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## 2 Evolution of the Media's Role

### Advent of Democracy

The media has reported on social and political events for centuries, yet its 'place at the dining table' in terms of elections coverage, especially in developing countries, is a fairly recent development. Such reporting has expanded in line with democracy and as gender and race-related barriers have diminished.

In many parts of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, colonial rule ended only in the second half of the 20th century. In Africa, for example, Zimbabwe and Namibia achieved independence in 1980 and 1990, respectively, while Eritrea was born an independent state in 1991. Apartheid in South Africa ended with the country's first democratic elections in 1994.

For some countries in the former 'Eastern bloc' of what used to be communist Europe, democracy – and with it the concept of elections – arrived with the collapse of their centralised, socialist, single-party regimes from 1989. Boris Yeltsin was at the heart of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the successor to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), only in December 1991.

Nor did the Americas have much of a head start. In the United States of America, it was not until 1965 that President Lyndon Johnson's signing into law of the Voting Rights Act ended voting discrimination against African-Americans. Latin America's democratic tradition was blighted by military dictatorship from the 1960s to the 1980s. Today, Cuba remains the only Latin American country under an unelected leader, with Raul Castro having replaced his brother Fidel, who overthrew Fulgencio Batista in 1959 in what is known as the Cuban revolution.

In his article, 'Formation of an Interstate System in East Asia', Ryuhei Hatsuse notes that the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand moved to genuine democracy in the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Indonesia achieved democracy in the late 1990s, but dictatorships still exist in North Korea, Vietnam and Myanmar.<sup>13</sup>

Scholar Eduardo Posada-Carbo (1996) argues that demo-

*Generally, an independent media has evolved in tandem with the more general development of political freedoms.*

cratic transitions in Latin America and Asia fuelled a growing interest in the study of democratisation and helped to foster increased optimism about the globalisation of democratic forms of government. At the centre of such study is the capacity of a country to regularly renew its contract with the people through periodic elections, electoral efficacy and the media's central role in enhancing democracy.

### **The 'Fourth Estate'**

Critics of the popular school of pluralist liberal democracy see the media as fulfilling a vitally important role as guardians of democracy and defenders of the public interest. This school is premised upon the notion of the new-found power of 'the man of letters' (i.e. one devoted to scholarly or literary pursuits) and, by extension, the newspaper reporter. Proponents then argue that the mass media is 'the fourth estate',<sup>14</sup> adding to the three existing estates (as they were conceived in 19th century societies): the Priesthood, the Aristocracy and the Commons. Modern commentators attribute to the fourth estate a fourth power that checks and counterbalances the arms of government, namely the executive, legislature and the judiciary.

The media's role as a key player in the theatre of elections has evolved over time. Studies depict the evolution of the media in Europe, North America and Latin America with this notion of 'the fourth estate' offering a proactive check on the activities of governments, being increasingly incorporated into international law, although the practice has fallen somewhat short of the ideal.

Generally, an independent media has evolved in tandem with the more general development of political freedoms. Despite this evolution, there is a tendency for some sections of the media to reproduce the dominant (often conservative/bourgeois) culture and to represent the interests of those who own them. This tendency is attacked by (usually left-wing/liberal) critics. Others argue that the media has in reality moved away from the positive expectations of civil society, to become a vehicle of profiteering and propaganda for the politically powerful and social elite. Indeed, new studies show that globalisation and economic liberalisation have contributed to the media's having a negative and deteriorating attitude towards society. Thanks to global competition and the profit motive, the media

has forgotten its social responsibility. These studies suggest that the media is no longer interested in contributing towards citizenship, providing a public sphere for dialogue and interaction among citizens. Instead, media institutions are busy transforming citizens into mere spectators, offering them entertainment instead of education, knowledge and information.

## Broadcast Revolution

It should be noted that the concept of the 'fourth estate' referred only to print media, which for centuries – and certainly until 80 years ago – was the only journalistic form.

Print media had a limited reach, since functional literacy extended to a small proportion of the population only. The advent of broadcasting, therefore, was revolutionary in communicating social and political ideas to mass audiences to the extent that *The Danish Democracy Canon* argues that it expanded democracy exponentially.

Nonetheless, in many instances the very potential of radio and television was perceived to be a threat by political authorities, many of which were bent on controlling public debate. For example, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) operated a '14-day rule' during the 1940s and 1950s, which prohibited coverage of any issue within two weeks of it being debated in the UK parliament. The compulsory blackouts of coverage of parties and candidates on the day before an election, which continue in countries like France, are also a relic of that period.

