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**The Dangerous Game: Relations Between  
Zimbabwe's Independent Media And Zanu PF**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For the greater part of post-colonial Zimbabwe's history, the relationship between the private media and ruling ZANU PF politicians has been sour. Journalists from the privately owned media were labelled as 'sellouts', enemies and 'hostile press', while their colleagues from the state media were branded 'patriots' and supporters by the ruling party. Sometimes, ruling party politicians arrested, harassed and beat or declined to grant interviews to journalists from the private media, whom they accused of harbouring a 'regime-change agenda' and being 'puppets' of the main opposition political party, the MDC and its 'Western handlers.' The government went on to bomb and later banned a privately owned daily to silence critical reporting.

The situation changed in 2014 with the emergence of two distinct factions in the ruling party known as 'Lacoste' and G40 all maneuvering to succeed then President Robert Mugabe, the country's long serving leader. Two biggest independently-owned daily papers, *The Daily News* or *The Newsday*, were being leaked stories and documents by ZANU PF politicians-albeit on a factional basis-to expose and attack a rival camp, and on the other hand the politicians used the media for their political marketing.

This study set out to understand from whose point of view ZANU PF factionalism was presented by *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* and also to establish why there were contrasting discourses aligned to ZANU PF-that arose from the two privately-owned 'independent' papers. Previous studies were fixated on the hostile relationship between the private media and government in Zimbabwe. This paper focuses on the nature of the two papers' reporting, perspectives, who was given agency and sourcing of the stories. The paper also seeks to establish who used whom and

who benefited most from the bond and assesses how *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* described the November *coup-de-tat*.

This research is based on literature review, analysis of the two newspaper articles from January to December 2017, as well as the author's personal experience as a journalist from *The Newsday* since its launch in 2010. The period under study (January to December 2017) is crucial in that this was the first time in the history of Zimbabwe for ZANU PF politicians to turn to and warm up to the private media. Again, at the end of 2017, in November, Mugabe, after 37 years ruling, was forced to resign through a bloodless *coup-de-dat* that saw Lacoste leader and former vice president, Emmerson Mnangagwa taking over.

This study found out that *The Newsday* was pro Lacoste faction while *The Daily News* was aligned to the G40 faction that coalesced around former First Lady, Grace Mugabe, who wanted to succeed her husband as president. This bitter-sweet relationship between ZANU PF and the private media was shaped by the need for the two papers to stay afloat in the face of withdrawn donor funding, reduced advertising revenue due to a comatose economy and shifting audiences. The papers, hardly able to pay staffers on time, were surviving from hand to mouth through copy sales-not advertising-and they needed to sell their papers and increase readership in a country where politics sells. There were also allegations of media capture by journalists support organisations.

The two papers were very focused on the ZANU PF factions and different personalities who were key figures in the ructions while giving little attention to the impact of the infighting on the economy and Zimbabweans at large. The newspapers also were slow with the *coup-d'etat* story and were scooped by the international media houses, which were also the ones to explicitly say the military transition was a coup. *The Newsday* presented the Lacoste faction as victims and G40 as villains, while *The Daily News* viewed G40 faction as the victims and the Lacoste faction as villains. The two papers capitalised on the succession story in the ruling party to boost copy sells and the factionalism was good for pushing volumes at a time when the economy was struggling and readers could not afford buying two newspapers.

This paper recommends increased donor and government support for privately owned media in Zimbabwe to make them independent from economic pressures from advertisers as well as politicians so that they remain vibrant and do their watchdog role. Just as the government funds political parties, a Media Finance Act should be promulgated to regulate financial activities of the media. All hope is not however lost for *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* if they are to go back to basics so that they regain audience trust.

## **Acronyms**

AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AMH	Alpha Media Holdings
ANZ	Associated Newspapers in Zimbabwe
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GMA	Grain Millers Association
GNU	Government of National Unity
IMPI	Information Media Panel of Inquiry
LOMA	Law and Order Maintenance Act
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai
MDIF	Media Development Investment Fund
MIC	Media and Information Commission
RPPC	Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company
VMCZ	Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZDP	Zimbabwe Democratic Party
ZIMDEF	Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund
ZMMT	Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust

## **1.Introduction**

Operating in autocratic environments, such as Zimbabwe, where hegemonic and partisan ruling parties reductively compartmentalize citizens into simplistic binaries of ‘patriots’ and ‘sell-outs’ as well as ‘supporters’ and ‘enemies’ exerts inordinate pressure on private media journalists. Ruling party politicians and civil servants were not only in the habit of questioning the *bona fides* of independent journalists but they occasionally exploited their lofty social and political positions to malign such journalists’ professional integrity.

At worst, these politicians connived to physically harm critical journalists. In fact, for much of the post-colonial dispensation the relationship between the private media and the ruling ZANU PF party in Zimbabwe has been acrimonious. ZANU PF affiliated politicians and activists viewed the private media as enemies of the state, labeling journalists from such stables as ‘opposition’ or ‘hostile press’, and ‘sellouts.’ They conveniently perceived journalists from private media houses as an extension of the opposition political parties. Sometimes, these ZANU PF officials refused to grant interviews to the private media journalists.

Because of the foregoing polarizations fermented by ZANU PF, framing of and exposing the Zimbabwean story has largely been through the problematic and subjective lens marked by binaries of ‘pro-ruling party’ and ‘anti- ruling party’ reportage. It has been argued that two models of journalism are evident-*patriotic* versus *oppositional* journalism (Chuma, 2005). These binaries became quite distinct after the formation of the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999, as well as during the post-2000 land seizures by ZANU PF and the 2008 financial and economic crisis. ZANU PF accused the local privately owned media and international media of being sympathetic to the former white commercial farmers (Willems, 2004).

The vibrant and broad based MDC destabilized the ruling ZANU PF's near monopoly of the country's political space by winning significant seats in the 2000 legislative election. In response, ZANU PF sunk into the default mode of violence, exclusionary rhetoric against perceived opponents and the muzzling of the private media.

This led to the ZANU PF government introducing a raft of stringent media laws like the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIIIPA), ushered in by then Information Minister Jonathan Moyo - who earned the moniker of media hangman - in 2002. One of the key casualties of this restrictive legal dispensation was the privately owned *Daily News* which was forced to close down by government for failure to comply with AIIIPA provisions that compelled all newspapers to register with the government. Journalists from private media houses began to be expelled from and violated at ZANU PF meetings. There was near unanimity in ZANU PF circles for the promotion and support of state owned media and journalists.

Surprisingly, such hatred of the private media toned down and ZANU PF warmed up to its 'enemies' after 2014 when serious cracks in the ruling party saw two rival factions arising-one known as 'Lacoste' and another termed Generation 40 (G40)-all jostling to succeed then President Robert Mugabe, who had in power for 37 years and was ageing. Despite once labeling them as 'sellouts', the rival ZANU PF politicians turned to the private media at a time when the state media was giving positive coverage to 'Lacoste' and attacking the G40 faction. Under this new arrangement, the private media was captured by ZANU PF (MISA 2017).

An interesting example is Jonathan Moyo, who complained early 2016 that the state media was biased in its coverage of him and other G40 members. Moyo and several ZANU PF heavyweights like former Local Government Minister and ex-national political commissar Saviour Kasukuwere have pending multi-million dollar lawsuits they raised against the state controlled daily paper, *The Herald*, and its sister weekly, *The Sunday Mail*. This was in itself significant – state owned media rarely criticized the ruling party, let alone a minister.

That function was usually left to private media.

The Zimbabwean private media framing of the ZANU PF succession battles at a time when Mugabe's political career, at 93 years of age, was reaching its twilight years forced the succession issue, usually seen as taboo in the party, into the open.

