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Evolution of anti-corruption journalism in Africa: lessons from Zambia

Abstract

All African countries, where there are functioning states express a strong desire to curb corruption. The African Union has a convention to prevent and combat corruption. Zambia, under President Levy Mwanawasa, has positioned itself as a leader in Africa's fight against corruption. Last year, former Zambian President Frederick Chiluba was found guilty of grand corruption by a London court in a case brought against him by the Zambian government. There is general agreement that the media plays a significant role in the war against plunder of national resources by African leaders. However, studies that examine exactly how the media influences the decisions and actions of public actors in Africa's anti-corruption agenda are few. This paper aims to fill this gap. The goal is to use the Zambian case to gain a clearer understanding of the evolution of anti-graft journalism in Africa and to derive enduring insights into the relationship between the anti-corruption actions of the state and anti-corruption reporting by the press. Three key questions provide a framework for this investigation: 1) Is the press driving the Zambian government's anti-corruption campaign 2) Is President Mwanawasa's 'zero-tolerance' campaign self-generated and the press simply following and reporting news events coming out of the bold steps already determined by the government? 3) Is it possible that the press and the state have found common ground and formed an informal but formidable alliance to combat graft?

Key words: Africa, corruption, Zambia, media, journalism

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INTRODUCTION

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, citizens do not label their president a ‘thief,’ let alone make headlines out of it. But on 17 August 2001, *The Post* (2001-08-17), Zambia’s leading independent daily, declared then incumbent Zambian President, Frederick Chiluba, a brigand. ‘Chiluba is a thief’ proclaimed the paper’s lead story. Chiluba, whose two terms as President from 1991 to 2001 were coming to an end, took the paper to court claiming the accusations were libellous. Ironically, on 11 July 2002, President Levy Mwanawasa, Chiluba’s handpicked successor appeared before the country’s legislature, accusing his predecessor of plundering the country of millions of US dollars, and asked the law makers to remove Chiluba’s post-presidential immunity. The law-makers subsequently stripped Chiluba of all legal shields against prosecution. The somewhat sluggish (see Clottey, 2007, *Times* 2007-04-25) Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was sidelined and an aggressive Task Force on Corruption constituted to hound, investigate and prosecute Chiluba and his accomplices on charges of the plundering of national resources. Plunder cases against Chiluba and his close associates were opened in Zambia and later in the United Kingdom (van Donge, 2006). The London civil case moved faster and in May 2007, Chiluba and 19 others were found guilty of massive fraud amounting to UK£23 million (Pallister, 2007).

This paper examines and discusses the evolving role of the print media in this whole saga. The press in Zambia is still a small industry gravitating around the three dailies—*The Post*, *The Times of Zambia* (hereafter *The Times*) and *The Zambia Daily Mail* (hereafter *The Mail*). There are other newspapers and magazines—weeklies, monthlies and occasional publications—but their role in public discourse is limited. This is due to small circulations, weak reporting, infrequency in publication and the general inability of most of the public to purchase more than one newspaper at a time. The three dailies therefore dominate market place of ideas and are able to garner public attention and arguably move public opinion through substantive investigative reporting, aggressive headlining and more widespread distribution. *The Post* is independent while the other two dailies are government-owned. Thus *The Post* often has a head start on anti-corruption news while *The Times* and *The Daily Mail* tend to wait for cues from the government before aggressively reporting on corruption stories. *The Post* carried Chiluba-is-a-thief stories while Chiluba was still in office. At that time, *The Times* and *The Mail* shied away from these reports. However, once Chiluba was out of power and the Mwanawasa government took an aggressive ‘zero tolerance’ anti-corruption position, the other dailies were free to report corruption. Therefore, the ‘press’ in this article is used in reference to the three dailies.

The goal of this analysis is to use the Zambian case to gain a clearer understanding of the evolution of anti-graft journalism in Africa and to derive enduring insights into the relationship between the anti-corruption actions of the state and anti-corruption reporting by the press. Three questions frame this investigation: 1) Is the press driving the Zambian government’s anti-corruption campaign; 2) Is President Mwanawasa’s ‘zero-tolerance’ campaign self-generated and the press simply following and reporting news events coming out of the bold steps already determined by the

government? 3) Is it possible that the press and the state have found common ground and formed an informal but formidable alliance to combat graft? These issues are addressed by tracking, describing and correlating the intertwining roles of the press and the government in the fight against corruption.

