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**THE MAKING OF AN AFRICAN PUBLIC SPHERE:
THE PERFORMANCE OF THE KENYAN DAILY PRESS
DURING THE CHANGE TO MULTI-PARTY POLITICS.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Natal – Durban. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Problem

In this study I am interested in investigating or assessing the performance of the daily press in an African country during a period of fundamental change in its political culture. The investigation will take the form of exploration and analysis of changes in the way two daily newspapers differentially performed in their coverage of (reporting) and commentary on the political transition in Kenya from a single party to a multi-party system. The decision for this study was influenced by two major reasons. Firstly, the strong prompting to argue and test the study's major hypothesis that *in Kenya, the country's political culture and praxis, more than any other single variable, has contributed most to the pressures and influences that have constrained or enabled the performance of the press in the realm of politics*. The opportunity to do this was afforded by the second reason; the socio-political process that led to the constitutional change in 1992, which established a multi-party political system in Kenya.

The above proposition is important because since the time of the struggle for political independence, most media critics, politicians and government functionaries have explained the performance of the daily press mainly by reference to their ownership status. The details of these debates will be given below, especially in Chapter Three. I have not come across a single study that has attempted empirically to explain the political performance of the Kenyan daily press by reference to her political culture. Most of the arguments in the debates on the performance of the media in Kenya have been informed, directly and/or indirectly, by the normative theory of development communication. In a critical

review of this normative perspective, I will show below its inadequacy to address issues related to the role of the press in the democratic process. I will therefore go on to recommend and develop the theory of the public sphere as a pertinent normative theory against which one can judge the Kenyan political media and make recommendations for their improvement.

Throughout 1990 and 1991, there was a determined spirit on the part of critics and opponents of the KANU (Kenya African National Union) government to defy attempts by the state to suppress their efforts at breaking KANU's monopoly of Kenya's national politics. While the KANU government had little, if any, leverage to muzzle completely voices of dissent from institutions such as the organised Church and the Law Society of Kenya, it had the political will and constitutional power to defeat any attempts at the formation of organised political opposition. It would seem that the daily press took their cue from this reality so that organised or attempts at organised party opposition were covered or reported on very sparingly, if at all. For example, when Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, a seasoned opposition figure, first announced in October 1990 that he would form an opposition party, none of the three daily newspapers carried the story (*Weekly Review*, 22 March 1991: 5).

The above observations beg the question as to what was the nature and extent of the influence of the one-party political culture on the political performance of the daily press. But before addressing this question, one needs to give a description of the emergence and nature of this political culture and how it affected various human freedoms in Kenya. It becomes pertinent also to review the history of the daily press in Kenya in order to better understand its nature and those influences that have most affected its composition and performance in the political sphere. From these reviews, I will provide the reasons that underpin my major hypothesis. It is my argument that it is necessary to have some understanding of the histories of party politics and of the daily press in order to

fully appreciate the empirical study, its results and their interpretation. Simply put, one needs to appreciate the dynamics of the influences between political culture and press performance as they were before the political change in order to investigate and understand how this change impacted on the political performance of the daily press. Gallagher (1982: 171) captures the dynamic relationship between the mass media and societal structures and processes thus:

... the general conclusion must be that the mass communication is indeed bound with, and bounded by, the interests of the dominant institutions of society, but that these interests are continually redefined through a process to which the media themselves contribute.

1.1.1 Democratic Political Culture and Legitimacy

The *Dictionary of Political Analysis* defines political culture as "The aggregate of learned, socially transmitted behaviour patterns characterising government and politics within a society. Political culture frequently connotes the psychological dimension of political behaviour – beliefs, feelings, and evaluative orientations. A political culture is the product of the historical experience of the whole society as well as the personal experiences that contribute to the socialisation of each individual." According to Pye (1993: 712), "Involving both the ideals and the operating norms of a political system, political culture includes subjective attitudes and sentiments as well as objective symbols and creeds that together govern political behaviour and give structure and order to the political process".

Birch (1993: 32) defines political authority as "a combination of political power and legitimacy, where power is the ability to get things done and legitimacy is the quality of ascribed entitlement to exercise that power". In Baynes (1993) words "the concept of *legitimacy* refers to a political order's worthiness to be

recognised". Held (1993: 150-1) discusses legitimacy, together with territoriality and coercion, as the third key term in Weber's definition of the modern state. In this definition "the state is based on a monopoly of physical coercion which is legitimised ... by a belief in the justifiability and/or legality of this monopoly". In Weber's concept of legitimacy, people no longer comply with authority claimed by the powers that be merely on the grounds, as were once common, of habit and tradition or the charisma and personal appeal of individual leaders. "Officials of the modern state can claim obedience, not because of any particular appeal they might possess, although this might sometimes be very significant indeed, but because of the authority they hold temporarily as a result of their *office* which people endorse or at least generally accept" (*ibid.*).

