

## **Chapter 7**

### **Election campaigns, partisan balance, and the news media**

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The mass media are the most common source for information about election campaigns in democracies and societies in transition around the world. In terms of the sheer volume of information available to citizens via the media on issues, political parties and leaders, election campaigns often represents a high point for political communications. Concerns about political bias in the mass media are at the heart of debates about the roles and responsibilities of the media at election time. Behind these concerns is the assumption that there may be effects, intended or unintended, on public opinion and political behavior and, ultimately, electoral outcomes.

In every election campaign, citizens must not only decide upon the party or candidate they wish to support, they must also decide whether they will vote at all. In democracies that do not mandate compulsory voting, most political observers would agree that turnout in an election is a measure of success where the higher the turnout, the better. In most cases, parties and candidates use all means to stimulate turnout and motivate supporters to go to the polls. In some cases, however, parties and political camps aim to repress turnout to accomplish their goals. It is the larger context of political party strategies and tactics, and the structure of the mass media environment, that we also need to consider when we turn to addressing questions about balance during election campaigns.

#### **The normative concepts of balance and bias**

What does the normative concept of balance imply for the news? Although balance is problematic to define, it remains an assumption behind allegations of political bias in the news, especially at election time. Political parties monitor media coverage closely and sometimes complain loudly when they perceive themselves to be accorded less time, less prominent, or less favorable coverage in comparison with their leading contenders.

In established democracies, broadcast journalists, whose medium is often mandated to provide impartial reporting of politics at election time, are confronted with the problem of balance when reporting election campaigns.<sup>1</sup> Research on television news has shown that the principle of balance, while used during election campaigns in a number of established democracies, has been applied quite differently. If the principle of balance in reporting on contending parties and candidates is strictly adhered to, then it conflicts with the journalistic principle of objectivity which drives story selection.

News values provide objective criteria by which editors determine what stories end up in the news. If television news is responsible for presenting a range of political voices at election time, then normal news values will need to be suspended to accomplish these objectives.

Allegations of political bias in the media may be aimed at the system level or at the program/individual level. An example of the former is the allegation by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky that there is an ideological bias in U.S. news reporting on Central and Latin America that supports U.S. government foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> An example of allegations of political bias at the program/individual level are those that emerged in the early part of the fall 2008 U.S. presidential election campaign about political talk-shows and news programs on MSNBC and Fox.

Some of the earliest research on media and elections in the U.S. stemmed from a concern about media bias having an impact on electoral outcomes. Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues compared radio and press reporting on the presidential candidates in the 1940 U.S. election. They found that Roosevelt had a visibility advantage in the news by a margin of 3:2 in quantitative terms, but the tone of the news actually favored Wilkie by a margin of 2:1, illustrating the independence of measures of degree and of direction of attention.<sup>3</sup> This early research illustrates two important dimensions to assessing balance in the news, namely visibility and valence.

In established democracies, the concepts of visibility and valence have been applied to the main political parties in assessing balance and bias in the news in election campaigns.<sup>4</sup> The visibility of party spokespersons and party leaders, and the tone of coverage toward these political actors, may be a component of the analysis. While the notions of balance and bias in the news at election time are often about political parties, they might also be extended to include interest groups and regions. In the context of a post-conflict election, and in societies in transition with little in the way of established political parties, it may be more difficult to apply these concepts to assessing the news coverage during an election campaign. Another question is whether internal diversity or external diversity is most important. The former refers to reporting taking into account the full range of parties and viewpoints within a news program, while the latter refers to the balance of coverage across all different news outlets. In comparing a number of established democracies on these questions, the answers are by no means identical.

## Four Case Studies

This issue of partisan balance in election campaigns is particularly important in transnational autocracies and consolidating democracies when one party is dominant, and where opposition parties and reform movements have difficulty in getting their message out to mobilize voters. Based on the experience with recent elections and the extent to which media reporting was seen to be an issue, and the national trajectories on the paths of democracy and development, four countries are studied here: Kenya, Mexico, Russia and Turkey.

These are diverse cases, drawn from different world regions and cultures. Some of these countries have more resources available to study election campaigns and changes in partisan balance in the media over time. Mexico and Turkey, for example, each have teams of researchers working on national election studies based on survey and panel data, as well as media content analysis of campaign news. Russia also has been the subject of much research with respect to media and politics, public opinion and elections. Kenya has had media monitoring and public opinion polls, but no systematic data collection that enables linking the two to address questions about influence. Although access to television in Kenya is far less widespread than in the other three countries in which 9 out of 10 households have television, television news reporting was perceived as imbalanced in the 2007 elections and this has been connected to the election's violent aftermath. In the sections that follow, I discuss each case drawing upon available scholarship and reports from recent elections.

[Table 7.1 about here]

Table 7.1 presents a matrix with key features of political and media system characteristics in the four countries. Based on the latest available Freedom House rating, these countries represent different levels of democracy ranging from free (Mexico) to not free (Russia), with Turkey and Kenya in between described as partly free. Press freedom is less variable, with Russia described as not free and the other countries as partly free, based on Freedom House ratings. The number of journalists killed in the country is another indicator of press freedom, and the common unfortunate degree of experience in Mexico and Russia on this indicator sets them apart from the Kenya and Turkey over the past five years. All countries have mixed broadcasting systems with public service (government funded) and private or commercial channels that operate nationwide, in addition to a number of regional and local channels. The countries vary in terms of the number of national newspapers, reflecting to some extent the variance in the reported level of literacy. Mexico, Russia and Turkey stand apart from Kenya, in terms of literacy, internet use, and access to television and radio. While television is a very accessible medium in

Mexico, Russia and Turkey, reaching more than 90 percent of households in those countries, less than 18 percent of households in Kenya have access to television and radio use is more widespread. The political systems vary from presidential in Kenya and Mexico to a mixed executive in Russia and Turkey, and the share of vote taken by the largest party in the last election suggests the least amount of electoral competition in Russia.

## **Kenya**

Kenya became independent from British rule in 1963. Kenya's constitution guarantees freedom of the press, free speech and freedom of assembly. The public service broadcasting ethos, with the duty to 'inform, educate and entertain' predominates. Journalists are known for independent and objective reporting.<sup>5</sup> Broadcasting in Kenya was originally modeled on the BBC, following the introduction of radio in 1927 under British colonial rule. Television stations include the government-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), Kenya Television Networks (KTN) among others as well as international channels. Newspapers in Kenya are privately owned and they have played a Fourth Estate role when criticizing the government, policies and political leaders.

In recent decades, until the fateful elections of December 2007, Kenya was viewed as one of Africa's most stable democratic countries with a thriving tourism industry and growing economy due to political stability, a developed financial sector, communications networks and liberal economic policies. The nation shares borders with Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

The 27 December 2007 presidential election had nine candidates on the national ballot, representing nine parties. Turnout was 69%. Incumbent President Mwai Kibaki (Party of National Unity, PNU) took 46.4% of the votes compared with Raila Odinga (Orange Democratic Movement, ODM) who took 44.1%. Kalonzo Musyoka (Orange Democratic movement-Kenya, ODM-K) came a distant third with 8.9% and all other candidates received less than one percent. Although the 2007 election is most remembered for its violent aftermath which was reported in some detail in news media around the world, in fact there were also a not inconsiderable number of violence incidents during the election campaign that received attention in Kenya's news media. The campaign violence in the Kenyan media appears to have been described in terms of who the victim(s) supported and who the perpetrator(s) supported.

In the run up to the 2007 general election, the UNDP contracted Strategic Public Relations & Research Limited to conduct monitoring from September through December 2007, with the goal of informing journalists, public, and politicians to ensure "enhanced far and accurate media reporting on

electoral issues.”<sup>6</sup> Balance, accuracy, impartiality and fairness was the goal of the exercise, with a focus on equitable access to media by political parties. Media monitoring reports were issued regularly with quantitative and qualitative assessments of political news in six newspapers, four television channels, six English/Swahili radio stations, and ten vernacular radio stations.<sup>7</sup>

The media monitoring operation specifically aimed to influence journalists, editors and media owners to provide accurate, impartial and fair reporting, and to encourage adherence to professional standards by journalists. By publicizing results periodically during the months preceding the election, the monitoring operation aimed to alert citizens to question their sources of information and to encourage parties and candidates to refrain from negative campaigning. The UNDP project also sought to advocate for new legislation to protect freedom of the press, the right to information, and the right of expression.

Kenya’s leading four television channels are owned by different media groups. Citizen TV is owned by Royal Media, a Kenyan multimedia house; Nation TV (NTV) is owned by Nation Media group, a Kenyan media company. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) is owned by the state/government, which is the equivalent to Britain’s BBC. And Kenya Television Network (KTN) is owned by the Standard Group, a regional media company.