In monitoring the role and performance of *The Newsday* and *The Daily News*, I based my analysis on the role of the news media and journalism in entrenching democracy. The assumption is that the role is to create an informed society, speak truth to power and make those in power accountable to the governed. This research sets out to highlight how the private media turned into political public relations machinery for ZANU PF, getting entangled in the party's factional fights. While highlighting the competing interests and conflicting coverage from *The Newsday* and *The Daily News*, it will also look at who benefited most from this strangely close relationship between ZANU PF politicians and journalists from the private media.

This study also sought to ascertain the shortcomings of the two privately owned papers in the coverage of the ZANU PF internal power struggles, as well as efforts they could have done to cover the issue better. A textual analysis of the two papers can therefore help us theorize the journalist-source power balance and relations as well as reignite debate on the news gathering practices in political communication.

This paper compares and analyses how these two daily newspapers have represented the infighting in ZANU PF that led to a *coup-de-tat* that overthrew President Mugabe. The study is on a comparative analysis of the coverage of ZANU PF internal power struggles and succession tensions by the two biggest privately owned daily papers, *The Newsday* and the *Daily News*, that are fierce competitors on the market. The two different ideological positioning mirrored a society on the edge and punctuated by polarization in the press as well as in politics. Instead of broadening the public sphere and proffer critical debate around the issue, these two papers narrowed the public sphere. The study makes use of qualitative research methods in the form of archival research to obtain the stories published from January to December 2017 which will be purposely sampled. Methods of data analysis include critical discourse analysis, which analyzes the use of language as a determinant of ideology and socio-cultural change (Bryman 2012). This will help understand

and analyze the language used by the private media in the internal power struggles in Robert Mugabe's party.

I analysed selected cuttings on the reportage of ZANU PF internal strife by the two papers from January to December 2017 as it is the period when the private media changed tact and started to be aligned and got embedded to different factions in the ruling ZANU PF party. Specific attention was given to the coverage of the main protagonists in the dog fight and different events like Former First Lady Grace Mugabe's 'Meet the People Rallies,' politburo meetings, the issue of the misused Zimbabwe Manpower Development Funds (ZIMDEF), the 15 November 'coup-not-coup' that ousted Mugabe and any other talk of his succession and the firing of or suspensions from the party of certain individuals as well as internal party elections and the demonstrations against senior party members for them to leave the party.

Apart from employing participant observation, the researcher looked at labeling of the different political players by *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* as well as the use of language in explaining and describing the events. The researcher analyzed the sampled stories from wording and phrasing. The selection, use of pictures (or lack of them) that accompanied stories concerning the ZANU PF power struggles was of great importance in analyzing the coverage of different politicians from the Lacoste and G40 camp. Pictorial depiction of certain politicians from either camps and camera angles had a direct bearing on what the readers perceive of them. For some, their best pictures are used, while for some, their worst pictures having a bad hair day were used. For others, old, embarrassing file pictures were used by either *The Newsday* or *The Daily News*.

January to December 2017 was the period when fighting for Mugabe's successor had reached fever pitch and turned ugly, characterised by public spats by ruling party officials in the media.

This period best reflected how *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* covered the ruling party fights. These two daily papers represent broadly the diversity of the private press sector since they fall under different ownership. Again, they are the only independently owned daily papers in circulation in the country at the moment. Other privately owned papers are weeklies, magazines or online.

In 2017, ZANU PF surprisingly warmed up to the private media, which it once viewed as its sworn enemies. As the year drew to a close, so did Mugabe's 37 year reign. In November 2017, things got to a head in the ruling party after the factionalism reached boiling point and Mugabe was forced to resign by the army after a week-long coup.

## **2. History of the private media and ZANU PF in Zimbabwe**

The Zimbabwean media has faced a host of challenges in the last two decades, (Mano 2005:61), not least the formation of the biggest opposition party to give ZANU PF headaches-the MDC. In addition, a hostile political environment; an unfavourable business environment due to a collapsing economy; the land seizures of farms belonging to former white commercial farmers, rampant corruption and the general discontent among the citizenry over a worsening economy.

*The Daily News* was launched in March 1999. A few weeks before the paper was launched, two journalists, Ray Choto and Mark Chavunduka from another privately owned weekly, *The Standard*, were arrested and severely tortured by state security agents after they published a story alleging that some senior army officers had been arrested in connection with a coup attempt.

Responding to the torture of the two journalists in a live, televised address on Zimbabwe Television (ZTV) on 6 February 1999, President Mugabe said the two scribes deserved it and the torture served them right:

‘... They (*The Standard* journalists) had through their deliberate and treasonable act invited that reaction.....Any media organisation which wilfully suspends truth necessarily forfeits its right to inform and must not cry foul when extraordinary reaction visits them.’

Autocratic governments try to discredit the private press through attacks linking them to destabilising the country (Ronning and Khupe 2005: 151): “It is characteristic of the relationship between the government and the press in monolithic systems that representatives of the rulers tend to attack the independent press regularly on the basis of two sorts of arguments: either that they represent a divisional threat to national unity and cohesion, or that they purvey slander and lies.”

This justification by Mugabe normalised the attack on journalists and was to serve as a warning to other journalists from the private media. Chavunduka later died from the injuries sustained from the torture.

Despite being launched in such an environment, *The Daily News*, according to Mano (2005) changed the media environment greatly because it was foreign funded, well equipped, lucratively remunerating yet challenging the dominance of the state controlled daily papers-*The Herald* and *The Chronicle* that had a monopoly.

Apart from revolutionising the ‘independent’ media landscape, Moyo (2005) argues that the *Daily News* played ‘midwife’ to the birth of the MDC party. While the paper came when there were already other privately owned papers offering an alternative voice from the daily propaganda from the state media that included *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Standard*, *The Financial Gazette*, *The Mirror* (which latter turned into *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror*) and several monthly magazines, *The Daily News* filled an existing void in terms of providing a popular newspaper that was affordable to the majority of the working population and was more hard-hitting in its criticism of government than the other papers (Moyo 2005).

The paper was owned by the Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ) Private Limited. Proposals were that the company was supposed to be 60 percent owned by Africa Media

Investments (Zimbabwe) Ltd (AMI), which was registered in the United Kingdom, with the remaining 40 percent coming from indigenous Zimbabwean investors. But the indigenous investors failed to raise the Z\$26 million expected from local shareholders and AMI had no option but to have 83 percent of the ownership (Chuma 2003).

During the 2000 land invasions, the paper exposed the violent and brutal manner in which the exercise was carried out. Most white farmers fled the country, and this also meant flight of advertiser revenue for the private media since this constituency was advertising and also had companies in other sectors, apart from the agriculture industry. Several white farmers were killed and hundreds injured from the violence by war veterans chasing them off their properties; dozens of journalists were harassed, arrested and deported while the BBC was banned.

In the 2000 Parliamentary and 2002 Presidential elections, the paper also suggested electoral fraud and took sides with the opposition MDC. Waldahl (2004: 114-115) writes:

‘The news coverage of *The Daily News* left little doubt that the paper was strongly in favour of political change in Zimbabwe. This could be seen more clearly, however, from its extensive and systematically negative presentation of (President) Mugabe and ZANU (PF) than from any thorough account of the MDC’s political qualities and activities.’

*The Daily News* paid for its critical coverage in several ways, apart from the unending arbitrary harassment and or the arrest of its staffers. The paper suffered two bombing attacks which affected its smooth running. In April 2000, a bomb exploded near a shop that was just below *the Daily News* offices. This was interpreted as a warning and a threat to the paper.

In January 2001, in another bomb attack, the paper’s printing press was brought down to ashes and the paper’s print run was cut by almost half. The attack came hardly 48 hours after then Minister of Information and Publicity in the Office of the President and Cabinet, Jonathan Moyo, had made a chilling threat of silencing *The Daily News*, saying that ‘it was only a matter of time before Zimbabweans put a stop to the newspaper’s madness’ (BBC Africa News, cited in Waldahl 2004,

137). Coincidentally, some days before, a motley group of war veterans had protested at the paper's offices accusing it of being 'unpatriotic'. And in the heat of the 2002 presidential elections, ZANU PF youths banned the distribution of *The Daily News* in Mashonaland province, the home province of Robert Mugabe.

