



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**Power and participatory politics in the digital age : probing the use of new media technologies in railroading political changes in Zimbabwe**  
Mutsvairo, B.

**Citation**

Mutsvairo, B. (2013, June 13). *Power and participatory politics in the digital age : probing the use of new media technologies in railroading political changes in Zimbabwe*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20974>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20974>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20974> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Mutsvairo, Bruce

**Title:** Power and participatory politics in the digital age : probing the use of new media technologies in railroading political changes in Zimbabwe

**Issue Date:** 2013-06-13

## 4 PROPPING UP PROPAGANDA

Parts of this chapter are based on:

Mutsvairo Bruce, (2012). Propping up propaganda? Exploring the Role of The Herald in Strengthening ZANU-PF's political position." *Journalism and Mass Communication* Vol. 2 No.12 p. 939-950.

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines *The Herald* newspaper's role in safeguarding the seemingly unparalleled longevity of Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF party. Using a sample of stories from both the paper's print and online editions, the study traces the origins of the broadsheet's ostensibly unfaltering pro-ZANU PF editorial positions, turning to direct observation and article analysis to critically probe not only the motive but also the impact of the newspaper's assumed open allegiance to the revolutionary party. In a nation believed battered by perceived state brutality and widening political differences, *The Herald* has been accused of dictating the pace of dictatorship while guardedly manipulating information to prop up President Robert Mugabe's regime. So important has the paper become over the years that its often uncompromising, one-sided style of reporting has earned it praise among militant ZANU PF hardliners while attracting bitter widespread criticism from detractors of the long-serving party.

Discussing Zimbabwean politics would be insignificant without a comprehensive analysis of *The Herald's* relationship with the country's political fabric. The paper has historically enjoyed a monopoly, to the extent that it claimed, "If you hear it, you get it from *the Herald*." This chapter examines *The Herald's* role in contributing to the political endurance of President Mugabe's ZANU-PF party. Using a structural analysis from a sample of stories from the paper's print and online editions, I trace the origins of the broadsheet's pro-ZANU PF editorial positions, analysing content and critically probing not only the motive but also the impact of the newspaper's allegiance to the revolutionary party.

Propaganda is commonly associated with Hitler in the Second World War even though it should be traced back to 500 years B.C., to Alexander the Great in the Ancient World

according to Jowett, G.S. & O'Donnell.<sup>183</sup> As long as mankind has lived in the aftermath of the 19<sup>th</sup> C Industrial Revolution, there has always been propaganda, according to Pratkanis & Aronson, who link propaganda with the invention of human civilizations.<sup>184</sup> Robert Jackall opines that propaganda's origins can effectively be found in religion arguing between 1621-23 a propaganda office was set up by Pope Gregory XV.<sup>185</sup> Stanley Ngoa estimates that there is a connection between advertising and propaganda suggesting that with the coming of the Industrial Revolution lifestyles changed automatically creating the need to "guide" the consumer.<sup>186</sup>

One of the key scholars in the field of propaganda Harold Laswell defines it as "the control of opinion by significant symbols, or to speak more accurately by stories, rumours, reports, pictures and other forms of social communication."<sup>187</sup> Contemporary scholars Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell have opted to define propaganda "as the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."<sup>188</sup> Manipulation is thus very central in both definitions. Persuasion is central in Ross' definition, which concludes propaganda aims to "persuade a socially significant group of people on behalf of a political institution, organization or cause."<sup>189</sup> Another influential scholar in the field Edward Bernays wrote in 1928 "Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group."<sup>190</sup> Even though he is one scholar who believes despite its negative connotations, propaganda does not necessarily have to be bad, it should be pointed out that the propagandist's intentions are always to convince he is right even if it means that he has to deceive. Thus Propaganda does not necessarily have to be

---

<sup>183</sup> Jowett, Garth and O'Donnell, Victoria, *Readings in Propaganda and Persuasion New and Classic Essay* (London: Sage Publications, 2006) pp.51.

<sup>184</sup> Anthony Pratkanis, and Elliot Aronson,, *The Age of Propaganda: Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, (W. H. Freeman & Co, 1991) pp. 11.

<sup>185</sup> Robert Jackall, *Propaganda: Main Trends of the Modern World*. (New York: University Press, 1995) pp. 9

<sup>186</sup> Stanley Ngoa *Agenda-Setting: The Neglected Role of some Agents of Power ...An Unpublished Ph.D Thesis*. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, RSA, 2006.

<sup>187</sup> Harold D . Lasswell, The theory of political propaganda. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 21 No. (3), (1927), pp. 627-631.

