

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS: HOW THE *STANDARD/NATION* COVERED THE ELECTIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out to present and analyse the findings of the data collected for this research. The findings sought to establish what the *Standard* and *Nation* reported on NARC/KANU in terms of their themes. The chapter additionally seeks to analyse whether the papers were able to show fairness in their reports in the way they allowed the parties concerned to present their agendas and openly debate and discuss them. The reports shall be summed up against the main roles the media plays in election coverage. All data discussed in this chapter is taken from a content analysis methodology.

#### 5.1 Data Analysis:

As has been established, the Kenyan media has a relationship with politics and this relationship is in turn reflected in the way the media reports on political issues. The *Nation* and *Standard* as independent newspapers showed similarities in the way they covered the elections. Their manner of presentation for the two main contenders was similar in that they were juxtaposed against each other. This was done in the reporting of Uhuru and Kibaki's campaign schedules, presentation of their policies and the interviews they carried out on both of them. Appendix I provides a visual representation of some of the headlines appearing in both newspapers at the time. Further, the *Standard* and *Nation* tried to maintain unbiased covering although one could notice a slight angling in the editorials which leaned towards some preferred candidates. This contrasted the open bias that the *Kenya Times* and *People* dailies displayed in their reports where they overtly endorsed KANU candidates and opposition candidates respectively. Both newspapers carried news reports of campaigns, constituency round-ups featuring all the contesting candidates and Opinion & Analysis forums which focussed on the candid issues around the parties and candidates. The opinion pieces opened up debate from various areas and personalities, creating an avenue for discussion around the on-going political scenario.

General examination of the data reveals the main pre-election issues in media coverage were the defection of the Rainbow alliance from the KANU/NDP alliance, Uhuru's endorsement as KANU presidential candidate, the formation of the NARC coalition, the defection of candidates from one party to another and parties' manifestos. In looking at the manifestos, both *Nation* and *Standard* either interviewed the candidates or gave them space to present the key election promises of their parties. All this fell under the media's role and function of information. Over the election period the issues given prominence included conduct of voters, election campaigns and later on, the results of the elections and its implication for Kenyans. Voter education was done late into the campaign period but this issue will be addressed later in this chapter. Gender issues were not well covered and the elections largely remained a man's affair.

The *Standard* was a forerunner in analysis with their 'Transition watch' column with *Nation* carrying out their 'Elections 2002' analysis in their Sunday newspaper. The *Standard* dedicated almost the entire Sunday paper to analyzing the candidates and issues surrounding the elections through 'Uchaguzi- your weekly briefing on election 2002'. There was a noted increase in the pages dedicated to the analysis as the elections neared. The newspapers allowed citizens to give their opinions and debate their views through letters to the editor. By this, the media provided a platform and forum for debate in which the voters themselves took centre stage. Likewise *Nation* had three columns 'Platform', 'Moi succession' and 'Constituency review' which were dedicated to commentaries and analysis of the different candidates and their issues. Both newspapers were liberal in allocation of space especially over the weekends to political commentators and politicians' opinions. In doing this the role of information, debate and discussion was well carried out especially where the common man could also be guaranteed of a voice in the debates.

From the onset the newspapers represented the elections as being a race between two major parties- KANU and NARC and their respective candidates. Headlines such as 'Let us judge Uhuru, Raila as individuals', 'Uhuru nominated, Opposition Unites' and

‘KANU heads for big split as Rainbow quits the race’ attested to this fact. Even where candidates like Simeon Nyachae (Ford People), David Ngeth’e (Chama cha Uma) and James Orengo (Social Democratic Party) were given a platform to discuss their parties manifestos, it was evident that they were considered non-starters in the race. In an editorial, the *Standard* declared that proper political contest would begin after Kasarani II (*Standard*, November 4, 2002) setting centre stage for the election battle. This was with the exception of Nyachae who had earlier been part of the Opposition coalition but once he abandoned the coalition, he was relegated to the periphery and the race left to the two leading contenders. After the selection of the two candidates as presidential flag bearers, the *Standard* ran with a headline ‘The mother of all battles: major showdown looming in Uhuru-Kibaki duel’ which analysed the candidates priorities for their governments and where they wanted to shine in the upcoming elections. (*Standard*, October 27, 2002). On the same day the newspaper published interviews with both Kibaki and Uhuru, giving them a fighting chance on the same page. This could be viewed as the newspapers attempt to give a balanced debate which constitutes fairness in reporting. The section below discusses the main issues and their presentation.