Kenya’s code of conduct and practice of journalism provides guidelines on a number of issues to ensure free, fair and accurate coverage of election campaigns including: accuracy and fairness; right of reply; letter to the editor; unnamed sources confidentiality; misrepresentation; obscenity, taste and tone in reporting; pay for news; plagiarism; discrimination; reporting ethnic, religious and sectarian conflict; recording interviews and conversations; privacy; intrusion into grief and shock; sex discrimination; financial journalism; protection of children; victims of sex crimes; use of pictures and names; innocent relatives and friends; acts of violence; editor’s responsibilities; advertisements. There are also guidelines for election coverage that have been developed by news practitioners and media owners, with the goal of facilitating free, fair and democratic elections to assist voters in making informed choices. Subjects of the guidelines include: accuracy and fairness; sources of information; favors and special treatment; role of media owners; opinion polls; hate speech and incitement; minorities; state media; private media’ separation of fact and opinion; advertorials; identification; attacks and threats; journalists and assignments; electoral processes and malpractice; informing and educating voters; human rights, political activity.<sup>8</sup>

The first report at the end of September 2007 pointed up the political highlights that month including the launch of a new Party of National Unity (PNU) that was a coalition including parties that

supported the re-election of President Mwai Kibaki. An opinion poll showed the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party leader and presidential candidate Raila Odinga ahead of President Kibaki, and a third candidate Kalonzo Musyoka, as the most popular presidential candidate. A political rally in Kisii became violent with ODM leaders injured in the chaos. Kenya's Electoral Commission refuted allegations that it was to blame for the Kisii violence and pointed to police for acting as bystanders. The third political grouping was the Orange Democratic Movement of Kenya (ODM-K) and it also ranked third in visibility, far below the other two. Print media in general give more coverage to PNU and its affiliate parties than other competing parties. The pattern is also evident in the coverage of parties on mainstream radio, with PNU receiving the most coverage, ODM second, and ODM-K a far third. Vernacular radio stations provided more opportunity for ODM than PNU in three out of five stations. Incumbent Kibaki received the most coverage in all types of media, followed by Raila Odinga, and Kalonzo Musyoka coming a distant third. The first media monitoring report concluded that there was a general bias favoring the incumbent President in both state-owned and private media, in terms of more time and space in all major media, with largely favorable coverage. ODM's Odinga was second in all major media, and despite some negative coverage, "the media largely reported it factually." The third candidate was far less visible, and the reporting was labeled accurate and fair. Tone of reporting on television was described as positive or neutral and none of the programs on television critically engaged with the parties or candidates. The first report pointed up a tendency for television to avoid reporting a story than present a negative story. Hate speech was a focus of the first monitoring study because mainstream media have attempted to censor speeches that may cause violence and chaos. But, the report pointed out, there were cases such as live broadcasts, in which editors did not have the time to edit out inflammatory statements and the PNU launch was one such occasion.

Gender was also a focus of the monitoring study and the first month's report concluded that women candidates received minimal coverage compared to their male counterparts, with only 6% of the total coverage of candidates on television given to women. This cannot be explained away by the lower number of women candidates, as channel comparisons found that in many cases political activities by women candidates often went unreported in the news. One newspaper story by Maxwell Masava reported on a poll that asked voters if they would support a female candidate: 54% said slightly or very unlikely, compared with 46% slight or very likely. The article pictured three women candidates under the headline "Number of women MPs set to rise after poll" and key sub-headlines in the article revealed the gist of the story: "Jealousy was cited as the main reason why women were not voted in as leaders" and "Men seen by voters as more courageous and less jealous."

The conclusion of the first monitoring report recognized the visibility bonus given to the incumbent President and the PKU, but judged the situation overall to be a “significant improvement in the coverage of the competing political parties and candidates.” Biases in favor of the incumbent president and his party, sitting MPs, and male candidates were highlighted. The study urged media to provide more news on underrepresented groups such as women and disabled.

The second monitoring report one month later at the end of October 2007 concluded that there was “extensive, preferential coverage...given to the incumbent presidential candidate and the ruling party and little coverage or resources were assigned to opposition parties.”<sup>9</sup> The Electoral Law was criticized for being vague so that the allocation of airtime on broadcast media was very selective, as “all broadcast media monitored failed to comply with the basic obligations of balance and equitable coverage of parties and candidates.” The press was deemed to be less biased than broadcasting, though it was also described as clearly leaning towards the ruling party in its reporting.

The report made several recommendations:

1. The free air time granted to candidates should be made available during prime-time, as this can be the only time that candidates have access to media.
2. Paid political advertising should be regulated and clearly labeled, accompanied by financial transparency to ensure equality among contestants.
3. Publicly funded broadcasting organizations and print media should serve the public and not the political forces, and therefore guaranteed editorial and financial independence.
4. There should be a clear separation between election programs and other programs that are not about the campaign, and the latter should not be used to promote political parties and candidates.

These recommendations suggest that although the British model of public service broadcasting (PSB) was introduced in Kenya, it did not result in the extensive efforts to balance campaign reporting that have been found in flagship news programs in the UK, namely on BBC and ITN.<sup>10</sup> The free provision of air time to political parties also follows on the British PSB model, but the allocation of this time to the parties was obviously highly contested in Kenya’s 2007 campaign and the placement of these party broadcasts outside of prime-time failed to reach many potential voters. There was also a clear tension in Kenya’s PSB and state-funded media with less of a tendency to take a critical stance in reporting on the parties and top candidates. The report also condemned the use of entertainment programming to

promote political parties and leaders, so the spillover into a variety of formats that is so common across media at election time in western democracies was clearly seen as problematic in the Kenyan context.

The third monitoring report covered Oct. 29-Nov. 25, 2007 during which time the party manifestos were launched and the presidential candidates were nominated. At these routine campaign events, the British PSB model would have produced reports of approximately the same amount of time given to each main party but this was not the case here. Each of the four television channels displayed noticeable differences in amounts of time given to the manifesto launches of each party, and in three of the four cases ODM K received the most time, with PNU a close second, and ODM a distant third. On KTN, for example, ODM received just slightly over half the amount of time given to ODM K's launch, and PNU came in just a few minutes after ODM K. By contrast, on the coverage of the presidential nominations on these four channels, the ODM K candidate Kalonzo came in a distant third on three out of four channels. On KTN, Raila was almost twice as far ahead of Kibaki in terms of the coverage given to his nomination, and gap between the two was much less on KBC with Kibaki in the lead, and almost no gap between the two on NTV. CTV gave almost a third more airtime to the nomination of Kibaki than ODM's Ralia, who was closely followed by ODM-K Kalonzo.

The third report finds that across all television channels, PNU had the most coverage followed by ODM, and NTV and KTN appeared to aim for some parity across the three main parties while KBC and CTV gave significantly more time to PNU than the other two parties. With respect to reporting on the presidential candidates, KBC and KTN gave more coverage to the PNU incumbent Kibaki than the others, NTV gave the most balanced coverage to all the candidates, and CTV gave the most negative coverage to Ralia. Newspapers were deemed to have provided a comparatively fair reporting on the top three parties and candidates, with PNU coming first in the Nation, People and Kenya Times, and ODM first in Standard and Nairobi Star. Across all newspapers monitored, Kibaki and PNU received the most positive coverage.

Violence became a part of the nomination process, and the report states that supporters of candidates who lost resorted to violence and demonstrations to protest the outcomes of the party primaries. ODM was the focus of more post-nomination coverage than other parties, all of which portrayed the party negatively. The report blames the media for releasing preliminary results in an attempt to beat each other on forecasting outcomes which precipitated violence. The report also criticized the media for overemphasizing violence, citing the example that CTV covered a demonstration against ODM in Moyale for about a half hour.

The third report also offered a number of conclusions about women and elections: women are not given any special treatment in the media; there are commentaries in the media on the difficulties women face running for office; all media treat women candidates as equal to their male counterparts; and women who complain of unfair treatment are given a fair audience by the media. These conclusions were presented without any data to substantiate them.

A fourth report, November 27-December 10<sup>th</sup>, focused exclusively on election violence. The report concluded that violence has been an important issue in the elections and the government and the Electoral Commission are left to handle the situation after news about violence has been transmitted by the media to the public.

The fifth report, dated December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007, drew attention to the fact that reporting on opinion polls in the media has improved over the course of the campaign. For example, media have called attention to the sponsors of the surveys, sample size and allocation, margins of error and confidence levels, survey instruments and their administration, and data analysis procedures. The report also points out that there are fewer cases in which politicians allege bias or misrepresentation by the media, which the report indicated suggests greater fairness and accuracy in reporting.