On 12 September 2003, government closed down *The Daily News* after a Supreme Court order the previous day declared the paper was an 'outlaw' for failing to comply with registering requirements with the government appointed Media Information Committee (MIC) as required under the new Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA 2002) Another weekly, *The Tribune*, was also closed and many journalists were thrown into the streets.

AIPPA, described by then chairman of the parliamentary legal committee and one of the sharpest legal minds from Zimbabwe, the late Dr Eddison Zvobgo, as "the most calculated and determined assault on our (constitutional) liberties, in the 20 years I served as Cabinet Minister", (Parliamentary Debates Volume 28, No 46, starting at column 4166) made it mandatory for journalists and media houses to be registered by the MIC. It also denies journalists access to public information from government departments and banned foreigners and non-Zimbabweans to own shares in media outlets.

ZANU PF also crafted other repressive media laws like the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (2002) adopted from the colonial legislation of the Ian Smith regime called Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA). Section 15 of POSA reinforces AIPPA that criminalizes communicating statements 'prejudicial to the state, its interests 'in the absence of reasonable grounds that they are not true.' Section 16 also suppresses freedom of expression by prescribing a jail term of up to a year to people who make statements "knowing or realizing that there is a risk or possibility of engendering feelings of hostility towards, or cause hatred, contempt or ridicule of the President"

Before the two laws, which were roundly condemned locally and internationally by human rights and civil society organisations, government had also passed The Broadcasting Services Act in 2001, which closed the broadcasting space and gave ZBC a monopoly. Other laws that stifled press

freedom also in existence or to come amended include the Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities Act, Official Secrets Act, the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (CODE), Official Secrets Act, The Censorship and Entertainment Controls Act (CECA), the Interception of Communications Act (ICA), Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, as well as the Defence and Police Acts.

Commenting on the closure of the *Daily News*, then MDC Secretary-General, Welshman Ncube, said ZANU PF wanted to deny the opposition party its voice;

‘The attack on *The Daily News* is not an attack on the owners of the paper to prevent them from becoming rich and making money... It is principally an attack on the MDC, for the simple reason that if you remove *The Daily News* as a source of news, you have literally made it impossible for the opposition’s voice to be heard by the mass of people.’

And as the journalism job market flooded, with thousands of graduates being churned out from universities and media training schools around the country yearly, journalists still lucky to be employed have no choice but to keep their jobs, even though they are paid low salaries, and sometimes the money comes late. Still, they do not question their editors, who also want to please the owners of the papers that expect profitability among anything else. Jonathan Moyo, (1993: 13), when he was still criticising the Robert Mugabe government before being invited to the feeding trough when after being appointed a Zimbabwean cabinet minister, retorted that ‘democracy cannot exist in an environment where violence and fear dominate the political process.’

During the absence of the banned *Daily News*, *The Newsday* was established in June 2010. It became the only independently owned daily paper also fighting with the well-oiled state dailies, *The Herald* and *The Chronicle*, which were giving daily dosage of propaganda. The coming of *The Newsday* tilted the media landscape as the state media had relaxed with no competition. *The Newsday*, whose majority shareholder is Trevor Ncube’s Alpha Media Holdings, gave the state media a good run for their money, but the paper was poorly funded. Most of the journalists hired-except the seniors and editors-lacked media experience as the company did not have funds to hire

the veterans. However, the paper capitalised on the absence of the *Daily News* as it offered alternative information and criticised the government.

Ncube, the paper's proprietor, in its 5 September 2011 edition, is quoted as stating that *Newsday* is published by *Newsday Publishers*, a company wholly owned by *Zimind Publishers*, which in turn is wholly owned by *Alpha Media Holdings (AMH)*. *Vusumuzi Investments*, owned by Trevor Ncube, has 61 percent shareholding in *Alpha Media Holdings* while 39 percent equity falls under *Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF)*. *MDLF*, based in the USA, has since assumed a new name, *Media Development Investment Fund (MDIF)*. In December 2017, the *MIDF* traded its shares in *AMH* for majority shareholding in the *Mail and Guardian* of South Africa, giving Ncube 100 percent shareholding in *AMH* as he ceded his shares in *The Mail and Guardian*.

In March 2011, *The Daily News* resurrected itself, under majority ownership of wholly indigenous investors, but still privately owned. The country's controversial indigenous laws prescribed, by then, that locals should have more than 50 percent ownership in any venture and foreign investors should remain with 49 percent.

The re-emergence of *The Daily News* meant *The Newsday* had been offered competition and had to pull up its socks. This was at a time when Robert Mugabe was forced to create a coalition government with the MDC formations after he was defeated by Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the mainstream opposition MDC party in the 2008 elections. A run-off, as stipulated by the law, was to follow, but Tsvangirai boycotted citing violence among his supporters, where dozens were killed while thousands were injured and displaced. Tsvangirai also fled the country and later returned to be inaugurated Prime Minister. The coalition government, dubbed the Government of National Unity, was disbanded in 2013 and ZANU PF won controversial elections.

With the government getting criticism from the two papers, harassment of the private media also increased. In 2015, media freedom violations increased to 25, from 22 the previous year (MISA-Zimbabwe 2015).

### **(a) Economic pressures and ‘media upheaval’**

Fighting for the continuously decreasing advertising cake in the wake of an underperforming economy characterised by a budget deficit and import-export disequilibrium, there arose stiff competition among the private media itself. This meant competition for stories and criticising the government, exposing corruption and misgovernance. There was a struggle for survival, as advertising revenue was low and consumers could not afford to buy media products-newspapers had to either sink or swim.

The deteriorating economic environment became a viability and sustainability poser to newspaper companies in Zimbabwe and journalists from both the private and public media were retrenched as newsrooms downsized and adopted convergence to cut costs. Journalists at *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* were not spared either, and this saw most veterans being retrenched. According to MISA-Zimbabwe’s *State of the Media Report* for 2016, most of the mainstream national publications did not have a print run that exceeded 50 000 copies daily due to dwindling advertising and sales revenues.

Dumisani Muleya, an editor of *The Newsday*’s sister weekly paper, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, in a commemorative speech to mark the paper’s 20th anniversary, said the bad economy and digital revolution had led to ‘media upheavals’;

“Due to technological advances and innovation in the digital space, media organisations are now struggling as audiences migrate online, while advertisers lag behind – creating a disequilibrium which brings instability in relation to the supply, demand and prices of media products. The convergence of media and entertainment on cyberspace ... and the world of telecoms has triggered far reaching disruptions and accelerated changes in consumer and advertising distribution patterns.”

Private media houses also paid salaries late, leaving many scribes from *The Newsday* to cross the floor to join the state media, which, because of government subsidies, did not feel the economic

pinch. With the media industry shrinking, those who were lucky to be re-employed or remain employed had no option but to dance to the whims of employers. They did not have a choice and this compromised journalism standards in the country. This also created polarization among the media in the country. The competition among the private media papers also slowly turned into rivalry.

MISA Zimbabwe further noted that the Zanu PF succession fights ‘posed serious challenges to media editorial independence, journalism ethics and professionalism. The Zanu PF succession story dominated the headlines in most of the mainstream media. This is not to say the media should not report on the goings-on in Zanu PF. Reportage should be factual and non-partisan, as opposed to the trashing of ethics of the profession as witnessed during the course of 2016.’

In 2014, the government sanctioned an official inquiry into the state of the information and media industry in Zimbabwe, dubbed the Information and Media Panel of Inquiry (IMPI) with panelists consisting of editors from state and private newspapers, media organisations, media training institutions, advertising agencies, lawyers, musicians, civic society and officials from the Ministry of Information.

The aim of the inquiry, the first formal and comprehensive one concerning the whole media industry since independence, was to ‘inquire into and assess and determine the policy, legal, technological, business, human resource, editorial and institutional adequacy and readiness in the information sector, gauge levels of investments in the sector, check the welfare needs of workers and staffers; their training and ethics, see the integrity and adequacy of news and information in relation to the needs of or on the economy, national interest, national security, politics and the citizenry’ (IMPI 2015: 6).