#### **5.1.1 Personalities: Uhuru versus Kibaki**

Overtly, the election reports were mainly candidate oriented rather than issue oriented in focus. The reports frequently centred on the candidates rather than their policies and this was more so for the months of October and November. Specifically, they were geared in the direction of comparison between KANU’s candidate Uhuru and NARC’s candidate Kibaki. Coincidentally, Uhuru was endorsed as the KANU presidential candidate and NARC united on the same day, October 23, 2004. The newspapers picked up the cue from there placing the two candidates against each other. Secondly, the focus on candidates could be attributed to their uniqueness; first Uhuru Kenyatta who was a newcomer in the election period but it is he that was privileged to run for the top seat. Mwai Kibaki on the other hand had been one of the architects of multi-partyism and he was taking his third shot at the presidential elections. Kibaki was also reputed as a brilliant economist, having served successfully as Finance Minister in Kenya for the longest period of time (1970-1981) and later as the Vice-President of the country under

the Moi regime<sup>46</sup>. Uhuru was part of the new breed of young leaders Kenyans wanted to see, the so-called ‘young turks’ and Kibaki was part of the seasoned ‘old guard’ was a constant issue in the press. In a paper presented by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CCD-Ghana), it was noted that in Africa, the principle of age as a criterion of wisdom distorts social relations and encourages gerontocracy, the rule by elders that is not necessarily based on achievement or knowledge. Knowledge is not identical with wisdom nor does longevity determine achievement or knowledge. On a positive note it was acknowledged that if age is perceived as denoting brilliance, then it is a positive thing<sup>47</sup>. This tug of war in the age factor was visible in the reports but tended to favour Kibaki because of his track record in politics. But as one writer said, old age is not necessarily a crown for sagacity, nor is youth a totem for brilliance. There were more pressing issues to contend with in the run for the presidency.

Both newspapers adopted a similar strategy when reporting on the candidates’ weaknesses, strengths as well as their previous political records. In both newspapers, Uhuru Kenyatta was presented using the title ‘project’ in the race for presidency<sup>48</sup>. Titles like ‘Which way Project’ (*Standard*, October 12, 2002) and ‘Project Uhuru in Eastern’ (*Nation*, October 14, 2002) drove home the point that he was a novice in the realm of politics, handpicked by his mentor. The plethora of voices that emerged without the media circles and which were critical of Moi’s imposition of the young Uhuru, meant that the media would cover him in exactly the way he was portrayed. It was not smooth sailing for Uhuru for he had to convince voters and the media alike that he would not remain a puppet of President Moi after the elections. Headlines like ‘Uhuru rally resembled a state-organised event’ were detrimental to his record further endorsing the

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<sup>46</sup> Mwai Kibaki’s political record was detailed in ‘Golf, Books and Afro Jazz: Mwai Kibaki the Man’ in *Nation*, December 30, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Governance, Democracy and Development in Africa: A Cultural Approach’, a paper presented by CCD-Ghana at the International Conference on the Cultural Approach to Development in Africa. Retrieved from the internet March 5, 2005 from

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/idep/unpan003346.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Brenda Wangwe notes that the term ‘Project Uhuru’ was coined by David Makali in 2002. At the time, he was writing for the column ‘Beyond Politics’ in the *Saturday Nation*. The media picked up the term and it became a common slogan in the country’s political vocabulary. (Retrieved from the internet 21<sup>st</sup> January 2005 in [http://www.kenyanews.com/Archives/mainsto/medst\\_4.html](http://www.kenyanews.com/Archives/mainsto/medst_4.html) )

notion that he was not his own man. The newspaper reports may not have embraced or discarded him overtly but the opinion pieces – which the media allowed for open debate and discussion- left no doubt as to where their preference stood. Before the KANU conference in October, one writer noted,