The final report, from December 11-20, 2007, found that PNU and ODM led in terms of the amount of radio coverage during prime-time. But the sections of the report on television and the press did not offer general conclusions about the visibility bias or tone of coverage toward each of the main candidates and parties, and instead only showed a number of charts presumably to leave conclusions to the reader. Those charts suggest to this reader that for television, the incumbent Kibaki maintained his visibility lead over the other candidates with Raila only even or almost even with him on KTN and NTV, and Kibaki was always the more likely lead news story on all four channels. The PNU (Kibaki's party) also maintained this visibility bonus on all channels apart from KTN. Kibaki also received the most favorable coverage of all the candidates on all four television channels, exceeding Raila's percentage of favorable coverage by some ten percentage points on KTN and KBC, with less of a gap between the two on NTV and CTV. The press was more balanced than television with respect to the top two presidential candidates' visibility and the visibility of the two leading parties PNU and ODM. The report offered no charts or qualitative judgment of the tone of the coverage in the press, however.

The report concluded that there have been improvements in coverage with respect to 'fairness and accuracy':

“Even though sections of the media have provided inordinate coverage to certain parties and candidates, the media has generally attempted a fair balance and has largely reported accurately...Cases of misrepresentation have greatly reduced...The coverage of delicate issues such as ethnic, religious and other sectarian differences has been well handled with none of the mainstream media overtly taking stands in such cases.”

This official monitoring exercise attributed some blame for the violence during the campaign to both media reporting and ineffective response of the Electoral Commission and the civil authorities. What is not addressed is what specifically is provoking the violence during the campaign in various parts of the country. The monitoring also did not discuss the issues that were reported on in connection with the coverage of the main parties and leading presidential candidates, and it is important to know how and whether certain issues played favorably for one or another candidate and party. The absence of issue reporting is also an important finding, but we don't have any indication of the importance of issues in the news during this historic campaign based on these monitoring reports.

There is a need for a stronger regulatory framework governing elections in Kenya that can also exert some influence over access to television and radio. There also appears to be little in the way of expert research on the consequences of election reporting on political behavior and electoral outcomes. While two publications discussed below highlight the role of the media in the campaign, and offer valuable policy suggestions, there remains a lack of systematic data collection on media content, public opinion and voting behavior in Kenyan elections.

A 16-page policy briefing published by the BBC World Trust Service was published in January 2008 on the role of the media in the post-election violence in Kenya. Specific policy relevant conclusions that also pertain to the media in 2007 Kenyan election campaign include these twelve points<sup>11</sup>:

1. "The media... play a central role in shaping Kenya's democracy. The recent record of the media, according to many within it, is that media has undermined as well as invigorated that democracy....[The briefing urges] development actors to be better engaged and more supportive of media in the future.
2. The problem facing Kenya's media is not an excess of media freedom. [but rather] a lack of it....Journalists and broadcasters face immense commercial and political constraints which are constraining their journalistic independence and integrity.

3. Some local language radio stations have incited fear and hatred....Talk shows have provided the greatest opportunities for hate speech and... [hosts] are not trained in conflict reporting or moderation....[T]his [training] was [felt to be] a priority.
4. [L]ocal language stations appear to have been playing an important role in calming tension and promoting dialogue. A strengthening of such a role... will form a critical contribution.
5. Training... remains a major priority, [particularly] training talk show hosts and others engaged in facilitating public debate. Training [journalists] on conflict reporting [is] now consider[ed]... an urgent need.
6. [A] debate [on media policy and regulatory environment] should be encouraged, and particular attention could usefully be focused on a public interest approach to broadcasting and media.
7. Media monitoring by civil society and research organizations has done a good deal to discourage the broadcast of hate speech by media organizations. Such monitoring is currently haphazard and could be more systematic and better supported.
8. Community media has...emerged with great credit [in calming the violence] and arguably provides a model for the future. It requires better, more strategic engagement and support in Kenya and elsewhere. This support is partly a question of policy engagement, partly one of financial, funding and sustainability models.
9. The poor remuneration, status and safety of journalists is hampering a free and plural media. Substantial progress in strengthening the media will not be possible unless the working conditions of journalists are improved.
10. There is no independent public service broadcaster in Kenya. If there is a debate and a move in the country to transform [a station] ... into one, it could usefully be intensively supported.
11. Kenya faces the most important public debate in its history. The media will be central to its character, conduct and its outcome. An inclusive and balanced debate may need financial support.

12. Coordination, information sharing and long term strategic planning of media support within Kenya could be substantially improved, including in ensuring that external media support is both demand led and strategically coherent. Much capacity building of media over recent years has been donor led (focused for example on specific health or other issues) rather than addressing the core challenges facing media in Kenya."

The policy briefing was based on a number of interviews with national and international figures in the Kenyan media and supporting organizations by the authors Jamal Abdi and James Deane.<sup>12</sup>

The *Journal of Eastern African Studies* devoted a special issue in July 2008 to the 2007 Kenyan elections, with more than a dozen articles on the background and context, the campaign, the vote, the violence, and the future.<sup>13</sup> The deeply contested official results are the subject of one article in the special issues whose author Toni Weis notes, "...even if these figures are questionable, their effects are quite real: however flawed the numbers are, they profoundly shape the political reality Kenya will have to live with in the years to come."<sup>14</sup>

### **Mexico**

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, media in Mexico were inextricably entwined with the country's single party system. But in the last two decades, Mexico has made a remarkable transition from a government-controlled media system to a market-driven competitive system. This transformation in Mexico's media system furthered democratization in the country. Competition encouraged new forms of reporting to appeal to audiences and, according to Chappell Lawson, these "changes in media coverage themselves exerted a powerful influence on politics and political transition," including "increased scrutiny of government actions and decisions, [and]...greater coverage of opposition parties during election campaigns."<sup>15</sup> The shift to a market-driven media system did not occur simultaneously in the broadcast and print media, it started earlier in the press and took place over a longer period whereas a culture of independence developed more slowly among owners and journalists in broadcast media.

With respect to newspapers, which have a very limited readership in Mexico, below 10,000 copies per day in the mid-1990s, there was the important recognition among journalists that greater independence comes from financial autonomy. Lawson describes the remarkable transition to a Fourth Estate print media in these terms:

In the 1970s 1980s, and 1990s, journalists with a different vision of their profession founded a series of independent publications: *Proceso*, *El Financiero*, *La Jornada*, *Reforma*, *Siglo21*, and others. Because these publications were more popular than their traditional counterparts, they were able to attain some measure of financial autonomy. Financial autonomy, in turn, enabled these publications to better resist official pressures and encouraged other papers to follow suit. Ultimately, independent journalism spread to virtually all major media markets. By the late 1990s, Mexico's Fourth Estate was firmly established in the print media.<sup>16</sup>

While entrepreneurial newspaper journalists were responsible for building the Fourth Estate in the press over several decades, Televisa was the single company that dominated that Mexican television from the 1970s to the mid-1990s. It took an earthquake in 1985, registering 8.1 on the Richter scale in Mexico City, to recognize extreme public dissatisfaction with the government and to demonstrate to media owners that the Mexican public demanded accurate information. Radio forged ahead with timely and accurate assessments of damage, while Televisa "continued to transmit mild reports of the damage—up until its own tower collapsed and it was forced off the air."<sup>17</sup> A large number of the channel's employees were killed. By the 1990s, Televisa's coverage of earthquakes and other natural disasters had become "extensive and graphic." The 1988 presidential election coverage was influenced by the earthquake, with radio offering a more even-handed approach to reporting the PRI's electoral challengers, though television coverage continued to provide a 'profoundly biased' view of the race to the point that it became an issue in the election campaign itself.

With the economic liberalization program of President Salinas, the broadcast media landscape was forever altered with the privatization of government-owned television channels. Television Azteca brought competition into the television landscape and, financed by banks in Texas, Mexico and NBC, the new network specifically challenged Televisa as an alternative national broadcaster. It took several years however for the new private television channel to become more assertive in the delivery of political news, with ratings rivaling Televisa's by 1997.

With legislation in 1996 to guarantee the autonomy of the Federal Election Institute (IFE), there was a deliberate attempt to ensure balance in broadcast news coverage during the 1997 and 2000 elections despite the fact that IFE had no authority to sanction networks. IFE provided public funds to political parties after 1996 which funded advertising and television networks competed for their business. Broadcast journalists insist that the opening of television occurred from the bottom up and

that despite the changes made by the Salinas administration the President actually had a negative influence on the process of opening the broadcast media.