CORRUPTION NEWS IN ZAMBIA

While the Chiluba case is obviously the ‘big fish’ story, there are other significant corruption news stories that also shed light on the forces which are driving the agenda between the government and the media. These include the 29 August 2003 case in which, Kashiwa Bulyaya, then Permanent Secretary of Health, was arrested and charged with abusing authority. Bulyaya engaged a Bulgarian firm to supply a herbal product to the Ministry of Health without following tender procedures. It was also alleged that he demanded money from the suppliers. It was also found that Bulyaya was managing director of the Zambian company ANBUL Investments that was appointed by the Ministry as agents in this transaction. Bulyaya was sentenced to five years in prison (Sichalwe, 2007c).

The other case was one at the Ministry of Lands where the then Minister of Lands, Gladys Nyirongo, was accused of ordering the subdivision of a farm formerly owned by the now defunct government mining conglomerate, Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) to her benefit in contravention of procedures. She also allegedly ordered the award of residential plots to her close family members. She was arrested on 29 June 2007, (*The Times*, 2007-06- 30:1). In the same saga, Frighton Sichone, then Commissioner of Lands, was suspended. These cases are still in court at the time of this writing. Another high profile case involved former Zambia National Service commandant, Lieutenant General Wilford Funjika, who was given a two year suspended sentence on 31 October 2007. The sentence was later reviewed by the High Court to nine months custodial sentence, (Mushaukwa, 2008). He was accused of corruptly paying a specified amount of money to his children and also not following tender procedures when awarding a contract to a company he had interest in, Seymon Holdings.

VALUE OF LESSONS FROM ZAMBIA

While there is a general agreement that the media can and does play a significant role in anti-corruption campaigns (Stapenhurst, 2000), lessons from Zambia - the first African country to tenaciously prosecute its former president (van Donge, 2006) - are informative and instructive for similar inquiries in other states on the continent. When it comes to corruption, Africa tops global charts making comparative studies imperative and urgent (Bunting, 2005). For example, neighbouring Tanzania - once seen as Africa’s anti-corruption poster boy- has been rattled by major corruption scandals. In January 2008 President Jakaya Kikwete fired the country’s central bank boss for failing to account for US\$120 million (*International Herald Tribune*, 2008-01-10) In February, Kikwete dissolved his cabinet after several ministers, including the prime minister, resigned in the midst of a corruption scandal (Tungaraza, 2008). What has been the role of the media in the Tanzanian saga? Speaking two years before these events, Professor Gaudens Mpangala, University of Dar es Salaam, expressed concern that ‘lack of sufficient media

freedom and independence is likely to be a big hindrance to the fight against corruption' (Mpangala, 2006). Did 'lack of sufficient ... freedom' affect the media's handling of these corruption developments? How did the media and the government relate and behave over these stories? These and related questions arising from similar corruption events in other African countries (for example, see Makuni, 2007) call for comparative investigation. Informed insights into interactions between decisions of policy actors on corruption and effective reporting by the media are crucial to theory building about the role media can and should play in Africa's anti-graft campaign. This paper is a contribution to this enterprise.

MEDIA AND CORRUPTION

There is a substantive amount of literature on the impact of corruption on Africa's economic and political development. (Ampratwum, 2008; Mbaku, 2007, Annasi, 2005; Svenson, 2005; Mason-Middleton, 2003; Goudie D. and Stasavage, 1997). The consensus is that corruption is a cancerous scourge that is crippling the continent, (Richards et. al, First time reference to collective authorship therefore put in all authors here, all authors not mentioned in reference section) 2003) For example, McArthur and Teal found a direct correlation between levels of corruption and the mediocre performance of many business enterprises in Africa (McArthur and Teal, 2002). The African Union, 'concerned' by the 'negative effects of corruption and impunity on political, economic, social and cultural stability of African states' and alarmed by its 'devastating effects on the economic and social development of the African peoples' adopted a long overdue anti-corruption convention in Maputo in 2003 (African Union, 2003:2).

It is clear that corruption is a big story in Africa. So is the issue of the role of the media in fighting corruption on the continent. One analyst of corruption in Kenya concluded that 'All the apparatus and organizations fighting corruption cannot succeed without the power of the media' (Anassi, 2005:320). Mpangala (2006) said the same about anti-corruption initiatives in Tanzania. International voices concur. 'Investigative journalism is fundamental in combating corruption,' declared Christopher Warren, President of the International Federation of Journalists: 'Without it, inefficiency, waste, crime and secrecy thrive' (Warren, 1996). Other activists from the international anti-corruption movement affirm that the media is a crucial player in the combat against graft:

Journalists often play a direct role in fighting corruption by 'breaking' a corruption scandal or producing reports that bring unethical behaviour to public attention. News reports can be an important motivation for official bodies charged with investigating or prosecuting corrupt acts; they can prompt the resignation of public officials (Poroznuk, 2006).

