (Marx and Engels; cited in Curran, 1982). This is contradictory to classical political economy arguments by Smith (1980) who sees capitalism as a source of peace and prosperity that satisfies all classes. Other political economists contend that the theory is a transition from post war American

hegemony to global transnational world communications dominance by multinational corporations (Garnham, 2011).

The theory is most applicable in explaining communication in capitalist societies where commercial activity dominates because it is embedded within liberal democratic theories and practice (McChesney, 1998). It is befitting then to apply critical political economy of media in this thesis because South Africa as suggested by McChesney (1998) has a liberal structural economic design founded on a *laissez-fair* market structure. Picard (1989) holds a similar view and asserts that studies on representations relate well to environments underpinned by market economics. Within political economy theory, this thesis focuses on media ownership and control to explain representation in the Swaziland media, particularly the two groups of newspapers central to the study.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has mapped the literature that has influenced this study. The media is found to be grappling with the challenges of operating in the authoritarian system, albeit one that purports to aspire to liberal pluralistic values, claiming to be free of state influence and interference. In the 10 years, the country has enjoyed a new constitution, there appears a paradigm in the way the media operates; both newspapers being pro-state, although the state-owned newspaper shows characteristics of a free press while the privately-owned group seeks to extract maximum benefit by entrenching its commercial interests within the state system. This has led to the country maintaining its monarchical democracy, firmly entrenched by the media.

In critical political economy publications are in a constant battle for revenue, which then has an impact in their editorial independence. Whether this influences the position of the Times is an interest to this study. However, the newspaper gets most of its advertising from government, which is seen as impacting on its claim to be an independent newspaper. The chapter has therefore, established the contributing factors to the representation of political parties in the media.

CHAPTER THREE: MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN SWAZILAND

3 INTRODUCTION

The chapter will review the media landscape in Swaziland within the context of the contested political domain. It will also deal with the origins and development of the Swaziland print media and seek to contextualize press freedom in Swaziland by adopting a historical overview of newspapers in the African context. This background is essential to locate the Swaziland newspapers' contribution and narrative to the African context. The primary objective of the chapter is to give the context under which stereotypical representations of political parties occur in the print media.

Media coverage of opposition parties influences the political environment by shaping what issues become salient and how citizens think about these issues. This power carries with it immense implications in understanding how political parties' experiences differ.

3.1 MEDIA OWNERSHIP

The Swaziland media, like the mass media in Africa, is a product of the political development and histories of the continent. This media has been a product of colonialism and as Kwame Karikari points out in the book, *50 Years of Democracy* that media ownership was a product of the political developments and histories of the continent. The ownership systems, their character, strengths and weaknesses, their political and social outlooks, and above all their outputs and impacts are all the products of the societies that formed and shaped them. Thus, just as most countries in the continent grappled with the advent of both democracy and media freedom, Swaziland is no different. Kasoma (2000:83) renders the African press as having been a political press that operated as a political tool from the onset. He notes that politicians particularly those in government, have always been involved in and with the press, legally and extra legally.

3.2 BIOGRAPHY OF THE PRINT MEDIA IN AFRICA

It can strongly be argued that since the early 18th century, the media has served the interests of those in power. The history of the newspaper in Africa can be traced back to the arrival of the European conquerors, missionaries, settlers and governing officials from around the 18th century (Chibita 2006:113; Hachten 1993: viii; Mativo 1989:342,388-389). Although there is scholarly dispute over the dates and order in which the first newspapers were first published in Africa in general and

Swaziland in particular, what may not be contested is that the earliest newspapers were introduced by Europeans, to serve European information needs and interests. The newspapers, too, were designed along the lines of those then in existence in Europe (Banda, 2003:29; Sturmer, 1998:11; Rantao, 1996:4–5; Hachten, 1993:17; Ziegler and Asante, 1992:23; Okigbo, 1995:192).

This applies in the case of the *Times of Swaziland*, whose owner, Allister Miller established the newspaper to serve the interests of the small white settler community in Swaziland. Kasoma (1986:19) states that the early newspapers in most African countries including Swaziland were European-owned that strictly pursued policies whereby the indigenous people were non-existent in their pages – unless the African people's activities had a direct impact on the lives of the European settlers. Ettinger (1986:25–26), posits that as part of the colonial project, the newspapers not only served the informational needs of the Europeans, but were also used to psychologically integrate and unify the colonial empires. Hall (2005) adds to this by stating that editorial policy promoted the exclusive interests of the European settlers, targeting only the small resident population. These roles were primarily carried out by the newly invented radio. In line with the media freedom perspective, this historical account is vital to the understanding and appreciation of media freedom within the context of Swaziland since the colonial era. This is also key in understanding the ownership structures of the media outlets, as being tools to serve their masters—and for specific agendas.

3.2.1 Times of Swaziland

As already mentioned in the section above, the genesis of the Swazi print media dates back to colonial times when British national resident in Swaziland, Allister Miller, who was a journalist and an adviser to King Mbandzeni, started the *Times of Swaziland* newspaper on 1 June 1897 (Matsebula, 1988; Booth, 2000) and later on closed it down in 1909 (Booth, 2000), having also been forced to cease operations when it was razed by fire during the 1904 Anglo-Boer war. It then resumed publishing on 18 November 1931, this time revived to counter the flirtation of the new generation of colonial officials with Swazi culture and interests.

Douglas Mackintosh Miller Jr. inherited the *Times of Swaziland* from his father during World War II and ran the newspaper until 1950, although by this time it was struggling as a business venture. Hence in 1950, Miller Jr. sold it to the High Commissions Territories Printing and Publishing Company, owned by the Bantu Press of South Africa. Subsequently, the Argus Group bought the cash-strapped newspaper, making it part of a stable of newspapers owned by the Argus Company across Southern Africa, which also owned the majority of commercial black-readership newspapers.

The newspaper's editorial policy changed significantly when the Argus Group took over, bringing in John Spicer from Zimbabwe as editor. While the editorial policy had previously been biased towards a white readership, Spicer changed it to that of a black readership, which irked the whites who wanted the paper to maintain a discriminatory racial editorial policy. Having cultivated a good

relationship with King Sobhuza II under his editorship, the *Times of Swaziland* supported the ruling *Imbokodvo* National Party.

However, when the King abrogated the 1968 Constitution enshrining a Bill of Rights on 12 April, 1973 and declared a state of emergency, the paper defied the state of emergency restrictions by reporting on political matters including detention of political opponents, corruption and inefficiency among politicians and civil servants. Upset politicians could only threaten the paper but not ban it, because the king read it (Burton 1979).

From 1978, Douglas Loffler, who bought the paper from the Argus, grew it into a big stable known as the *Times of Swaziland* Group of Newspapers, comprising; the *Times of Swaziland, Swazi News, Times of Swaziland Sunday* and *What's Happening (in Swaziland).* However, continued failure to generate advertising revenue led to the closure of the experimental *Evening News* which launched earlier, and the two *SiSwati newspapers.* The *Times of Swaziland* Group of Newspapers had a number of running battles with the authorities over the paper's critical reporting. Consequently, the Swazi government adopted a hostile stance towards the press which for many years, the uncompromising authorities had subjected media practitioners to various forms of threats, intimidation, harassment and to some degree, censorship (Maziya 2003).

After running a series of critical articles exposing the corrupt practices and inept policies of the successive governments, the newspaper had become the target of libel lawsuits. To muzzle the paper, government and high profile people instituted libel proceedings in terms of the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act of 1939. This problem was also compounded by the Swazi government's threats of advertising withdrawal as a means to cow the paper (MISA 2001:109).

Subsequently, legislators started engaging the Information Minister to table a media bill seeking to introduce a statutory media council that would regulate the media which brought about the emergence of another significant shift in the life of the *Times* when Douglas Loffler's son, Paul Loffler took over control of the paper, transforming it to a pro-establishment newspaper which no longer published dissenting views, but maintained its main focus on becoming more commercial rather than being offensive to the authorities.

It is in this respect that in 1999 the *Times of Swaziland Group* fired one of its Editors, Bheki Makhubu for publishing an article revealing that King Mswati III planned to marry a high school drop-out. Makhubu was also charged with criminal defamation, although he was never prosecuted. However, the fact he was fired from work for having 'breached' an editorial policy of the newspaper indicated the position the newspaper had taken regarding its relationship with the Monarchy.

3.2.2 The Swazi Observer

Having fallen out with the Times of Swaziland, which had previously supported his *Imbokodvo* National Party, King Sobhuza II soon realised the need to have his own newspaper, thus in 1981 the

Swazi Observer was established, under the Observer Media Group. This publishing company was formed as a subsidiary of *Tibiyo TakaNgwane*, a trust of the Swazi monarch. Without expertise in the newspaper industry, it received technical support from the United Kingdom tycoon Tiny Rowland's Lonhro Group, based in Zimbabwe and later, it launched its weekly publication, the *Weekend Observer*.

According to *Tibiyo TakaNgwane* ex-Managing Director, Dr. Sishayi Nxumalo (*The Swazi Observer*, 1981), King Sobhuza II and his advisers were inspired by the need to establish a national paper which would be a strong voice in the affairs of the Swazi nation. The newspaper's objective was to interpret the will of the Swazi nation and demonstrate a responsibility to the king, government and the Swazi people. Simelane (1995) notes that the *Swazi Observer* editorial policy states that "within the general laws of the Kingdom of Swaziland we shall recognise the jurisdiction of the king (of the time) or the head of the royal family, to the exclusion of every kind of interference by others" and argues that the main objective of the newspaper was however, to serve as a social media platform that focused on the developmental views of the Swazi nation.

However, the newspaper faced serious challenges which led to its closure in 2000 where it faced prosecution under the Proscribed Publications Act of 1968 following its exposure of corruption in the Swaziland Royal Police (RSP) and its refusal to disclose its sources (MISA 2000). The newspaper however, regained its ethical and professional stance which led to its reopening in the year 2002 when it reviewed its organisational motto; "We Serve the Nation" on its mast-head. Since it reopened, the Swazi Observer has been forced to apologise to the King for publishing articles relating to a proposed loan deal with South Africa.