The 1997 Mexico City mayoral elections brought PRI opponent Cardenas, a candidate of the PRD, into power, and some observers claim that Mexico's transition to democracy was solidified when PRI President Ernesto Zedillo officially recognized the victory of Cardenas in this mayoral race. Others point to the presidential election of 2000 as the watershed election that guaranteed the transition to democracy in Mexico.

The election of Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) in 2000 altered the political landscape as he was the first opposition party leader to ascend to power peacefully and many therefore say he was responsible for bringing democracy to Mexico.<sup>18</sup> As President, he brought major changes in the news media and in the laws and practices governing free expression and freedom of information legislation which opened most areas of government to external scrutiny. The establishment of the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information, which serves to process requests for government documents and files, and the release of tens of thousands of secret files by the government, for example, brought about an unprecedented openness in the country. In 2001, President Fox launched "e-Mexico" to have the Internet provide more access to government information.

With the result of the 2000 election, and a newly elected President Fox, the many print media found themselves in a difficult position as they had supported the incumbent Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and had been subsidized by the state or the party for years. Television and broadcast media had also worked closely with the incumbent PRI. The election of Vicente Fox and the end of the accommodating relationship between the state and the media brought about a new era, one in which there was no longer room for conscious avoidance of criticism of the government and the President. A new critical Fourth Estate role was evidenced by a number of exchanges Fox himself had with the media.

Televisa continues to be Mexico's leading broadcasting company and is also among the world's leading syndicators. Televisa controls a number of Mexico's national broadcast channels that are among the favorite channels of television viewers, and the company also has interests in radio, cable, magazines, sports, film and TV production studios. TV Azteca, the main competitor to Televisa, was launched in the mid-1990s under the administration of President Carlos Salinas through the sale of state-owned networks in an effort to privatize and democratize. It later emerged that the networks that became TV Azteca were bought by a businessman whose opportunity to purchase was facilitated

through payments to the President's brother Raul Salinas, and TV Azteca came to support PRI and the government just as Televisa had.

Research on Mexico's 2000 presidential campaign found that privately owned television stations were generally more balanced than public broadcasters, which continued to follow propagandistic models of reporting. Yet private ownership also often involved special arrangements between broadcasters and politicians based on the prospect of future business, which Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson describe as "crony capitalism."<sup>19</sup> Changes in ownership therefore do not appear to be eradicating partisan bias in the news.

Content analysis of the coverage of the 2000 election campaign on the country's two leading television channels found that the tone of the news reporting on PAN candidate Vicente Fox on Televisa shifted considerably over the course of the campaign, with a marked change against him after it became evident that he might actually defeat the PRI nominee.<sup>20</sup> Many political observers viewed the change in Televisa's reporting on Fox as a consequence of government pressure on the network.

A four-wave panel survey conducted during and surrounding Mexico's watershed presidential elections in 2000 found that exposure to television news had significant effects on both attitudes and vote choices.<sup>21</sup> By 2000, public disenchantment with the government's handling of the economy, and with corruption, was widespread and this was an important influence on voters. News coverage was also a key factor in influencing voter attitudes and behavior in 2000. There were differences in the tone of coverage on the main candidates and this indeed shaped citizens' comparative assessments of those candidates. In cases in which reporting was balanced, the effects of exposure to television news were not important but key differences in the tone of coverage to which citizens were exposed did emerge in public opinion. With respect to vote choice, the study shows that Vicente Fox benefitted from the fact that those who were exposed to network news on Television Azteca displayed declining support for Labastida over the course of the campaign whereas only modest effects emerged among Televisa audiences.

Mexico held simultaneous presidential and national legislative elections on 2 July 2006. There were five registered candidates standing for president and the result was very close between the PAN and PRD candidates, with turnout at 58.6%. Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojose (PAN) took 36.7% of the vote compared with 36.1% for Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (PRD). Roberto Madrazo Pintado (PRI) came a distant third with 22.7% of the vote. In the Senate which has 128 seats, PAN took 52 seats, PRD took 36 seats, and PRI took 38 seats. In the Chamber of Deputies which has 500 seats, the results in

terms of seats for the three largest parties were PAN 206, PRD 160, and PRI 121. The 2000 election therefore paved the way for PAN to succeed in 2006, winning across the board. Alejandro Moreno shows how economic voting was activated in the 2006 presidential campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Content analysis of campaign news on television found that during the first part of the 2006 race, Television Azteca leaned toward Lopez Obrador (PRD) in part because the channel wanted his advertising money and in part because “it was betting on him to win.”<sup>23</sup> The channel’s coverage tilted against Lopez Obrador after the race began to narrow and the new law regulating television – nicknamed Ley Televisa -- was passed. Taking the period from January 19 through July 2, 2006 on the two main television channels, Televisa and Tevision Azetca, TV news was slightly more negative towards the PRD/Left 5.6%, compared with the PRI 2.7% and PAN 2.5%, while the vast bulk of television news was coded as neutral in its depiction of the 2006 federal elections. Positive coverage of the parties was 1% or less on television. There was a greater difference among the parties in terms of visibility on TV news, however: The PRI received the most television news time with 1,118,701 seconds, followed by PRD with 903,175 seconds, and PAN with 864,723 seconds. Radio news was more negative: PRD/Left with 14.3%, PRI with 9.9% and PAN 6.8%. Radio also ranked the parties differently on air time. PRD/Left with 4,682,634 seconds, PRI 3,604,812 seconds and PAN 3,830,639 seconds. All of these data come from Mexico’s Federal Election Institute.<sup>24</sup> The visuals of candidates on television have been almost always favorable or neutral with net positive ratings for all of the three main presidential candidates around +30% in both 2000 and 2006 campaigns.<sup>25</sup>

Although there has been no systematic research on the balance of poll or horserace coverage versus substantive or policy reporting on the Mexican media coverage of campaigns, there is limited space given on television, radio and in print media to discussing the outcomes of polls. And this is despite the fact that a number of news media themselves often commission or conduct polls. Mexican media also tend to give more ‘soundbite’ time to candidates than their U.S. counterparts, with the average soundbite about 20 seconds, and there is less interest in Mexico in reporting on the private lives of candidates unless it concerns allegations of corruption.

In terms of political advertising, parties traditionally invested heavily in television relative to other media outlets, and in 2006 this was by a ratio of 3 to 1 spent on television vs. radio, and a ratio of 6 to 1 on non-broadcast media. The legislation introduced in 2007 curbed the amount of public funds provided to the parties, but they remain well funded with about \$100 million annually in non-election years for activities and up to about \$130 million in years with midterm elections and \$150 million in

presidential election years. Parties will not be permitted to purchase time on television or radio with these funds, but they will receive substantial free advertising time during campaigns. Television is therefore expected to continue to be the main medium for party campaigning and for voter information during election campaigns. Central party organizations with state funding are expected to continue to dominate campaigning.

The 2006 elections occurred before the implementation of Article 79-A of the Ley Televisa, so the next election will be the basis for understanding how this new regulatory environment affects balance and access in campaigns. At present, the Mexico's electoral authorities are in the process of translating the broad legal mandates into specific regulations. The IFE was affected by the 2007 reforms. The President of the IFI will serve for six years with the possibility of re-election for one further six year term and other members are to serve single terms of nine years. Current IFE members were selected in 2003 and their replacement will be staggered to prevent influence of party politics. The IFE oversees a large number of civil servants and political appointees who train polling station workers and supervise the campaign, as well as negotiate with political parties which are required to report campaign expenditures to the IFE. The 2007 reforms put IFE in charge of allocating free airtime during the campaign to the parties and no other group is allowed to purchase airtime, thus no "swiftboating" by outside interest groups as was the case in the U.S. 2004 presidential election campaign. IFE will also have the power to stop broadcasts that it views as in violation of the provisions. IFE also has the power to ban spots due to accuracy and tone, and in 2005 they issued bans on 29 separate spots "deemed deceptive, defamatory or exorbitantly nasty."<sup>26</sup> Mexican law does not give IFE the right to sanction channels for the tone and content of news coverage, however, and it has been suggested that this leaves "room for bias stemming from collusive relationships between broadcasters and the political leaders."<sup>27</sup> The regulatory changes continue to change however. By the summer of 2007, Mexico's Supreme Court in effect nullified a number of key provisions of the Ley Televisa with several rulings, which alongside the contested outcome of the 2006 election, presented an opportunity for the Congress to produce legislation on electoral reform that "further ensures the integrity and authority of Mexican electoral institutions."<sup>28</sup>

In sum, Mexico has all pieces in place to guarantee an opportunity of access to the main political parties and presidential candidates during election campaign. Mexican elections are also the focus of research among a vibrant and growing community of scholars and polling experts. Their research on Mexican election campaigns is guaranteed to unveil any perceived biases in the news media and their

potential consequences for electoral outcomes and may in fact have implications for future regulatory policy.