“Today I will add one more thing. President Moi may push the Uhuru Project through the KANU presidential nominations next week. But in these days of Uhuru, the project spells only one word for KANU, D-E-F-E-A-T. But even such issues as being defeated are sometimes a matter of choice- there is Uhuru for you.” (*Standard* October 6, 2002)

In an editorial ‘Decent chap this, but can Uhuru deliver for Kenya,’ (*Standard* October 28, 2002:6) the writer focused on the main issues Uhuru Kenyatta had previously tackled in a televised interview on the popular current Affairs programme *Summit*. Being a follow-up on the interview, KANU’s promises were questioned as well as Uhuru’s ability to deliver on his own. Others were ‘Uhuru’s Journey to the Centre of Politics’ and ‘Will Kibaki be third time lucky’ (*Standard*, October 20, 2002), articles that traced Uhuru’s path into politics, including the years when he was not visible in the political arena. The clergy also made their preferences known like the retired arch-bishop of the Anglican Church, Dr. David Gitari who called on Kenyans to reject the Uhuru Project as he was an extension of the KANU regime (*Nation*, November 1, 2002:1). Some of these comments were not out of an examination of Uhuru’s abilities but arose from the fact that he was part of KANU, the party the voters wanted out of power.

However, few columnists covering the campaign trail refused to disregard Uhuru simply as an imposed choice or a project. They argued instead that Uhuru should be given a fair chance at the Presidency. At some time a columnist for the *Standard* posed the question whether Uhuru was a threat enough for the opposition to unite, producing a voice of reason in the midst of many others vouching for Kibaki. Without the influence of the NARC euphoria, he questioned the opposition, their tactics and what the formation of a national coalition presented to Kenyans as a whole.

While Uhuru was presented as a project, Kibaki as a candidate was viewed more within the coalition than as a candidate on his own. Press reports were more favourable of Kibaki. He was a seasoned politician, having served in the Moi regime and this was his third presidential bid. As a candidate Kibaki seemed to be more endearing than Uhuru and he was backed by a strong team of opposition politicians. Further, Kibaki had lived on the legacy of a strong track record in economics and one thing Kenya needed at the time was a President who would save the economy from further decline. This was not missed by the media either. The support of political heavyweights like Raila Odinga was a bonus for the candidate and as much as he spoke for and on behalf of the coalition, it seemed that he was not at pains to introduce himself as a likely candidate like Uhuru had to. Most of KANU's electoral pledges in the newspapers were delivered by Uhuru but NARC's promises and battle of wits were drawn by among others Prof George Saitoti and Prof Anyang' Nyong'o.

When Kibaki suffered from a fatal accident on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the media reported it as a blow to the coalition, and initially caused panic among some sections of the country. Despite the fact that his injury was severe, the then NARC opposition downplayed the health factor. When Kibaki left the country for urgent treatment abroad, the *Standard* carried detailed analysis on the accident and how it would possibly affect his already failing health in 'Mwai Kibaki: How will crash affect poll' (*Standard* December 8, 2002: 1). On the same day, the *Nation* carried 'Kibaki doing fine, London doctors say' which was a news report stating what his doctors said (*Nation* December 8, 2002). The *Standard* team was prepared to confront the issues around Kibaki's health, a factor that the *Nation* chose not to engage in in-depth although it would have serious repercussions on the president's performance as evidenced early in his term. *Standard* additionally ran a feature report on other presidents who had suffered similar physical/ health related misfortunes in their time. At best, the coalition should have been honest when questioned about the seriousness of this illness. On his homecoming, NARC played the sympathy card and both papers carried the story as the lead story upon his return on December 15th. In fact, the *Nation* dedicated five whole pages to Kibaki's homecoming in words and

pictorials with the *Standard* using only the lead story to his homecoming. The newspaper chose to focus on its weekend feature 'Kenya after Moi' (*Standard*, December 15, 2002) an analysis which looked at what would happen to the network of individuals who were at the time surrounding Moi.