The newspaper has, however, grappled with the issue of being a state paper and competing with the Times of Swaziland Group of Newspapers. Although still under the ownership of Tibiyo, it no longer is subsidised by the parent company and was told to 'swim or sink' on its own when it reopened in 2002 (*Swazi Observer*, 2002). In addition to this, the newspaper still struggles to get access to government advertising, unlike its competitor. This is what forces the newspaper to draw a strong editorial stance in its bid for survival that then often causes problems with the King. In 2012, for instance, two of its editors were suspended for nine months after having revealed the details of the bail-out loan negotiation between the King and South African government. The newspaper's chief editor Musa Ndlangamandla was fired in January of that same year after publishing interviews with political party leaders and writing about corruption among prominent politicians (Freedom House, 2013 Report).

3.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND MEDIA

According to Freedom House report of 2013, Swazi media content is marked by a high level of both official and self-censorship on political and royal matters, often encouraged by hostile rhetoric and threats from senior government and royal officials. The report further states that authorities

restricted media coverage of prodemocracy protests and public sector strikes (Freedom House, 2013).

"Of note, the local media operates under a myriad of laws and restrictions which over the years have eroded its credibility to report objectively. A study on media freedom in Swaziland conducted in 2011 recommended the amendment of 32 restrictive laws that contradict the country's constitutional recognition of freedom of expression and media enacted in 2006 (Hlatshwayo, 2011)," says Dube (2014).

He goes on to argue that this 'current state of affairs promotes media imperialism as it increases demand and market for the South African media in Swaziland because the South African press reports without restrictions. Stories that are banned in the local media can be accessed in the South African press which has a large footprint in the country. It is common therefore, for readers in Swaziland to read stories in the South African press, which otherwise would never have been published in local newspapers."

As mentioned in above section, the *Times of Swaziland* editorial position has appeared to be cosy since the late 90s, and can be traced to the period after the wave of public sector strikes of 1996. That was followed by the dismissal of its influential editor by the *Times* in 1999, cemented by the strong advertising presence of government in the newspaper.

In the new Millennium the *Times* developed an interestingly cosy relationship with the Monarchy. The newspaper moved away from the critical reporting and comments and adopted a much softer approach. In 2009, its Managing Editor Martin Dlamini left the newspaper and joined the Prime Minister's Office as Director of the Smart Partnership Secretariat. While housed at the Prime Minister's Office the position actually serves the King's Office.

In 2012, Dlamini returned, apparently seconded back from the King's Office and retook his position as Managing Editor of the *Times Group of Newspapers.* The Editor of the only private newspaper now holds the dual position of being of King Mswati III's speech writer and is a permanent part of the King's entourage when the King travels abroad. Crucially, when outside the country as part of the King's delegation, he assumes the position of royal correspondent for both the *Times* and the *Observer*.

Interestingly, the Chief Editor of the *Swazi Observer* held the roles of speech writer for the king and reporting as the royal correspondent, although he did not write for the *Times*. This has blurred the lines somewhat as the supposedly state-owned newspaper now gets content from a supposedly independent newspaper, thus resulting in both newspaper publishing stories that are similar.

As speech writer, and the head of the editorial department of the independent newspaper in the country, this offers a different narrative to the independence of the *Times* and crucial to the assessment of how the newspaper would handle the salient issues of banned political parties and their role in the polity. This closeness between newspaper and state suggests that the newspaper would not be able to be critical and oppositional. It is also what motivates this study, to interrogate the subject of whether or not the media legitimises the Royal hegemony.

3.4 MEDIA REGULATION AND AFTERMATH OF THE PRO-DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN

For purposes of this study it is important to review the state legal apparatus to determine to what extent it is constructed to ensure media compliance with state hegemony. Though there is no single law that outlines the state policy towards the media, there is an arsenal of at least 32 laws that directly and indirectly govern the media (Hlatshwayo, 2014). For the news print media, the most essential is the Books and Newspaper Registration Act of 1963 that controls access to the news media business. It requires that anyone intending to publish a newspaper apply for a licence and post a bond to provide compensation in the eventuality of legal suits. Publications are at the mercy of the minister of information who has the power to invoke the Proscribed Publications Act and ban a newspaper that he deems has offended the public interest. This Act was strengthened by Decree Number 1 of 2001 that places the minister's decision final and outside of legal review by the courts. The Obscene Publications Act also empowers the minister to ban publications he deems to promote obscenity and pornography.

Journalists however have to keep particularly clear of the Sedition and Subversive Activities of 1938 that seeks to prevent publication of any content that tends to undermine the authority of the state. Journalists are advised to be particularly wary of publishing contents of political pamphlets that became the primary mode of distributing political messages by various dissenting voices during the 1980s period of power contestation following the death of King Sobhuza II in 1982. On conviction under this law, journalists risk prison sentences up to 20 years in jail.

The Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act equally places journalists in a precarious position. Under this law journalists must be wary of contempt of court in the coverage of court processes. Judicial officers often invoke this law claiming to act in the interest of protecting the dignity of the judiciary. Criticism of judges or their decisions risks censure under this law. Sentences include both custodial terms and fines. The Nation Magazine and its editor were fined E400 000 (R400 000) and a suspended custodial sentence for the editor after they were convicted of disrespecting the Chief Justice in two articles that appeared in 2009 and 2010. The Court of Appeal subsequently significantly reduced the fine (*Times,* 2016).

Equally, journalists risk heavy sentences if they are convicted of disrespecting political leaders. A publication can be charged with Criminal Defamation for publishing content that is viewed as attacking the dignity or esteem of public officials. The latest addition is the Suppression of Terrorism Act of 2008 that is directed at arresting people and entities seeking the violent overthrow of the State. Reporting that can be viewed as aiding and abetting the acts of terrorists renders journalists liable to prosecution and possible conviction and lengthy prison sentences.

Clearly the media and information sector potential as a factor in the promotion or undermining Hegemony received priority from the beginning of the new state of Swaziland. At independence in

1968 the Deputy Prime Minister's Office was assigned the information portfolio. Before the Ministry of Information was established in 1993, information fell under the Ministry of Local Administration (Home Affairs). Under the 2005 Constitution, freedom of the press is firmly enshrined as a human right. Claw-back clauses however still empower the State to intervene and limit press freedom in a range of instances ranging from national security to the protection of personal rights to the preservation of effectiveness of the administration of justice and the courts of law.

The Media Council Bill 1997

As outlined in Chapter 1, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War that resulted in the explosion for demands for human rights globally had a deep impact in Swaziland. Civil society groups combined with labour unions to unleash a wave of strikes and demonstrations that began as demands for improved workers' condition. These however soon extended beyond industrial action and transformed into a fully-fledged campaign of demands for the restoration of constitutional and human rights.

This movement resonated with the needs of a reconstructed global political and economic order consistent with a new unipolar world. The pro-democracy movement was region-wide and concentrated in all SADC countries. Quick successes followed throughout the region. Apartheid South Africa released Nelson Mandela and committed to a peaceful transition to majority rule. One party regimes and life presidents collapsed in Malawi and Zambia. Transformation in Kenya and Mozambique and Zimbabwe ushered in a new genuine commitment to multiparty political contestation for government and opposition politics in Parliament. Not so in Swaziland where the king braved the storm.

By 1996, the pro-democracy movement consolidated their political agenda articulated into the "27 Demands" for political rights, and freedom of expression and press freedom. For the media, the inclusion of press freedom in the 27 demands struck a raw nerve especially since coverage of the pro-democracy demonstrations featured strongly in the newspapers. At the onset of an eight-day strike to promote the 27 Demands, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Information visited the government radio and TV stations to ensure that they did not report on the strikes.

Newspaper coverage of a 1997 demonstration by the Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SDA) drove the government to develop an editorial policy for the state media that "were in danger of being hijacked and controlled by pressure groups". In line with regional trends the Swaziland media was emboldened and even strayed to reporting that criticised the King.

The tipping point that finally inflamed government is when the newspapers criticised the king for taking a huge 50-person delegation with him to the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. Criticism of the King is a strict no-go area under Swazi Law and Custom. Incensed authorities unleashed a number of measures that included withdrawing government advertising and reviewing

legal measures to craft a media policy environment to keep the press under control. They also moved directly against leading media individuals. The publisher of the *Times of Swaziland* who was a British citizen was forced out of the country. He relocated to Namibia, leaving the reins of the newspaper in the hands of his son.

In the same year, the newspapers published the purchase by the king of a hotel and his alleged failure to pay municipal rates. This again inflamed the authorities. Both the *Times* and the *Observer* were charged under the Books and Newspaper Act for failure to register. When it was proven that they were registered, government also withdrew its advertising from the newspapers, cutting off the lifeblood to the newspapers to coerce the media to fall in line.

Government then produced the Media Council Bill of 1997. This first effort to regulate the media sought to institute a government-imposed Code of Ethics requiring that journalists be registered. The media industry united and mounted advocacy opposition to the move. In a landmark decision Parliament rejected the Media Council Bill and ordered government to consult with the media industry to produce legislation based on consensus. For its part, the media agreed to the establishment of a Media Complaints Commission (MCC) as a self-regulatory framework for mediation and conflict resolution mechanism. The eventual incorporation of the MCC in 2011 can be seen as a major frustration of government policy designs to control the media. MCC notwithstanding, as shown in the Bheki Makhubu cases, government has gone ahead to deal with the media without reference to constitutional rights or existing structures.

At the same time, the state began implementing a more carrot and less stick to bring the independent *Times* to serve the government. The editor of the newspaper was recruited to join government for three years before he was released and restored to his position as a more empowered newspaper editor who is concurrently a leading royal advisor to the king.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the prevailing media environment to demonstrate the complex media policy relations among media owners. This also seeks to show the political context within which representation of political parties would occur in the print media. The chapter has outlined the history of the Times in relation to its role in entrenching hegemony of the monarch, and its pursuit of commercial interests under the current ownership. It has also laid out the relationship where the Palace is now embedded at the Times where it has seconded palace staff to hold the reins at the newspaper as group managing editor.

It has also outlined the history of the Swazi Observer that was formed to provide the voice for the Palace and Government, a role that has been appropriated by the supposedly independent news media.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an overview of the research methodology used in this study. The discussion will relate to the methodology and findings to the relevant literature. The chapter will unfold as follows: research design; methods of data collection; research approach; qualitative method; data processing and analysis; limitations of the study.