Stapenhurst (2000) dissects the media's role in curbing corruption into two segments: tangible and intangible effects. Tangible impact is when reporting by the media leads to 'readily identifiable' results. Intangible results are more subtle effects that foster 'enlivened public debate and heightened sense of accountability' (pp.2-3). In the case of tangible effects, action is taken either by the corruption culprits, such as public

resignations, or by officials and bodies responsible for corruption control in the country. Stapenhurst (2000) identifies seven tangible results of media effects on corruption.

1. Investigating and exposing corrupt officials and office-holders

The ‘most spectacular among them is when corrupt bureaucrats or public office holders are impeached, prosecuted or forced to resign after their misdeeds are exposed to public light’ (p.3). The resignations of top government leaders in Tanzania and concurrent dissolution of the cabinet by President Kikwete is a good example.

However, limitations for this effect exist and must be acknowledged and further investigated. For instance in Zambia, during the Chiluba era, resignations on the basis of corruption were rare, if any. In 1997, at the peak of the Chiluba presidency and when corruption was rampant, a University of Zambia researcher (Matenga, 1998) listed six government ministers who were embroiled in corruption scandals, including the now late finance minister, Ronald Penza. None resigned, were dismissed or prosecuted despite the fact that these cases were ‘widely publicised and documented in the press.’ The Zambian experience during the Chiluba era shows that anti-corruption journalism in Africa can only lead to resignations and dismissal when practised in atmosphere of, and thereby support of, political will against graft. In the case of the Chiluba administration there was little. ‘In spite of overwhelming evidence of corruption in a number of these cases, President Chiluba consistently parried charges against his leadership’ (Matenga, 1998). Thus lack of political will is a hindrance to the positive effect of anti-corruption journalism.

2. Prompting investigations by official bodies

This is a scenario where ‘hard-hitting reporting ... provides the initial seed that prompts official bodies to launch formal investigations’ (p.5). Official anti-corruption bodies are sometimes reluctant to investigate corruption allegations. In other cases they are either incompetent and lack the capacity to investigate and prosecute. Sometimes they are simply sluggish. Zambian Information Minister, Mike Mulongoti, told the media that his boss, President Mwanawasa, was dissatisfied with the rate at which the ACC was handling cases. ‘He [President Mwanawasa] expressed his dissatisfaction [because] he wanted them to expedite the cases,’ he said. President Mwanawasa was upset because ‘cases were taking too long to prosecute ... investigations were taking unnecessarily long’ (Clotey, 2007). Transparent media coverage can not only prompt anti-corruption agencies to investigate allegations but also push for expedited prosecution.

3. Reinforcing the work and legitimacy of the state’s anti-corruption bodies

Press reports give legitimacy to anti-corruption units. If people read in the papers that such bodies are preventing corruption before it occurs and that, when it has happened they investigate and prosecute the culprits, it stirs a feeling that these entities are doing their work. But the press is only able to do this if indeed the anti-corruption agencies are doing their work. In Zambia, as noted above, there is still a feeling that the ACC is *not* delivering enough convictions. Reporters often find nothing to report about the activities

of the commission. In contrast, the Task Force investigating Chiluba generates interesting news such as finding Chiluba's shirts, shoes and 'brown' envelopes stashed away in a warehouse. A total of 349 shirts, 206 jackets and 72 pairs of shoes were discovered (*BBC News* 2007-03-09). Such findings gave the press a big story and helped reinforce to the public that the Task Force was doing its work. This is a significant role the press can play in curbing corruption.

4. Strengthening anti-corruption bodies by exposing their flaws

Anti-corruption agencies are not flawless. Since 'no public body - or private entity, for that matter - can be immune from corruption' anti-corruption organizations themselves can 'turn out to be corrupt or tainted by corruption,' (p.7). The media can help salvage such scenarios by exposing the corruption so that these agencies can clean their own house first before tackling external corruption. In Zambia, for instance, the Director General, Nixon Banda of the Anti Corruption Commission has been in the headlines about corruption allegations. 'ACC Boss in Trouble' announced a lead story in *The Times* (2007-11-15). The allegation was that the ACC boss had acquired land in the country's Eastern Province without following procedures. Later, Ryan Chitoba, top leader of the Drug Enforcement Commission - the country's anti drug trafficking agency - was suspended in August 2007 amidst serious allegations of corruption (Sichalwe, 2007). Three weeks later, his deputy, Jacob Koyi and his assistant were also suspended and charged with various corruption offences (Sichalwe, 2007b). These incidents reveal that the anti-corruption bodies are not flawless and the press should play a watch-dog role on the 'watch-dog' agencies themselves.