Notably, not all the reports on Kibaki and NARC were positive in nature. Further, it was noted that not all the opposition politicians held untainted political records. One headline screamed, 'Moi: I'll expose opposition' meaning that there was more to the opposition than an amalgamation of politicians out to remove KANU from power. In a paid-for advertorial appearing on the *Standard* and *Nation*, the Citizens Forum for Transparency questioned Kibaki's authenticity and integrity as a person. The author noted,

'From the foregoing, it cannot be denied that indeed Kibaki is one of the architects, if not the chief architect and defender of the oppressive single-party system, together with the loss of the democratic space it entailed, and the suffering that was occasioned by it' (*Standard/ Nation* December 25, 2002).

Elsewhere, *Standard* political analyst Barrack Muluka argued that the same strategy that had been rejected by Raila and the Rainbow Alliance, the imposition of Uhuru on KANU, was the same one Raila adopted. He noted that it was Raila who announced '*Kibaki tosha*' which translates to mean Kibaki was enough as the presidential candidate, at the formation of the Super Alliance. Muluka questioned what he saw as imposition of Kibaki by Raila saying that the NARC nominations should also have been free and fair. Other news reports that followed revealed that Nyachae had quit the 'Super Alliance' as he did not agree with NAK and LDP's settling for Kibaki as their candidate. What was different about the mode of reporting was that Uhuru's nomination was greeted with scepticism but the press chose to ignore that Kibaki's endorsement was done in the very same manner.

Such dissenting voices in the midst of the euphoria that surrounded the election period were both informative and with a good base of argument, they provided a balance to the obvious endorsement of Kibaki. The choice of news stories for the newspapers like the

*Nation*'s dedicating five whole pages to Kibaki's return and the *Standard* downplaying the issue can be argued in two ways. One can interpret it in terms of bias, arising out of editorial policy as we earlier discussed the ownership of the newspapers or it can also be seen from the angle of news production where the newspapers had already chosen the news for the day in the news diary. All these elements are determinants of the way news will be covered daily.

### **5.1.2 Policies**

Election policies and pledges were a key area in which the media should have delved in but save for the pledges the leaders gave, the press shied away from confronting the real issues around these policies. As has been mentioned earlier, this was an election which focused on strategy rather than substance of elections. At one time Archbishop John Njue called on aspirants to stop attacking each other and instead address issues that affected society (*Nation*, December 3, 2002). Another article titled 'Rainbow excitement ignores real issues' noted, "To still talk and embrace '*Yote yawezekana bila Moi*'<sup>49</sup> when we know he is leaving anyway and little else is to miss the point." (*Standard*, October 29, 2002). Here, one can see the desire for more than just a desire for change of guard from the citizens and a need for real answers. Besides, election pledges were some of the ways in which politicians endeared themselves to voters.

As the KANU candidate Uhuru Kenyatta assured Kenyans that the priorities of his government included the formation of government of national unity, job creation, poverty eradication and war on HIV/AIDS. There was little talk about the economy in his pledges which I read personally to be more aligned towards social issues than economy. Uhuru's pledges centred on good governance, a vital factor in elections and setting up of new government. Perhaps it can be argued that Uhuru was trying to keep his promises as realistic as possible.

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<sup>49</sup> This translates to mean 'everything is possible without Moi' a parody of the gospel song "nothing is impossible with our God". This became a popular chant during the elections especially at NARC campaign rallies.