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

4.1.1 Qualitative Research Method

To be able to draw a comprehensive and conclusive picture of the representation of political parties in the Swaziland media, the study used a qualitative approach. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007:4) defines a qualitative research method as a form of research design in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences from a critical analysis of emerging themes. The study engaged a critical analysis of content from both newspapers namely Times of Swaziland and the Observer with regards to their degree of political coverage.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.2.1 Content Analysis

The study analysed the data using a content analysis technique. Sabitri, Chanda, and Bulu (2016:2) define content analysis as a set research procedures that involves the collection of data in a systematic manner so as to establish trends of common themes. The study utilised various relevant articles published about political parties in Swaziland in the *Times of Swaziland, Swazi News and Times Sunday* and in the *Swazi Observer and Weekend Observer (*and later the *Sunday Observer)* during the period of 2013, from January to December. All the articles were extracted from hard copies at the respective media groups' libraries, because their online databases do not hold some of the archived material. The aim was to pull out all articles published about political parties, and in particular those stories relating to the elections of 2013.

This entailed photocopying all stories about politics, political parties and civil society as well as of reports of the head of government's remarks on politics as carried in both the *Times of Swaziland* and *Swazi Observer* newspapers.

The search for the data returned 466 news items on both newspapers; and both newspapers returning almost similar results. There were 234 items from the *Observer* and 232 from the *Times.* It was clear from the onset that a bulk of the work that was collected shares similar characteristics,

as both newspapers cover similar events, and there appeared to be no distinction as to which newspaper is independent and which belonged to the state. This shall be dealt with in the findings, in the following chapter.

4.2.2 To make up for the shortfall of the content analysis research technique, the study employs qualitative research interviews. The interview research technique explores beliefs and experiences of participants on a subject matter. As such, interviews are significant in understanding the underlying factors of a social phenomenon (Robson, 2002). The study uses semi-structured interviews because of their structure which allows for fluidity in the exploration of ideas that are not outlined in the main questions. Compared to the rigidity of structured interviews, this approach allows for exploration of new information that may have been omitted but proves valuable to the study (Gill et al., 2008). Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006) observe that in semi-structured interviews, participants can infuse their own understanding and experiences of phenomena as they see fit.

In designing the outline of the interview, the non-probability purposive sampling strategy was again preferred over the probability sampling method. Chilisa and Preece (2005) assert that in this strategy, participants have to be knowledgeable in the area of study. Unlike probability sampling, this method does not involve random sampling and the disadvantage is that it is difficult to ascertain if the samples do or do not represent the population. Considering this research, this implies that participants may or may not possess the required knowledge and depth to respond satisfactorily to the subject matter. Even experts can be wrong sometimes (Trochim, 2000).

Non-probability sampling can be further divided into two sampling methods, listed as accidental or purposive (Battaglia, 2011; Doherty, 1994). Purposive sampling which is ideal for this research is self-explanatory, that is, sampling with a purpose or sampling predefined material or groups. This research opted to sample senior journalists and editors to help us appreciate the extent to which the press maintains – or challenges – the hegemony of the monarch and its alliances.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed the research methodology for the study. Data was sourced from newspaper stories from both the *Times* and *Swazi Observer* groups. This basically equates to three newspaper titles per group; the daily paper and two weekend papers from each print media. Interviews were also conducted. The research used content analysis and interviews as data collection and analysis methods whilst thematic analysis was used for data interpretation.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA FINDINGS AND PORTRAYAL OF POLITICAL PARTIES

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five presents the data findings of the study. It takes into consideration the following areas of interest, namely; the coverage of elections, the representation of various political parties in the newspapers through published stories and journalists' political commentary relating to the elections in Swaziland. The chapter concludes that the print media's portrayal of political parties shares a hegemonic narrative (and contributes to it) in Swaziland, which buys into the ideology of the monarchial democracy, and the components of that narrative; that the oppositional political groupings are a problem for the state. It is essential to understand media coverage of opposition parties because of the pronounced power of the media to influence the political environment by shaping what issues become salient and how citizens think about these issues. This power carries with it immense implications in understanding how political parties' experiences differ.

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

5.1.1 Thematic analysis

The data collected on the study returned a lot of material from six newspapers—three titles from each of the media houses as outlined in Chapter 3 and 4. In total, there were 466 articles that were returned as data for this study. These articles about political parties, elections and politics were selected from the newspapers. From this an organised analysis of stories and how they relate to the themes set out on hegemony and ideology was conducted, revealing three major themes from the newspapers under study. There were no predetermined categories/themes before this search and therefore the themes emerged after the selection.

The majority of stories were supplied by the *Times* daily newspaper, followed by its sister papers, the *Swazi News* and the *Times SUNDAY*. *The Swazi Observer* returned fewer stories, although the *Saturday Observer* was able to publish most stories assumed to be critical of the status quo despite the newspaper's position as a state paper. Once the stories had been grouped, the major themes emerged from which the dominant stereotypes were evident.

Table 1: *The table shows the themes from the newspapers*

SECTOR	MAIN THEME	NOTES
1. Political system; Tinkhundla and Monarchial Democracy	Hegemony and Ideology	The system is perfect; and the country is peaceful. There's no need for multiparty democracy
2. Political stance	A Call to boycott the elections	Political parties are not going to legitimise the elections; and the world should take note
3. Enforcing the stereotype	How the media has reported the issues	When political parties and their leadership are reflected in the news, often it fits with negative stereotyping

5.1.2 Analysis According to Themes

a) Theme 1: Political system: Tinkhundla and Monarchial

The theme on the political system was predominant in both print; especially just before the elections when King Mswati III announced the modernised version of the system of governance, naming it Monarchial Democracy (*King renames Tinkhundla, Times SUNDAY*). The king defines Monarchial democracy as a marriage between the Monarchy and the ballot box, the ballot box being the will of the people. The king is quoted below:

"With this system, the people provide advice and counsel to the King that ensures transparency and accountability. The monarchy is married to the trust of the people who believe that the king does everything in their best interest. It is home grown and easily accords with the norms and values of the Swazis and is therefore easily understood by all Swazis (*Times SUNDAY*, pg.2)."

There were a lot of stories that were given prominence by the print media, through which the royal hegemony is seen to be enforced. These were given the main news pages, if not the front page by the newspapers.

Five stories were selected for in-depth analysis of this theme.

- ***Monarchial democracy from heaven - King (September 1, Times)***. This headline is indicative of the kind of rhetoric from the head of state to enforce the ideology, and using the media to good effect. The message from this is intended to be understood as an endorsement of the system of governance from the King. The people of Swaziland worship

their king, and the country is itself a Christian country, although the Constitution allows for freedom of religion. This message therefore carries a lot of weight if it comes from the King. The story itself being published ahead of the elections asserts the position with regard to the stance of multiparty democracy and the involvement of political parties. It was a lead story of the day, and published on double-pages in the *Times SUNDAY*

- ***Tinkhundla is the only way - PM (November 26, Times).*** This headline was also carried in the *Swazi Observer* so that both newspapers had a similar story. It was coverage of an address by the Prime Minister at the first workshop of newly elected Members of Parliament, in which Jan Sithole, the president of SWADEPA, was present. This story enforces the ideology and hegemony of the state. The Prime Minister makes it clear that "we should be able to explain our democracy at constituencies and abroad. Any ideologies we had are now secondary as we sing our tune of Tinkhundla." This could be interpreted to have been a direct response to Sithole, who represents a political party, and more emphatically, to the elections observers who had made recommendations that political parties should be considered for the process of elections to be legitimised. The African Union (AU) elections observer team, for instance, had made public its recommendation that some sections of the Constitution needed to be reviewed (*Allow political parties, Times,* September 23). This was also followed up by another recommendation by the United States embassy, "Include political parties in Parly elections—USA" (*Times*, September 27). However, the statement from the head of government that *Tinkhundla* can be understood to say that this will not be considered. This could be interpreted as being a strong message to show that the country was not being intimidated or wavering. As this was a lead story in the *Times*, it was considered significant and carried weight.

- ***Vote for Christians only - King (April 2, Observer).*** This controversial headline came from an address made to Christians at an annual gathering, where the King had sent a delegate on his behalf. Both newspapers covered the event, but the headlines were different, with the *Times* going with "King urges nation to vote for God-fearing MPs (*Times*, April 2). It was clearly intended to discourage the public from voting for those known to belong to political parties. This was in the wake of suggestions from the progressive formations that they were considering taking part in the elections in order to change the system from within. In this regard, the message from the King was clear that the public needed to vote for people who were God-fearing citizens. However, the headline from the *Swazi Observer* suggests that the message was that these needed to be Christians. Either way, the story made front page on both, and in context, it was to de-campaign the political party members, some of whom had also stated that they were going to not just boycott but would disrupt the elections.

- ***Forget about political parties - PM (Observer, May 2).*** This headline and story is generally the emphasis of the political position of the country and therefore this story is a strong message to not just the political parties, but also the international community. In the wake of the calls for boycott of elections and mounting pressure for a change of system of governance, the message from the head of government is direct to those making the calls and also intended to reassure the nation that government would not bow to the pressure.

- ***'You will regret it - King' (July 23, Times).*** This headline is as chilling as it was intended to be understood. The message was for political parties and those who were calling for regime change—and from His Majesty the King. It was a warning, at the backdrop of the Arab Spring, and after a failed attempt on a Swazi Uprising the previous year, to political parties still entertaining thoughts of disrupting the upcoming elections. It was clear that it was also intended to show the nation at large that the King was not intimidated by the threats of violence, and that he was willing to meet fire with fire. As the King is known to the nation as having the divine right to rule the land, the warning was also biblical; "People who challenge powers of Kings are challenging God himself, as stated in the Book of Romans in the Bible." This front-page story in the Times demonstrates not just the powers of the King and his stranglehold, but it also was intended to intimidate if not to enforce the ideology of the Monarch.

Other stories on the theme

HEADLINE	NEWSPAPER	DATE OF PUBLICATION
King upbeat about 2013	Times	January 13
King warns people who want uprising	Observer	July 23
Only Sibaya can change Tinkhundla	Times	April 18, 2013
SADC applauds Tinkhundla system, Sibaya for involvement at grass-root level	Observer	September 24, 2013

The above table shows more stories on the political theme.

b) Role of political parties in the elections

- ***Activists run to court to stop elections (July 24, Times).*** This front-page headline, and story, is a perfect example of when political parties make news - when they challenge the status quo. Both newspapers took particular interest in this development, and ran the stories as their main stories of the day. The story itself demonstrates the challenges that political parties have in telling their story, as this story is only making headlines because it was now subject of a court case. Were it not for this, the story would not have made it to print. This is notable largely because were the print media to play its watchdog role, they would pick these stories and publish them in order to enhance a healthy public debate on these issues. Interestingly, the parties themselves approached this case using the Swazi Law and Custom, picking up their case from a resolution of the people from the traditional structures. This further allows the newspapers to publish these stories because the traditional structures are mentioned.