Times have changed. Modern elections in Western countries are dominated by television, a development that can be traced back to the first historic television debate between United States presidential candidates in 1960. The American model of television-mediated politics was initially resisted in many Western European countries, especially those with a long tradition of state-controlled broadcasting. The advent of commercial television in the 1980s helped to unshackle broadcasting regimes and usher in a new era of television politics.

For all the talk of 'spin doctors' and 'globalisation', much of what passes through the media at election times would be readily recognisable to a previous generation of voters, accustomed to a style of political campaigning through public meetings. The American tradition of paid television advertising, drawing upon the most sophisticated techniques of commercial advertising, is

an important one, but it is not yet dominant worldwide. Europe's more regulated broadcasting still enjoys wide adherence during elections, more so than at any other time. A broadcaster in a regulated environment tends to favour lengthy policy messages and debate over quick sound bites.

Much as television has revolutionised elections reporting in the Western world, it is still only a growing feature of developing countries, where access is limited by poverty. People still grapple with basic facilities such as lack of electricity or water: owning a television set is the last thing on their minds. For these people, radio is their main source of election or any other news.

## The Internet and Multimedia Communication

Innovation did not rest following the advent of radio and television. The next great transformation has taken place with the development of the Internet, which has radically changed the way in which elections are reported. It has effectively ended, for example, the practice of 'news blackouts' or 'reflection periods', since it operates largely beyond the reach of regulators.

More generally, the Internet has changed the way we work, play and communicate. It has led to a deliberate attempt by journalists to move from one form of communication – for example, either through print or broadcast – to multimedia forms. Ben Goldacre, contributor to UK newspaper *The Guardian*, tells of how he has moved from a primarily text medium to broadcast as well, and how he makes his work available online.<sup>15</sup>

The Internet is also changing the way presidential candidates wage campaigns and how voters make their voices heard.

Critical to this paradigm shift is the rapid growth of social networking – the Internet connecting people around the globe – which bears the potential to morph into a powerful tool for organising movements and setting political agendas. Journalist Jessica Gynn sees ample signs of this shift in the US presidential election in 2008:

*It is already clear that 2008 will be a watershed year in the evolution of the Internet, not only because it is now being used by massive amounts of online Americans to get political information, it is also being used extensively by mainstream media professionals in their efforts to cover the campaigns. So many of the stories in print, on TV and on the radio about the campaigns are origi-*

*nating online. In addition, 2008 is already shaping up to be the year where voter-generated content primarily through video will play an even bigger role in changing the dynamics of the campaign and continue to erode the candidates' attempt to control their message.<sup>16</sup>*

## **Medium of the Future**

In our view, the most significant innovation has been that of the mobile phone. Since their advent, only about 20 years ago, mobile phones have become easily accessible to rural and urban communities alike in the developing world, and in their wake access to telephones has leapfrogged an entire technological generation. Millions of people without access to a landline now own a mobile telephone, and text messages have already been used in political campaigning and in distributing campaign news.

## TESTIMONY

## Timothy Selemani – Kingdom of Swaziland



Every five years the nation's people converge in their 55 constituencies (*tinkhundla*) to cast votes and usher in a new government through the election of members of parliament. In Swaziland, electioneering begins at least a year before, with the process set in motion by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Elections were held in 2003 and the latest in September 2008, the latter being the first under a new constitution. However, both took place to elect independent candidates and were criticised by supporters of multi-party democracy, who prefer that candidates are voted for through political affiliation and not on an individual basis. Nevertheless, election fever in Swaziland has always had its fair share of interesting moments, events, joy, disputes and pain, as is the case in other African countries.

For purposes of this article, I will discuss only the August 2003 elections.

A year before the poll, prospective candidates for the election had started giving donations to members of their constituencies, secretly campaigning for the election. Legal procedure dictates that campaigning should commence only after a pronouncement by the Chief Electoral Officer, and it is illegal, according to the law, to buy votes by offering gifts and food to the electorate. However, politicians often find ways to circumvent the law. In my country, some politicians gave free soccer jerseys to soccer teams in front of television cameras, other paid school fees for orphaned and vulnerable children, whilst others just gave blankets, clothing and bread to the elderly.

It is worth noting is that the elderly (those over 60 years old) form about half the voting population. Very few among the youth participate in elections, and some of those interviewed said they had better things to do – a serious issue considering that the youth, as Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma often says, are the ones who will inherit the 21st century.