NARC's main focus was the economy and investment, provision of free and compulsory primary school education as well as the creation of 500,000 jobs. The coalition also pledged to use taxes in poverty alleviation thereby improving the citizens lives (*Nation*, December 3, 2002) The media argued that provision of free education was possible for the government and went on to forecast how this would be made possible. NARC additionally unveiled a 121 page booklet titled, '*The Economy: Vision and Strategy*' whose contents the public barely knew. As with other times, the newspapers juxtaposed the candidates pledges with alternating headlines like the *Standard* which ran "Kibaki: My government will scrap 8-4-4" and 'Uhuru in a special pledge to industry' (*Standard*, November 25, 2002)

There were unrealistic pledges too like NARC's pledge of December 11, 2002 to form a Truth and Reconciliation commission that the press did not question. In covering elections, the media should not only take news and such policies at face value but should subject them to scrutiny for the benefit of the electorate. For instance, the NARC government's pledge of job creation endeared the coalition to many Kenyans who were jobless yet the figures looked unfeasible and NARC should have been asked how they intended to bring about this. Unemployment ranked high on the reasons why Kenyans would not trust the KANU government with power again; a government they felt had created a few rich politicians and millions of poor people.

In an article 'Why I find it hard to forgive Moi' (*Nation*, December 19, 2002), one writer criticised the former president and KANU for plundering the treasury only few weeks to the new government, an act he described as 'treasonable'. He said the intention was to destroy the economy so that when NARC took over, it would be unable to fulfil their election pledges. A reading of this would mean that there were repercussions of the deed of the outgoing leadership to the incoming government which would either reflect positively or negatively on election reports.

Overall, it seemed the newspapers did not adequately debate the pledges presented by the candidates and there should have been more engagement with the politicians in this. It

seemed that the pledges were more visible as advertisements than as reports discussed by the newspaper reports. In the context of information, they did well to carry the pledges but these were not debated and discussed exhaustively. Further, the primary definers that media engaged with did not seem to tackle the policies adequately, choosing instead to dwell on the need for a change of government above all else.

### **5.1.3 Of mergers, defection and acquisitions**

The period covered in this research; October-December 2002 began with the defection of Raila and his 'Rainbow alliance' from the NDP-KANU merger. The reports on these happenings were given prominence with what the *Standard* termed 'Kasarani II showdown' the imminent battle of the titans for the presidential candidate. In the report, they pitted Uhuru Kenyatta, Raila Odinga, George Saitoti and Kalonzo Musyoka against each other (*Standard* October 4, 2002). When the Rainbow alliance defected from the KANU/LDP merger, an editorial in the *Nation* advised the parties to reconstitute but go beyond ethnic boundaries (*Nation* October 12, 2002). The *Nation* and *Standard* teams carried extensive analysis on what would unfold politically, throwing in speculations as to what would happen next. *Standard* carried out an analysis of 'Rainbow Alliance's evolution' (*Standard*, October 12, 2002) tracing the path from when Raila's NDP merged with KANU at Kasarani I, the first KANU meeting. Other headlines on the same day were 'What's the next move for Rainbow Alliance', 'How long will they stay in cabinet' and in the editorial, it was 'KANU is split but Kenya moves on' (*Standard*, October 12, 2002). On the other hand, *Nation* had the stories 'KANU heads for a big split as Rainbow Quits the race' (*Nation*, October 12, 2002) with later reports speculating 'Will the Super Alliance become real?' (*Nation*, October 20, 2002) Both newspapers inevitably saw a merger of the opposition political parties in the making.

In reporting about the formation of the joint opposition, the newspapers chose to tackle it in different ways. By way of informing the voters, the *Nation* revealed in an article 'How the Rainbow Coalition Picked Kibaki and Kept Nyachae in the dark' that the NAK and LDP had entered into talks prior to the launch of LDP (*Nation*, October 28, 2002).

*Standard's* approach was a little more confrontational. Barrack Muluka questioned the move in the article 'Alliance Nominations must be free and fair' saying that Kibaki had been imposed as NARC leader in the same way that Uhuru had been imposed on the KANU group (*Standard* October 20, 2002). In the wake of these alliances, one *Nation* writer noted that there were indeed differences in the parties coming together but it was certain that the opposition grouping were firmly united in their desire to hasten the exit of the Moi system (*Nation* October 26, 2002). From the ruling party KANU, the *Nation* questioned what impact the defections would have on its fortunes focusing on former die-hard activists like Mr. Joseph Kamotho and Mr. Norman Nyaga (*Nation* November 17, 2002). *Standard* did the same with the decamping and the challenges facing the parties as a result of the same (*Standard* October 28, 2002). These reports cited critics as saying that this would adversely affect KANU in the elections.