- ***Restore political parties, to co-exist with monarch (November 8, Times)***. The dominant view from the political parties is their call for multiparty democracy. This story highlights some of the issues that are not covered by the print media, despite that they are crucial to the contestation of the political domain. This plea that political parties should be allowed to actively participate in the political domain is neglected by the media. In this case the story was placed on Page 8 of the Times. This supports the notion that the print media does not care about the issues, except to help glorify the Tinkhundla system.

- ***Prayer to disturb elections (February 18, Swazi Observer).*** Early in the New Year, members of the progressive formations, who include civic society and political parties, made it known that they would disturb the elections. To this end, they organised activities to send their message across, clearly because they could not rely on the print media as a medium. Police stopped a prayer meeting organised civil society groups to discuss their position towards the elections. The police later said they were informed the meeting was to plan how to destabilise the elections. The Swazi Observer made this a lead story, making the assertion that the organisations were plotting to make the country ungovernable.

- ***PUDEMO wants international observers to snub elections (February 12, Times).*** This headline is a clear indication of the position of the political parties on the elections. This, however, is not on the agenda of the media. The article is placed on Page 12 of the newspaper, which was also careful to get the voice of the government to ensure the position was explained for the readers. The aim is to balance this thought by the political parties with

that of the status quo, to ensure that the public is kept reassured that things will go on as normal.

More stories on the theme

HEADLINE	NEWSPAPER	DATE OF PUBLICATION
Progressives not our enemies	Times	June 23, 2013
NNLC stands by elections boycott	Times	May 15, 2013
Jan criticised for declaring political status	Times	November 4, 2013
Call for democracy grows	Swazi News	June 8, 2013

c) Enforcing the stereotype

In this theme, the aim is to highlight the stories that give a negative portrayal of political parties, thus enforcing the stereotype that political parties are violent and a destructive element. A lot of stories on political parties are coverage of appearances in courts over cases of allegations of bombings and terrorism. Where they are associated with the national elections, these themes emerged strongly. The summaries below are some of the newspaper headlines.

- ***Chief refers to parties as devils (August 6, Times).*** This story illustrates the reception political parties receive even from the traditional structures. The story is further proof of the negative representation of political parties. The chief accused political parties of being devils who are out to disrupt elections in his area. Chiefs are the footstools of the Monarchy and therefore carry huge political clout. The chief told his community that he was pleased that they had defied the call to boycott elections. "By coming in considerable numbers, is a sign that you have defied the call to boycott the elections," he said. It is also important that this was picked up by the newspapers, because it goes to highlight how political parties are perceived. It is also worth noting that this assertion by the chief was allowed to stand, and there was no attempt to either ask him to further explain it or to give some those political parties an opportunity to defend the position.

- ***Jan openly defies, Criticises PM (October 9, Times).*** Once Jan Sithole entered the political domain as a member of a political party, the manner in which the media treated this subject became more pronounced. It was notable that there was an initial hesitation to how they related to his position as a Member of Parliament, and also the face of a political party. This headline was among the first main activities in which Jan Sithole was involved. The headline suggests that the media was taken by surprise by how the member of a political party had openly defied the Prime Minister. This was unusual, and the use of 'openly' in the

headline also goes to support this. But perhaps even more interesting, the framing of this story is such that it shows what kind of conduct a 'member of a political party' brings to the fray—defiance and criticism of the leadership. It is undeniable that the media itself was not used to this, thus this story was front page in both newspapers.

- ***Jan's Parly demands (October 10, Times).*** The Times followed its sensational headline of the previous day with a second headline on Jan Sithole, following up its interest in the single member of a political party inside parliament. The tone of this story suggests that the MP was making demands in only his first sitting; among these being freedom of speech inside parliament. There was nothing to this submission by the MP, but because it came from a known member of a political party, it was enough for the Times to sound alarmed.

- ***MP Jan pledges support to king (November 1, Times).*** Here the Times chose to go with the angle of the fierce political party president of SWADEPA bowing before the King; and pledging to support him. This is a different tone adopted by the newspaper, and a total contrast to how it had portrayed him during earlier interaction with the leadership. This story is coverage of the introductory meeting of MPs with the King, and the choice of Jan's pledge to the king as a main story is critical. How he is also framed in the story is important. Interestingly, the Swazi Observer chose a similar approach, except that it made it a front page story instead of page 8 of the Times.

Other headlines

HEADLINE	NEWSPAPER	DATE OF PUBLICATION
Chief Mvimbi warns Jan	Swazi Observer	November 2
Jan a rich man	Times	July 10
Explosives suspects are PUDEMO members	Times	Nov 7
Banned entities cowards	Times	May 17

5.2 COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS

The coverage of elections demonstrates the position the Swazi media assumes when dealing with political parties. Despite political parties and civic organisations making their position clear that they would not take part in the elections, the media failed to interrogate this subject when covering the elections. Ordinarily, this would open a window for the print media to interrogate the role of the political parties in the elections and to what extent their involvement is necessary for the advancement of democracy. However, the fact that this is neglected indicates the kind of narrative that newspapers adopt when dealing with stories

about political parties and political journalism. What is clear is that both the Times and Observer ignored the topic of political parties and their role in the elections; instead, from the priming of the stories published, urged the public to participate in the elections, without seeking to engage it on the political side.

The newspapers went all out to promote the elections, publishing stories relating to the preparations and subsequently the elections. Both newspapers published two-page profiles of the outgoing members of parliament, seen largely as campaign strategies by their rivals. This was further followed with another two-page profile of candidates for the elections. These were published weekly by both newspapers. The tone of these articles published before the elections expresses the national interest. In this regard, it can be stated that the newspapers played their role of informing the public, although critically, they failed to stimulate an invigorating debate around the elections and the participation of political parties.

5.3 HOW PARTIES ARE REPRESENTED

In the articles published by both newspapers, it is evident that there is a missing voice in the representation of the political parties. Most of the stories related to PUDEMO, yet, the political party that had made news by entering the elections was the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA), whose president Jan Sithole successfully contested the elections in his individual capacity. Sithole's action should have offered a strategic entry-point for the newspapers to access to the contentious issue of participation of political parties in the election and generally their concerns around political party inclusion. Given that Jan Sithole represents a political party, this was useful to the study to determine the attitude of the media in this topic. The coverage however shows that the media was uncomfortable, if not hesitant at first. Thus, the media covers Jan the same way they cover the topic of political parties, with suspicion and negative bias. He is treated as an outsider, especially in the early days of his position as a Member of Parliament.

The table below shows how the media dealt with Jan as an MP

HEADLINE	NEWSPAPER	DATE OF PUBLICATION
Jan openly defies, criticises PM	Times	October 9, 2013
Chief Mvimbi warns Jan	Observer	November 2, 2013
Jan criticised for declaring political status	Swazi News	November 4, 2013
Can Jan work?	Sunday Observer	October 20, 2013
MP Jan pledges support to King	Times	November 2

It is also notable how the newspapers both published statements by the head of government or the head of state without seeking to balance these views with those of the dissenting view. Often these were very strong statements, such as headlines like 'Banned entities cowards - DPM' or 'King warns against uprising'. There were also headlines that portray political parties as negative, or violent and terrorists. These included such headlines as **'Explosives suspects are PUDEMO members'**; '**Chief refers to political parties as devils'**; **'Do not vote for political parties' agents - Chief'**; **'Political party distributes pamphlets'** published by the *Times*. The *Times* got around to publishing stories relating to political parties only through press statements. However, this was balanced always with a view from government. However, this was not the same when there was mention of political parties in negative light. The articles remained one-sided and negative. The Swazi Observer, although surprisingly published some stories that would have been viewed as sensitive, also tended to not seek the view of the political parties whenever the information came from the state.

5.4 INCONSISTENCY AND CONTRADICTIONS

Given the coverage of some of the stories about the political parties, and their activities in the country, as well as activists, relating to issues of governance, democracy and human rights, the media has set its agenda on the monarchical democracy. Taking the issue of a so-called Swazi activist in the United Kingdom, who was reportedly about to be deported from the UK after her application for asylum was declined, the Times' sister paper, the Swazi News reported fully on this, even giving the headline the title, 'Anti-Tinkhundla activist freed after detention in UK'. A sub-story accompanying the main article is headlined 'She would be abducted on arrival in SD', a quote attributed to trade union leader Barnes Dlamini demonstrates on the one hand the freedom by the press to pick up these issues. It also demonstrates their awareness of such matters. However, there is no indication that

these issues are then taken up and followed upon by the same journalists or newspaper to drive this agenda.

A "Swazi woman refused asylum in the UK fears for her safety" would have made a good front page headline. But, this article was tucked on page 8 of the paper, although significantly, it is the main story and occupies half the page. This is the inconsistency that makes it difficult to tell whether the press simply wishes these issues away or is afraid to pursue them for fear of reprisal from the authorities, or indeed, there isn't any agenda setting to assist journalists pursue this course. To add to this, did the decision makers fear that this article would get them in trouble with the authorities for reporting it, then it would have been accompanied, as do many other articles where the state is criticized, with a rebuttal from the government. But there was none in this case, which begs the question of whether this is intentional—and if so, why.

However, it is worth pointing out that in the actual article, as carried by the Daily Mail (UK) this so-called activist made serious allegations about her abductor being the king, and hence her application that she would be abducted if she returned in Swaziland. Were the Times to take this up, they would have shed light on this activist's claim, if not helping to tell her full story, instead of picking on segments that suited their intentions. In essence, this undermines the very effort the newspaper had put into digging this story from the Internet. Furthermore, it is questionable as to why it was picked up in the first place. It is on this basis that it can be concluded that this was the safest way the paper could report this story, without upsetting the king or his court, or the authorities. This way the story is meaningless and only serves to highlight a non-issue.