About two months before the primary elections, the head of state has to dissolve parliament. Then the Chief Electoral Officer has to announce the dates for the nomination of new members, primary elections and secondary elections. No nominations are carried out at chiefs' residences (*imiphakatsi*), which are estimated to number more than 500 countrywide.

A few weeks before the 2003 elections, I went to Kontjingila to cover the nominations. A group of about 300 people sat under a tree and suggested names of people that could stand for the primary elections. Usually, about ten people get nominated for the primary elections, depending on the number of people that affiliate to the chief's residence. The group that showed up at Kontshingila predominantly comprised women and the elderly. Though few in number, those that raised their hands to nominate were men. The nominees were mostly men, too. The implication was that women were there to offer support and to show obedience to the authorities of the land. The process was long and the scorching heat resulted in the meeting losing members. Immediately after the nominations, some of the nominees were congratulated by those still present.

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One of the nominees was a head teacher who, just before the elections, offered gifts to people and even transported them to the chief's kraal in his car. The only woman nominee was the wife of the commissioner of Correctional Prisons. Although she campaigned strongly for the seat, many felt she had spent too many years living in the cities, far away from her constituency. Amongst the contenders, the head teacher won, whilst the commissioner's wife came second.

In the build-up to the primary and secondary elections, I went to Zombodze Emuva, another constituency in the southern part of Swaziland where campaigning was fierce. One of the favourites was a head teacher, although there was strong competition from a deputy sheriff. The Chief Electoral Officer facilitated the gathering of people in community halls, where the campaigning took place in the presence of election officers and the police. The teacher was a good public speaker, who managed to gain support from people, at times making outrageous promises such as building a hospital and an airport. The deputy sheriff specialised in giving donations such as blankets and money. His strategy did not work, however, as he lost the election to the teacher.

Then on the day of secondary election, I covered elections at Maseyisini, where a former cabinet minister was competing for a parliamentary seat with a former member of parliament (MP). There were many incidents of conflict involving the police and some voters, who had been declared frauds by electoral staff. It turned out the suspect illegal

voters were a group of youth that were friends of the former minister's stepson. The former minister won the election, but it was later contested in court after the former MP said the election was rigged. The High Court of Swaziland ruled in favour of the MP, but said there should be new elections. The judgment raised serious concerns for some critics of the former minister, who said as a fraudulent voter, he should not be allowed near the polls again. In the by-election, the former minister won again, this time with a landslide victory.

Several other election results were contested in court, with bitter losers complaining, for example, that ballot papers were missing, some voters were illegal and so on. During the secondary election at Zombodze Emuva, the former head teacher also won, but was taken to court by his competitors who accused him of having used the name of the Queen Mother during his campaign. They said he had claimed to be favoured by the Queen Mother, and that he had brought in South Africans to vote for him. They further accused him of having cooked food for voters. The former head teacher won the court battle and was declared a substantive MP, after his opponents failed to produce evidence for their assertions.

After all 55 members of parliament had been voted in, they were sworn into parliament, where they were joined by 10 others appointed by His Majesty King Mswati III. From there, they elected their own speaker and deputy speaker to the House of Assembly. They also elected 10 members of the public to take Senate positions. The selection of MPs was rather unusual, as it comprised, among others, a musician and a journalist.

The Prime Minister was picked from the House of Assembly, as the Electoral Law states. He was appointed by the head of state. In turn, the prime minister appointed 16 cabinet ministers from the House of Assembly and the Senate. There was, however, a commotion in the House of Assembly when the elected speaker, Marwick Khumalo, was rejected by the national authorities for unstated reasons. A high-powered committee comprising traditional authorities was established to ensure that Khumalo vacated his seat. He grudgingly obliged.<sup>17</sup>



## Commonwealth Observer Group report

### Guyana Election, 2006

**Note:** Ten political parties contested the 2006 national and regional elections. These were: the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), which had as its presidential candidate Bharrat Jagdeo; the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (PNCR-1G), which fielded Robert Corbin as its presidential candidate; the Alliance for Change (AFC), which had Raphael Trotman; the Justice For All Party (JFAP), which had Chandra Narine Sharma; the Guyana Action Party/Rise, Organise and Rebuild (GAP/ROAR), which had Paul Hardy as its presidential candidate; and The United Force (TUF), which fielded Manzoor Nadir. These six parties contested the geographic constituencies, which qualified them for the national elections and thus their entitlement to field a presidential candidate. The other four parties only contested regional elections.