### **Russia**

Russians went to the polls in national legislative elections on 2 December 2007 and then again on 2 March 2008 to vote in the presidential election. In both cases, one party, United Russia (ER), took the majority of votes. In the legislative election, ER took 64.3% of the vote, followed by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) with 11.6% of the vote, and turnout of 63.7%. In the presidential election, Dmitrii Medvedev received 70.3% of the vote, well ahead of the Communist Party candidate Gennadii Zyuganov with 17.7%, on a turnout of 69.7%. Since the presidential election, Vladimir Putin has been appointed Prime Minister by President Medvedev. This overwhelming support for one party by the public mirrored the overwhelming consensus in the Russian media.

The Soviet Russian state retained the system of censorship that existed in czarist Russia in which self-censorship by journalists themselves was the key. The purpose of news organizations was to extend to the public the Party's view and stimulate national support for the regime. News was drab, official, and unchallenging. Despite this, the Soviet press was widely read and television news was widely viewed. When Mikhail Gorbachev took office in 1985, his introduction of glasnost was welcomed by media in the form of questioning government policy, yet most of the revelations were "carefully orchestrated and leaked by Gorbachev's few close supporters," or by himself, so that it was essentially "free speech from the top down."<sup>29</sup>

The 1991 Russian Law on the Mass Media predated the 1993 constitution. While censorship was barred and freedom of information guaranteed, there was no law guaranteeing journalists the right of access to government information. Journalists could also be required by the courts to disclose their sources. Media were liable for defamation and left the news organization with the burden of proof, which led to many lawsuits especially in the provinces by government officials, individuals and businesses. Two government agencies were created: the State committee on the Press which registered print media and distributed state subsidies, and the Federal Service of Television and Radio Broadcasting which issued and revoked broadcasting licenses.

All media were hard hit by the economic crises in Russia in the 1990s and many saw advertising revenues fall appreciably. Economic pressures on the news organizations and their poorly paid or unpaid employees made fertile soil for the growth of a culture of corruption in journalism which already had a precedent in the Soviet era. Some journalists and editors took payments for publishing certain stories.

Focus groups with journalists conducted for the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1998 pointed out that bribes were common during the 1996 election campaign. One analyst at the respective Moscow business newspaper *Kommersant-daily*, said “there was no objectivity at all in election coverage. Every person stood up for his own specific interests. I, for instance, bought myself an apartment.”<sup>30</sup>

A content analysis of television reporting on Russian elections in 1995 and 1996 concluded:

The results of coding television news during the campaign periods for the 1995 Duma campaign and the 1996 presidential race show that these channels generally failed to contribute fully to the legitimization of the electoral process. During the parliamentary campaign, state-controlled Russian Public Television (ORT) focused on pro-government parties and neglected coverage of the competition. Although the elections coverage on the private NTV station was more balanced, the elections were relatively ignored in favor of aggressive coverage of the war in Chechnya. By the 1996 presidential election, the two stations both abandoned the pretense of neutrality to promote the incumbent presidential candidate, Boris Yeltsin. What emerges from this study is evidence of a missed opportunity to consolidate the growth of an independent media in Russia—and the failure of voters to obtain disinterested information from primary television outlets in a fragile democracy.<sup>31</sup>

There is a considerable literature on Russian voting and public opinion since the early 1990s.<sup>32</sup> There are also numerous reports on Russian media reporting during election campaigns.<sup>33</sup> The European Institute for the Media show that Russian journalists view themselves as political players more than watchdogs or challengers to the status quo. Although citizens are aware of the biases in television news on state-run Channel 1, it continues to be one of the most trusted institutions in Russia. In 34 focus groups in 2000 and 2004, run by Sarah Oates with support from the British economic and social Research Council, citizens in Russia commented that they rely on state-run television especially for news, and they supported the role of television as a political player.<sup>34</sup>

There were five national television organizations in Russia in 2000: RTR, which was owned by the government and controlled by the Kremlin; ORT which had the largest news audience, in which the government held 51% ownership though otherwise it was known that media oligarch Berezovsky exercised control on ORT news programs; TV Center which was private but in practice controlled by the government of the Mayor of Moscow, which began in 1997; NTV, a wholly private operation, founded in 1993, controlled by Gusinsky’s conglomerate Media-Most until the 2001 takeover by Gazprom administrators supportive of the Kremlin; and TV-6 which was largely entertainment television founded

as a joint venture with Turner Broadcasting which later withdrew, and Berezovsky also had a large stake in the company. There continued to be many newspapers in Russia in 2000. The Moscow dailies and weeklies continued to set the national media agenda when investigative pieces prompted official responses or were picked up by television. In May 2001, a *Noviye Izvestia* correspondent said that there was no room for independent investigative reporting because “every article in the newspaper is bought and paid for.”<sup>35</sup>

The USIA focus groups among educated elites in Moscow and three provincial cities in late 1998 revealed a consensus that the Russian media became much less diverse and free with the start of the 1996 election campaign. The 1996 presidential campaign led to the perception that manipulation of public opinion was one of the main functions of the Russian media. The reporting appears to have been less biased in the 2000 presidential campaign in part because one of the main broadcast networks, NTV, opposed Putin and the other two ORT and RTR supported him.

Once Putin came into office, his government quickly took steps to diminish the power of media barons who were perceived to be a challenge to the Kremlin. Gusinsky (owner of NTV) was the first target. His conglomerate, Media-Most, owed an estimated \$1.5 billion to Gazprom. He fled to Spain and by April 2001 Gazprom officials took over Media-Most and the conglomerate’s daily newspapers and radio station. Berezovsky was next, who owned 49% of ORT but effectively controlled the channel because he paid the salaries of the news division staff. He exiled himself from Russia and there were reports in July 2001 that he had sold his share of ORT to Roman Abramovich, oil baron and governor of Chukotka who was supportive of the Kremlin. After these takeovers, Russian national television became more muted in reporting news and opinion that might offend the Kremlin, but not entirely silenced and alternative perspectives were still present in print and local broadcast media.

Putin also signed into law on December 20, 2002, the new law on Duma elections, which has some good intentions with respect to objectivity and balance in the informational material carried by the mass media and disseminated by the political parties. But the overly specific restrictions accompanying the law make it unworkable, and the law has little to do with Russian media reality. Much of the news is positive to pro-government parties and candidates, often in the form of a visibility advantage in the news.<sup>36</sup>

The democratic intentions in the design of the electoral system, the media and campaign practices since 1993 were no guarantee of democratic government. Sarah Oates explained what came out of these good intentions: “...manipulation of the media and the party system constrained the

development of functional political parties. As a result, 'broadcast parties' that are little more than a marketing exercise manipulated by the power and money of elites replaced grass-roots parties. As such elections increasingly became an exercise in propaganda and image, with more legitimate parties such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and Yabloko marginalized and finally excluded from real power. The link between party identification or judgment of a party by prospective/retrospective evaluation doesn't function in Russia; hence the media coverage is not particularly relevant in the classic sense. But it IS important in terms of the image exercise!"<sup>37</sup>

## **Turkey**

Established in 1923, the Republic of Turkey has at times experienced a critical press in a Fourth Estate role and at other times a censored press subject to closure and legislation designed to limit the media's role in reporting. From the launch of the press during the Ottoman Empire, legislation in 1858 restricted the press from criticizing government officials and violation resulted in fines or sometimes even closure.<sup>38</sup> The publication of photos and humor deemed to be not in good taste was also an offense. Legislation in 1864 required government permission to publish, although this is no longer the case. In short, the history of the press in Turkey has been one of government influence or control to guarantee no serious criticism of the government.

The media industry in general in contemporary Turkey is characterized by high levels of concentration of ownership. The Dogan group owns nearly half of the total newspaper circulation in the country, two very important television stations (Kanal D and CNN-Turk), dozens of magazines and three radio stations. The Sabah Group is the second largest owner of media with five newspapers including one of the largest in circulation (Sabah). There are three additional groups that own the remainder of the country's media.

Media concentration of ownership has been criticized for resulting in less diversity in news and information as well as conflicts of interest in displaying a lack of critical reporting on the non-media institutions and organizations owned by media groups. Government subsidies in recent years to expand newspapers have also been said to have diminished both critical reporting on corruption and press credibility.