The *Dictionary of Political Analysis* defines legitimacy as:

The quality of being justified or willingly accepted by subordinates that converts the exercise of political power into "rightful" authority. Legitimacy reflects an underlying consensus that endows the leadership and the state with authority, and that offers respect and acceptance for individual leaders, institutions and behaviour norms. Although law serves a legitimating function, the technicality of law alone without widespread social acceptance may provide little support for the power of the lawmakers and enforcers. The consensus that provide the legitimating factor in the exercise of power may be cultivated through the sanctity of tradition, by the devotion of people to a charismatic leader, or by the acceptance of the supremacy of "legal authority" through a general belief in the supremacy of law.

On the basis of the above definitions and pertinent literature (Atieno Odhiambo, 1988; Anyang Nyong'o, 1988; Birch, 1993; Goulbourne, 1987; Gitonga, 1988; Habermas, 1992; Held, 1987), one can say that a liberal democratic political

culture obtains where the "pattern of orientations toward government and politics" is characterised by an open, free and informed participation by the citizens in the political process. This culture is enabled by the fact that the various groupings, and/or individuals, of society articulate their interests in terms of demands on societal resources, the formulation of collectively significant goals and participation in policy formulation for the achievement of these demands.

One of the preconditions to this democratic politico-cultural process is the existence and efficient functioning of various political institutions, mainly, universal suffrage, free electoral competition, political parties, free press and parliamentary democracy. The successful working of these institutions is seen as the source of political legitimacy. This type of legitimacy implies that power lies with the led, a power exercised through the ballot box. Birch (1993: 35) explains this by observing that one of the functions of political representation "is to ensure that political leaders are held accountable to the electorate for their actions in elections that are spaced in time, but not too widely spaced. These help legitimise the system and the powers of those who direct the government." There are indeed those like Schumpeter (1976), for whom the only defining characteristic of a democratic process is the legitimacy conferred to those in authority by a competitive (free and fair) electoral system. For such people, "democracy should be understood (merely) as a political method in which people as electors periodically choose between possible teams of leaders ... a mechanism to select 'the men who are able to do the deciding'" (Held 1993: 165).

A democratic political process whose legitimacy is based solely on the institution of electoral competition among political elites has received widespread criticism from radical Africanist and other scholars (Ajulu, 1992; Allen, Baylies and Szeftel, 1992; Anyang Nyong'o 1987; 1988; 1989; Atieno Odhiambo, 1988; Beckman, 1989; 1991; Chomsky, 1991; Cliffe and Seddon, 1991; Decalo, 1992; Frank, 1991; Gitonga, 1988; Gouldbourne, 1987; Gutto, 1988; Imam, 1992; Shivji,

1991). In this regard Gitonga's comments about a democratic political culture will be helpful. He argues that since "The superstructural foundations of democracy are ... to be found in the values, beliefs and attitudes of the people ... the amount or degree of democracy in any given society is directly proportional to the degree of acculturation of the people in democratic values, attitudes and beliefs. For democracy to exist, survive and prosper, it requires that the people be bathed in and drenched with the democratic ethos!" That is, the people must be imbued with "the gospel of equality, freedom and human dignity". (Gitonga, 1988:22).

In a critique of Schumpeter's classic *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Held (1993) takes issue with the belief that "acquiescence to a competitive electoral system entails a belief in the legitimacy of the system". He argues that in such an understanding of legitimacy:

Far from democracy being a form of life marked by the promise of equality and the best conditions for human development in a rich context of participation, the democratic citizen's lot was, quite straightforward, the right periodically to choose and authorise governments to act on their behalf (*ibid.*: 165)

The inadequacies of institutional means of political legitimation necessitate another precondition to the democratic process. That is, a political public sphere which, ideally, "operates as a neutral zone where access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely available, where discussion is free from domination by the state and where all those participating in public debate do so on an equal basis" (Curran 1991b: 83). In this political public sphere, the citizens collectively determine through the process of rational and free discourse the way in which they want their society develop. This directly implies that a democratic political process requires "the supportive spirit of cultural traditions and patterns

of socialisation, of a political culture, of a populace accustomed to freedom” (Habermas 1992: 453).