### Media role

... The news media played a significant role in fostering the atmosphere for a peaceful campaign, notwithstanding some breaches of the media code of conduct. Noticeably reduced from the airwaves was the diet of wild rumours, inflammatory statements and accusations, which served only to fuel flames of fear, doubt, tensions and confusion during election campaigns in the past.

We shared the concerns expressed by the Commonwealth Observer Group of the 2001 Elections about the damage that could be done to the democratic process through free-wheeling news and information media and therefore welcomed the establishment of the Media Monitoring Unit and the Independent Media Refereeing Panel.

Guyana has one radio station owned and controlled by the government. However, there are a number of independently owned television stations with less coverage than the government-run radio and television station.

### State media

It was drawn to our attention that National Communications Network (NCN)-TV gave the incumbent party (PPP/C) an unfair advantage in the elections. Examples included: the repeated replaying of President Jagdeo's congratulations to the Guyana team that won the Stanford 20/20 cricket tournament; the replaying of a documentary-type presentation on the President's contacts with world leaders, combined with references to his plans for Guyana's future development; and the replay of 'interviews with presidential candidates', which repeated the interview with President Jagdeo.

### Voter education

The general consensus was that the media could have played a better role in getting voter education to the public on time. However, due to the short time available between the announcement of the election date and the elections themselves, there was little time to inform the electorate of where they would be voting, particularly because there had been an increase in polling stations.

### Election advertisements

The inequitable distribution of advertisements was questioned by *Stabroek News*, which stated that the elections were a national issue and therefore placements of public notices in the newspapers should be unbiased as was the case during the elections. Our observation was that the *Guyana Chronicle* carried most of the public notices and advertisements to the exclusion of the *Stabroek* and *Kaieteur* newspapers ...

### Code of conduct and media monitoring

Guyana's media organisations signed a code of conduct for the media, which committed them to provide fair, balanced and accurate information, including voter education, to help deliver successful elections by enabling voters to make informed decisions at the ballot box. The code of conduct also outlined the role of the media organisations to provide minimum equal shares of free airtime/newspaper space in the period after Nomination Day in the lead-up to Election Day. The recommended amount would be at least five minutes of airtime a week for radio and television, and a minimum of 200 words per week for print.

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An Independent Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel (IMMRP), comprising veteran journalists Lennox Grant of Trinidad and Tobago and Wyvolyn Gager of Jamaica, was established to monitor the media's adherence to the code of conduct. This Panel was chosen by local journalists.

## Overview

The Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) set up by GECOM [Guyana Elections Commission] produced a series of reports on the conduct of the Guyanese media. In a survey conducted between 25 July and 5 August, during the period after Nomination Day, the MMU concluded that the state-owned National Communication Network (NCN) Channel 11, which has a major share of viewership (about 80 per cent of the population), had not achieved the level of balance envisaged in the Media Code of Conduct. The MMU said it noticed that television hosts and reporters of Government Information Agency (GINA) presented their opinions rather than facts in their programmes. NCN's Voice of Guyana radio network, which broadcast on AM 560, reflected a similar imbalance in its election coverage. The MMU noted that the proportion of positive coverage outside of news between the two main parties was 3:1 in favour of the ruling party.

Election coverage on other television stations ranged from well balanced to one-sidedness, with a few in between. GWTV Channel 2 favoured the PNCR-1G, but they gave the PPP/C ruling party a substantial on-air profile, followed by AFC and TUF. CNS Channel 6, owned by JFAP leader CN Sharma, gave extensive coverage to his political party with some coverage of PPP/C and other parties in the lead-up to the elections. But this changed positively closer to the elections ...

This trend of election coverage by the various television stations continued in the two weeks leading up to polling day, though the MMU also reported the use of inflammatory and libellous remarks on some of the partisan television stations, which was in breach of the Media Code of Conduct and journalistic principles of fair, accurate, balanced and responsible reporting.

## Radio

The state-owned National Communications Network (NCN) operates two radio stations – Voice of Guyana at AM 560 and the music channel Hot FM 98.1. The Presidential Secretariat expressed its concern over the establishment of an illegal radio transmission on FM 98.3 weeks before the polls. The broadcasts included PNCR-1G political advertisements and allegedly antisocial exhortations to Guyanese in between its music programmes. The government tried to identify the location of the illegal transmission, which was believed to be in the Linden area. The establishment of this pirate radio station using a frequency close to NCN's Hot FM 98.1 was aimed at providing an avenue for a different political voice – that of the opposition.