The panel toured all the countries provinces getting views from information stakeholders that include journalists, the public as well as media houses to see the challenges affecting the information and media sector. It found out that the media industry is undercapitalised and ill-equipped as it depends on obsolete printing and broadcasting equipment and is therefore a ‘dinosaur technology’ (IMPI 2015: 3).

In terms of skills and training, findings from the 666 paged report, presented to Parliament a year later in 2015, indicated that journalism and media training in Zimbabwe is ‘in a sorry state’. Even though there sprouted many media training institutions, even at higher level, they were producing half-baked journalists and there exists ‘a training and skills crisis’ (IMPI 2015: 5). Because of polarisation in the media, the report says editorial policies face ‘real value-dilemma’ and journalism ethics are in tatters. The media sector in Zimbabwe, according to IMPI, ‘is hardly an industry at all.’

The document recommended media laws reform. Laws cited for reform or repeal include AIPPA, BSA, CODE, CECA, ICA, among others. The report realised the need for the establishment of a journalism code of ethics that is enforceable as the current one, under The Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe (VMCZ) was on a willing joining basis without enforcement powers. The IMPI report also called for the creation of a standard employment conditions and service of employment where a standard minimum wage for journalists across the media sector would be tabled as well as the establishment of a monitoring body to set the curricula for journalism and oversee all training institutions in the country, with the Ministry of Information being an overseer. Among other things, the report called for non-interference in editorial decisions be it from government, advertisers or any other pressures.

While IMPI was a good move in the right direction, however, none of the recommendations were implemented. Even though the findings were tabled in Parliament in 2015, it became a white elephant and the recommendations died a natural death, up to now. The ambitious document is gathering dust. Then Information Minister, Jonathan Moyo, was moved to a lesser powerful Higher and Science Education Ministry in a cabinet reshuffle blamed on infighting within ZANU PF, after being accused of trying to win the hearts and souls of the private media sector through the process, where panelists were given lucrative allowances of US\$100-US\$150 daily for several months that they did the outreach programs. Moyo’s successor in the Information Ministry, Christopher Mushowe, was unwilling to implement the recommendations from IMPI.

**(b) ‘Crisis of perspective’**

The Zimbabwean media has had a crisis of framing (Chuma 2005) during different historical epochs like the violent and controversial land redistribution program, the 2000 referendum and 2002 elections; the 2008 violence-ridden elections as well as the 2007-2008 era of runaway inflation. This is because of the political, economic, technological and professional challenges that continue to dog journalism. The independently owned media had a 'crisis of perspective' (Chuma 2007) and the terrain of debate about the historical developments were 'bifurcated.' The same applied to the 2017 economic crisis where there were cash shortages. It was difficult to distinguish between press freedom and advocacy reporting or public relations (Chari (2010).

As such, the media develop into lame dogs for powerful elites. Berger (1998: 605) correctly asserts that 'rather than [being] . . . a free floating "watchdog", [the media are] located in a nexus of relations, and like the state, [they] . . . are dominated by more powerful partners'. This view is also shared by Tettey (2001:22): "In reality, their (media) views and claims are tainted by narrow ethnic or political trappings, quite at variance with the interest of the nation which they tout as their motivation and call to service." And the journalists, worryingly so, have resigned to fate, seeing such challenges as the new 'normal', and finding it natural that they have to adjust their professional roles to suit the new environment (Mano 2005). This claim is corroborated by Ronning and Kupe (2005: 138); "The African media carry contradictions which have roots in the colonial period, when newspapers and broadcasting mainly served the needs of the colonial administrators"

While alluding to competition among television channels that breeds rivalry, Bantz (1999, 139)'s findings also mirror the situation between newspapers:

'This conflict is intensified by business norms that often characterize the competition between organizations as warfare (the prevalence of military and war metaphors in organizations has often been commented on...). In addition to the professional competition between reporters, news competition may escalate into interorganizational conflict where the television stations compete for stories, news workers, prestige, and ratings as well as advertisers' dollars.'

However, the blame also goes to the editors. It is also the case that editors ‘may arbitrarily rewrite reporters’ stories and delete crucial facts without telling the reporter, and yet still attach the reporter’s by-line to the now unrecognisable product’ (*Media Professionalism and Ethics* 2002, xii). This, as observed by Curran (2002:225) ‘obliterates critical scrutiny of either public or private power’.

Part of the framing dilemma that gives rise to contesting and contrasting discourses is because the media space in Zimbabwe is a hotly contested space by different interest groups and individuals. Mabweazara (2011:100) argues that the mainstream press in Zimbabwe “remains a central and vibrant platform for the struggle for control of public discourse between the opposition and the incumbent elite.”

As such, the media in Zimbabwe-the private media included-tended to have selective amnesia when it comes to matters that they feel angers groups that they are aligned to. This intentional error of commission should not be understated, and should be taken at the same level as selectively trashing one interest group over the other. Foucault (1978:27) argues that silence cannot be overlooked in discourse analysis: “Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies.”

What the two papers, *The Newsday* and *Daily News* intentionally omitted and failed to cover concerning a certain faction they were inclined to, is of equal importance to this study, just like what was covered, as Van Dijk (1991:114) observed that the analysis of the ‘unsaid’ is sometimes more revealing than the analysis of the said.

Other scholars like Chari (2009); Stone (2007); Raftopoulos (2005); Kupe (2005); Ranger (2005) and Willems (2004) converge that media frames on the Zimbabwean crisis are influenced by power relations between media and other social institutions. The scholars further argue that there has been ‘competing journalisms’ regarding the Zimbabwean economic crisis.

While this study observes that there is a crisis of framing and crisis of perspective in the Zimbabwean press, however, it attributes the dilemma to polarization, disaggregated audiences, technological and economic pressures and the tight production routines in understaffed newsrooms.

### **3. Framing: News as a construction of reality**

Framing, often used interchangeably with ‘representation,’ refers to the way in which news media resort to particular interpretive structures to set particular events within their broader context. A frame in communication or a media frame refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker or a media outlet uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989). The chosen frame reveals what the speaker sees as relevant to the topic at hand (Chong, Druckman, 2007). This theory has been chosen in studying the way *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* covered the ZANU PF succession wars.

The essence of framing is ‘selection to prioritize some facts, images, or developments over others, thereby unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events’ (Norris, Kern and Just 2003:11). Entman (1993:52) says framing is the idea of making some issues more salient than others in order for “problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Entman (1953:53) adds that ‘framing essentially involves

selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text'. This will help the researcher theorize *The Newsday* and *Daily News* coverage of the internal ZANU PF strife as the study looks at the stories carried by the two papers.

Apart from the stories covered and how they were covered, I also looked for stories and story angles that were ignored by either of the two papers, though they ought to be covered since they would have been in the public interest. This is because frames work through selective amnesia or remembrance (Edelman 1963:32). Exclusion of interpretations by frames is as significant to outcomes as inclusion (Entman (1993). Frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions (Entman, 1989, 1993; Riker, 1986). The selective exclusion of other stories is relevant to the study and is likely to give out information needed in this investigation.

Framing consists of selection, backgrounding, foregrounding and highlighting issues to leave the reader with what to think about a problem, its causes and possible solutions. The study takes into cognisance the issues used as backgrounds, foregrounded and highlighted by the two papers in the coverage of the factionalism in ZANU PF from January to December 2017. Issues to note are frame building and frame setting (Scheufele 1999) of the stories sampled.

Edelman (1963:32) says frames work through selective amnesia or remembrance; 'The character, causes, and consequences of any phenomenon become radically different as changes are made in what is prominently displayed, what is repressed and especially in how observations are classified. . . . The social world is . . . a kaleidoscope of potential realities, any of which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorized.' The framing of ZANU PF squabbles can also best be described by the intentional omissions made on either faction by the two papers. These errors (of omission or commission) have a net effect on the readers of either papers as Entman (1993) observed that exclusion of interpretations by frames is as significant to outcomes as inclusion.