Circulation measures do not adequately capture the reach of newspapers as many are also read in public places such as coffee houses and in the workplace. At least 13 daily newspapers are circulated to more than 100,000 people each, and 7 sell more than half a million copies each day. The tabloid-style sensationalized coverage of crime and partially dressed women, on the order of some of the British

press, is matched by a sober and serious quality daily press that has a long history. *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), for example, is one of the country's oldest daily newspapers, launched in 1924 with the mission of explaining to the people the principles of Ataturk. According to the BBC, major newspapers include: two mass circulation dailies, *Hurriyet* and *Milliyet*; one left wing daily, *Cumhuriyet*; and several English-language newspapers *Sabah*; *Today's Zaman* which is the English version of a Turkish daily; *The New Anatolian*; *Turkish Daily News*.

Turkey, like most of Europe, had a public broadcasting monopoly until the late 1980s. The summer of 1990 brought privately owned radio and television stations from Europe via satellite dishes, without permission from the government. Turkey's 1982 constitution authorized the state only to establishing broadcasting stations. By 1993 parliament legalized private broadcasting with a constitutional amendment known as Article 133 that noted: "radio and television channels may be freely established and managed within the stipulations to be regulated by law. The independence and the impartiality of the only radio and television institution established by the state as a public corporate body and news agencies aided as public corporate bodies are essential." Today there are some 300 of local television channels owned privately, and more than a dozen nationally broadcast private channels, with more than 1,000 private radio stations, competing with the state broadcaster TNT which operates four national networks. While the majority of private channels are commercial and feature entertainment, sports and news, as in the U.S. religious groups in Turkey own or control some channels and include programming on Islamic practice and topics. The growth of the internet in Turkey has been substantial over the past decade. Online news media launched by journalists who lost their jobs in the financial crisis that hit the country and particularly the journalism industry hard in 2001, are finding a large and active audience.

Turkey's major television channels include: TRT which is the state broadcaster; Star TV, private and the first to break the state's TV monopoly; Show TV, a private high ratings network; Kanal D, a private high ratings network; less watched private networks are ATV, TGRT, NTV, and CNN Turk. TRT is also the country's leading radio with cultural/educational programin gon TRT1, popular music on TRT3 and folk and classical music on TRT 4. Show radio and Capital radio are commercial radio stations with wide reach, and Radio Foreks is a news station with wide reach.

The Supreme Council of Radio and Television is appointed by the government to monitor and regulate broadcast media and apply sanctions when it observes a violation of the law. It is a crime to spread separatist (read Kurdish) propaganda, and it is also an offense to provoke enmity or hatred by

displaying hatred or regionalism. Many reporters and news organizations have been charged with breaking these laws over the past two decades. One of the sanctions imposed by the Supreme Council included a one day ban on broadcasting by CNN-Turk, which is a joint venture between CNN and the Dogan Group. This was due to the fact that the host of a talk show raised a question about whether Abdullah Ocalan, the Kurdish revolutionary leader, who is otherwise known as a terrorist, could ever acquire the stature of Nelson Mandela.

The BBC describes the difficult environment in which journalists in Turkey are working: For journalists, the subjects of the military, Kurds and political Islam are highly sensitive and can lead to arrest and criminal prosecution. Media watchdogs and rights groups report that journalists have been imprisoned, or attacked by police. It is also common for radio and TV stations to have their broadcasts suspended for airing sensitive material. Some of the most repressive sanctions against journalists have been lifted as part of reforms intended to meet EU entry requirements. But the Paris-based watchdog Reporters Without Borders noted in 2006 that journalists were "still at the mercy of arbitrary court decisions". An article in the penal code makes it a crime to insult Turkish national identity. It has been used to prosecute journalists and publishers. Kurdish-language broadcasts, banned for many years, were introduced by the state broadcaster in June 2004 as a part of reforms intended to meet EU criteria on minorities. Some overseas-based Kurdish TV channels broadcast via satellite.<sup>39</sup>

In November 2002, Turkish politics was transformed with the general election results that brought a new political party to power with nearly two-thirds of the seats in the parliament. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) came out of a tradition of Islamic oriented political parties which have challenged the state's practices on religious policy.<sup>40</sup> In the past, Islamic parties had been banned from running in elections, but over time this resulted in a reframing of the message in order to work with the constraints of the system.<sup>41</sup>

To the dismay of many in Turkey's secular establishment, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was first named Prime Minister in 2003 as leader of the Justice and Development Party (AK). AK had become the country's largest party in Parliament and claimed to be secular but is criticized for having a hidden Islamic agenda to bring about sharia law and for openly supporting pro-Islamic reforms to Turkish law such as lifting the ban on the turban in universities and government institutions. In the 1990s Erdogan was a member of what was a precursor to the AK, then called the Welfare Party, which was an openly Islamist party whose members also included his close ally Abdullah Gul.

By 2006, Prime Minister Erdogan was expressing possible interest in being a candidate himself for the position of President, which would have made him the first president from AK and the first president whose wife wears a turban. It is important to understand the meaning of the turban in the Turkish context, which is not the traditional Islamic headscarf or veil often seen worn by Muslim women in western European countries: "The turban is not a traditional Islamic head-cover which has no political connotation and is not at all problematized within the system. That is our grandmother's attire. The turban on the other hand is politicized and is a very modern attire of urban conservative circles. Not much of a rural base exists in the rural segments of the society for turban."<sup>42</sup> Many Turks were alarmed by the thought of a First Lady in a turban appearing at official functions and expressed that it would roll back 80 years of progress and the secular state. The press was also fascinated with this story, but at the same time concerned about what a powerful leader might do to harm its interest if the widely popular Erdogan became president and another AK member became Prime Minister. The President is not elected directly by the public but by a majority in the Parliament.

As it became clear from public opinion via the press that this was a very hot issue, the Erdogan decided that he himself should not be considered a possible candidate. Instead, he claimed he would consult various groups in society before deciding who he would endorse for the position of President. There was a cartoon that showed him saying that he will ask for the opinion of group a, group b, group c, group d, and finally he would even ask the press, which shows the journalist running away in shock and possibly also fear.

Based on the timing of the 2002 election, the due date for the next election was in November 2007. In May 2007, however, the Turkish Grand National Assembly controlled by the AKP failed to elect the 11th President of the Republic. This came after a long and very polarizing debate over the candidates, the procedures, and the implications of the election for the Republican regime. This legal and political debacle forced the AKP to call for elections about three and a half months earlier than their due date.

On 22 July 2007, Turkish voters went to the polls for the fifteenth time since the first contested elections of 1950. Of the six main parties contesting 550 seats the 22 July 2007 parliamentary elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took 46.7% of the vote, which represented a 12.4% increase on its share of the vote since 2002, and the Republican People's Party (CHP) took 20.8 percent which represented only a 1.4% increase since 2002. Despite these increases in share of vote, AKP lost 22 seats and CHP lost 68 seats in 2007, because the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) took 14.3% of the vote

which represented an increase of 6% and 70 seats since 2002. Turnout was 84.4%. The independents who were Kurdish nationalists who ran as independents to circumvent the 10% threshold for parties to win seats, took 5.2% and 28 seats. The 2007 election was the second parliamentary election in which citizens opted for a 'progressive' Islamic party over a 'conservative' secular party.

In 2007, the AK led by Erdogan won an unprecedented share of the percent of the national vote, which was viewed as a landslide by many observers. Shortly thereafter, Erdogan endorsed his close friend and political ally and AK member Abdullah Gul for the office of president. Parliament elected him with an even bigger majority than before and Gul took office. President Gul's wife is also wearing a turban but rarely appears at official functions.

The larger questions are now being asked by scholars of electoral behavior, as they analyze the data from the 2007 Turkish National Election Study: How far has the AKP been able to transform itself from a marginal ideological movement into a party of the centre of Turkish society?<sup>43</sup> To what extent does the AKP's heightened electoral self-confidence coincide with continued commitment to democratic reform? Is Turkey moving to a one-party system similar to India, Japan and Italy prior to the 1990s?<sup>44</sup> Ali Carkoglu notes: The AKP is the only party with pro-Islamist roots to have increased its vote share in competitive elections after nearly five years in office. The AKP's second general election victory is significant, since it seems the success of the incumbent government was primarily due to evaluations of its performance rather than to ideological cleavages. Another critical factor was the AKP's successful transformation of its traditionally euroskeptic constituency in less than five years into the only party constituency that is predominantly pro-EU. As a result, the AKP remains the sole political engine behind Turkey's EU project. Consequently, the AKP's conservative pro-Islamist ideological roots and constituency characteristics offer a continued identity challenge for the EU, as the membership negotiations continue to unfold.<sup>45</sup>

Research on the 2007 election campaign includes a study of the reporting of the campaign in major news media over the ten weeks prior to the election, May 7 through June 22, 2007 are underway.<sup>46</sup> Preliminary findings are just out from content analysis of four national daily newspapers: *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, *Posta*, and *Cumhuriyet*. *Hürriyet* and *Zaman* are broadsheets, the former is a mainstream, quality newspaper and the latter is a quality conservative newspaper with an Islamist leaning. *Posta* is the tabloid with the highest readership in Turkey. *Cumhuriyet* is an intellectual quality broadsheet and has the lowest circulation of these four newspapers. The front page of each newspaper was analyzed for each day, as was a randomly selected inside page for which each story was coded. The

news story is the unit of analysis and each was coded for characteristics such as length and placement, a primary and secondary topic, and whether the election was mentioned. Up to 10 actors (party leaders and candidates) were coded in each story. AKP politicians and spokespersons were the most visible actors in the press, far above other party spokespersons as the election drew closer. MHP and CHP were the next most visible parties in the press, but well below the AKP. High visibility did not mean positive coverage, however. With respect to tone towards main party actors in the news, most of the stories in all newspapers were negative and there was very little in the way of positive coverage with the exception of CHP and DP in *Cumhuriyet*. Future research will focus on completing the coding of the television news programs that were collected during the campaign.