5. Helping to shape public opinion hostile to 'sleaze' in government

African culture can have a tolerance for corruption (Henriot, 2007). The feeling is that, after all, everyone is corrupt. Thus when individuals find an opportunity to better their economic situation through corrupt means, they do it for the sake of their families, relatives, village or ethnic group. It is an opportunity to rapidly reverse the poverty circumstances of those close to the individual who have never had access to such resources. As Henriot (2007) told the World Bank Forum in Berlin, 'there is a cultural issue of expectation and acceptance of corruption, even sometimes admiration and envy of corruptors'.

Although no empirical evidence has been gathered, it is not far fetched to surmise that the press has contributed to a higher anti-corruption public opinion in Zambia. What is not clear is why this hostility against corruption is in many cases most fervent toward those holding public offices but seems to dissipate once the very leading critics assume the same positions. Elsewhere, Kindra and Stapenhurst observe that while the media can and does create awareness of the corrosive effects of corruption, there is need for an 'additional tool: the use of social marketing' (Kindra & Stapenhurst, 1998:2). Social marketing aims at changing behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of target groups beginning from the cognitive level to induced behavioural change. Two steps are identified:

- ‘Marketing research is used to identify the groups that most need the information and their media habits are identified. The messages themselves are formulated on the basis of target audience analysis and are carried to the audience through advertising, publicity, personnel, displays, exhibitions and other means.’
- ‘At the next level, the aim is to induce or help people to change some aspect of their behaviour ... This is much harder to achieve ... People must unlearn old habits, learn new ones, and maintain the new pattern of behaviour.’

The authors are quick to admit that step two is the ‘most difficult task’ because at that level, the goal is to ‘alter deeply felt belief or values’ and the ‘human psychological system resists information that is disorienting’. The prescription is a ‘long and intense program of indoctrination’ but ‘even then the chances for success are small’ ((Kindra & Stapenhurst, 1998:4).

The potential of social marketing as a tool to curb corruption provides opportunities for research that goes beyond the scope of the present work. It should suffice to note that in Zambia, the media - in this case including broadcasting - has done some of step one leading to some awareness about corruption. What is not clear is whether the media campaigns are helping ‘alter deeply felt beliefs’ about corruption. This calls for further investigation.

6. Pressure for changes to laws and regulations that create a climate favourable to corruption

This role demands that the press takes time to look deeply into the laws and regulations of the country to find flaws that increase the opportunities for corruption. In Zambia, and arguably in most of Africa, there are strong laws and regulations that bar the press from access to crucial information. This makes investigative reporting very difficult and allows corrupt public actors to shield themselves from scrutiny. Ironically, though the current government has positioned itself as an anti-corruption administration, it remains resistant to a freedom of information bill. This and many other issues around laws and regulations place a high demand on the professional capacities of news people to study such laws and mount enduring pressure for change.

7. Anticipation of adverse media publicity prompting a pre-emptive response

To deliver this role, the press needs more resources to undertake solid investigations that would oblige state actors to take pre-emptive actions. The challenge is that press people like ‘scoops’ and so would not want governments to act before their stories are published. It is hard for the press to claim credit for exposing corruption if or when the government’s pre-emptive action dissipates the impact of the story. However, it is important for journalists to realize that while by-lines are desirable and give professional fulfilment, the fight against corruption is bigger than personal egos.

Stapenhurst’s seven roles of the media in curbing corruption, though not exhaustive, provide a solid foundation for the position that the press is a significant player in the global anti-graft campaign. What becomes apparent is that anti-corruption

journalism is a high calling. In pursuing and fighting corruption, the media itself faces the strong possibility for being caught up in the device. Warren (1996) laments that ‘in many developing countries, so-called “envelop journalism” (accepting financial benefits for certain action or inaction) is the corruption which destroys the image of our profession; deepening cynicism about the media and making us part of the problem, not solution’. While there is no evidence of rampant corruption within press circles in Zambia, the danger hovers continuously over news professionals. Warren’s appeal (1996), though outdated, is still relevant: ‘We have an ethical obligation to our readers, viewers and listeners. They expect honesty from us as we demand it from others’.

BACKGROUND TO CORRUPTION IN ZAMBIA

This paper is not about corruption but about the role of the media in exposing and curbing its impact on the quality of governance in African states. Therefore, the following review of corruption in Zambia will be brief and limited to providing a background within which the role of the media can be better understood.

Zambia became independent in 1964 and for the first 10 years enjoyed relative prosperity, thanks to copper exports. Though no major studies have been undertaken about corruption in those early years, it is safe to surmise that it, if it existed, it was rare and of nominal consequence to national development. Under President Kenneth Kaunda, public leaders were expected to work within an ethical regime called a ‘leadership code’ that forbade illegal wealth acquisition. Emasu (2005) says that from 1964 to the early 1970s, corruption was ‘unheard of’ and that the political leadership was ‘strongly against corruption’.