<sup>188</sup> Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage Publications, Inc; 4th edition (December 8, 2005) pp. 7

<sup>189</sup> Sheryl T. Ross Understanding propaganda: The epistemic model and its application to art. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 36 No. (1), pp.16-30.

<sup>190</sup> Edward Bernays *Propaganda* (New York: Ig Publishing, 2005, original publication 1928) pp 25.

outright lies. There has to be an element of truth in everything that is reported. However, not everything has to be accurate.

One of the most commonly accepted norms to the success of democracy is the system's inseparable relationship to a free press. The media provides citizens with information essential to the decisions they make, especially when choosing the country's political leaders.<sup>191</sup> The media is a source of power that influences, controls, and promotes new standards in society or reinforces existing ones.<sup>192</sup> During his decades-long rule, Mugabe, deliberately or not, has had a dependable mouthpiece for disbursing information. At the same time, critics especially his opponents in the MDC party have dismissed it as a cheap propaganda platform. The availability of several weekly newspapers, including those fiercely critical of President Mugabe, has failed to hold back *The Herald's* market dominance. With the exception of the short-lived *Daily News*, which doubled its circulation from an initial 60,000 to 120,000 within a few months of its 1999 launch, *The Herald*, with 90,000 readers, has been the overwhelming force on the Zimbabwean media scene, argues Dumisani Moyo.<sup>193</sup> Nor did the arrival of several other post-independence political parties, including the MDC, destabilize the newspaper's support for ZANU PF and market dominance.

#### **4.2 Problem Identification: Research Questions**

In the first of the four separate empirical studies, I endeavoured to first identify the problems associated with *The Herald* newspaper's role in Zimbabwean society. The first problem was the institution itself. Its ability, role and responsibility among the citizens as a provider of reliable news content have all been severely questioned by its critics from the opposition parties at home and abroad because of its openly-pro-state stance. The second problem, which is related to the first, has to do with the openly biased political stances in the stories it covers hence a structural analysis of its content is necessary, with

---

<sup>191</sup> Agner Fog 'The supposed and the real role of media in a modern democracy', working paper (2004) pp. 1-49.

<sup>192</sup> Lal Ratan Mani, Sharma, Sushil K., Ahmed, Nazim, 'Inherent barriers for mass media impact on Indian society', Vol 7, No. 6 (2007) pp. 47-63.

<sup>193</sup> Dumisani Moyo, 'The "independent press" and the fight for democracy in Zimbabwe: A critical analysis of the banned Daily News', Westminster Paper in Communication and Culture Special Issue (2005) 109-128.

a view to investigating allegations of bias against the opposition parties. I therefore decided to formulate one central research questions as follows:

Why is *The Herald* prepared to use propagandistic tendencies to support ZANU PF

Data collection was based on a random selection of newspaper articles from *The Herald* newspaper between 1990 to 2012. While the use of random sampling has been criticised by scholars such as Riffe, Aust and Lacy,<sup>194</sup> one has to acknowledge its notable usefulness. Random sampling can leave every item selected for research included in the examination. For instance, the articles chosen for analysis were representative of *The Herald's* editorial output because they were taken covering a period through with the paper has had more than seven different editors in charge

### **4.3 *The Herald's* role in Zimbabwean politics**

Propaganda, for the right or wrong reasons, is often associated with negative connotations. It is often perceived that propaganda techniques can only be employed by autocratic and despotic regimes. However, it has been argued that practically all governments, including the so-called democratic ones, use some form of propaganda to bolster their support from other nations and citizenry.<sup>195</sup> In its quest to discredit and disqualify President Mugabe's rule in Zimbabwe, the British government has also used propaganda techniques, one may argue. Repeatedly labelling President Mugabe a dictator who has a disregard for his human rights is an established propaganda associated with glittering generalities. There is no agreed definition of "dictator" even though it's quite clear that the term carries negative connotations, which the British government used to help convince its allies in the European Union, Australia, Canada, the U.S., and New Zealand to impose sanctions against the Zimbabwean leader and his closest associates in 2002. That Mugabe had rigged elections as was suggested at that time as the justification for launching a sanctions regime, is debatable because the Southern African Development Community (SADC) concluded in its assessment that the elections had been "free and fair."

---

<sup>194</sup> 16. Riffe D, Aust C F, Lacy S R. The effectiveness of random, consecutive day and constructed week sampling in newspaper content analysis. *Journalism Quarterly* 1993. 70133–139.139.

<sup>195</sup> Anthony Pratkanis & Elliot Aronson, 'The Age of propaganda: Everyday use and abuse of persuasion', W. H. Freeman & Co (1991) 4-19.