By calling attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, this leads audiences of *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* to have different reactions (Entman, 1989; Riker, 1986) to the Lacoste Faction and the G40 camp. A dominant meaning is put so through reinforcement through texts as well as legitimizing or de-legitimizing it so that readers do not get a balanced and objective analysis of the situation. This study looks at how *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* solicited for different views from selected 'sources' and 'analysts' and which 'picture frame' was employed by the two dailies concerning the internal fights in ZANU PF.

#### **4. Relationship between journalists and sources**

The study of news sources and their relationship with news organisations is absolutely central to the discussion of the 'big questions' that should be at the heart of any consideration of news journalism (Manning 2001:1). This is because such a relationship will shape the nature of the news product churned out by *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* in the period under study. The relationship between journalists and sources is a symbiotic one as either needs the other: journalists need politicians as sources of news, while the politicians need the media for political marketing and conveying their messages. However, journalists need to be wary of being used by politicians and have to cross check with other independent sources before publishing information given to them (Baron, 2018).

Politicians, even though they may not be the final gate-keepers of what gets published, influence the final news product (Davis 2007). This is because political sources, who include spin doctors, have knowledge of news production as Davis (2007) further notes, that allies and rival politicians 'leak stories' and 'fly kites' to undermine opponents, test ideas and push new policies in pre-spun strategies. Thus, the leaks are selective. The same scholar posited that all politicians want to influence journalists.

Leaks to the Zimbabwean private media, though selective, gave a glimpse into corruption and the spendthrift lives of the ruling elite. Such leaks, though selective, would not have found their way to the private media if it was not for factionalism in the ruling party. These leaks, though, were

authorised, selected leaks from one faction. Schorr (1997) says there are authorised and unauthorised or unplanned leaks. Of which the latter are done in an honest manner, for no motive or benefit and not to settle scores. Be that as it may, however, these leaks helped to sell the two privately owned papers and Zimbabweans got to know for the first time how the ruling elite was living large on taxpayers money at a time when the majority were wallowing in poverty. A good example is the Salarygate scandal, where government officials at loss-making parastatals were milking them in huge sums of salaries and allowances.

Overall, the whole ZANU PF system-not just one faction-was exposed because either of the two papers under study were given different leaks by the two factions. *The Newsday* was given leaks by one faction, while the other faction also leaked files of their rivals to *The Daily News*. So democracy thrived through the exposures. Voters will then make informed choices based on the lifestyles of and the governance system done by their leaders. This could not have been achieved if it was not for the familial relations between journalists and sources in Zimbabwe.

Though observers and critics say private media journalists warmed up to ZANU PF and such a relationship was not healthy for democracy, Gans (1979) and Gitlin (1980) say the ability of the press to sustain a healthy democracy is anchored on informing and educating citizens to make informed political choices. Manning (2001:2) also observed that such a role is dependent on journalists 'maintaining a professional code which placed public before party or personal interest'. So the end may justify the means if the public were the biggest beneficiaries. Even though critiques of embedded journalism say the press may not write something critical of their sources-and in the Zimbabwean case the private media was not going to criticize a faction in ZANU PF that leaked stories to them, I would argue that it is a strategic way of source creation and sustenance. Nobody would want to kill a goose that lays the golden egg! Journalists embedded with sources have to create and earn trust and confidentiality among their sources if they are to get more exclusive leaks and stories.

Instead of asking 'how do the powerful influence the media', we should ask, 'where do media communication and culture relate to sites and processes of power' (Davis 2007). It would therefore be a misplaced argument to say that politicians may control the media simply because journalists

are embedded with them since such a relationship changes with time. The media may wake up one day and turn against the politicians, and the other way round. Journalists, like politicians, do not have permanent friends and enemies, but they have permanent interests. Reporters are there to record change-the rise and fall of powerful men and women (Reeves 1997:101).

While questions of objectivity always come to the fore, the term itself is subjective. What constitutes objectivity? And objective to who? Shoemaker and Reese (1991) noted that there is no objective observer of reality. Therefore, objectivity is subjective. The private media in Zimbabwe did not change the stories-they just trashed a rival faction-depending on which they are aligned to-but they maintained objectivity, balance and fairness-otherwise they could have been sued to their last socks. There are also questions of accessibility of the media; transparency of news communication process; political engagement; political public relations; how information can be deployed and controlled within the private media when the issue of journalists and sources comes to the fore. Manning (2001:1) questions if all news sources 'enjoy the same degree of access and the same quality and the same ability to communicate their perspectives, or encode their preferred agendas.

The powerful and wealthy in society may enjoy some advantages. "The interests of wealthy media proprietors and manipulative spin doctors working on behalf of political elites are images now familiar to the public. One important issue to consider, then..is whether or not the less powerful are significantly disadvantaged in the scramble to secure access to the news media (Manning 2001:1) This will have an important bearing upon the question of just how diverse are the perspectives and interpretive frameworks that are presented through the news media" (Ibid). Even though the scholar above says that some sources are not given enough space in the media, however, journalists are in the business of news, and the best newsworthy idea and source will get more space than the other. It is a contest of ideas and space in the media, and the best should win the space-which is what democracy is all about.

One explanation for the media's propensity towards the 'majority' perspective is the commercial imperatives underpinning media operations. In this case, 'majority' does not necessarily denote numerical superiority per se (in fact, it is possible to have 'majority' views being embraced by a

numerically inferior section of the population) but the issue of power in society. Political and corporate hierarchies are likely to have their views constitute the dominant media frames Chuma (2002:7) (see also Herman and Chomsky 1988; 2002). Media decisions to mainstream certain perspectives are made simultaneously with decisions to ‘cut’ other issues, perhaps less ‘dominant’ views on the agenda. Internal and external factors of the organization like the editorial policy, deadlines, niche market and political persuasion and inclination, advertisers and audience preferences also have a direct bearing on which frames are adopted by different newspapers (Chitagu 2016: 40).

MISA Zimbabwe noted that the private media and the state media has been ‘captured by factionalists and they were reporting from a factional lens of their preferred handlers’;

“You do not need rocket science to determine which faction the media and their journalists are bidding for. In all this, Zimbabweans remain poorer with regards to information on issues that affect their daily struggles”-*Daily News*, July 30, 2017

“While it is an exciting story, succession must be on accountable and transparent, people-centered leadership and people centered not those already privileged” (Mukundu, 2017).

Challenges within the media industry itself impacted on the nature of reporting. Sustainability challenges within the media, particularly the print media sector limited Zimbabwe media’s ability to innovate in the face of challenges posed by new media. Even more worrisome are reports around media capture, particularly in light of ZANU PF factional fights that led to the military intervention in November. This capture greatly affected professional and ethical conduct that led to the relative failure of the media to tell the Zimbabwean story outside the factional politics. While events in 2017 can be blamed for professional and ethical glitches, these challenges date back to the last decade and a half in Zimbabwe’s media history, where professional and ethical gaps in media reporting have been noted (MMPZ 2018:2-3). The media’s credibility and integrity is being questioned in the wake of reports and allegations of media capture, corruption and deteriorating ethical standards.....the media should at all times, defend the principles of freedom of expression in the honest collection and dissemination of news and the right to fair comment and criticism (MISA Zim 2017).

While the dominant belief is that politicians use the press for their own means, or that the relationship is mutually beneficial, I present a different perspective on the interface between journalists and public officials. My point of departure emanates from the fact that the Zimbabwean private media houses, *The Daily News* and *The Newsday*, could have been the biggest winners from leaning on different ZANU PF factions. Although Schoor (1997:132) believes politicians use the media and that 'journalists' successes are really somebody else's successes in using them', however, the successes of the ZANU PF factions in using the media are not evident in the Zimbabwean case study. This is because the war to succeed ageing President Robert Mugabe was in the end, not determined or influenced by the press, but by the gun, when the Lacoste faction staged a bloodless coup in November 2017, forcing Mugabe to resign and be replaced by Emmerson Mnangagwa.