Such a political culture is characterised and facilitated by the media “by providing an arena of public debate”. In this regard, a basic requirement would be the institutionalisation of ‘freedom of speech’ and the articulation of public opinion in the press. This ensures that in the democratic process, the citizens as political actors are enabled and guided by their willing acceptance of and trust in the functioning of the democratic institutions, including the media. Atieno-Odhiambo (1988: 119) explains that in this understanding, ‘democracy thrives ... within a political culture which asserts that “no government is legitimate which does not derive its powers and functions from the consent of the governed.”’ Political culture, Hallowell (1954: 49) states, must underwrite the civil liberties because:

There can be no real consent where there is no freedom of speech, of press, and of assembly. Individuals must be protected from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment... Individuals must be free to present petitions to the government and to enumerate publicly their grievances. Individuals must feel secure in their persons, homes, papers and effects against unreasonable and arbitrary searches and seizures.... There must be an impartial judicial system to settle dispute in terms of the rule of law (Quoted in Atieno-Odhiambo 1988: 119).

1.1.2 The Party-State’s Suppressive Political Culture

The Party-State and the Monopoly of Politics

Writing about developing countries and African states in particular, Anyang Nyong’o (1988: 84-85) describes the development of a political culture whereby

states “have preferred to be occupied with the politics of control rather than the promotion of political participation ... Thus any form of popular participation in the process of government is usually in the form of approval of government decisions rather than an expression of diverse interests expecting governmental decisions and actions”. This political culture “of preferring control over participation becomes prevalent” not “because governing elites want to satisfy certain developmental goals” but because they “have chosen to privatise the state and personalise political power so as to meet their very narrow and private needs over and above any public good”

The development of the non-democratic political culture of control, in Frantz Fanon’s (1963) view, started soon after independence when African governments started to sideline democracy. This sidelining of democracy was achieved primarily by use the state as “a means for private accumulation of both wealth and power, and this was quite often done irrespective of how much it hurt the public good”. State institutions “including the monolithic political parties” were in turn used to keep “the people away from the political arena” (Anyang Nyong’o 1988: 75). The sidelining of democracy easily led “many African civilian governments to be commandist, i.e. to prefer issuing commands so as to be obeyed rather than engaging in discussions so as to convince. Very soon a culture of fear becomes prevalent in the political system such that, even when things are going wrong, nobody dares point it out since only the commander has the right and knowledge to know what is wrong. In this regard the commander is usually the Head of State. The lack of a participatory political culture, rather than nurture political stability, is here argued to be the source of political instability” (*ibid.*).

Shivji links the development of a non-participatory political culture to the adoption by African countries of the one-party state. He argues that with this adoption:

... the Party ceased to be an organ and institution of the civil society and became part of the state. It became a state-party. It derived its *authority* from law as opposed to a political party which derives its legitimacy from, and is part of, civil society. Hence, increasingly and frequently, it began to depend on the use of coercion, which is a characteristic *par excellence* of the state, rather than persuasion, which is characteristic of an organisation of civil society (Shivji, 1991: 84).

Another pertinent explanation given by Shivji is that:

... the Party ceased to be a regular ruling party let alone a political party. The self-perception of a state party, which it propagates and even enforces on others, members and non-members, is not simply that of a ruling party bent on staying on power but that of a supreme political existence which holds the last word on the social good and political truth. This means that one of the main objects of a political party – to get into government and monopolize political power – is transformed into a singular object of monopolising politics. And this object is pursued single-mindedly with a far-reaching impact on the constitution and future of civil society itself (Shivji, 1991: 84-5).

The Consequences of Party-State Monopoly of Politics

Shivji goes on to argue that the emergent monopoly of politics had four fundamental consequences for the polity. “First, it meant that no organised politics or political activity could be permitted outside the state-party”. Consequently, all “mass organisations” were “brought under the control of the state-party”. He describes this “profound effect of the monopoly of politics by the state-party” as the “destruction of autonomous organised expression of the differences in civil society”. This destruction led to the second effect: “If organised interests cannot be permitted then any autonomous articulation and

expression of those interests cannot be permitted either.” This meant that the “various media of expression, newspapers, magazines, radio and institutions or propagating ideas, schools and such also come under the hegemony of the state”. Shivji argues that though it is true that “different interests and the expression of those interests cannot be obliterated altogether but they can certainly be suppressed and discouraged” (Shivji 1991: 85).

The cumulative result of the above two effects was “the development of a closed society”. This third effect “develops almost imperceptibly behind the backs of the people, so to speak”. The development and manifestation of the closed society takes place on both the institutional as well as ideological levels. The institutional manifestation happens in such a way that:

The public affairs are conducted most secretly, where members of the public are spectators and rumour-mongers rather than actors and commentators ... The right of expression is circumscribed – monopoly of the press, severe laws on edition – while the *right to know* is almost non-existent. Severe limits on the rights of the citizens are prescribed in law, which the people themselves may not know, but feel in their bones.