While *The Herald* does not hide its allegiance to ZANU-PF, it offers an alternative to the coverage of Zimbabwean politics, which since the launch of the land reform programme in 2000 has largely been biased against the government of Zimbabwe. While the foreign and independent media has sought to delegitimise Mugabe's rule because of perceived land reform injustices and allegations of election rigging, *The Herald* has robustly maintained its nationalistic pro-Mugabe stance. It has steadfastly echoed the government in blaming Zimbabwe's woes on a coalition of local and international foes including White farmers, the British government and the opposition MDC party.

A newspaper must be judged for its credibility and reputation as an honest provider of reliable news. Yet without the media, people in societies would be isolated, not only from the rest of the world, but from governments, lawmakers, and neighbouring towns and cities. *The Herald's* arguably one-sided approach to reporting, I believe, has damaged its position as a harbinger of impartial, coverage of news and events. Indeed, the newspaper often fails to provide an accurate picture of Zimbabwean news. However, as Fog would argue, how different is it from other media, which adopt an editorial line aligned with their advertisers or sponsors?<sup>196</sup> If *The Herald* has failed to provide a fair and balanced coverage of developments in Zimbabwe, has anybody been able to achieve that goal elsewhere?

Media is a business. The owners of a media outlet normally have a say in the content produced by that particular organization. To understand how *The Herald* works, one has to understand who is behind it. A closer look at the newspaper's ownership helps explain the paper's bias towards ZANU PF. The newspaper is majority-owned by Zimbabwe Newspapers Group, Zimpapers, which holds 51.09 percent of the shares. The remaining shares are owned by the nation's leading financial firm, Old Mutual, and several other government-connected private companies.<sup>197</sup> It is not surprising, then, if *The Herald* takes orders from its masters. Yet it is the newspaper's failure to give a platform to a variety of voices and its deliberate labeling of critics as traitors that may potentially help undermine its authority. By choosing to abandon impartial and objective reporting, instead

---

<sup>196</sup> Agner Fog 'The supposed and the real role of media in a modern democracy', working paper (2004) 1-49.

<sup>197</sup> Open Society Institute, Media Programme Publication, Public Broadcasting in Africa Series (2009).

maintaining an unswerving nationalistic pro-ZANU PF agenda, the newspaper has ignored a fundamental ethic of modern journalism. Whether objectivity exists is another question open for discussion. Zimbabweans who have left the country because of the economic crisis are considered traitors and allies of the West in a strongly generalized perspective, which normally ignores the fact that pro-Mugabe supporters may have also left the country. One could argue that the ubiquitous barrage of criticism leveled against the MDC for supporting the Europe Union's "targeted" sanctions ignores ZANU PF's actions that prompted the sanctions, including allegations of gross human rights violations brought by supposedly independent players such as the United Nations.<sup>198</sup> ZANU PF politicians – even those born after independence – are addressed as "Comrade" to reflect their imaginary credentials as veteran bush war fighters. MDC officials, by contrast, are referred to as "Mr.," including those who fought in the 1970s guerrilla wars. *The Herald* thus measures patriotism by party allegiance.

*The Herald's* relationship with the government is symbiotic. While faithfully disseminating the ruling party's political, social and economic agenda, it has been guaranteed exclusivity to news, ensuring that it 'scoops' independent journalists and maintains its journalistic edge against competitors. President Mugabe historically travels with a reporter from *The Herald* on most of his foreign trips. This favour is not extended to journalists from the private media, and accordingly the newspaper gets unchallenged access to the President. Thus, while its reports may be dismissed as manipulative propaganda, they actually may be informative, despite the fact that the objective, like most forms of propaganda, is to create a favourable public response. Though its content is one-sided, the paper has long been a vital and usually credible source of Zimbabwean news. For instance, while various foreign media incorrectly reported that President Mugabe had left the country in the aftermath of his first-round 2008 defeat to Tsvangirai, *The Herald* had it right: the president had not left the country. In 2012, Western media outlets including The Sydney Morning Herald incorrectly speculated that Mugabe may

---

<sup>198</sup> UN-commissioned report was critical of Operation Murambatsvina or Drive out trash, a drive of mass evictions. The author read the BBC website report 'Zimbabwe slum demolitions continue' on the BBC website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4715635.stm>, accessed on 9 September 2009.

have died during a trip to Singapore.<sup>199</sup> As it turned out, *The Herald*, which had a reporter travelling with Mugabe rebuffed these reports, suggesting as what later turned out to be the case that Mugabe was alive.