However, by the late 1970s occurrences of acts of corruption - missing public funds, unexplained acquisition of personal wealth etc - began to bother the Kaunda government. This can be attributed to the collapsing economy which put a squeeze on the population causing greater temptation for public officials to abuse public resources they had exclusive access to. The situation became so serious that in 1980 the Kaunda government introduced legislation against ‘corrupt practices’ to Parliament. Though the legislature at the time was comprised entirely of handpicked Kaunda stalwarts, there was fierce opposition by some backbenchers who feared that Kaunda would use this act to harass defectors, or as they were then known, ‘dissidents’. But, predictably, the Corrupt Practices Act No. 14 was passed and in 1982 the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) created and mandated to combat graft. The ACC director general was a presidential appointee and reported directly to the head of state. But like in most African countries during that era, the agency remained generally ineffective and instances of corruption among public officials continued to increase somewhat unabated.

Nonetheless, though rumblings of corruption may have been heard during the latter years of Kenneth Kaunda’s 27-year rule, the regime was not as corrupt as Chiluba’s reign turned out to be. While some corruption was apparent - such as trading foreign currency on the black market, ‘misplaced’ grant aid funds etc - grand corruption does not appear to have been rampant. When Chiluba ousted Kaunda in the country’s first genuinely competitive elections in 1991, there was grave acrimony between the two but Chiluba’s investigators could not dig up substantive corruption charges against Kaunda or his top lieutenants. Thus the only squabbling between the two was political. There is

no doubt that had Kaunda left a trail of corrupt actions while in office, the Chiluba government would have come after him.

The transitions from one-party and military regimes to plural politics that swept across Africa in the early 1990s triggered anti-corruption campaigns in many African countries. Harsch observed that ‘expressions of public outrage against corruption and corrupt officials occurred in many an African country since the beginning of the 1990s given greater rein by the eruption of pro-democracy movements that drew large numbers of people into political debate and organisation’. These ‘outbursts of discontent’ also included strong calls for accountability for public resources (1993:31). But that was not the case in Zambia. The pro-democracy Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) that ended Kaunda’s reign and ushered in the Chiluba era was less about corruption but more focused on ending the political hegemony of Kaunda’s United National Independence Party (UNIP). In fact many of Kaunda’s ministers were left without homes and vehicles as they had avoided wealth acquisition in line with Kaunda’s leadership code of ethics. For example, Kaunda’s long-term friend and loyal vice-president, Grey Zulu, lamented riding in rugged public minibuses until a wealthy and benevolent politician donated a used automobile for Zulu to use. Many of Kaunda’s loyalists wallowed and died in poverty after they were removed from office.

It is not surprising therefore that Zambia did not have a major anti-corruption campaign after Kaunda left office. The big story in the early Chiluba years was privatisation of the state-run (or more accurately state run-down) enterprises and the loss-making copper mines. This environment favoured and bred grand corruption. Chiluba and his newly minted ministers found themselves negotiating the disposure of many large enterprises. Chiluba was also desperate to appease international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF and instituted brutal structural adjustment programmes that placed a heavy burden on the already poverty stricken population. In this transitional scenario, it was easy for large amounts of favours to exchange hands.

ORIGINS OF THE ANTI CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN

The Chiluba years - 1991 to 2001 - turned out to be the era when corruption became endemic in Zambia. In 1997, the ACC Director General (quoted in Matenga, 1998) could not help but admit that there is ‘too much of it [corruption] going around the country’. As Chiluba’s constitutionally mandated two terms of office were nearing the end, he appeared to warm up to a third term bid. This desire may have been fuelled by the experience of his counter-part in neighbouring Namibia, President Sam Nujoma, who was handed a third term on a silver plate. However, Chiluba failed to see that he did not have the same level of good will and statesmanship as Nujoma had in Namibia. In Zambia, Chiluba’s third term bid created a fracas. The MMD imploded; the opposition exploded. Van Donge (2006) observes that Chiluba ‘quickly lost public status and respect, not only because of his thwarted attempt to change the constitution so that he could have a third term, but also of increasing accusations of corruption’. Corruption accusations which may have been spoken of discretely became public. ‘Chiluba-is-a-thief’ stories hit the headlines and have not stopped since.

Thus by the time President Mwanawasa assumed power, the media and the public were already aflame with anti-corruption sentiments. The independent press, by reporting

aggressively on anti-graft stories, stirred public opinion compelling the new government to exhibit immediate anti-corruption policy. But it is not just anti-corruption journalism that was driving Mwanawasa to act. There were three other sources of pressure. First, he had won the December 2001 elections on a thin margin and was facing severe challenges in court from the now deceased Anderson Mazoka, the leader of the United Party for National Development (UPND). Secondly, as one observer put it, ‘Mwanawasa had been seen as a straw man for Chiluba’ (Henriot, 2007). There was urgent need to be seen to be independent of Chiluba. Finally, there was a strong presence of opposition legislators in Parliament who were calling for investigation and prosecution of Chiluba.