### **Conclusions**

Elections are high points for political communication in the lives of democracies and societies in transition. In most societies, television continues to be the medium of choice for information about the election campaign, the parties, leaders and policy issues. In the four case studies presented here – Kenya, Mexico, Russia and Turkey – television has been the focus of much attention during recent election campaigns and it is perceived as an influential player in the electoral process. Citizens' responses ranged from resigned acceptance in Russia, to ethnic violence in Kenya, and protest in Turkey and Mexico. Legislative action and regulatory change emerged in Mexico and the new regulatory environment governing television in election campaigns will be in place in the next national election.

The case studies show four countries at very different points with respect to addressing questions about balance in the mass media during election campaigns. By almost all accounts, Russia is a 'failed state' in these terms, yet the public votes and the citizens appear to trust state-controlled television news in large numbers, despite evidence of overwhelming bias in the news at election time. By contrast, Mexico and Turkey, in the most recent elections, appear to have all the mechanisms in place to study and assess the contents, uses and impacts of the mass media in election campaigns. Research is still underway on the most recent elections in these countries on the contents of the news coverage and the possible consequences for electoral behavior. Of the four countries studied here, Kenya is unique in having a journalistic culture which espouses a Fourth Estate role. That said, the little evidence available from the most recent election campaign suggests that media helped to facilitate the problem of ethnic violence in the election's aftermath, and imbalanced coverage in television news during the campaign may have contributed to what at the time was perceived as random acts of violence during the campaign.

Free and fair elections are a core principle for democratic development. As campaigns mark high points for political reporting in national and international news media, the consequences of a problematic campaign and unclear electoral outcome may reverberate in the national economy and the national consciousness for some time. Even in an established democracy like The Netherlands, many international business investors pulled out after the highly-charged and rhetorically intense 2002 election, when a right-wing leader was gunned down just days before the vote and his leaderless new political party, LPF, went on to win an unprecedented number of seats. The contested election outcome in Kenya in 2007 and the violent aftermath of the campaign shut down tourism in the country for some time and diminished international investment considerably.

The four cases studied here are at different points along the path of putting systems into place that recognize the importance of the media in elections and enable experts to assess its role and impact. Important goals are: (1) *to enhance media literacy* among citizens before, during and after election campaigns; (2) *to monitor and measure media coverage* in a systematic fashion which enables comparisons across media in real-time during campaigns; and (3) *to establish and strengthen existing national election studies* to provide the independent collection of valid and reliable survey data before, during, and after election campaigns. Technical assistance can build capacity in each of these areas.

Media literacy refers to the ability of audience members to ask questions about the information they are receiving rather than accept it immediately without question. While much has been done to educate young people to become media literate, these has been concentrated in media saturated societies. In 1982, UNESCO founded the Grünwald Declaration of 1982 to “emphasize the need for political and educational systems to promote citizens’ critical understanding of the phenomena of communication.”<sup>47</sup> In June 2008, UNESCO brought together experts from around the world to share methods for introducing media literacy into teacher training worldwide. Election campaigns are ideal territory for testing the critical thinking skills necessary for media literacy.

Best practices in media coverage of elections can contribute towards a larger media literacy education campaign, to enhance citizens’ awareness and abilities to reflect critically upon the information before them. Such a project would bring together media professionals and expert researchers on media in elections to identify international standards for election news reporting, and best examples to be shared.

Real-time monitoring of election news is done in a number of countries and this information is utilized by campaigners, interest groups, and citizens. Best practices in coding a storing these real-time

data should be the focus of one component of the project, to enable a standard number of variables and formats for coding information so that it can be leveraged by those studying the effects of the media on citizens political attitudes and electoral behavior.

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) was established in 2005 to support democratization throughout the world and finance projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes. UNDEF complements ongoing UN efforts to strengthen democracy and expand it around the world. The ACE (administration and costs for elections) Electoral Knowledge Network provides online information on elections, promotes interaction among election professionals around the world, and enhances capacity development for electoral management. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network helps Electoral Commissions in a number of countries to identify what role the Commissions play in election campaign reporting, in the context of the best practices project.<sup>48</sup>

Technical assistance in surveying the public to assess the influence of the election campaign, and the media coverage of the campaign, on political attitudes and behavior, can draw upon a variety of experts. Many are active in international survey organizations such as the World Organization of Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and they also include researchers in universities that serve on national election studies and international comparative research projects. One of the goals in this part of the Best Practices project is to ensure that key questions about the news media and communication sources are asked in the surveys. The World Values Survey, for example, in its most recent wave included a series of questions on media use that enable scholars to address important questions about media influence cultural convergence on a global scale.<sup>49</sup> In the context of election campaigns, researchers working in national election studies, as well as those in the field of comparative electoral and survey research, can help to build capacity for survey fieldwork and research in various contexts, to determine the most effective methods for capturing public perceptions of the campaign and campaign effects on electoral outcomes.

**Table 7.1 Political and Media System Characteristics**

	<b>Kenya</b>	<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
Democracy <sup>4</sup>	partly free (7)	free (5)	not free (11)	partly free (6)
Press freedom <sup>3</sup>	partly free (59)	partly free (48)	not free (75)	partly free (49)
GDP pc PPP (US\$) <sup>3</sup>	1,240	10,751	10,845	8,407
HDI <sup>3</sup>	.521 (148th)	.829 (52nd)	.802 (67th)	.775 (84th)
<b>Journalists killed</b>				
2006-2008	0	9	5	2
2003-2005	0	6	8	0
<b>Type of broadcasting system</b>				
Number of terrestrial public and private nation-wide channels	7	4	6	8 (some 300 private)
<b>Type of newspaper market</b>				
Number of national daily titles	5	300	250	588
Daily circulation per 1,000		92.76	91.78	
<b>Level of literacy</b>	73.6	91.6	99.4	87.4
<b>Access</b>				
Internet users per 1,000	32.43	180.64	152.33	222.02
Radios per 1,000	104	325	418	180
Household with television (%)	16.83	92.37	97.77	96.29
<b>Political context</b>				
Type of executive	Presidential	Presidential	Mixed executive	Mixed executive
Share of votes/seats of the largest party	56.1 <sup>1</sup> 125 out of 210	34.6 <sup>2</sup> 206 out of 500	64.3 <sup>3</sup> 315 out of 450	46.7 <sup>3</sup> 341 out of 550

**Notes:** 1 - 2002, 2 - 2006, 3 - 2007, 4 - 2008

**Sources:** Democracy and press freedom, Freedom House; GDP, HDI, and literacy, UN Stats; journalist killed, International Press Institute; newspaper data, World Development Indicators, World Bank; access and type of executive data taken from Norris; share of votes, Psephos, <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/>.

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<sup>1</sup> Holli A. Semetko. 1996. 'Political Balance on Television: Campaigns in the US, Britain and Germany.' *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 1 (1): 51-71.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. 2002. *Manufacturing Consent: The political economy the media* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Pantheon Books, New York.

<sup>3</sup> Denis McQuail. 1992. *Media Performance. Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London and Newbury Park CA: Sage. p. 225

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Holli A. Semetko, Jay G. Blumler, Michael Gurevitch, David H. Weaver. 1991. *The Formation of Campaign Agendas: A Comparative Analysis of Party and Media Roles in Recent American and British Elections*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas K. Boas. 2003. Status of Media in East Africa. *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, VI 1: 461-468. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Science.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.kenyaelections2007.org/media\\_monitoring.html](http://www.kenyaelections2007.org/media_monitoring.html)

<sup>7</sup> Newspapers: East African, Kenya times, Nairobi Star, Nation, People, Standard. Television: Citizen, KBC, KTN, NTV. English/Swahili Radio: Capital FM, Classic, Easy FM, KBC, Kiss, Simba. Vernacular Radio: Coro, Egessa, Iqra, Inooro, Kameme, Kass, Mulembe, Musyi, Ramogi, Sayare.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP-Kenya Monthly Media Monitoring for 2007 Elections Report. 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007-30<sup>th</sup> September 2007, Strategic Public Relations and Research Ltd.