### 4.3.1 Historical Overview

Among several challenges faced by any new nation, Eric Hobsbawm introduces the question of loyalty to, and identification with, the state and ruling system.<sup>200</sup> A carefully crafted ZANU PF art of dominance has seen the nationalist party controlling Zimbabwe's political landscape uninterrupted over the past three decades. *The Herald's* pro-state stance can be traced back to the heyday of its predecessor, *The Rhodesian Herald*, which was then a powerful propaganda platform for the Rhodesian Front in 1963, according to Elaine Windrich.<sup>201</sup> The flagrant control of the press is an entrenched characteristic of the legacy of colonialism in post-colonial Africa.<sup>202</sup> Determined to discontinue foreign ownership of the press, President Mugabe's government created the state-controlled Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust (ZMMT), a watchdog that eventually took overall ownership of *The Herald* and its sister papers, Nyahunzvi argues.<sup>203</sup>

The Trust was established amid assurances of a free media, with the then Information Minister Nathan Shamuyarira commenting: "Government remains committed to the freedom of press as stated in the Election manifesto. We will neither publish nor edit any of the newspapers."<sup>204</sup> Those pledges would become history a few years later, prompted by what appears to be the government's determination to keep a grip on power. Nyahunzvi concedes that the formation of ZMMT in 1981, just a year after gaining independence from Britain, kick-started a string of problems for the ambitious young

---

<sup>199</sup> Megan Levy 'Mugabe Close To Death' Sydney Morning Herald, 10 April 2012 <http://www.smh.com.au/world/mugabe-close-to-death-reports-20120410-1wls5.html> Accessed 12 April 2012

<sup>200</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth and reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 23-45.

<sup>201</sup> Elaine Windrich 'The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe: Censorship and Propaganda under Rhodesian Front Rule', *Mambo Occasional Papers, Socio-Economic Series 15* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1981).

<sup>202</sup> Stanford Mukasa, *Press and Politics in Zimbabwe* in M'Bayo, R. T., et al., (eds.) *Press and Politics in Africa* (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 2000).

<sup>203</sup> Tim Nyahunzvi "The Zimbabwean Mass Media Trust: An Experiment that Failed", *Media Development*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2 (2001), pp 31-36.

<sup>204</sup> Tim M. Nyahunzvi 'The Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust: An experiment that failed', *Promoting Communication for Social Change* [web page] <http://www.waccglobal.org/en/20012-media-scenarios-in-southern-africa/742-The-Zimbabwe-Mass-Media-Trust-An-experiment-that-failed.html>, access on 5 March 2010.

media houses. Among them, he notes, were fears from ordinary citizens about the potential use of newspapers for state propaganda.

There is a wealth of evidence to show *The Herald* has been fronting ZANU PF's political ideologies since its inception in 1981. Political rivalry pitting Mugabe's ZANU and old foe Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union spilled into the state media newsrooms. Nkomo claimed editors either ignored or twisted his speeches following a government decree restricting his speeches to parliament. Furthermore, Willie Musarurwa, who in 1981 became the first Black editor of *The Herald's* sister paper *The Sunday Mail*, was fired for his connections with Nkomo's ZAPU, although some scholars have argued that his independent editorial line cost him his job.<sup>205</sup> Even though several editors may have graced the nation's oldest newspaper, nothing seems to bring them together more than their unbending support for government policies. Those who refused to toe the ZANU PF line have paid a heavy price.

Both Nyahunzvi and Chikuhwa point to Henry Muradzikwa, the paper's former editor, who was removed from his job over a story that claimed that 60 Zimbabwean students had been deported from Cuba for unspecified "health reasons". The story implied that the students had AIDS, which was seen as potentially damaging to Zimbabwe's relations with the communist island. With its monopoly during the first years of independence, *The Herald* undoubtedly had to deal with a variety of challenges that included serving a racially and ethnically divided nation fresh from the horrors of war. Satisfying the believers of press freedom could not have been tougher. However, it appears the lack of independent media players at independence proved detrimental to the overall government media policy over the years. Continuing the policies of Rhodesian Herald, which according to Gale expressly sought to advance mining and agricultural interests of the white community and the colonial government, *The Herald* sought to serve the interests of the chosen few.