Their predictions did come true. The reports additionally informed of some of the dangers of the decampings like former ministers in the KANU government leaking state secrets to other people. The analysis on this was important as NARC was made up of ministers who had formerly served in the Moi government as noted earlier by Ajulu (2003). Out of this, it was important for the voters to know what exactly these ministers were offering the electorate other than a new government coming into power.

#### **5.1.4 Gender**

Gender as an issue was inadequately tackled in the media and the 2002 elections seemed more of a men's affair. Representation of women journalists in the media was scanty also nonexistent with the few being commentaries by editors or Women's Rights Activists. This cannot be attributed to the lack of women in newsrooms but certainly their engagement with politics was wanting. In fact, politics has wrongly been assumed to be a man's domain and the press has not been spared either of this assumption. Gender-based organisations had more to do with vouching for female candidates to run in the elections.

The news reports were few but the *Nation* on one occasion dedicated a section of their paper to the gender agenda. In this feature, the team pulled together a couple of pages

which focussed on the issues affecting women in elections. One such issue brought to the fore was the commercialisation of elections where women did not have economic capacity to run against their male counterparts. Other reports noted that the dynamics of the political world characterised by violence, intimidation, vote-buying, propaganda, disinformation and apathy among voters, cost the women their votes (*Nation*, December 11, 2002). In other cases, susceptible women were being bribed with pitiful (yet much needed to the women) gifts like a bag of sugar in exchange for votes (*Nation* October 24, 2002). Unfortunately, there were no reports on gender in the *Standard* on the days sampled for this research. Whether this can be attributed to a lack of interest, or that the reports fell on other days cannot be identified at this point.

At the conclusion of party nominations, it was found that 44 women parliamentary candidates out of a total of 1,037 candidates were in the race, a ratio of 4:96. A separate report noted that despite a spirited campaign by lobby groups to sway gender imbalance in Parliament, candidates still fared badly. For instance, in Central Province, only one woman managed to beat her male counterparts in the battle for the constituencies (*Nation* November 29, 2002). Further, it was noted that there was no female candidate representing North Eastern or Nyanza provinces. In it, Muthoni Wanyeki questioned whether the issues in the upcoming elections were considered too important for issues as ‘trivial’ as gender to play a determining role (*Nation* December 14, 2002).

The position of KANU and NARC regarding women should have been a key factor in the policy analysis. KANU’s presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta made specific reference to women in his election pledges promising a guarantee of their rights in education, land ownership and inheritance. Further, he pledged increased participation by women at all decision-making levels in government and business. The NARC electoral board members challenged women to contest elective posts, but it was noted that some parties were not keen on clearing women to run, preferring male candidates instead. One *Nation* writer quoted KANU’s director of elections William Ruto who defended his party by saying KANU was very clear on nomination and it bars discrimination of any kind, be it gender, race or otherwise. Female candidates interviewed expressed that there was no level

playing ground for them as Ms Josephine Kibathi, a contestant who ran against Raila Odinga, said, 'I have to work three times as hard as a male candidate in order to convince the voters I can effectively represent them in Parliament' (*Nation* November 17, 2002).

Notably, woman's qualifications were scrutinized either in terms of occupation or background. The testers in most cases were spouses of political heavyweights in that area, women's leaders or candidates with strong academic backgrounds which were brought out against their names in the media. This did not happen for the male contestants who were taken to either be first time contestants or taken a second shot at the presidency. In this respect, the press at times gave gender issues a raw deal, neglecting to front for an even ground in the political sphere.

One article was summarised thus; 'the poor performance of women in the nominations heralds another five years of poor representation in Parliament. The dismal results are also reflected in civic seats although all political parties are promising a 30% women's representation if they form a government' (*Nation* November 29, 2002). This was an indication of the long term results of the choices of the electorate over their female candidates.