The coverage of AGOA renewal dominated the news in the days leading to the announcements from the United States government on whether or not Swaziland would retain its status in the preferential trade agreement. In covering this crucial issue, the press relied on the trade unions, which gives credence to the argument that the trade unions are pseudo political parties if not opposition. Added to this claim is the fact that the leaders of these unions are themselves figureheads of the parties, and thus blurring the lines between legal and proscribed.

The media plays this card very well. On issues the media is afraid of tackling directly it would interview union leaders. In one headline, 'We want SD to retain AGOA - TUCOSWA' the Times interviewed the president of the federation of trade union. While it can be argued that the federation represents the masses in the issues of textile industry, it is however prudent that the use of TUCOSWA to address this issue was similar to interviewing the opposition party, challenging the status quo, given the role the union occupies as part of the prodemocracy movement, and using these issues to call for regime

change. Additionally, democratization is one of the benchmarks required for the country to regain AGOA benefits.

5.5 THE VIEW FROM THE TIMES

In order for the *Times* to be seen to be not just relevant but also independent, the newspaper publishes voices from the political parties in its opinions section. The *Times* used columnists and feature writers, and sometimes the Letters to the Editor section to publish articles that expressed the view of political parties, or critical of the political issues. While the *Times* offers the platform for the public to express their view, and goes out of its way to give independent thinkers to express their views, these are not the same as stories from which journalists and editors have exercised their critical role. This seeks to enforce the claim that the newspaper is independent and not afraid of criticising the government. However, that is just one side of the coin. The converse to this is that if the newspaper is able to publish these critical views from the readers and critical columnists, why then does it not go on to interrogate these issues? Critics point to this as proof that the newspaper engages in self-censorship rather than as a sign of bravery when it the newspaper publishes features that are critical of the government.

In this context, Jan Sithole writes for the Sunday publication, alongside Musa Hlophe, a prominent civil society activist who openly canvases for multiparty democracy and the active participation of political parties in the polity. Both are known to espouse the multiparty democracy and therefore are critical of the status-quo. Sithole's participation in the elections seems to be used to justify the aforementioned position of the newspaper being free to publish the views of political parties. He is recognised as President of the SWADEPA, and especially as a member of the progressive formations who are very critical of the state - and not in favour of the system of governance. He is associated with political parties.

Although SWADEPA is a political party that has made it clear it opposes the system of governance, it is not in the list of proscribed parties in the country. Its leader, Jan Sithole broke ranks with civil society and other political parties who chose to boycott and disrupt the 2013 elections. He took a decision to take part in the elections. The party's position was that it had not served any purpose to boycott the elections (see Jan's column). On this basis, Jan entered the contested political domain and became the subject of news stories until his victory in the elections. It is significant how the media covered the Jan Sithole story. Although visible as a positive story for the media, he was not necessarily front page or main news. His stories filled the inside pages. Even in the inside pages, he was not given prominence. At this point, it is worth pointing out that by ordinary news value judgement, Jan's participation in the election should have elevated him into a major newsmaker. That is

not the case. The media shows no special interest in him or his party. He does not feature in interviews or receive coverage.

The Jan Sithole case should be understood in the context that it offers the media a good opportunity to interrogate the 'sensitive' subject of political party participation in the election, as an entry-point to a discussion on the subject of multiparty democracy and the gains he represents as a voice to the banned political parties. This point deserves emphasis because the media's responsibility goes beyond its public watchdog function but also has a responsibility to promote liberal-pluralism and democracy.

Here is it is important to point out that the media only used Jan Sithole as the face of the vilified political opposition and conveniently omits placing his position in a proper context. This can be considered a missed opportunity.

The stories around Jan Sithole are not, for instance, singled out as a positive—instead the tone suggests this as a surprising element (*See Stories on Jan Sithole*). Even though Sithole contributes to the political discourse in his personal column, it is worth pointing out that this is hardly used to argue the position that he advocates strongly in his writing. In this way, his participation, and the role that he plays in the media, would be considered to have added to a positive portrayal of the political party story. Yet, it is concluded that despite his role in the newspaper, and his victory in the election, the media has not allowed itself to change its negative portrayal of political parties in the way that they are covered.

5.6 POLITICAL JOURNALISM

The aim of this study is also to offer a critique of the practice of political journalism in Swaziland's print media. Critical research in this area relating either to the print or broadcasting media is patchy and without theory-based reference to cultural studies nor to a discourse on ideology and hegemony. In the Problem of Media, McChesney (2004) argues that the media present a political problem for any society, 'whether their content is good, bad, or a combination'. He then explains that the first problem deals with its content; the second and larger problem deals with the structure that generates that content. Drawing on this argument, it is considered that there is a serious dearth of political journalism, which impacts in the representation of political parties by the print media.

"In dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, those in power generate a media system that supports their domination and minimizes the possibility of effective opposition. The direct link between control over the media and control over the society is self-evident. But in democratic societies, the same tension exists between those who hold power and those who do not, only the battle assumes different forms. Media are at the centre of struggles for power and control in any society, and they are arguably even more vital players in democratic nations (McChesney, 2004)."

Arguably, it can be posited that the manner in which the mainstream media relates to the problem of political parties and their role in the polity exposes this lack of political journalism. Journalists only concern themselves with covering what has happened, and hardly offers meaningful debate of the issues in the public domain. This can also be seen in how the media went out to only promote the elections, more than offering content that would be informative. Although not considered for this study, political parties have not made a secret of their position to not participate in the elections, yet this topic occasionally comes out in some formants in some organizations and observer missions - and glaringly not extensively covered by the media, as an important element of the elections.

This also speaks to the issue of self-censorship or censorship of the media. It was not the focus of this study to explore the extent to which the media are censored. Indeed, there is no suggestion from the empirical data collected that there is direct censorship of the media. However, it can be considered from the tone of these stories how the media self-censors. If the Times is able to publish Jan Sithole criticizing the holding of the elections in his personal column - why can't this then be the opportunity to pursue this as a story?

Alternatively, if the media is able to publish the criticism of the non-participation of the elections by the political parties why isn't this a story dominating the media? Notably, there was no retraction of stories concerning the publication of such views, a norm when and where there has been pressure exerted on the media for failing to toe the line. Yet, what is notable is how the Times coverage of the elections is similar to that of the state paper - very colourful, pro-state stories that are hardly critical.

Comparatively, the coverage of the elections by both newspapers is too similar. It is stark too how the Times has more of the government stories than the Observer.

This study set out to determine the representation of parties in the elections coverage. In the context of two mainstream newspapers. It hypothesised that the coverage should have been different, given the ownership profiles and the editorial policies of the two newspapers.

The fact that both newspapers carry similar stories goes to enforce the argument that the independence of the Times has become questionable. This adds to the view that the commercialization of the Times sees it becoming more and more a lapdog media than a watchdog - and thus, helps to maintain the hegemony and ideology of the state.

Critically, the political parties have no voice in the Swazi media. Drawing on the Gramscian concept of ideology as expounded by Stuart Hall *et al*. (1977), the examination exposes the nature of what Louis Althusser (1971) terms ideological and repressive state apparatuses in inculcating 'common sense' into the practice of political journalism (Tomaselli *et al.* 1987:7).

5.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to highlight the coverage of the elections by the *Times of Swaziland Group of Newspapers* and the *Swazi Observer Group of Newspapers*. It highlighted how these newspapers leave out the critical voice of political parties, because these were banned by the government and therefore not recognised. Yet, the same newspapers recognise that very standing of the political parties when it comes from the state, or international and civic organisations. Consequently, the chapter showed how the media recognised Jan Sithole as a political party president, when he stands for elections, although still not use his story to amplify the discourse over the participation of political parties in the elections—or indeed the multiparty democracy.

The chapter concludes by observing that the representation of political parties, although minimal during the 2013 elections, was only in a negative portrayal.

Even though *The Times Group* is considered as an independent newspaper of Swaziland, however, the reality shows that it is embedded with the government and hardly goes out of its way to challenge the issues in terms of issues of political reportage. It is noted how all three titles under the *Times* skirt around the issues of political parties, using only events to cover political parties.

CHAPTER SIX: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This research sets out to answer the fundamental question of how political parties are represented in the Swaziland news media as viewed through the coverage of the 2013 Swaziland General Elections. To what extent did the media balance its political coverage and carry out its professional responsibility for impartiality and objectivity within the unique policy context of Monarchial Democracy? The study also sought to establish the media's role in the dissemination of the ideology of Monarchial Democracy and contribute to a critical understanding of the country's media within the context of the Kingdom's unique political landscape. This chapter discusses the patterns that emerge from answering the above question and also includes interviews with senior journalists and editors of the two main newspapers.

6.1 INTERVIEWS WITH JOURNALISTS

To answer the objective of this study, it was necessary to undertake structured interviews with editors and senior journalists of the two main newspapers. The aim of the interviews was to explore the experiences that inform the narrative for the portrayal of political parties. In order to bring out any underlying factors in this discussion six journalists were interviewed for the study; four editors and two senior journalists. The interviews were however limited by an unexpected challenge. While the topic was important, respondents were generally reluctant to be interviewed on the record on a subject that has potential career limiting implications. They expressed their fear that the nature of the topic was sensitive. In itself, this was informing of the kind of environment under which the journalists practice, and how the issue of political parties is dealt with in the two newspapers. However, this led to the interviews being conducted with fewer respondents than targeted. Even those respondents who agreed to be interviewed were nervous about being quoted and requested anonymity.

The perceived sensitivity of the topic especially among journalists and the implications of speaking on the record seemed to be even more complicated by concern of being interviewed by a fellow journalist that works within the same space. To provide the comfort required for the interviews, I engaged a research assistant to conduct the interviews on my behalf. This approach was designed to improve the atmosphere and increase the scope for eliciting fair responses as well as remove a certain degree of intimidation were some respondents to be interviewed by me.

That said, there were four thematic areas that emerged from my initially engagement with the journalists and from the result of the interviews conducted by the researcher;

1. Media is reflecting the Swaziland situation

2. Journalists and editors are being brave
3. Relationship with prodemocracy groups not cordial
4. Journalists have maintained their professionalism.

From these themes, it is necessary to interrogate the issues arising from the responses.