---

<sup>205</sup> Jacob Chikuhwa "A Crisis of Governance: Zimbabwe" New York: Algora Publishing, (2004) p.6-21

While Mukasa argues that ZANU PF's media control was tested in the 1990s with the rise of weekly newspapers such as the Zimbabwe Independent, *The Standard* and the *Daily News*, it goes without saying that *The Herald's* political and social influence has remained steadfast. The *Daily News*, which claims to be the first independent Zimbabwean daily newspaper, did not last long, falling victim to a catalogue of new media laws introduced by the government under Moyo's five-year reign as information minister. Moyo's ministerial reign witnessed one of the most unalleviated propaganda campaigns in postcolonial Africa.<sup>206</sup> The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) as noted in Chapter 1, introduced a rigorous licensing system for media outlets, restricting foreign ownership of the media and prolonging *The Herald's* monopoly since the other privately run newspapers were weeklies. Despite their influence, they could not challenge *The Herald's* circulation figures. Intimidation against journalists regardless of their political affiliation has been commonplace in Zimbabwe, but working for the independent press has been even more daunting. Examples of state-sanctioned repression and intimidation of the private media can be seen in the 2007 incident involving veteran journalist Bill Saidi. A soldier, unhappy with an article published in Saidi's *Standard* newspaper, left an envelope with a bullet and a handwritten note reading, "What is this? Watch your step."<sup>207</sup>

Despite its fierce support for ZANU PF, there have been several occasions when the newspaper attacked the government. *The Herald*, Chikuhwa reckons, bitterly criticised the government in the aftermath of the December 1997 national protest and the food riots a year later. Also, according to Mukasa, police brutality, which rarely gets attention in *The Herald*, hogged limelight after teargas hit the newspaper's headquarters during the 1998 disturbances, prompting editor Tommy Sithole to make a rare public attack on the police. This extraordinary criticism should not be taken as a sign of balanced journalism. The newspaper has always supported ZANU PF. In the unlikely event of the party being exiled as the opposition, there is no evidence to suggest the paper would be prepared to

---

<sup>206</sup> Ezra Chitando "In the beginning was the land': the appropriation of religious themes in political discourses in Zimbabwe" *Africa* 75 (2) (2005) pp. 220-239.

<sup>207</sup> "Charamba's comments on Saidi rile journalists," 13 February 2007 [http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/print.php?art\\_id=1749](http://www.zimbabwejournalists.com/print.php?art_id=1749) Accessed on 14 September 2010

drop its loyalty. Its roots are deeply enmeshed in the revolution against colonialism, and that identity is likely to remain its characteristic feature. President Mugabe's credibility as a freedom fighter, *The Herald* is keen to remind its readers, is there for everyone to see. At a World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002, Mugabe was treated to elated applause for his "braveness" in telling Tony Blair to keep his Britain while he kept "his little Zimbabwe".<sup>208</sup> Mugabe's popularity, readers are told, is based on his desire to see colonial injustices corrected. This is without a doubt a non-negotiable stance shared by Mugabe, *The Herald* and their supporters.

### 4.3.2 Conceptual Framework

In his article on "patriotic journalism", Terence Ranger argues that hate journalism has flourished in controlled media for many years.<sup>209</sup> Die-hards in President Mugabe's government view the state monopoly of media as an effective tool to sell ZANU PF's viewpoint while enforcing its patriotic agenda. After nearly 90 years of colonial and settler rule, it is understandable that nationalism and patriotism were paramount topics at independence in 1980. However, the two concepts remain on today's agenda thanks largely to *The Herald*, which is keen to promote values endorsed by ZANU PF. In a weekly column that appears each Saturday in *The Herald*, a government official writes using the pseudo-byline "Nathaniel Manheru lashes out at President Mugabe's critics". The column, introduced by Moyo, and fairly popular among the political elite, rarely has kind words for anyone who disagrees with the government. Its approach is a deliberate division of the world into two racial pillars, namely "Black" and "White". Anyone who disagrees with the Zimbabwean government is seen as siding with the White colonialists. Others are treated as patriots or nationalists.

Despite Western sanctions, Manheru portrays a picture of hope, arguing Zimbabwe does not need to make friends outside the developing world. His column leaves little room for any intermediate position other than "for us or against us". Here is what he had to say on Kofi Annan's departure from the UN's top office in 2006:

---

<sup>208</sup> Keep your England, President tells Blair, *The Herald*, 3 September 2002, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200209030047.html> accessed 14 July 2010

<sup>209</sup> Terence Ranger, 'The rise of patriotic journalism in Zimbabwe and its possible implications', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, Conference paper (University of Westminster, London, 2005), pp. 6-17.