Drawing lessons from experience and leading examples, which become part of popular sub-conscious, people set their own limits through self-censorship. Prudence dictates that these be even more restrictive than the legal limits (Shivji 1991: 86).

The consequence of the above institutional development is that “openness, one of the most important characteristics of a democratic society, suffers. With it suffer the prestige and social place of institutions given to openness, by definition, such as the judicature, the parliament, the press or the university”. The closed society provides fertile ground for the flourishing of “arbitrariness,

intrigues, nepotism, favouritism and political sycophancy. At the leadership level, individual merit, sincerity of purpose, personal honesty or commitment count for little. What matters is the ability to appease your leader and the agility to chorus into a dominant song, even if it is exactly opposite to the one sung on just the previous day" (*ibid.*).

In Shivji's analysis, "the fourth effect of monopoly of politics is ideological". This ideological effect is the "most subtle yet profoundly prejudicial to democracy" since by it the monopoly of politics "generates a political culture of intolerance which expects and actively solicits an unanimity of views". The political culture of intolerance is best exemplified by "what has always been put forward as the strongest argument in favour of the system of state-party... This is the argument that the one-party system has generated and helps ensure national unity". This argument is ideological because it "may not necessarily mean what it says or may say what it does not necessarily imply". One of the implied meanings of national unity "may be a nation (country) without diversity and divergent interests; that is to say, the one-party system has helped us to attain national unity by obliterating all important differences and different interests. This is certainly not true" (Shivji 1991: 86).

Shivji concludes by contending that there is only one real meaning of 'national unity' and:

that is that the single-party has managed successful to suppress any organised expression of diversity and differences in our society. If so, then what is really meant is not 'national unity' but (imposed) unanimity ... In that case, therefore, 'national unity' is an ideological euphemism for imposed unanimity". ... Unanimity is not identical with unity, for unity can flourish in adversity just as unanimity can disguise forces of disunity. National unity based on diversity would dictate different political attitudes

and culture, a politics of consensus rather than a politics of coercion – whether physical or psychological.

A politics of consensus has a positive attitude towards diversity while a politics of unanimity aims at obliterating all diversity. A politics of consensus however can still maintain national unity by a continuous process of dialogue, debate and discussion in which there is 'give and take', and there are compromises so as to attain a consensus on major issues. Under the politics of unanimity, views of one side have to prevail, more often by the logic of force rather than the force of logic (Shivji 1991: 87).

1.1.3 Presidential Authoritarianism

There is another feature that characterised the emergent political culture that Shivji did not address: the “phenomenon of presidentialism” (Goulbourne 1987) or “presidential authoritarianism (Anyang Nyong'o 1989). Goulbourne (1987: 30) argues that the first generation of post-colonial leaders in Africa “had a unique opportunity to set in motion the further development of democratic institutions, practices and conventions”. This unique opportunity was characterised on the one hand by the fact that “there was the tremendous enthusiasm of the people for building a new social order, an enthusiasm borne out of the struggle for political independence and which was still buoyant in the years immediately after independence”. On the other hand, “first generation of leaders throughout the continent enjoyed an authority which went beyond that derived from popular elections, etc.; they nearly all enjoyed something of what Weber called charismatic authority by virtue of being the leader who had challenged the colonial power and forged the path to political independence”.

These leaders however failed to use the unique opportunity that they had and instead did the direct opposite, "the destruction of the birth of democracy". They "threw their weight behind the construction of a variety of repressive systems and used their authority to justify these new forms of repression" mainly by use of "a number of spurious arguments". One of their arguments was that "being new states engaged in the process of nation-building, the unity achieved during the nationalist struggle for political independence should be maintained at all cost". In this argument, "national unity was pitched against open politics; it was seen as a choice between the one of the other. The declared search for consensus which formed the basis of national unity, was short-circuited and a 'unity' imposed from above through the repressive state institutions" (Goulbourne 1987: 35).

The first-generation leaders also used the ideological argument that "the institutions and beliefs which are generally accepted as being the essential elements of democracy" such as a plurality of political parties, a free press "are colonial in character, or in any case, come from the former imperialist countries and are, therefore, if only presumably by association, unacceptable". Yet another argument "was that to effect rapid development it was necessary first to put controls in place. This argument maintained that much political disputation was bound to result in distraction from the main national effort, namely development". The reasoning here is premised on the "view that democracy and development are in any event contradictory elements":

The argument seems to run something like this: a poor country cannot afford to dissipate its energies in the niceties, luxuries, of allowing all and sundry to put their views about national matters when the task of prosecuting development is the national project over which independence was fought. A second aspect of this argument is that in any event democracy is not a necessary condition for development (Goulbourne 1987: 36).