## Print media

The MMU stated that the three English language daily newspapers – the *Guyana Chronicle*, *Kaieteur News* and *Stabroek News* – provided reasonable coverage of the political parties. It was noted that the state-owned *Guyana Chronicle* provided coverage for all six parties. The *Guyana Chronicle* was seen to give less negative coverage to PNCR-1G than either *Stabroek News* or *Kaieteur News*, while *Kaieteur News* gave more positive coverage to AFC than *Stabroek News*. Overall *Stabroek News* gave more than two-thirds of its coverage to PPP/C compared to the *Guyana Chronicle*.

## Political party advertisements

There was controversy over some political advertisements. One PPP/C advertisement, which disparaged the PNCR-1G through the use of inflammatory language, was repeatedly aired on NCN and several other television channels. It showed scenes of people from a particular ethnic group attacking buildings during previous periods of unrest in the country. With the song 'The Great Pretender' playing in the background, the voice-over said: 'Everyone in Guyana remembers well the role PNC/AFC leaders played out on the streets of the city. Yet today they want you to believe they've changed their ways and can lead Guyana. Can you believe the promises of the PNC/AFC?'

The advertisement linked the leaders of PNCR-1G, Robert Corbin, and AFC, Raphael Trotman, to the rioting and looting through the use of images and accusatory words. A more judicious editorial judgement on the content of political party advertisements in line with the Media Code of Conduct should have been made by the television stations concerned to be mindful of the impact of this politically charged and provocative advertisement that could instil fear and suspicion, exacerbate racial tensions, and even incite unrest and violence.

Two television stations – VCT Channel 28, which was owned by a PNCR-1G candidate, and WRHM Channel 7 – declined to air the advertisement, citing concerns over its contents. The PPP/C accused the two stations of attempting to 'muzzle the PPP/C's message to the Guyanese electorate' and said it would air the advertisement with increased frequency on other television stations. The IMMRP said the Media Code of Conduct upheld the right of media organisations to make judgements in favour of good taste and respect for public safety and decency. They said the media organisations could refuse material likely to be hateful, ethnically offensive, or likely to promote public disorder or threaten the security of the state.

There was also a PPP/C complaint about a PNCR-1G television advertisement, involving a letter purportedly written by an Amerindian child, which triggered a response from the PNCR-1G leader about his party's inclusiveness. However, the leader went on to say that he also had Amerindian blood. This was seen as an appeal to race, which could be offensive to other

ethnic groups of Guyana. It was therefore a violation of the spirit and intent of the Media Code of Conduct, the Media Refereeing Panel ruled.

### Electronic communications

The political parties did not capitalise on the Internet to spread their message locally and abroad, particularly to aid their efforts to reach out to the Guyanese diaspora for both political and financial support. Not all the parties contending the elections had set up a website. For the parties that did, it was noticed that some of these websites were not regularly updated. The websites of the PPP/C at [www.voteppc.com](http://www.voteppc.com), PNCR-1G's [www.guyanapnc.org](http://www.guyanapnc.org) and AFC's [www.afcguyana.com](http://www.afcguyana.com) were most informative on their political leaders and electoral candidates and their agenda, besides featuring speeches, press releases and news about their rallies.

The PPP/C website provided comprehensive information on its activities, including the presidential candidate's speeches, a photo gallery of the party leader's activities, press releases and information on press conferences and videos of the press conferences. The website also posted the GECOM election results. The PNCR-1G posted information on its Central Executive Committee members on its website, and also sought new membership among web visitors. It also had a very accessible email address for correspondence.

AFC's website featured its party constitution, election candidates, besides audio-visuals, a photo gallery of its activities and election posters. The website also listed its political rallies and opinion polls conducted by the party. It also encouraged membership and donations to the AFC. The United Force's website [www.tufsite.com](http://www.tufsite.com) provided basic information on the party, its manifesto (however the hyperlink was broken, which did not allow web visitors to view the manifesto) and election candidates. The news articles were not up to date. The GAP-ROAR's website [www.gap-roar.org](http://www.gap-roar.org) posted some basic information on its political candidates and plans.

A novel feature of the campaign was telephone canvassing. Many cell phone subscribers reported receiving messages from at least four of the contesting parties. The AFC announced that part of its strategy was for an army of 500 to 600 supporters in North America to call up electors and request their votes.