In Shona, Annan means "who is he with"? One last word for the United Nations. Kofi Annan is an African, and may the good African Lord be with him in his last days in office. Zimbabwe's land question started in 2000, a good six years before the end of his term. He had lots of time to come, and indeed he came to the region countable times between then and now. Kofi Annan is an African who knows the West only too well. After all, the West is in his home, so to speak.<sup>210</sup>

According to Marxist media theory, the media is a "means of production" that is used by the ruling class to deny or defuse alternative ideas. *The Herald's* mission is evident on many of its pages. *The Herald* does not only 'tell the truth' but also ensures that alternative versions are discredited. The story headlined "Tsvangirai Begs for VP Post", does not only not tell the truth, it also denies other options being suggested by the rumor mill.<sup>211</sup> The message is clear: Zimbabwe may be facing plenty of economic, political and social challenges, but in Mugabe, it has the only tried and tested leader to deliver.<sup>212</sup>

In Gramsci's hegemony theory (1971), the intellectual community plays an important role in the success of hegemonic domination. Exerting government control over the people is impossible without intellectuals. In the case of Zimbabwe, academics regularly contribute to *The Herald* trumpeting nationalist positions. Among them are professors Tafataona Mahoso, known to his opponents as "the Media Hangman", and Vimbai Chivaura, both educated in the US where they received doctorates. The majority of Mugabe's cabinet ministers and close associates hold degrees from Western universities, where they also send their children. Yet, their articles or comments in *The Herald* are decidedly anti-Western. The paper was scathing in response to Australia's decision to deport the children of ZANU PF officials under the sanctions, denouncing it as a racist state.<sup>213</sup> Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his predecessor Tony Blair are portrayed as main culprits responsible for Zimbabwe's isolation. *The Herald*, which

---

<sup>210</sup> Nathaniel Manheru No God from a Machine, *The Herald* 20 May 2006  
<http://www.zwnews.com/issuefull.cfm?ArticleID=14451> Accessed 16 July 2010

<sup>211</sup> 'Tsvangirai Begs for VP Post', *The Herald*, 8 April 2008.

<sup>212</sup> 'Zimbabwe: Zim not for Sale', *The Herald*, 19 April 2008.

<sup>213</sup> 'Tsvangirai thanks paymasters for sanctions', *The Herald*, 28 October 2007.

makes no apologies for its support of ZANU PF, has always maintained this view, arguing in its September 22, 2007 issue:

Communicating with fellow Europeans through the British press (Brown) clearly indicated British diplomacy had come unstuck. Clearly British diplomacy has foundered in its backyard, with Brown adopting for the rest of Europe Blair's odious megaphone diplomacy against Zimbabwe.

As noted by Frankfurt school stalwarts Adorno and Horkheimer, the media has the ability to transform enlightenment into barbarism.<sup>214</sup> True to their view that economic prosperity breeds mass deception, *The Herald* has used Zimbabwe's once affluent economy to foster a formidable relationship with the country's ruling elite. As the only daily available in the country, it certainly is a widely read paper, powerfully delivering Mugabe's message of hope, political independence and economic prosperity. When annual inflation was topping over 231 million percent,<sup>215</sup> *The Herald* still chose to defend the country's economic policies, dedicating pages of praise to central bank governor Gideon Gono, the man critics accuse of bringing down the country's economy. The newspaper also ran articles in which Zimbabwe was allegedly commended by its southern African neighbours for pioneering "innovative economic policies".<sup>216</sup>

Perhaps indicative of the anger *The Herald* aroused among its critics, the paper's online version was brought down in May 2008 by an unknown hacker.<sup>217</sup> That happened after the vicious election campaign in which dozens of opposition supporters were beaten or killed, in a well-documented campaign of violence.<sup>218</sup> Victims included Harare deputy mayor Emmanuel Chiroto, whose wife Abigail was reportedly kidnapped and killed by suspected ruling-party militias.<sup>219</sup> *The Herald* stood its ground, reporting pro-ZANU PF stories while taking its usual line of attacking the opposition as a Western puppet, diverting attention from coverage over alleged killings.

---

<sup>214</sup> Brian Neve, 'Theoretical Approaches to Mass Media', [web page] <http://people.bath.ac.uk/hssbnp/theories%20of%20media.htm>, accessed 7 December 2010.

<sup>215</sup> 'Zimbabwe inflation hit 231 percent', Associated Press, 9 October 2008.

<sup>216</sup> 'Zimbabwe hailed over economic policies', *The Herald* 14 October 2008.

<sup>217</sup> 'Zimbabwe official newspaper hacked', Reuters, 12 May 2008.

<sup>218</sup> 'Zimbabwe elections: Four activists found dead, says opposition', *The Guardian*, 19 June 2008.