Thus the first major action by President Mwanawasa was to lay corruption charges against his predecessor before the legislature and ask the law makers to permit the executive branch to investigate and possibly prosecute Chiluba. The Parliamentarians, taken off guard by the audacity of the Chiluba-anointed heir, intrigued by the unbelievable predatory abuse of public resources, and infuriated by Chiluba’s post-presidential pomposity, gave the new President the green light to pursue and prosecute Chiluba and his lieutenants. Years later, Chiluba was still bitter about these actions. They ‘generated anger, indignation, and at worst hatred against me’ and ‘I have been exposed to considerable public ridicule and contempt’ (Chellah, 2007). But though the former head of state is crying foul, he should not expect an apology from the incumbent. By his own account, Mwanawasa’s convictions about the evil of corruption are strong. He believes that corruption threatens ‘the very existence of Zambia as a nation’. He argues that, ‘It is not HIV/AIDS, it is not poverty, but corruption which poses the greatest threat to [the] people of this country’ (quoted in Henriot, 2007).

Thus the Mwanawasa presidency became embroiled in anti-corruption investigations and prosecutions from its inception. Chiluba’s press assistant, Richard Sakala, was convicted and jailed for five years by a magistrate’s court for theft of government vehicles and properties, abuse of office and corruption.. So was the former ZNS commandant, Wilford Funjika jailed for not following tender procedures when awarding contracts (Zulu, 2007). The other one convicted for five years with hard labour on 21 February 2007 was the former permanent secretary in the Ministry of Health Kashiwa Bulyaya for misappropriation of funds meant for the purchase of HIV/AIDS immune booster drugs, (Sichalwe, 2007d)

However, the big catch appeared to elude conviction. Chiluba was brought before the Zambian courts but with mixed success. Examples include the London judgement on 4 May 2007 and the freezing of various properties such as houses, the FJT Institute of Political and Democratic Governance among others However, others have been dragging on since 2003 like the case involving a deal to buy US\$20 million worth of weapons, which never arrived. In all, he was charged with 168 counts of theft, (*BBC News, 2007*). The cases did not appear to hold and about 100 for both Chiluba and Xavier Chungu were dismissed by a magistrate’s court in September 2007, although they were later re-charged on same counts. However, the investigations yielded revealing findings about the luxurious lifestyle Chiluba lives. A search at a warehouse yielded 349 shirts, 206 jackets and 72 pairs of shoes, (*BBC News, 2005-03-12*). These findings provided food for the press and fuel for the investigators and prosecutors. The anti-corruption coalition between the press and state was further affirmed.

Lack of progress in the Zambian courts may have driven the government to be more aggressive in the civil case brought against Chiluba in London. The London ruling was pronounced on 4 May 2007 and was damning against Chiluba. The press in Zambia published the ruling word for word. The judge found it hard to believe that ‘at a time when the vast majority of Zambians were struggling to live on \$1 a day and many could not afford more than one meal a day,’ Chiluba could spend US\$500,000 on suits monogrammed shirts and 72 pairs of handmade shoes. ‘The people of Zambia must know that whenever he appears in public wearing these clothes he acquired them with money stolen from them’ (Pallister, 2007).

The ruling generated a lot of news for the press. Kaunda, whom Chiluba had harassed while he was in power said Chiluba should be ‘remorseful for stealing from Zambians’ (*Saturday Post*, 2007-05-12). President of the opposition UPND, Hakainde Hichilema, said Chiluba as president ‘was a disgrace’ because he behaved ‘like a monkey in a maize field’ (*The Post*, 2007-05-18). It is rather sad that the Chiluba presidency will always be remembered for high levels of corruption rather than the courageous pro-democracy activism of the late 1980s that reintroduced competitive politics in Zambia.

MODELS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION JOURNALISM

The objective of this paper is to provide some insights into the relationship between the Zambian government’s anti-corruption campaign and anti-graft journalism by the press. The core question is: Who is setting the agenda? This question is best addressed by a response grounded in observations, findings and propositions found in the literature on the impact of investigative journalism as well as media influences on public opinion and decision making of public officials. The literature on these subjects is vast but for the purposes of this paper, the focus will be on three approaches that promise the greatest possibility of better explaining the complex and seemingly often changing relationship between the state and the press in Zambia’s anti-graft agenda.