### Opinion polls

Several opinion polls were conducted in the lead-up to polling day. Results varied. For example, opinion polls conducted by the North American Teachers Association (NACTA) showed the PPP/C and AFC making gains among the electorate, with the PNCR-1G losing ground. A poll conducted on 20 August predicted that the PPP/C could garner between 43 per cent and 51 per cent support, but would still be short of an overall majority of

parliamentary seats. NACTA projected a loss of seats for PPP/C and PNCR-1G at this year's elections, with the beneficiaries being the AFC and JFAP. The findings were based on a survey involving more than a thousand voters.

An opinion poll conducted by the AFC through Arcop, a Mexico-based pollster, on 16 August posited encouraging gains in popularity for the AFC, rising in percentage points from 24 per cent on 8 August to 27 per cent on 16 August. The other political parties were shown to have dropped in popularity, except for PPP/C which was listed as gaining 6 percentage points on 16 August from the previous week.

## Commonwealth Observer Group report

### Kenya Election, 2007

**Note:** Kenya's controversial 2007 election was an electoral battle that pitted a coalition led by incumbent President Mwai Kibaki against an umbrella opposition group under the banner the Orange Democratic Movement, led by Raila Odinga.

#### Media

... During the 2007 elections in Kenya, various media outlets – print, radio and electronic – generally played a positive role in disseminating information on the electoral process to the voting population of Kenya ...

... Our overall impression was that the majority of the media did an excellent job in informing the voting public on the political issues relevant to the election. It was difficult to discern any overt bias, which had been a concern expressed by a number of commentators.

However, we noted that the public-owned media, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), which is required by law to provide equal and balanced coverage to all political parties participating in the elections, was biased in favour of the Party for National Unity (PNU), as the party in government. This observation was confirmed by media monitoring that was carried out during the electoral period. This is regrettable.

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Act (the Act) was amended in 1997 to regulate KBC's coverage of political activities during elections. The Act provides for equal coverage of campaign activities for all political parties and their presidential candidates. It was quite clear that KBC failed to comply with this legislative requirement.

The Act also required that KBC, in consultation with the ECK [Electoral Commission of Kenya], allocate free broadcasting to registered political parties participating in the election, but this was not done. The Chairman of the ECK publicly complained that KBC had refused to comply. It appeared there was little effective action the ECK could take. We are of the view that there is a need to implement better methods of obtaining compliance with these two legislative requirements during the election campaign. Considerable media coverage was given to decisions taken by the government right up to the eve of the election. This can give an unfair advantage to an incumbent government. Elsewhere in this report we suggest a moratorium on major decision making in the lead up to an election.

The media, particularly the print media, paid particular attention to the role of the Electoral Commission of Kenya, and the whole electoral regime. Most aspects of the electoral process were extensively covered and reported on. There were also some very insightful analyses and

commentaries authored and published in the major newspapers, namely, *The Nation* and *The Standard*. Furthermore, most television stations ran special election-related programmes to inform voters about their rights and well as providing a platform for the major candidates to espouse their programmes and manifestos.

In the lead up to the elections, the Media Council of Kenya, ECK and media practitioners developed guidelines aimed at ensuring responsible media coverage, upholding journalistic professional standards, impartiality and independence. These were often flouted. It is not clear how they were enforced and how errant media were sanctioned. Observers were told that the media in Kenya have political leanings that are influenced by ownership, ethnic considerations, and business interests. We were, however, not able to independently verify these accusations. The media gave full coverage of incidences of election-related violence, and in some cases carried articles condemning the violence and calling for peaceful and fair elections.

Sectarian ethnic campaigning by some politicians was denounced in media editorials. However, there were some stories which reported on allegations where it was clear that there was no evidence to substantiate the reports. Such stories, which put unjustified doubt in the voters' minds, are to be deplored. In some cases, the stories led to outbreaks of violence. There is a need to impose better discipline on media that undertake such reporting. Journalists and the media must conduct their duties responsibly by seeking and reporting facts. They should desist from reporting rumour and inflammatory statements that lack authenticity.

There were also instances of anonymous advertisements being published that encouraged voters to support certain political parties. There appeared to be no restriction on the amount of money that could be spent on political advertising, furthermore there appeared to be no consistency with regard to the standards required for election advertising, particularly with regard to the ability of the media to decline advertising on the grounds of taste and decency. We recommend that consideration is given to require all advertisements to carry some form of identification as well as clearer guidelines with regard to disallowing advertising.