## **5. Findings and overall reporting trends**

An analysis of newspaper articles selected from January to December 2017 reveal that *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* were fixated on the two factions and personalities, while ignoring the importance of Mugabe in the succession matrix as he played the two factions against each other. The two papers inflamed the already contentious succession topic, which was a hot potato in the ruling party. The framing of the Mugabe succession puzzle was because of different interpretations by the two papers which later led to conflicting discourses.

The two papers under study framed the internal power struggles within ZANU PF differently since they had different agendas, handlers and interests. Polarisation, which used to exist between the state media and the private media, had also extended to the private media as espoused by the two papers. Much attention was given to the warring factions in ZANU PF as they tried to outdo each other in the private media, instead of focusing on the impact and implications of the factionalism in the ruling party, which had brought discord in government and stalled all meaningful development-and the economy continued bleeding.

### **(a) Consensus that ZANU PF was burning**

The study found out that both *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* were in agreement that ZANU PF was involved in an internal power struggle prompted by then President Robert Mugabe's advanced age and his long stay in power that made others in his party willing to take over from him grow impatient. Among the stories that were carried in *The Newsday* that exposed the infighting are; 'Fireworks expected at ZANU PF politburo (July 19); 'Grace goes for broke' (May 17); 'Mnangagwa ally savages Grace (February 21). *The Daily News* also carried such stories that highlighted the infighting in the ruling party like on 5 January (Shocker as ZANU PF factions fight over a coffee mug); 15 January (Man up or sink: backers tell VP); 3 February (Mugabe succession takes new twist); 27 February (Masvingo burns over succession), among others.

The papers used language like ‘succession matrix, deadly factional fights, bloodletting, jostling for takeover’ among others. For the *Daily News*, the phrase, ‘ZANU PF’s deadly tribal, factional and succession wars’ had become a national anthem in introductions for their stories.

The emergence of Mugabe’s wife, Grace, further stoked the succession fires and the two papers were in agreement on that. *The Newsday*, in its story on February 17 titled, ‘ZANU PF jittery as Grace resumes rallies’ said:

“FEAR and trepidation has gripped warring Zanu PF factions following First Lady Grace Mugabe’s decision to resume controversial nationwide rallies amid concerns she could worsen an already fragile situation”

The story came with a picture which depicts the former First Lady as shouting, crass, abrasive and uncouth while in the party’s regalia taken when she was addressing a rally.

On the other hand, *The Daily News* on 18 February also wrote a story, ‘Grace back with a bang’;

“Powerful First Lady Grace Mugabe registered her return to the high octane rally circuit yesterday by letting rip at the ruling ZANU PF’s warring bigwigs, while also bluntly telling those angling to take over from President Robert Mugabe that they did not have ‘leadership qualities and do not qualify to lead the party.’”

The two papers inflamed the contentious succession issue by coming up with sensational headlines. For example, *The Newsday* had a story on March 24, ‘Knives out for Mugabe, Grace’; Mugabe flies into rally storm (June 30) while *The Daily News* also had such headlines like ‘Chiwenga after Jonathan Moyo’ (June 28) as if implying that the army general and then commander of The Zimbabwe Defence Forces was literally hunting while armed to the teeth for his arch rival. In another story in which then Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa had avoided questions on Grace Mugabe in parliament, *The Daily News* also had a headline, ‘Grace strikes fear in ED’ (22 September). An unsensational headline could have been like, ‘ED ducks questions on Grace.’

*The Daily News* and *The Newsday* agreed that Zimbabwe's recurrent economic problems were because of politics and that the country could not improve economically until the politics were sorted out by ending uncertainty over Mugabe's failing health that nerved edgy investors who adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Both papers noted that Mugabe was playing the two factions in a divide and rule tactic to fool either factions. But the papers' focus were much more on the factions than the disastrous effects of the wrangling on the economy, the country and the general populace. While there were a few stories and mention of the effects of factionalism, most of it was in passing.

### **(b) Villains and victims: Representations of G40 and Lacoste factions**

In order to get scoops and exclusive leaks, the two papers were sympathetic to different factions in the ruling party. Each faction will then selectively leak stories that denounced the other faction, be it corruption or otherwise. *The Newsday* emerged sympathetic to the Lacoste faction, while *The Daily News* was more inclined to the G40 faction. *The Newsday* was much more focused on the on the negative aspects of G40 faction, while *The Daily News*, on the other hand, was much more interested in the negative aspects of Lacoste faction. In sourcing, agency and who was given more voice, the study found out that ZANU PF factionalism, as represented in *The Newsday*, was mostly from the Lacoste point of view, while for *The Daily News*, G40 had agency.

Though trying to give a semblance of balancing reportage on both factions, *The Daily News* betrayed its sympathy for the G40 by portraying it as the persecuted faction. In stories of the then Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa's appearance with a mug inscribed, 'I am the boss' at a party, the paper had a field day with him (Mnangagwa feels the heat-6 January; Mnangagwa interview divides opinion-8 January; G40 hunts Mnangagwa, team Lacoste-12 January). One story, 'Mnangagwa on the ropes' published on 13 January begins:

"There was widespread agreement yesterday that Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa is walking a tight rope following Wednesday's dramatic events in which his ZANU PF enemies put in motion plans to have him censured by President Robert Mugabe over a festive season gathering of the VP hosted at his rural home"

The story though, quotes political analysts who however do not agree that the then VP is a pushover.

In another story in *The Daily News* on 23 February titled 'Minister calls for Mnangagwa's arrest,' the paper got 'an unsolicited interview' from a G40 minister, Mandiitawepi Chimene, whom the paper glowingly wrote as 'forthright'. On 27 March, in another story, 'Moyo lays into Mnangagwa' without a byline and replying to a story in the state media which was sympathetic to Lacoste faction, *The Daily News* did damage control to Moyo and quoted him extensively. The headlines made ideological and factional statements.

During the same period, *The Newsday* was also doing a counter, fighting from the Lacoste and then Vice President Mnangagwa's corner and looking for negative stories for the G40 camp. On February 17, the paper wrote, 'Mugabe roasts Kasukuwere'; 'Zimpapers, scribes geared to fight Moyo' (February 21); 'Kasukuwere on the ropes' (31 March); 'Publicly apologize for embarrassing Mnangagwa, Mahoka told' (January 25), Mliswa tears into 'extravagant' Grace' (January 25).

On the votes-of-no confidence on Saviour Kasukuwere, a key G40 member and then ZANU PF national political commissar, the two papers also took sides, with *The Daily News* coming to his defence, while *The Newsday* seemed to pile pressure on him. Among the stories from *The Newsday* on the Kasukuwere issue are; 'Kasukuwere on the ropes' (March 31); 'Kasukuwere hospitalised'; 'Kasukuwere, Mafios woes mount (April 5); 'Mugabe's pre-emptive strike saves Kasukuwere' (April 10); 'Chaos dominates anti-Kasukuwere petition' (April 13); 'Zanu pf youths dump Kasukuwere' (April 19); 'Grace blocks Kasukuwere probe' (April 24); 'Kasukuwere in dramatic survival' (April 27); 'Kasukuwere meeting hangs in the balance' (May 3); 'Kasukuwere on tenterhooks' (June 23);

*The Daily News* presented Kasukuwere as an invincible victim and predicted he would survive the purge-which he did-through a number of stories (Vultures circle 'wobbly' Tyson-10 April; 14 April- 'Kasukuwere could survive ouster,' 'Tyson hits back'-19 April; 'Women's league has 'no issue' with Kasukuwere'-27 April; 'ZANU PF Mps in Tyson ouster u-turn'-29 April).