Muckraking model

The muckraking models, though drawn from a somewhat romanticized history of American journalism, exhibit great promise in providing a framework that captures what is going on in anti-corruption journalism in Zambia. The idea behind the muckraking model is simple (Molotch, 1996:440):

“This [muckraking] imagery implies that muckrakers (investigative journalists) unearth evidence of a problem. The exposure (publication) of the problem leads to the mobilization of a changed public opinion which in turn is reflected in policy initiatives by legislators and administrators, followed by some sort of policy consequence.

This appears to be exactly what is often going on in the anti-corruption campaign in Zambia. Sources tell the press that President Chiluba is a ‘thief,’ plundering the country’s resources for personal aggrandizement. The press makes these accusations public. The public is activated and mobilized to press for action by administrators and

law makers. The President acts; parliamentarians follow suit. Legislative and policy changes are introduced. Investigations and prosecutions are launched with varying levels of success.

Another good example of the muckraking model in operation is the Ministry of Lands case. Although President Mwanawasa is said to have noted publicly that the Lands Ministry was ‘the most corrupt,’ no action was ever taken. Then, *The Post* published an investigative story detailing the rampant corruption in land administration at the Ministry. The Minister, Gladys Nyirongo, was reported to have awarded land to herself and associates without following procedures ‘Nyirongo gave out land to herself, two plots to her husband, and two other plots to her son and two more plots to her daughter.’ (*The Post*, 2007-02-27). The next day, 28 February, 2007, police besieged the Ministry of Lands headquarters locking out all staff while investigators rummaged through the records looking for implicating records, (*The Mail*, 2007-02-29). Nyirongo lost her job the day after (Mulenga, 2007). Later corruption charges were brought against the minister and other senior ministry officials (*Times*, 2007-06-30). It is clear that it was brilliant investigative journalism that triggered state action against corruption in the Ministry of Lands.

Anti-corruption journalism in Zambia appears to fit into the muckraking model described above, but it must be borne in mind that how the model operates varies. Feldstein distils three typologies of the Muckraking Model. First, there is the ‘catalyst’ model in which media investigations, lead to changes in public opinion, which lead to policy changes. Second is the ‘dummy’ typology in which ‘public opinion is essentially bypassed’ and the ‘real actors are the media and policy makers.’ Third is the ‘ventriloquist’ typology. In this case ‘the process is initiated not by the much-heralded journalist but by the behind-scenes source; for it is the source, not reporter, who is the real catalyst here for change’ (Feldstein, 2007:501-503).

These caveats to the Muckraking Model call for analysis that accommodates other theories and approaches that could have as much explanatory value towards understanding anti-corruption journalism in Zambia. One such instance is the Theory of the Accumulation of Minimal Effects (DeFleur & Dennis, 1994:578-579).

Accumulation of minimal effects

The effects of news reports on policy decision makers are fertile ground for debate and research among media scholars. Consensus is elusive (see for example Bryant & Zillmann, 1994). However, the accumulation of minimal effects theory exudes some power when applied to the evolution of anti-corruption journalism in Zambia. The proponents of the theory say three pre-requisites are required for accumulation theory to yield explanatory results (DeFleur & Dennis, 1994:573):

First, the media must focus repeatedly on a particularly issues; second, they must be relatively consistent in presenting a more-or-less uniform interpretation; and third, the major media (newspapers, radio, television, and magazines) must corroborate each other with parallel reports.

The theory is built on five propositions: first, the media focus attention on one issue; second, they are consistent and persistent over a long period of time; third, public awareness and comprehension of the issue increases accumulatively; fourth, increased awareness causes transformation of beliefs and attitudes leading to changes in behaviour; finally, 'minor individual-by-individual changes accumulate and new beliefs and attitudes slowly emerge to provide significant changes in norm of appropriate behaviour related to the topic' (DeFleur and Dennis 1994, p.579). Essentially, the idea is that once the media gang up on a topic and continuously report aggressively about the issue, there will eventually be accumulated effects that impact behaviour.

It is clear that the theory of accumulation is built on the muckraking model in that the influence of the press drives the behaviour of the state (except in the case of the 'ventriloquist' typology'. To apply this theory to anti-corruption journalism in Zambia, it would mean that it is the corroborative work of the three dailies that is driving the government's anti-corruption agenda. *The Post*, because of its independence, leads the way, but the government papers soon joined the pack in vilifying the corrupt by making their behaviour headline news. The cover stories stirred public opinion compelling the state to act - or at least appear to act - against corruption.

This theory does more or less capture what has sometimes happened in Zambia's anti-graft campaign. However, one deficiency is the implication that the government is a rather passive player in the campaign and that it has only taken up the corruption issue as a result of accumulated media effects. If the press was not making corruption the big story, there would be little action on the part of the state. This is not a complete picture. The role of the media in creating public awareness and calling for action against corruption cannot be questioned, but neither can the role of the government be relegated completely to passive reaction to media effects on public opinion. The relationship between anti-corruption journalism and the government's 'zero tolerance' policy is complicated and the fact that two of the papers are government ones is part of the complication.