<sup>9</sup> UNDP-Kenya Monthly Media Monitoring for 2007 Elections Report. 30 October 2007, Strategic Public Relations and Research Ltd.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Holli A. Semetko, Jay G. Blumler, Michael Gurevitch, David Weaver. 1991. *The Formation of Campaign Agendas: A Comparative Analysis of Party and Media Roles in recent American and British Elections*. Hillsdale, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>11</sup> These twelve conclusions are online at the Democracy and Governance website:

<http://www.comminit.com/en/node/269468/348>

<sup>12</sup> BBC World Service Trust. 2008. *Policy Briefing #1. The Kenyan 2007 elections and their aftermath: the role of media and communication*. April. London, U.K.

<sup>13</sup> See *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. 2008. Special issue on 'Election Fever: Kenya's Crisis.' 2 (2) 2008.

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- <sup>14</sup> Toni Weis. 2008. 'The Results of the 2007 Kenyan General Election' *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. 2 (2):1-41; p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Chappell H. Lawson. 2002. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. p.5
- <sup>16</sup> Chappell H. Lawson. 2002. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. p. 91.
- <sup>17</sup> Chappell H. Lawson. 2002. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. p. 100.
- <sup>18</sup> Alejandro Moreno. 2003. 'Campaign Effects in Mexico: Evidence from the 2000-2002 National Panel Study and the 2003 Election.' Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- <sup>19</sup> Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson. 2004. 'Propaganda and Crony Capitalism: Partisan Bias in Mexican Television News' *Latin American Research Review*. 39 (3): 81-105; p. 81. See also Sallie Hughes and Chappell Lawson. 2005. 'The Barriers to Media Opening in Latin America.' *Political Communication*. 22:9-25.
- <sup>20</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2004. 'Television coverage, vote choice, and the 2000 campaign.' In J.I. Domínguez & C. Lawson (Eds). *Mexico's pivotal democratic election: Candidates, voters and the presidential campaign of 2000* (pp. 187-209). Stanford & La Jolla, CA: Stanford University Press//the Center for U.S. – Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego.
- <sup>21</sup> Chappell Lawson and James A. McCann. 2004. 'Television News, Mexico's 2000 Elections and Media Effects in Emerging Democracies.' *British Journal of Political Science*. 34: 1-30. See also Alejandro Moreno. 2003. 'The Effects of Negative Campaigns on Mexican Voters.' In *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Campaigns, Voting Behavior, and the 2000 Presidential Race*, Eds. Jorge I. Domínguez & Chappell Lawson. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Alejandro Moreno. 2007. 'The 2006 Mexican Presidential Election: The Economy, Oil Revenues, and Ideology.' *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 40( 1): 15-19.
- <sup>22</sup> Alejandro Moreno. forthcoming. "It's the Economy, Stupid! The Activation of Economic Voting in the 2006 Mexican Presidential Election Campaign' Jorge Domínguez, Chappell Lawson, and Alejandro Moreno (eds.). forthcoming. *Consolidating Democracy in Mexico: The 2006 Presidential Campaign in Comparative Perspective*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press.

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<sup>23</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2008. 'Election Coverage in Mexico: Regulation meets Crony Capitalism.' In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. pp. 368-383. p. 378.

<sup>24</sup> These are presented in Table 23.1 on p. 371 of Chappell Lawson. 2008. 'Election Coverage in Mexico: Regulation meets Crony Capitalism.' In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. pp. 368-383.

<sup>25</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2004. Television coverage, vote choice, and the 2000 campaign. In Jorge Dominguez & Chappell Lawson (Eds). *Mexico's pivotal democratic election: Candidates, voters and the presidential campaign of 2000* (pp. 187-209), Stanford & La Jolla, CA: Stanford University Press/the Center for U.S. – Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego. Chappell Lawson, James McCann, M. Flores. 2007. Content analysis of news coverage of the 2006 Mexican campaign. Dataset.

<sup>26</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2008. 'Election Coverage in Mexico: Regulation meets Crony Capitalism.' In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. p.379.

<sup>27</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2008. 'Election Coverage in Mexico: Regulation meets Crony Capitalism.' In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. p. 380.

<sup>28</sup> Chappell Lawson. 2008. 'Election Coverage in Mexico: Regulation meets Crony Capitalism.' In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. p. 380.

<sup>29</sup> Michael J. Berlin. 2003. 'Status of the Media in Russia.' *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, 4: 103-113.. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Science. p. 105. Much of this section on the historical development of the Russian media system draws on Berlin 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Michael J. Berlin. 2003. 'Status of the Media in Russia.' *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, Vol. 4: 103-113. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Science. p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Oates and Laura Roselle. 2000. 'Russian Elections and TV News: Comparison of Campaign News on State-Controlled and Commercial Television Channels.' *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 5 (2): 30-51.

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<sup>32</sup> Since the launch of the Russian Federation in January, 1992, the Center for the Study of Public Policy (CSPP) at the University of Aberdeen has been conducting Barometer surveys monitoring mass response to transformation across Central and East Europe and the former Soviet Union. In addition to the classic text on Russian voting, Steven White, Richard Rose and Ian McAllister. 1997. *How Russia Votes*. Washington, D.C.: C.Q. Press, Richard Rose and Neil Munro. 2002. *Elections without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and Sarah Oates. 2006 *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia* London: Routledge Curzonsee, see [http://www.russiavotes.org/president/presidency\\_vote\\_preferences.php?S776173303132=63924c6f1c2ac7d04fc6b7b8edb49e54](http://www.russiavotes.org/president/presidency_vote_preferences.php?S776173303132=63924c6f1c2ac7d04fc6b7b8edb49e54)

<sup>33</sup> See the European Institute for the Media. [www.eim.org](http://www.eim.org)

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Oates. 2008. Election Coverage in the Russian Federation. In Jesper Stromback and Lynda Lee Kaid eds. *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World*. New York: Taylor and Francis. pp. 355-367.

<sup>35</sup> Berlin 2003: 113.

<sup>36</sup> Oates. forthcoming. p. 360

<sup>37</sup> Interview with the author. May 15, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> This discussion of the development of the Turkish media system draws extensively upon Christine Ogan. 2003. Status of Media in Turkey. *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, VI 4: 511-517. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Science.

<sup>39</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/country\\_profiles/1022222.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1022222.stm)

<sup>40</sup> Ali Çarkoğlu. 2003. 'The Rise of the New Generation Pro-Islamists in Turkey: The Justice and Development Party Phenomenon in the November 2002 Elections in Turkey.' *South European Society & Politics*, 7(3):123-156.

<sup>41</sup> R. Quinn Mecham. 2004. 'From the Ashes of Virtue, a Promise of Light: The Transformation of Political Islam in Turkey.' *Third World Quarterly*. 25 (2): 339-358.

<sup>42</sup> Interview by the author with Turkish political scientist, May 12, 2008.

<sup>43</sup> See Ali Çarkoğlu and Ersin Kalaycıoğlu. 2007. *Turkish Democracy Today: Elections, Protest and Stability in an Islamic Society*, I. B. Tauris.

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<sup>44</sup> Ali Carkoglu, 2007. 'A New Electoral Victory for the 'Pro-Islamists' or the 'New Centre-Right'? The Justice and Development Party Phenomenon in the July 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey.' *South European Society and Politics*, 12 (4): 501 – 519.

<sup>45</sup> Ali Carkoglu, 2007. 'A New Electoral Victory for the 'Pro-Islamists' or the 'New Centre-Right'? The Justice and Development Party Phenomenon in the July 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Turkey.' *South European Society and Politics*, 12 (4): 501 – 519.

<sup>46</sup> Canan Balkir, Susan Banducci, Didem Soyaltin & Huriye Toker. 2008. 'Expecting the Unforeseeable: The 2007 Turkish Elections in the Media'. *Turkish Studies*. 9, 2: 199-214. June.

<sup>47</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=27056&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27056&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/XNewsACEElectoralKnowledge.htm>

<sup>49</sup> See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. 2009. *Cultural Convergence? Cosmopolitan Communications and National Diversity*. New York and London: Cambridge University Press.