On the disputed ZANU PF Masvingo provincial chairmanship elections, *The Daily News* sided with the G40 faction's losing candidate who cried wolf and clutched onto a straw despite being

defeated by a Lacoste candidate. Most of these stories were single sourced and one-sided since they quoted G40 officials and ‘sources’ in the faction. The paper carried stories like; ‘Tension, fear as Masvingo votes’ (2 May); ‘Masvingo poll: factions fight’ (5 May); ‘Vanquished G40 disputes elections’ (8 May); ‘Team Lacoste squeezes G40’ (6 May); ‘ZANU PF’s one man Masvingo poll condemned’ (14 May); ‘Masvingo ZANU PF war rages on (31 May). The insinuation from these stories was that Team Lacoste had won controversially in an unfair election, which had a rerun. This is despite the fact that the G40 candidate was beaten hands down in the two polls.

*The Newsday*, on the same issue, had stories that legitimized the election process as well as the winner of the Team Lacoste candidate. One of the stories, written by this researcher, goes; ‘ZANU PF factions square off in provincial elections (23 Feb); ‘Mnangagwa ally mauls Mugabe’s uncle in Masvingo provincial elections’ (February 25); ‘Mnangagwa flies to Masvingo ahead of ZANU PF provincial polls (May 4); ‘ZANU PF to stage one-man chairmanship polls (May 6).

Such a trend where *The Daily News* fought in the corner of G40 while *The Newsday* was pro-Lacoste faction replicated itself on different issues like the alleged abuse of ZIMDEF funds by Moyo; Grace Mugabe’s ‘Meet the People’ rallies and Mugabe’s ‘Youth Interface’ rallies-which were platforms to denounce and de-campaign Mnangagwa-that led to the alleged poisoning of Mnangagwa, his subsequent firing, going into exile and the November *coup-de-tat* that deposed Mugabe. *The Daily News* carried the largest number of stories on the events from the firing of Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa to his inauguration as president (MMPZ 2018: 5).

When Mnangagwa was fired as Vice President, *The Newsday* analysed the impact of his sacking saying on November 8; ‘ED sacking creates Mugabe dynasty’ since Grace was to replace him and ultimately succeed her husband, and on November 2, ‘Stop Mugabe dynasty:war vets’. To expose Grace’s extravagance at a time when the majority of Zimbabweans were struggling to survive, *The Newsday* editorial of January 11 titled ‘Grace ring fiasco: what \$1,4 million can buy’, goes:

‘Imagine what \$1.4 million would do to help Zimbabwe’s struggling economy? This is the amount of money Grace Mugabe used to buy a wedding ring on her 20th anniversary with President Robert Mugabe. Despite the source of the money not being verified, Grace, as wife to a public figure and

a member of the First family, is subject to public scrutiny on her spending especially at a time when the Mugabe government is faced with allegations of massive looting and abuse of state resources.’

After the November coup, *The Newsday*, in a show of support for new President Emmerson Mnangagwa, seemed to endorse him and wrote about the legality of his takeover, while *The Daily News* was fixated on giving a voice to the G40 faction members arrested by the new administration. *The Daily News*, after the coup, gave a voice and seemed to be a mouthpiece of the vanquished G40 faction. On 25 November, it had a story ‘G40 breaks silence on ED’ saying some members of the faction are now warming up to new administration in a disguised message of apologising. In another story, ‘G40 kingpins allege persecution’ (19 December) describing the arrest of the purged ZANU PF members on corruption charges, the paper says they are being targeted for their political association with Mugabe.

Another story on 4 December ‘It is time for political sabbatical says Mzembi’, the former G40 Foreign Affairs Minister said he is quitting politics but affirms his loyalty to the new administration in a sign of asking for forgiveness in an interview with *The Daily News*. After the appointment of a new cabinet by the new president, the paper ran a story on 02 December, ‘With or without Mugabe, Zanu pf is the same’, quoting residents saying Mnangagwa had recycled cabinet ministers from Mugabe’s old cabinet. On 16 December, in another story, ‘ED promises free fair elections’, the introduction says Mnangagwa had ‘yielded to international pressure to hold free and fair polls’. *The Daily News* also calls for the setting up of an independent commission to probe rights abuses by soldiers during the coup (16 December ‘Soldiers must return to the barracks’ and 11 December-‘Zim now a military state-MDC’)

*The Daily News* also made insinuations that the new government may rig the elections slated for June or July 2018; (10 December-Suspicion as Makarau quits). The report says;

‘Zimbabwe Electoral Commission chair, Rita Makarau, who was G40, resigned eight months before the polls, raising conspiracy theories and cast a huge shadow on the polls’ suggesting that

she could have been pushed out', implying and suggesting, according to the papers' sources, that Mnangagwa may want to rig the elections to 'manipulate the vote'.

*The Newsday*, in a space of two days, propped up Mnangagwa and legitimised his rule. Of course, this was understandable, given that Zimbabweans were fed up with Mugabe, who had overstayed, as seen by the outpouring of people in the streets of Harare alongside the army to force him out. On December 13, *The Newsday* carried a story of a billion dollar rescue package, with a picture of the new president, while three days later it also wrote, 'President commits to democracy' (December 16). This was a day after *The Newsday* wrote, 'Mnangagwa pledges free elections' (December 15) which was an almost similar angle. Such stories appeared to make the paper as an extension of the state media, toning down from hard hitting criticism it was used to before. For example, *The Newsday* on December 7 ran with a story headlined, 'ED pledges to improve soldiers welfare' and 'Zim sign \$213 million deals with China'. On December 13, *The Newsday* also had another story typical of those ran in the state media titled '\$1.5 million rescue package unveiled' and 'Mnangagwa a shrewd businessman, God fearing person' (December 19). Two days later, the paper carried another story 'Mnangagwa turns to God', giving the new president a perfect Xmas present. Early December, *The Newsday* wrote, 'President reiterates re-engagement drive'.

*The Newsday* also carried stories that most readers would expect from the lapdog state media, like 'ED promises free and fair polls'; 'Mnangagwa pledges wide reforms' (November 25), 'Mnangagwa promises financial stability, reforms (November 24); 'Government to arrest cash shortages' (November 28) (with a good picture of the president); 'Mnangagwa turns to God' (December 25). *The Newsday* went on to attack and dig up the G40 faction, with stories like 'Grace's \$10 million slash fund 'exposed' (December 18); 'Made managed Mugabe farms' (December 4) and 'Bona Mugabe's empire crumbles' (December 6), a story that the *Daily News* did not carry.

### **(c) Coup or no coup? Description of the coup and post coup period**

Unlike the international media, *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* did not explicitly say it was a coup due to the chilling threat made by the army on the night of the coup on state television. This also explains why the international media broke the story of the coup, giving a blow-by-blow account, while the domestic media lagged behind. The two papers did not engage in more profound debate on the illegality or the unconstitutionality of the coup. Overall, ZANU PF voices dominated views on the military intervention as they made up 78 percent of all sources quoted by Zimbabwe's mainstream media. Zimbabwe's largest opposition accounted for 12 percent of all voices, reflecting skewed sourcing patterns that have become the norm in the media (MMPZ 2018: 9). Reporting on the coup by Zimbabwe's media happened in a constrained media environment, characterized by high levels of legislative and extra-judicial measures that restricted critical reporting by the media (ibid; 3).

*The Newsday* did not directly say there was a coup, preferring to euphemistically call it a 'military intervention' like on November 27 in the story, 'Africa needs succession culture: Mnangagwa'. The paper described Mnangagwa's ascendancy to the throne as having 'the fingerprints of a military coup'. On November 25 (Army intervention constitutionally correct: High Court', and on November 24 (Nkomo Foundation commends ZDF), November 24 (British envoy jets in for Mnangagwa inauguration), November 24 (SADC rights group hails Mugabe resignation), *The Newsday* does not mention that it was a coup or President Robert Mugabe was forced to resign by the military. Instead, the paper chose to say Mugabe 'succumbed to pressure from legislators, the masses and the military (November 22-Adious Bob!)