1. Media is Reflecting the Swaziland Situation

The responses in this topic reflect the argument that the press has been able to publish balanced stories and were satisfied they gave political parties the platform to engage with the public. Three of the interviewed journalists pointed out that the newspapers had published what could be published within the limitations of the legal framework. Their argument was that the press has given sufficient coverage to political parties to clearly and firmly express their opposition to the elections and the system of governance. Using their platform, political parties had expressed themselves numerous times.

They insisted that they had to be firm to present balanced and not be partisan in their reports. "What we have not done is adopt the negative attitude the parties have of the monarch and their detestation of him (Interview, 2017)."

The perception and criticism that the press actively participates in the cementing of royal hegemony and therefore prejudiced in their coverage of opposition political parties is certainly common. This journalist however insisted that the perceptions are not fair or particularly accurate noting there is a difference between partisan journalism where journalists would have joined the political parties, adopted their agenda and promoted the campaign against the monarch. The other extreme would be where journalists reject stories from political parties and totally refuse to reflect their views in the media.

"The stories are there, if you look. What's not there is how they want us to say it," pointed out another *Times* senior journalist (Interview, 2017).

-- "My view is that we have raised some very critical issues around this issue, from the protests to criticism of the system and their stance (Interview, 2017)."

2. Journalists and Editors have been brave

The majority of the respondents believe that the media's effort in reflecting the Swaziland situation is not fully recognised and the risks they take to do so not appreciated. Their view is that in terms of the Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA), interviewing and publishing the views of political entities banned under that law exposes journalists to criminal charges of promoting terrorism. In essence, this makes it legally impossible for them to write stories on the activities of political parties that are banned under this law. Despite the danger, journalists routinely defy the law and not only interview entities banned under the Terrorism Act, but also reflect their views in the media. The majority of the respondents say decisions to conduct interviews and publish stories that violate STA

demonstrate the high degree of risk journalists knowingly take and also their bravery to do so knowing the potential consequences.

Editors tread a very fine line. They recognise that on the one hand banned political parties have an interesting story that they have a constitutional right to tell and an interested public that has a constitutional right to hear that story. Within the contested political space, banned parties express themselves in robust political rhetoric that defines their identity, and to their chagrin, is edited to fit the national political context. Reluctance of the media to transmit the political parties' combative narrative that is reflective of their stance in that contested political space, also highlights a stress point in the relationship of the media and opposition parties who believe their statements have to be told as they are. In carefully balancing their social duty to tell all sides of a story, editors are always keenly aware of the necessity to guarantee the survival of their newspapers. "While the media has to be responsible for its mandate of informing the public, at the same time we can't risk the newspaper being shut down to please people, (Interview, 2017)." One editor of the Times states; "We have to balance what we do with being able to stay alive to publish another day, (Interview, 2017)."

3. Journalists have been professional

Even though journalists tiptoe around the issue of how to report on issues of political parties, they insist they still play their role as professionals. Journalists understand the risks of publishing stories that might be deemed sensitive, hence always protect themselves by getting the view of government every time they have to publish contentious stories.

"Our policy makes it clear that to dodge any comebacks, we have to balance the views. This helps us to tell the story (Interview, 2017)."

Within the Swaziland media and political context, the *Observer* holds a particularly difficult position. It is State owned in that it is owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane, a Charter company and Nation trust fund controlled by the King. Through Tibiyo, the *Observer* is ultimately directly accountable to the King.

State owned does not imply Government owned. Indeed, the Observer has had its fair share of run-ins with the Government. Government closed down the newspaper for one year in 2000 after it published stories about the Commissioner of Police. The lukewarm relationship can be also reflected in the *Observer's* low access to government advertising. In the public political space though, there is little the newspaper can do to dispel public perception that it is a government publication that promotes only government views.

"But, we have published more than what we get credit for," argues an editor of the newspaper, in relation to the risks the newspaper takes to remain competitive and relevant.

"It is difficult working for this newspaper and conduct yourself in the way we do. We publish we get into trouble. We don't publish we still get into trouble. Overall, the situation is that we have put

our necks on the block many times, and yet this newspaper still gets criticised as being a propaganda newspaper. That is frustrating (Editor, Interview (2017).”

4. The relationship is not cordial

Some editors believe that there is distrust between prodemocracy groups and the media. Attitudes have been changing over the years as the media environment also visibly evolved. A key dimension has been the positional shift of the privately owned and therefore notionally independent *Times of Swaziland*. Not only has the *Times* distanced itself from the pro-democracy rhetoric of the 90s, it has also publicly instituted structural changes that signalled to everyone that the *Times* has constructed new institutional arrangements that place the interests of the monarch firmly in the heart of the newspaper. The Managing Editor of the newspaper who transferred to work in the palace subsequently added the newspaper’s editorship to his palace responsibilities.

Editors believe there is not enough engagement between them and the prodemocracy groups. As a result, the media is perceived to always project the position of political parties to the public from the perspective of the monarchical democracy to promote the view that they are engaged in a futile effort to disrupt order. This is impacts on how the media and political parties see each other.

A wave of bomb attacks targeting government infrastructure and that of traditional authority structures swept the country in the years prior to the elections. The highpoint of the wave of terror was an attempt to bomb a bridge within 500 metres of the king’s Lozitha Palace. The bomb, apparently exploding prematurely, killed two of the bombers and seriously injured the bomb mastermind. He was subsequently arrested and confessed to be a member of neighbouring South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) supporting PUDEMO’s military campaign in Swaziland. Indeed, one of the two dead bombers was a known PUDEMO member. PUDEMO was caught red handed at the scene of the crime. The incident spurred the Government to enact the STA, under which PUDEMO and its alleged military wing, Umbane as well as the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) were declared terrorist organisations.

Respondents cite opposition parties association with the wave of acts of terror as the stain that poisoned their relationship. The notion that the proscribed political parties were ideologically inclined to seek political power at any cost, even through political violence, placed editors in a moral tight spot. No publication wished to be seen to share the ideology of violence. In this regard, the media adopted an arms-length engagement.

“You have to appreciate the political landscape and the risks associated with this; but we are professionals and we will do what we can. However, we must agree that the spate of bombings sent a chilling message to everyone (Editor, interview: 2017).”

6.2 IDEOLOGY AND HEGEMONY: HOW THE MEDIA WAS WON OVER

The fundamental question this study set out to answer was whether or not the Swaziland press legitimises the Monarchial hegemony through its coverage of political party issues. The media in Swaziland can be viewed as reflecting an achieved consensus and, thereby, as strengthening the core value system which holds the Swazi society together. This analysis has confirmed, therefore the hypothetical statement that the media is reflecting a produced consensus.

If we are to understand ideology as being concerned with the transmission of systems of signification across class lines, the press coverage of both the monarchy and related cultural issues demonstrates how the media has been employed as cultural producers to glorify the dominant institutions and ways of life. That both newspapers report in the same manner, regardless of the ownership, further adds to the conclusion that the media id in effect pro establishment. The King is guaranteed front page coverage every time he is attending a public event, and no longer just in the *Swazi Observer*, but also more importantly in the independently-owned *Times of Swaziland*. The front page picture on the *Times SUNDAY* (January, 2013), for instance, indicates the media's tone relating to the how the King is seen by the public; '*King upbeat about 2013'*. This is significant when the picture is analysed; the King is making his first public appearance from a cultural seclusion of three months. In the imposing image, he is surrounded by the hordes of what is referred to as '*emabutfo*' – regiment. The message is loud and clear, especially in the backdrop of this being the critical year for the establishment – the year of the election, which election pro-democracy formations want to disrupt and the international community is keeping a close watch on.

Another headline is *'King's strong advice for change agents'* (*Times*, 2013) for the King's address to Christians, which he traditionally uses to make strong policy statements. Swaziland is a Christian country and the annual gathering of Christians every Easter Sunday is part of a long tradition that brings the monarchy closer to its people. It is part of how the monarchy entrenches the hegemony. This message coming in the wake of the threats of disruption to the elections and the calls for regime change carries significant meaning to the average Swazi. In publishing this as strongly in its front page, the *Times* becomes a vehicle for the message, and as a newspaper that parades itself as independence of state, it is important to the state that it is given this attention. This is what Tomaselli refers to when he states that, for all of its promises of "free expression", the liberal model often perpetuates "the free expression of ideas and opinions which are helpful or at least not harmful to the prevailing system of power and privilege" (Tomaselli, 2001: 33).

Scholars argue that the concept of ideology suggests three main areas of concern in relation to the media. The first has to do with the nature of the social control exerted over the media, the concerning mainly being the structure of the ownership of the media and, more generally, the ways and, of course, extent to which ruling-class control over the operations of the media is secured. The analysis of the press during the election year and how they covered the Monarch, in particular, is similar to Berger's (2000) analysis of the black press during apartheid, which he found conveyed

vibrant images of the creativity of the media, the journalists and the editors in times of harassment. However, it can be observed from this study that the Swazi press has not challenged itself to be as creative or vibrant in dealing with the issue of the coverage of political parties. Instead, the press has allowed itself to be used as the construction of consensus of the *Tinkhundla* ideology.

There is an obvious shift from the press in how it covers the issues of political parties, traced back to the mid-90s, with the political parties and trade union movement getting negative representation in the mainstream media. This can be pointed to the shift in its relationship with the media, in particular the *Times of Swaziland*, which became pro-establishment in the pursuit of commercial interests. Instead of a robust media, critical of the leadership and interrogating the salient issues of democracy and especially on the political parties' inclusion, the media only tend to cover the activities of the state. This has led to those disenfranchised calling for the establishment of an alternative press in order to get their messages heard; *'Progressives urged to create own newspapers* (**Times, 2013**).

"I don't understand why you say the *Times* should publish your positions; you need to have your own newspaper. This is how it works in every society; you have your own newspaper, you publish your own views," Silvia Ricchieri of the Italian Civic Society is quoted to have told civic society organisations at a media event (*Observe*r, 2013).

Thus, the demands by prodemocracy groups for constitutional rights, especially the right for democratic political representation on the one hand, and a rejection and boycott of elections by political parties on the other, are ignored by the media in the sense that they do not form part of the agenda. The media fails to balance its political coverage while retaining its professional responsibility for impartiality and objectivity within the unique policy context of Monarchical Democracy. To its credit, although the newspapers do not interrogate these issues, they have been able to publish whenever they can; especially when these statements or remarks are made in the public domain.