Gender as an issue needs in-depth discussions as it is a vital area in the quest for political leadership. This is the case especially because women are rarely given the same fighting chances as men in the political arena.

#### **5.1.5 Voter Education**

Education of voters is a key requirement of the media at the time of elections. The *Standard* and the *Nation* were able to create some form of public awareness in the last three months. The media provided the voters with a choice of candidates to pick from and present their manifestos giving them an objective picture of what was on the ground. Civic education seems to have been mandated as an ECK task and the body was faulted for not having begun the exercise earlier on. An editorial in the *Standard* accused the

ECK for not having begun the important exercise of educating voters on how to conduct themselves over the election period (*Standard*, November 9, 2002).

Voter education came by way of editorials and advertisements. Editorials cautioned voters against false promises of the politicians and advised them to guard their votes. On December 19, 2002 the *Nation* criticized KANU ministers who were trying to lure Kenyans to campaign rallies with false promises of relief food that never came. The editorial advised voters to carefully sieve politicians with the *Standard* advising voters to stay focused and instead go for the future. In an ironic comment ‘Go on, Sell your vote if you wish’, (*Nation* November 1, 2002), the author used a financial angle to detail the loss to voters when they sell their votes to politicians. The very insightful piece ended,

‘As December 27 approaches, by all means sell your voter's card. Sell your national identity card, driving licence and passport as well. Only make certain that the price is right. Anything less than Sh 68 million is clearly a fraud’.

When electoral anomalies were reported such as claims of voter cards buy-outs the newspapers carried the reports and *Standard* once ran a headline ‘Voter cards racket exposed’ (*Standard*, October 30, 2002). Purchasing of voter cards is tantamount to rigging and by exposing this vice; the newspapers fully enforced their surveillance role over the election period. The ECK however later developed an extensive public awareness programme which was run as advertisements in the papers as well as electronic media. These were visible full-page advertisements, sometimes adopting graphics only, educating on peaceful voting, how to choose leaders and cautioning against bribery. Voters were shown how to cast a valid vote, information was given on the various areas where they could cast their ballot as well. However, the electronic media especially the radio was more effective in dissemination of information especially to those in the rural areas where newspapers were inaccessible and levels of illiteracy were low. This was done to ensure that voters especially those in the rural areas knew what to do on Election Day.

There were press reports and fears expressed that rigging was far from behind. Take as an example a view expressed in the *Nation*. The writer cited Adolf Muchiri, outgoing member of parliament for Kasarani who was concerned that there were 500,000 uncollected national identity cards which he said 'could be used by the ruling party to rig the poll.' However in the same article, ECK chairman Samuel Kivuitu explained the process his commissioners would use to curb rigging in the elections. By presenting both sides of Mr. Adolf Muchiri and Mr. Samuel Kivuitu, the *Nation* was giving a balanced view hence allowing any allegations to be dealt with on the spot rather than later (*Nation*, October 28, 2002). Where the parties erred, the reports were presented in the news like *Standard* which ran the story of the ECK fining NARC and KANU for election malpractice (*Standard*, December 23, 2002). In doing so, the media was carrying out its watchdog role by exposing electoral malpractices where it occurred and what the authorities were doing about this

The media acted as a forum for debate and through the letters to the editor, allowed civilians to air their views on the ongoing process. Noteworthy was the public's ability to discern and question the manner of campaigns the ECK was running. One letter to the editor, noted that the ECK was giving mixed signals in one of their newspaper advertisements which said "If you vote for murderers and thieves as your leaders, you will only have yourself to blame." The letter wondered how the ECK could possibly have cleared any contenders of questionable character, contenders who were murderers and thieves (*Nation*, December 3, 2002). This kind of concern was not uncommon in the reports.