The same day, the paper put blame on Grace for her husband's downfall: (Mugabe's hated wife triggered change) saying "Mugabe resigned with the army seeking bloodless transition."

In a story on November 20 (Defiant Mugabe summons cabinet) the story says the 'army stepped in to potentially pacify a volatile situation' without saying it was a coup. On November 15, *The Newsday* screamed, 'Military steps in, denies coup' yet the same day commentary says 'that Zimbabwe is on the cusp of a coup is unquestionable'. On November 14, the paper says 'Chiwenga calls Mugabe to order' without saying Chiwenga or army threatens coup.

In another commentary on November 16, *The Newsday* says ‘military takeover should be temporary’, without explicitly saying its a coup, and called the coup ‘military intervention’

On the other hand, *The Daily News* came just short of calling it a coup, describing it as a soft, smart rebellion. On 17 November, in a story, ‘More Mugabe allies arrested’, the paper says “the army seized power,” coming close to saying it was a coup. In another story on 16 November titled ‘Zimbos anxious as army takes charge’ the paper says the army ‘has usurped civilian authority’ which fits into the description of the coup-save for the wording. The story quotes a political analyst, Thomas Sithole trashing the army from blocking a civilian government and a democratic selection of a new government; ‘What Zimbabweans want is a new government through a democratic process’ says Sithole. On 16 November, *The Daily News* says ‘Army takes over key institutions’, describing the coup, and a day before it screamed with the story, ‘Army takes over, says Mugabe is safe’ and says it is a ‘military takeover of government’.

Overall, the perspective of politicians dominated news coverage of the transition; they made up 44 % of the recorded voices ahead of private citizens (16 %). Only 4 % of the recorded voices belonged to analysts whose role in such circumstances would have been to interpret the transition for the private citizens (MMPZ 2018:16). The perspectives of private citizens were rarely sought as their voices were heard just 5% of the time. The coup was seen through the eyes of the politicians, the military, civil society and foreign envoys. The relatively large number of voices from the army who were quoted in 14 % of all news sources reflects the militarised nature of the narrative on the military intervention (MMPZ 2018: 17). By so doing, the local media missed an opportunity to cover Zimbabwe’s biggest story in the last decades (ibid; 24).

#### **(d) ZANU PF factions wrangling as a marketing strategy for both papers**

The two papers capitalised on the succession issue within the ruling party for marketing strategies since it was a topical subject. Confirming that politics sells, most of the lead stories in *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* were mainly about the infighting in ZANU PF, and for once the MDC was overtaken as the most written about party. Other issues of national importance were ignored by the two papers as they did not boost sales. This narrowed the public sphere as ZANU PF politicians,

were, in a way, shaping and controlling the news making and production process since they were the go-to sources of the time.

Before it was initially banned and made a resurgence, the original *Daily News* had external funding, while *The Newsday* was reportedly bailed out by donors. However, because of withdrawn donor support and dwindling external funding, and a deflated economy, the two papers retrenched several staffers and experienced journalists, leaving few, overworked scribes. Lack of capital left the papers exposed and they then turned to ZANU PF factions for selling their papers. This compromised *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* heavily as they were viewed as extensions of ZANU PF, doing a bidding for the party which once fought them. Usually, the state media does a bidding for the ruling party.

This could have been to the benefit of readers that, through selective leaks, got a sneak peak into the corruption and malfeasance that was happening behind closed doors during former President Mugabe's 37 year reign. Again, the strategy to get embedded with their former enemies helped the two media houses to sell their papers. The need to sell and survive during the financial crisis also made *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* frame the crisis in binaries in-order to remain relevant and afloat. This conforms Mabweazara's (2011:115) claims that; 'the polarized editorial policies and proprietary demands; the slanted deployment of sources; the entrenchment in politics; and the quest for economic survival point to the extent to which Zimbabwean journalism should be seen as not only reflecting and embodying the historical processes within which it develops, but as contingent upon the contemporary political and economic conditions in which it is ingrained'

For boosting sales, after the coup, *The Newsday* ran with a story, 'Mugabe files for divorce' (November 30). Most readers passing by would think it was President Mugabe whose marriage could have been troubled by his losing power, yet it was a lady called Sharon Mugabe divorcing her husband who does not even have the surname of Mugabe. The paper used the same trick again on November 11 when it carried a story, 'Professor Moyo remanded in custody', which could have attracted readers to buy after seeing the banners thinking it is exiled Jonathan Moyo when in fact it was someone whose first name is Professor, not an academic title.

On November 8, *The Newsday* repeated the same trick with the story, ‘Mnangagwa sues Mugabe over debt.’ On the surface, it appeared as if the new president was going after the ousted Mugabe, yet it was some other people with the same surnames as Robert Mugabe and Emmerson Mnangagwa the politicians. *The Daily News*, soon after Mnangagwa was fired as vice president by Mugabe before the coup, ran a story on 10 November; ‘Probe, arrest Mnangagwa’. A day before, it had screamed, ‘Mugabe mauls ED’ (ED short for Emmerson Dambudzo referring to Mnangagwa).

## **6. Conclusion**

*The Newsday* and *The Daily News* immersed themselves fully in ZANU PF’s power struggles, seeing the conflict as a way to boost sales and gain readers in a challenging economic climate.

Again, shifting audiences and the threat posed by social media and new media ecologies saw the private media desperately clutching to the ZANU PF succession issue as a selling point for their papers, at a time when the readers were also hard-pressed and did not have surplus to buy newspapers. It would therefore mean that convincing them to buy newspapers, there ought to be catchy headlines and stories.

The coverage of the power struggles within ZANU PF by the two privately owned papers mirrored a society on the edge and punctuated by polarization in the press as well as in politics. Instead of broadening the public sphere and giving critical debate around the economy and other issues of importance, these journalism models narrowed the public sphere as they spent their energies fixated more on infighting within ZANU PF. The two papers had different interests and agendas when it came to the feuding within then President Mugabe’s party. The issue of infighting within ZANU PF, the party that has ruled Zimbabwe for the past 38 years, was an extraordinary

occurrence that needed much more coverage. While ZANU PF was literally burning, factionalism reaching a crescendo than ever before leading to the *coup-de-tat*, this was a rare chance for the private media to cover the events in depth. Sadly, the local media was found wanting concerning such developments that will be etched in the history of Zimbabwe. By taking sides *The Daily News* and *The Newsday* could have been used as pawns in the political chess games within ZANU PF.

**(a) Recommendations:**

It is imperative that in performing their duty to society, the media avoid capture by parochial interests (Tettey 2006: 244) (also see Besley et al., 2002: 6; Cohen-Amalgor, 2002: 40). While journalists and politicians have a symbiotic relationship, the press should be careful to avoid being used by politicians and have to verify the stories they are leaked by politicians (Baron 2018).

The government should also finance the media just in the same way it finances political parties. Under the Political Parties (Finance Act), each political party is entitled to receive a substantial amount of money every parliamentary year. The same should apply to the media where the government can also come up with a Media Companies Finance Act. This is because information is a public good and the right to be informed is a fundamental right.

There is also a great need for increased donor support to independently owned media houses in undemocratic countries so that they can maintain their independence and integrity. This will keep the private media vibrant and serve its true function as a watchdog of society and a Fourth Estate without being compromised by the need for advertising revenue or the need to increase sales by whatever means necessary.

**(b) Can *The Newsday* and *The Daily News* regain trust?**

There is a chance for the two papers to regain trust and audience confidence that they used to have before they took sides in their coverage of the ZANU PF succession wars. However, they still have a lot of homework to do because trust, once lost, is difficult to regain. The private media in

Zimbabwe should go back to the drawing board, go back to basics and show their readers that they have repented through objective, truthful and unbiased coverage and without taking sides in the factionalism of ZANU PF and any other political party. Being professional and ethical is a sure way for the media to regain public trust and respect, and to contribute meaningfully to democratization (Nyamnjoh (2005: 99).

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