6.3 CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY: THE CASE OF COMMERCIAL TIMES

Murdock and Golding point out that the manner in which the press is set up, and financed, has traceable consequences for the range of discourses, representations and communicative resources in the public domain and for the organisation of audience access and use. As outlined in Chapter 3, the *Times of Swaziland* is the dominant commercial newspaper while the *Swazi Observe*r is state-owned, although the newspaper suffers an 'identify crisis' given how it does not benefit financially from the state as the *Times* does, and no longer seems to get the financial backing from the parent company to give it the stature it should have. The *Swazi Observer* has already felt the wrath of the state when it was closed down in 2000, and has had a fractured relationship with the King, with two of its editors having been suspended in 2012. These incidents have a chilling effect on the

newspaper, and therefore influence easily how it covers issues that will be viewed as sensitive by the owners.

The *Times*, on the other hand, has historically had a good relationship with the Monarchy, dating back to the colonial times when the newspaper was established by Allister Miller. Miller was also an adviser to King Mbandzeni, and although the newspaper reflected the interests of the small white settler community, the relationship he enjoyed working closely with the King goes to argue that there was always a cosy relationship between the monarch and the newspaper, even if it was not directly beneficial to the monarchy at the time. Booth (2000) does suggest that Miller reopened the newspaper for its second stint 'to counter the flirting of the new generation of colonial officials with Swazi culture and interests'. This demonstrates the commercial interest that began in the early years of the existence of the newspaper, perhaps as part of the general global concept that media development and control has been under the influence of those in power.

When the paper was subsequently sold to the Argus Group it was part of a regional commercial drive that was to lead to a shift in editorial policy that dispensed with white bias. It resulted in a good relationship with King Sobhuza II who supported the newspaper. Although there was a fallout when the King abrogated the 1968 Constitution, the paper has always sought to balance its commercial interests first than its independence status, despite changing hands of ownership. This was particularly apparent after the events of the mid-90s when, as a result of its coverage of the trade union strikes, government withdrew its advertising, and deported the newspaper's publisher. The newspaper moved to strike the balance, choosing commercial interests over its freedom. Given that this paradigm in the *Times* happens at the period described as 'democratic journalism' that was sweeping through the Southern African region, the blow was quite decisive for the prodemocracy groups. The private press, like the *Times*, played a significant role in forcing autocratic African regimes to give space to the democratic wind of change that swept across the continent.

This research shows how the newspaper company has done more than simply maintaining a focus on commercial but went to extra ordinary lengths to integrate itself into the Monarchy. This can be seen with the positions held by the newspaper's managing editor. One the one hand he is the key editorial policy executive of an independent newspaper that claims to champion press freedom and liberal democracy and on the other, he is the king's adviser, speech writer and royal correspondent. This does little to dispel the notion that the newspaper not only enjoys a good relationship with the monarch, but also an active facilitator in advancing the very policies that the newspaper subsequently must report on. This complicates the way the prodemocracy groups engage with the newspaper and leads to the perceived distrust between the political parties and the newspaper on its role as media.

According to Kasoma (1999), the inadequate advertising base for independent commercial media remains a serious impediment to media autonomy and growth. He points out that the freedom of the media, as well as private ownership, is curtailed according to the cultural, political and socioeconomic priorities of (supposed) development needs, as articulated by (often corrupt) ruling elites of developing economies (see McQuail, 2000: 155).

Thus, the relationship of the *Times* with the Monarch in its present format leaves the country with two 'state papers', which therefore impacts on the role of organising the images and discourses through which people are expected to make sense of the world.

The Swazi Observer as a state paper and commercial challenges

Despite being owned by Tibiyo, the company held in trust of the nation by the King, the *Swazi Observer* has a chequered recent history with the authorities. Consequently it has an identity crisis in that the public relates to it as a state paper, often distrusting the stories it publishes as propaganda. At the same time, it publishes stories that complicate its relationship with state and King. The paper is also no longer subsidised and therefore struggles to make ends meet after it was told to swim or sink after its reopening. In contrast, its counterpart enjoys over 65 per cent advertising from government. This goes against the normative theory of the authoritarian, or state-media system, which is set up as "subordinate to state power and the interests of a ruling class" (McQuail, 1987, p. 111). *The Observer*, under this theory, is expected to either support, or be neutral, towards government. According to McQuail, the authoritarian model also refers to situations in which "the press is deliberately and directly used as a vehicle for repressive state power" (McQuail, 1987, p. 111).

This study shows that the *Swazi Observer* tends to behave as an 'independent' newspaper to be able to survive, often running into trouble when it has. For this study, the *Observer* pushed the boundary, publishing some very critical stories about the state of the political parties and even going further to interview those in the wilderness. *The Sunday Observer* headline, for instance, 'Can Jan Work?' (*Observer*, 2013), demonstrates the kind of liberal thinking and approach to the presence of the only individual from the political party domain to enter the *Tinkhundla* domain. This was the paper's front-page lead, and approached the hitherto sensitive topic of the president of a political party by analysing his impact and interviewing progressively.

To contextualise the *Observer's* identity crisis, the case of the former Chief Editor Musa Ndlangamandla can be cited. Ndlangamandla was fired for having given the political parties a platform to have their views published every Saturday in a column he penned. Titled 'Asikhulume' (*Observer*, 2012), this was a double-page column in which the uncomfortable topics were discussed with members of the banned political parties, aimed perhaps at providing the readers with proper

discourse on the issues. It did not go down well, and he left unceremoniously to seek asylum in South Africa.

Similarly, the paper was consistent in publishing stories critical of the state of the elections, and especially the voices calling for a boycott of the elections and/or disruption. What defines the role of the *Observer* is for instance such stories as 'Swazi elections debate heats up Wits' (May, 2013) in which prodemocracy groups debated the pros and cons of participating in the election at a workshop held at the Wits University. This two-day debate is evidence of how the *Observer* sticks its neck out and tries to balance the position by engaging with the prodemocracy groups. This article was a main story in the newspaper and quite detailed as to the issues raised. This was not published in the *Times.*

Another example is the headline, 'Please sign here' (July 2013), an article of civic organisations calling on the SADC Troika to pressure Swaziland (for democratisation). Another of such headlines is 'Sive Siyinqaba wants constitution enforced' (*Observer*, 2013) where the newspaper interviewed three different political parties in the subject of the elections boycott. It also ran as its front-page headline, 'Swaziland undemocratic', quoting the jailed PUDEMO member. To further demonstrate this, the newspaper published on May 2, 'Defiant TUCOSWA sticks to its guns... as Six Unionists Arrested' (*Observer*, 2013). The reference to 'defiant' is key, as the trade union had been warned by the state against its workers' day celebrations. By contrast, the *Times'* headline of the same event, also a lead story; 'Union leaders under house arrest' (*Times*, 2013).

The essence of the relationship of the media and the Monarchy, and by extension the state goes to argue how the print media has been captured, and therefore cowed into self-censorship. In this way, both print media can do nothing but reproduce a 'pseudo-environment', which as Lippmann points out, determines a great deal of political behaviour.

6.4 NORMATIVE MEDIA OR MONARCHIAL MEDIA

This study employed the six normative media theories, largely the authoritarian theoretical framework, motivated by the fact that the country is not a recognised democracy. Media's role in society is defined by the type of political rule that describes the sphere in which it operates, which defines the parameters within which media can function. De Beer (1998, p.18) explains the "political philosophy of a state has a direct bearing on the structure and functioning of the media system".

There is no question that the media portrays political parties negatively and that it often shuns their issues in favour of favourable reporting of the Monarch and the state. The theory of journalism practice is premised on the tenets of the Western model of liberal democracy that characterized by fair, free, and competitive elections between multiple distinct political parties, a separation of powers into difference branches of government, the rule of law in everyday life of an open society, and the equal protection of human rights, civil rights, civil liberties, and political freedoms for all

people. The *Tinkhundla* system, even after being christened a Monarchial Democracy by the King is still far from a normal democratic system. There is no question that Monarchial Democracy is not the same as multiparty democracy, from which the model of liberal democracy is premised. Perhaps in this regard, the scholarly discourse of the model of journalism that is suitable to both the system and the continent as opposed to the Westernised theory is apt. The media employs a delicate balancing act in order to be seen to be relevant to both the monarchy and prodemocracy groups. This demands that the media employs self-censorship and sacrifice its public duty of watchdog.

However, it is also in keeping with the argument that every government, or system, has its media. The case of Swaziland, however, is made unique by the fact that the independent press that should champion the key tenets of liberal democracy are seen to have put their commercial interests first, and sacrificed their professional duty to hold the leadership to account. While the case of the two main newspapers in Swaziland may contribute to the ongoing academic discourse on the role of the media in the African context, it does also offer fresh insights regarding the normatively and theoretically discussed development theory.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter has analysed and outlined the challenges that face the media in Swaziland and how these lead to its 'construction of consensus' as it tries to balance its professional role. On the one hand, the media must legitimise the ideology and hegemony by giving prominence to everything the King says while also attempting to appear liberal in its approach to other areas of news.

The chapter also shows how the media is captured by the state, in two different ways; the *Times* pandering to its commercial interests thus displaying a closeness to the monarchy; the *Swazi Observer* on the other hand is owned by the monarchy. In this equation the *Times* is seen to have sacrificed its expected role as a free and independent press, and has ended up being less critical in its approach to the coverage of the election stories concerning political parties when compared to the *Observe*r. Largely, the *Observer* appears to have risked more in its handling of the sensitive stories, despite that it is state-owned.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the concluding discussion and summary of the study. It presents an overview of the representation of political parties in the two main newspapers in Swaziland, the *Times of Swaziland Group of Newspapers* and the *Swazi Observer Group of Newspapers*. The study's primary aim was to investigate the role of the media in Swaziland's political journalism to answer the extent to which the media balanced its political coverage while retaining its professional responsibility to impartiality and objectivity within the country's Monarchial Democracy, as well as also assessing the media's role in disseminating the ideology of the Monarchical Democracy. To achieve this, the study analysed the coverage of the 2013 National Elections.