#### **5.1.6 The Moi Succession**

Early in the year, the media had begun debate on the Moi succession with the certainty that the former president was running his last term. *Nation* carried out the reports in 'Moi's succession' and 'Kenya after Moi' while it was also 'the Moi succession' in the *Standard*. However, the debate gathered momentum over the last three months as the campaigns unfolded. In order of importance, the topic of the Moi succession would arguably have been ranked third after personalities and manifestos/pledges. Kenya

needed to be guided into a transition with care as the country had been ruled by one president for far too long a time. The succession debate ran concurrently with the election campaigns and formed a large portion of the media reports. Both newspapers carried out detailed analyses of the successes and failures of the Moi regime and presented forecasts as to how the new government would fare. These also looked at what Moi's role would be after his exit from power after 24 years in power. Some headlines proffered 'NARC: Moi could be Africa peacemaker' (*Nation*, December 7, 2002) in which Kalonzo Musyoka saw Moi could be joining the ranks of Nelson Mandela and the late Julius Nyerere as an African negotiator. The reports were unequivocal in the cry that it was time for a new government to take over in power which then became the subject of debate. Would it be Uhuru his handpicked successor or Mwai Kibaki, the more seasoned politician who had once been Moi's vice president? Age and experience was an important factor in these debates.

In presenting the Moi succession, the newspapers also looked at the role of the 'Super Alliance' in forming a new government. Both newspapers had carried reports on the opposition alliance unity at Uhuru Park signaling the beginning of a great battle for presidential candidates. It was also after the historic merger that the papers consciously or subconsciously relegated the other parties and contenders to the back, and generally viewed them as appendages in the race.

## **5.2 Conclusion:**

It was the *Standard/ Nation's* competitive front that made other papers sidelined when it came to election reporting and their sales proved it all along. They educated voters in many ways providing analysis on what was going on. The columnists tried to break down election rhetoric and explicate on what different parties were offering voters in the coming elections. The newspapers mainly carried out what Broder (1987:242) calls a 'horse-race journalism' kind of analysis, the kind that emphasizes strategy and tactics and ignores issues, substance and serious consideration of candidate's qualifications.



As evidenced by the newspapers coverage, there was more of the strategy of elections and tactics and less information on issues, substance and serious considerations of the candidate's qualifications. Additionally, the reports tended to angle on the side of what I would term political entertainment which offered a ground for politicians to constantly attack one another. Angling of news and their selection we have seen are as a result of careful planning and sifting of information, the final result taken to be what the media constitutes important news. Thereby, where issues were not adequately tackled, we can blame the media. Professor George Saitoti noted this and in one article stated,

“I believe- rather I regret- that these discussions have missed the point and misled the Kenyan public. The issue is not who is standing but what confronts our nation at this critical moment.” (*Nation*, October 28, 2002).

Both newspapers erred largely in that they encouraged “attack-dog” journalism. Politicians were known to use rallies to attack their political counterparts and the media also made merry out of this. Newspaper headlines frequently made do with the attacks and worse, allowed themselves to be a platform for the bickering politicians to get back at one another. These kind of reports were more common than those that discussed the issues voters wanted politicians to contend with. As a matter of fact, the media embraced this kind of drama, sometimes fuelling the fire that started it instead of ignoring the constant bickering of politicians.

The results of the elections proved and ended the long awaited exit of KANU from power after many years. Newspaper reports chronicled the end of a long awaited era and a rather peaceful transition for the nation of Kenya. In their reports, both newspapers established that the unity factor of the opposition alliance was a major force in ousting KANU from power. Raila Odinga's presence in the opposition had been hailed as significant in playing the tribal card right by uniting the populous Kikuyu and Luo votes which would have been scattered and KANU would probably have won again. Before the elections, local clergy and international groups were reported as having encouraged the opposition

to unite under a single umbrella party to defeat KANU. The win for the opposition was received favourably from all corners, which was subsequently reported in the papers.

But overall, the *Standard* and the *Nation* can be said to have carried out their informative roles to the society well despite the few attempts at endorsing candidates. This is especially in comparison to other newspapers but they both could have carried a much more detailed analysis of policy statements and the like.