<sup>219</sup> 'Harare mayor in hiding after Mugabe thugs kill wife', *The Independent*, 19 June 2008.

### 4.3.3 Discussion of Results: Representation and coverage

Endless repetition is a key technique of propaganda. *The Herald* hopes that maintaining its sympathetic stance insofar as the government's land reform exercise is concerned helps convince the audiences on the need to a land reform. Chief among its editorial lines is the continued endorsement of the land reforms. While critics argue that it is unjustified to hand over seized farms to Black 'war veterans' based on their war credentials and not their agricultural expertise, *The Herald* sees no problem with that. It views the reform as enhancing economic expansion. Analysis of the reform exercise is always pro-Mugabe. It ignores the plight of White farmers losing the land or allegations from opposition parties that only those with close connections to ZANU PF benefited from the land reform. While being repetitive is considered important in this case, consistency is also essential. These articles for example show the newspaper's unshaken and continuous loyalty and support for the land reform. "Zimbabwe: War Against Land Reform Unwinnable,"<sup>220</sup> "Zimbabwe: Land Reform a Success – Survey"<sup>221</sup> Zimbabwe: Farmer Reaps Fruits of Land Reform.<sup>222</sup>

The University of Leeds' Institute of Communication through the World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia identifies three ways through which propaganda works:(1) It calls for an action or opinion that it makes seem wise and reasonable. (2) It suggests that the action or opinion is moral and right. (3) It provides a pleasant feeling, such as a sense of importance or of belonging.<sup>223</sup> Stories in the newspaper normally reminds readers of historical imbalances committed by Western imperialists. This is a chorus position echoed by the newspaper editorially taking a position that Mugabe is a liberator and in fact a victim of neo-colonialism. This argument appears convincing due to its ability to give Zimbabweans a sense of shared belonging. Name-calling the West as imperialists puts Zimbabweans in a victims pot. Thus the assumption could then be that they all have one enemy.

---

<sup>220</sup> Reason Wafawarowa Zimbabwe: War Against Land Reform Unwinnable *The Herald*, 17, April 2009 <http://allafrica.com/stories/200904170469.html> accessed 17 July 2010

<sup>221</sup> Tinashe Farawo Zimbabwe: Land Reform a Success – Survey *The Herald*, 5 February 2011 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201102140147.html> accessed 17 July 2010

<sup>222</sup> Isdore Guvamombe Zimbabwe: Farmer Reaps Fruits of Land Reform, *The Herald* 15 September 2009 <http://www.politicsforum.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=33&t=110293> accessed 17 July 2010

<sup>223</sup> "Propaganda" <http://ics-www.leeds.ac.uk/papers/pmt/exhibits/727/propaganda.pdf> accessed 16 July 2010

The basis for *The Herald's* strong pro-Mugabe stance is largely historical. The newspaper carries radical opinions from Mugabe's party. It is easier to judge what Mugabe's mood is towards an issue by reading what *The Herald* says since it remains one of the most accurate sources disseminating the thoughts and views of Mugabe and his cadres. *The Herald* twists facts to suit its own pro-Mugabe agenda while its coverage targets a certain audience with characteristically corresponding interests. Race plays a major role in the newspaper's coverage of news. President Mugabe has on a few occasions openly declared his dislike of White people.<sup>224</sup> *The Herald* has followed his cue. That antipathy, however, is not extended to the country's White Olympic gold winner, Kristy Coventry. Mugabe has declared: "What we hate is not the color of their skins but the evil that emanates from them."<sup>225</sup> And the newspaper referred to Coventry as a "golden girl", to whom Mugabe gave a diplomatic passport. Coventry's sporting heroics offers *The Herald* a chance to portray the Zimbabwean government's "liberal" policy towards a multiracial society.<sup>226</sup> In contrast, another White sportsman, Andy Flower was lacerated for teaming up with a Black teammate in openly denouncing President Mugabe during a cricket match in Harare February 2003.<sup>227</sup> Equally interesting is the way White ZANU PF financial supporters John Bredenkamp and Billy Rautenbach appear in the paper. The two businessmen are subject to unfriendly scrutiny and sometimes to scornful attacks in the Western press. But *The Herald* represents them as legitimate Zimbabwean businessmen with the country's interests at heart. Using these few examples of White Zimbabweans sympathetic to the regime, *The Herald* seeks to discount allegations of anti-White antagonism by the government, a position that makes its opinion seem wise.