7.1 MEDIA'S FACILITATION OF THE HEGEMONY

The study, in Chapter 1, has demonstrated how the press, especially the *Times Group of Newspapers*, was seen to be part of the movement for change until the State came up with the Media Council Bill, which had a chilling effect on media. This is critical in understanding the outcome of this study, insofar as the role of the media in the representation of political parties is concerned. The texts in relation to the facilitation of the hegemony and the ideology of the state show how the media has played a crucial role. The findings show that the media has, since that period, shied away from its role in the political process, shifting towards closeness with the State seen through its reporting of issues concerning the issues of politics and political parties.

The embedding of the Head of State's script writer in the media is also evidence of the paradigm shift in the facilitation of the hegemony.

The co-option of the media into the Monarchical Democracy is very crucial to the state. The case of the Swaziland Democratic Party's (SWADEPA) president Jan Sithole is crucial in understanding the manner in which the media plays a significant role in facilitating the hegemony. As shown in Chapter 5, Sithole complied with the political system and took part in the elections in his individual capacity and was elected into a parliament. However, in submitting to the norms of the system, he is shown in the media to have sacrificed his principles and sold out on his comrades in the struggle for multi-party democracy. Through this, the media can be shown that it doesn't reflect the views of political parties—unless those individuals who are part of the political set-up and are part of the system. This demonstrates the extent to which the media only shows the shadow of their views through the arguments against them. In this case, the media becomes a battlefield for the contestation of the ideologies.

The two main newspapers have been shown to cement the ideology and hegemony of the state, while arguably undermining the quest for multiparty democracy. It has been shown that the media in Swaziland can be viewed as reflecting an achieved consensus.

7.2 THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Ownership of the media plays a critical role in how it functions, and in a study of representation, this plays a key role. The ownership of the two main newspapers was analysed, and shown to be strangulated by commercial interests on the one hand and state control on the other, thereby impacting on the print media's ability to portray political parties. Media organisations are part of 'cultural industries' and as such, according to Murdock and Golding, have a range of features in common with other areas of production. Newspapers, such as the *Times* and the *Swazi Observer*, rely on advertising for revenue, thus also becoming significant economic actors. The study of these two newspapers is therefore important to also place them in the African context, particularly as part of a continent that has grappled with the advent of both democracy and media freedom. How they fare in these areas informs the ownership systems and their outputs and impacts.

It is in this context that the independently-owned *Times* is analysed alongside the state-owned newspaper, the *Swazi Observer*. In Chapter 6, it was shown that the government shows no discrimination in its treatment of the two newspapers and how it applied censure irrespective of ownership. This would suggest that, in their coercive mind-sets, the authorities used a broad-brush approach to promote compliance from the sector, not individual media institutions. This suggests why both newspapers as the study concludes, are now clearly pro-state. As this development leaves the country without an independent newspaper, or an alternative voice, it highlights media ownership as an issue for further analysis.

If we are to understand ideology as being concerned with the transmission of systems of signification across class lines, the press coverage of both the monarchy and related cultural issues demonstrates how the media has been employed as cultural producers to glorify the dominant institutions and ways of life. That both newspapers report in the same manner, regardless of the ownership, further adds to the conclusion that the media is pro establishment.

It can therefore be concluded that the commercial interests pursued and relied upon by the *Times* for its operations and survival are impacting on its status as an independent newspaper. The *Swazi Observer* on the other hand, even though clearly owned by the state—gyrates between independence on the one hand and functioning as a state-aligned newspaper on the other.

Crucially, this then raises questions on the applicability of the critical political economy approaches and liberal pluralism, in a country and economy as small as Swaziland. The findings show us that the independent newspaper, which in essence should be oppositional to the government, is less oppositional than the newspaper that is supposedly closer to the state. Liberal pluralism argues that the commercial media provides independence, while critical political economy shows that the dependence on the commercial means that the media will tailor their content for advertising.

Therefore, this raises the argument of smaller nations with smaller economies and how these theories cannot be applicable in a smaller country because the government is a major economic player for the media as a major advertiser.

As this study has highlighted the dependence of the *Times* on the advertising revenue from government, which has forced the newspaper into a close relationship with the government. It is the extent to which the role of the Managing Editor as speech writer for the King can be understood. This complicates the role that the newspaper plays, in that on the one hand it is expected to be oppositional and be seen to be independent. Yet, the newspaper ends up being seen as being only ideological in its freedom.

7.2.1 NORMATIVE MEDIA THEORY AND THE SWAZILAND CASE

In reaching the conclusion of the media's legitimisation of the hegemony, and the negative portrayal of political parties and issues of politics, the normative media theories were assessed and analysed to fit the Swaziland case. The normative theories are the ideals of how the press should function, in a proper democracy.

Swaziland's unique system of democracy means that it is difficult to locate which of the normative media theories would be applicable. Swaziland entered a constitutional dispensation with the 2005 Constitution, and now espouses a Monarchial Democracy, which King Mswati III proclaims to be a marriage between the monarchy and the ballot box.

The media's balancing act renders it incapable of providing the level of sustained and forceful advocacy to make a meaningful contribution to advance the democratisation discourse. The media's close proximity to the state suggests it cannot be seen to actively agitate to force the democratisation of Swaziland as an issue for the international community agenda. For this reason, pro-democracy groups have called for an alternative media in Swaziland.

7.2.2 JOURNALISTIC PROFESSIONAL OUTLOOK

It is essential to analyse the work of journalists in order to fully assess the extent of the representation of political parties in the Swazi media. The role of individual journalists, and editors, was also analysed in assessing the role of the two newspapers in the portrayal of political parties. This was essential in locating whether or not the media is censored, or alternatively if there is self-censorship.

It is interesting to compare the role of the journalists in the Swazi case to that of the black consciousness journalists during the apartheid era, in part to give a context to how a paradigm shift can lead to the media finding ways to creatively send those media texts to influence change. In a study of the early black press, Irwin Manoim (cited in *Sowetan and the creation of a black public*, Cowling; 2014) describes certain features of the post-war black newspapers, one of which was the

challenge of how to increase circulation and revenue in a market limited by apartheid economics, given that they were restricted by political views that would not permit them to give expression to black political aspirations and militancy, a route that might have rewarded them with more readers.

Charney argues that the growth of an urban black readership, and the increasing numbers of black journalists needed to service this sector, allowed for more activism to develop in black journalism, thus enabling the growth of a black public sphere in South Africa. Charney's study of Black Consciousness (BC) in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrates convincingly the links between BC movements and black journalists. He suggests that black journalists rallied behind the cause of liberation and formed strong bonds with BC activists through social and political events.

This, crucially, is not how the Swazi journalists are undertaking their role. What is apparent is that journalists strive to remain professional in their application of the ethical role and doing what they can under the circumstance to tell the story. As one editor states, "it is important to remain relevant, than for the paper to be shut down. At least we live to tell another story another day." This pragmatism signifies an approach adopted by the media in dealing with the issues that affect and influences the way media reports stories relating to political parties, even though it is illegal to do so. The stories that the two newspapers have published are seen as gains, and an attempt by the media to play is public mandate to democratisation by adding a voice in the public discourse for the promotion of political inclusion.

7.3 QUESTIONS RAISED

This study has raised fundamental questions relating to the role of an alternative press in the Swaziland context. The emphasis on the *Times* becoming pro-state and therefore abandoning the role of a free press has been argued in Chapter 3, 5 and 6. However, this raises the question of why the country, if not the political parties have not developed an alternative media.

Critically, the question of the funding of the media through a subsidy system should be considered as a means of encouraging media pluralism. It has been shown that the *Times* was coerced to choose commercial interest and sacrifice its expected watchdog function in the face of sanctions. Arguably, the *Swazi Observer* struggles financially despite its position as a state-owned newspaper. In other countries, newspapers are funded so as to encourage the diversity of views. This explains how Swaziland still has two main newspapers.

Although the media comes under attack for sustaining state hegemony, or in effect, undermining the pro-democracy agenda that calls for political inclusion, the question of how the media characterises the system of governance should also not be ignored.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This area of discussion is considered a sensitive topic in Swaziland, therefore undertaking it was considered some kind of career limiting risk by many of the persons interviewed. Many of the senior journalists with experience on the topic would not commit to structured interviews, and ignored requests. The few that eventually agreed did so having received assurance of anonymity, so as 'not to be dragged into this (trouble)'.

A major limitation was that most of these interviews were conducted in long intervals, due to the difficulty of journalists refusing to commit.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was purposely confined to the two main newspapers of Swaziland. It could have also included a monthly publication called *The Nation*, which has a very small circulation, but very critical of the state and the King. It is recommended that in future, the study could be extended to not just the magazine, but other media such as social media platforms, which have become the platform for many who criticise the newspapers for failing to offer the diverse and critical views on issues of politics. This would give a more comprehensive outlook of the topic.

Another area of interest could be the study of the professionals who have to deal with the nuances of censorship and the shift in the reportage of these issues, to include broadcasters from radio and television. Radio and television are firmly state-controlled and therefore do not allow voices of political parties in their broadcasts and that way suppress the prodemocracy discourse.

Lastly, is a discussion on the effects of media 'capture' by the state. This is also an interesting area that can be developed and contextualised against the traditional prerogatives and responsibilities of the press. If the media has become pro-state, how then does it still play its role in shaping how the public thinks of the Swazi society? Further questions for exploration are the implications of the media's relationship with the monarch and the public response.

An area of interest will be a study of the methods used by the state to turn the independent *Times* into a royal institution and how this has influenced its coverage of political issues and how this has influenced the public perception of the media.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the media's representation of political parties, the study concludes two main points.

1. The findings of this study, therefore, mean that as long as Swaziland has the kind of political and commercial system that it has, there is no possibility of critical and independent media. This needs to be explored in a global world in attempting to assess the relative democracy of the Kingdom.

2. The usual critical political economy and liberal pluralism debates and analysis don't really apply to many countries such as Swaziland where there is no complexity of the economy of developed nations.

APPENDIX

(Qualitative Data Gathering Method)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main Question

Are the articles that cover political parties themed differently than those on Monarchial Democracy in the two major press groups in Swaziland – *The Times Group* and *Observer Group*?

Sub-Questions

i) Are their voices covered in the press? What kinds of stories are published and how are these placed?

iii) Are there any cases where the press has either shunned or neglected to publish or pursue issues deemed to be criticism of the state or the monarch?

ii) In its coverage of the political process, to what extent have the Swazi press helped in maintaining or challenging the hegemony of the monarch and its alliances?

The question is how the above distinctions will translate into differences along the specific aspects of media coverage.

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