Ecology of news model

Molotch, H., Proress, D. & Gordon, M. (1996) found, in their analysis of media-policy connection in the United States that the 'connection' was not as straight forward as the muckraking-based models and theories suggest. They found policy outcomes that did not match the traditional formula: from investigation to publication to activated public opinion to policy decisions to effective action. They came across many instances of what they labelled 'truncated muckraking' - botched investigations killed in the newsroom, stories that only stirred 'uneventful exposure', stirred but 'inconsequential' public opinion and 'symbolic' policy pronouncements but 'nothing is really done to affect the original problem'. They were also surprised by 'leaping impacts': solutions to problems with policy decisions, policy initiatives without pressure from public opinion, policy initiates without media reports and activated public opinion about an issue without much media coverage (Molotch, pp.45-48).

These encounters were a strong challenge to these media scholars. First, they questioned their previous approaches to the study of the influences of the media on policy

decisions. ‘Perhaps we have been misleading in emphasizing the role of journalists as the primary catalysts in the media-policy process’ (Molotch 1996, p.50). Their final position was even more drastic: ‘We give up testing the proposition that, as a general rule, media reports cause or do not cause opinion or policy consequences’. Instead, they advanced a different proposition - that the press and government actors exist in a ‘mutually constituted’ (Molotch 1996, p.59) ecology in which, when interests merge, coalitions are formed. In such situations, the press and public officials establish *quid pro quo* relationships in which ‘policy actors find their interests best served by joining in a journalistic investigation. The policy actors’ goal is to foster an image of responsiveness ... to head off potentially damaging implications of inefficiency, corruption or incompetence’ (Molotch 1996, p.51).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is the position of the present work that anti-corruption journalism in Zambia, in the last seven years, has arguably evolved from different versions of the muckraking model to the accumulative effect model and finally to the ecology model. Muckraking effects are most evident toward the end of President Chiluba’s era when *The Post* began to aggressively publish ‘Chiluba-is-a-thief’ stories. *The Post*, being the only independent daily at the time, led in publishing corruption stories, while the government-owned press was hesitant. However, when President Mwanawasa declared anti-corruption as the top item on his agenda, the government media became free to join in the campaign. At this stage in the evolution, anti-corruption journalism in Zambia matched closely with the accumulation theory: the dailies began to report persistently and consistently on corruption creating an accumulative effect on the government to investigate and prosecute Chiluba and his accomplices.

At the time of writing, anti-corruption journalism in Zambia had evolved into a symbiotic relationship between the press and the government. The government, basking in international praise for its anti-corruption campaign, is eager to show results and make headlines. The press, gold-digging corruption stories for its own sustenance, is eager to run with stories about government investigations, prosecutions and convictions.

Examples of this symbiosis are not hard to find. On March 26 2008, the Task Force on Corruption summoned Chiluba for yet another corruption case in which a Canadian corporation, Carlington Sales Company, was given US\$7.8 million to supply maize to Zambia. The corn was never supplied and the government suspects that Chiluba may have connived with the suppliers. The government, wanting to show that its anti-corruption campaign was still going on, called Chiluba in for a warn-and-caution statement. The press had another field day. The headlines in all the three dailies were about Chiluba being ‘summoned’ by the Task Force (*The Times*, *The Post*, *The Mail*, 2008-03-26) Follow-up stories after the three-hour meeting were just as hyped: ‘Task force grills Chiluba,’ (*The Mail*, 2008-03-27); Chiluba had ‘evaded’ the Task Force questions (*The Post*, 2008-03-26).

What is happening in these recent examples is that the press and the government have built a relationship - at least around the Chiluba case - in which they feed each other and also feed on each other. The press, hungry for anti-corruption news, salivates over government anti-graft activities. The government, keen to maintain if not upgrade its anti-

corruption score card, ardently creates events that show that it is committed to the anti-corruption agenda and, in the process, generates news that the press is hungry for. This relationship has become so steady that it can be said to have reached an ecological equilibrium.

What remains to be seen is whether this equilibrium will degenerate into a static partnership in which the press finds itself so entangled with the government on the corruption issue that it fails to address other governance issues, *such as human rights, justice, gender and general delivery of development services*. Already it appears that while the press is eager to make headlines out of corruption stories, it is less vocal on other issues which are as important. Even *The Post*, known in the past for aggressive reporting about many government failures, has in recent times mellowed down. Nonetheless, it is too early to make conclusive observations about the impact of the government-press coalition against corruption on the wider state/media relations in Zambia. This is yet to be seen.

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