*The Herald* sees itself as the perfect answer to Africa's often negative and contrived image in the Western and independent media. It accuses Western media outlets with

---

<sup>224</sup> "Robert Mugabe: White Farmers Must Vacate Their Land" Associated Press, 28 February, 2009 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/28/robert-mugabe-white-farmers\\_n\\_170752.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/28/robert-mugabe-white-farmers_n_170752.html) Accessed 5 June 2010

<sup>225</sup> Robert Mugabe Speech in Harlem, New York (September 2000), In Michael Radu, "State of Disaster", *National Review*, 27 May 2002

<sup>226</sup> In *The Herald* edition of 30 August 2008, Coventry, a white Zimbabwean, is referred to as the "Daughter of Zimbabwe"

<sup>227</sup> In *The Herald* edition of 23 February 2003, an opinion writer attacked Andy Flower and Henry Olonga as the two were warned by cricket authorities in the country they risk sacking if they wore their "death of democracy" armbands.

correspondents based in the region and local independent newspapers of distorting and misrepresenting facts about Zimbabwe. Bashing the MDC for its alleged connections to the independent media, *The Herald* asks on its opinion page: “The question is, are the media in reality mouthpieces of political powers and governments for which they express sympathy?”<sup>228</sup> While *The Herald* claims bias by other newspapers against ZANU PF, it does not address charges that its own reporting is slanted towards meeting coverage expectations of the party. But can that be quantified? A sample of 25 political stories in February 2008 prior to national elections showed that ZANU PF received overwhelmingly favourable coverage, with 17 stories profiling, reporting or openly professing a slanted opinion towards ZANU PF candidates. There was minimal coverage of campaign rallies for the opposition parties during this period.

A close look at headlines in *The Herald* also discloses an ideological bent towards ZANU PF. “Annan forced to abort visit” is the headline for a story suggesting that the former UN Secretary-General would not visit Zimbabwe for a first-hand examination on the country’s clean-up exercise. Annan, who had been accused by several pro-government commentators of siding with the US and Britain on the issue, possibly handed the party some victory by calling off the trip, which Mugabe had previously called “politicized”.<sup>229</sup> Another headline, “Guarantee Safety of Scribes, MDC Leadership Told”, appears to put blame on the opposition party after two journalists covering a rally were allegedly threatened.<sup>230</sup> A headline of this nature, intended for the ZANU PF leadership would not find space in *The Herald*, as it not only betrays the interests of the party also potentially exposes it to readership scrutiny.

#### **4.3.4 Conclusion**

This study has shown the mechanism employed by *The Herald* in summarily showing its siding with the government. It finds itself supporting the ZANU PF in almost every scenario perpetuated by the fact that the revolutionary party owns the establishment and has always made sure pro-party editors are employed in order to guarantee positive coverage. The articles reveal how *The Herald* uses propaganda and bias as the main news

---

<sup>228</sup> The Herald, 14 December 2009,

<sup>229</sup> The Herald, 26 September 2005.

<sup>230</sup> The Herald, 22 November 2007.

components to further extend its traditional relationship with Mugabe's party. Hence, the paper's ownership structure is pivotal in its quest to maintain the positive coverage. Understandably, the stories that are run by the newspaper tend to be openly biased towards its cadres. Without its political steadfastness, it could be argued that Mugabe would not have managed to stay in power for over 30 years. Politically, *The Herald* has always been unapologetic for its pro-Mugabe stance. Faced with new Western-sponsored hostility, Mugabe has turned to the paper for the much-needed support. The MDC has accused *The Herald* of refusing the MDC's campaign materials, for example during the 2005 elections. However, as long as Zimbabwe remains a country dominated by Mugabe's Marxist-centered party, *The Herald's* disappearance from the Zimbabwean political arena cannot be foretold.

In the eyes of *The Herald*, Mugabe has become a cult-like figure, incapable of error but someone who it sees as being victimised by a Western distortion of history. Blame is put on the West in *The Herald* while Mugabe's cadres are always presented as victims, regardless of the issue. Most importantly, Mugabe has redefined democracy thanks to *The Herald*. The newspaper convincingly applauds Zimbabwe's democratic credentials. These are questioned in the West, thereby creating confusion as to what is the agreed definition and key characteristics of democracy are. More importantly, despite its evidently pro-Mugabe reporting, *The Herald* cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. It is used to sell the ZANU PF brand. It is a weapon in the party's tactics to preserve power among all sectors of society, by reinforcing, for example, the party's relationship with war veterans and the educated elite. As the newspaper's majority shareholder, ZANU PF may seek to justify its control of the newspaper merely on the grounds of its overpowering investments in the company, which gives it absolute decision-making powers. *The Herald* therefore occupies a very important seat in Zimbabwean politics, one that should never be underestimated