The above actions and ideological arguments on the part of “the first generation of post-colonial leaders in Africa” was coupled with, and also contributed to, the birth and development of “presidentialism”. According to Goulbourne (1987: 31), this phenomenon “involves the centralisation of state power in the hands of president and/or his office. The incumbent is supposed to represent the people as a whole in nearly all matters relating to the country”. The development of this phenomenon has seen “many presidents derive their authority not from any popular electoral mandate but through sheer incumbency.” A process, such as obtained in Kenya (see Widner, 1992), whereby “the sole political party puts forward one candidate for election to the presidency” achieves because the candidate is returned and is deemed to have been unopposed. This is then projected as a demonstration of the president’s popularity in the country, “and the newspapers usually hail his election as a great victory”. The result is that “presidents have never actually gone to the country for popular election because candidates have never been opposed, it being illegal to put forward a candidate from outside the *de facto* single party which becomes the *de jure* sole political party” (Goulbourne 1987: 31).

For Anyang Nyong’o (1989: 231):

Presidential authoritarianism is born when political power is so concentrated in the office of the president that no major decision is taken within the bureaucratic or political process without reference to this office, or when the legitimacy of bureaucratic decisions is derived from their claim to have the blessing or backing of the president. The presidency becomes the biggest bureau in terms of administration and policy-making; all other organs of government gradually begin to bend to it and politicians stand in awe of the power of the president

It is his contention that “the rise of the strong presidents in post-colonial Africa is really the result of the fragmentation of the petty bourgeoisie; struggling among

themselves for political power, and who, not being able to produce any dominant tendency among them, are finally compelled to settle for the mediation of one man; the leader, who eventually grows into a strong president" (*ibid.*). The result is that "factions of the bourgeoisie, especially the dominant and ruling faction, could not see their political and economic fortunes outside the halo of the presidential power". This is because they had abdicated from political organisation by dismantling their nationalist coalition, and now they could only ensure their class rule by perpetuating the authoritarian presidency. Anyang Nyong'o argues that though at first the "authoritarian presidency" was seen "as a stabilising factor for bourgeois rule, increasingly became a snare to the rule, and finally stood as a wall between the bourgeoisie and the popular masses" (*ibid.* 232).

1.1.4 The Ideology of Order

In a study of the development of a suppressive political culture in African countries and Kenya in particular, Atieno Odhiambo (1988) deploys the concept of "ideology of order." In this study, he "explores how the state, as an institution, has evolved and attained its hegemonic function in the Kenyan society, while simultaneously eroding the process of democracy, and therefore freedom". He argues that, "the pursuit of power as an end in itself has attained its Machiavellian charm in Kenya". The source of this development is located in the fact that "the decolonisation process was an ambiguous adventure" which "left Kenya with two legacies that have sat and continue to sit uneasily with each other. On the one hand there is the legacy of freedom, while on the other there is state power" (Atieno Odhiambo, 1988: 111).

Atieno Odhiambo's (1988: 112) main thesis is that "the colonial and post-colonial regimes have sought to control the direction and content of politics in Kenya, using state power as the instrument of control. The state has created a justifying

ideology ... the Ideology of Order, in order to legitimise these efforts at control. The goal of the ruling regimes has been to assert political hegemony over the rest of society". Two of the essential characteristics of the ideology of order are that it "spells out the need for obedience among the governed rather than any profound acceptance of the rulers" and "the necessity for lowering the newly-acquired expectations and levels of activity of the ruled". In this ideology, the people or the ruled are seen as the greatest danger to democracy. "The people are perceived as a danger to order because they do insist that there ought to be accountability in society" (*ibid.*: 122).

In the development of and justification for the ideology of order, "the emergent wisdom was that the strong state was a pre-requisite for law, order, good government and nation-building". Atieno-Odhiambo (1988: 124) observes, for example, that "the quest for hegemony in the Kenyan context has involved the sponsorship of the high visibility of the General Service Unit (for beating up recalcitrant crowds), the continuous centralization of power around the presidency, and the usage of legal lawlessness – detention and murder – to muzzle society". And for justification:

The argument runs that one of the foremost concerns for any newly independent state is creating political order. The struggle for independence has a way of throwing up a whole host of political opinions, an array of political movements, and a gamut of flamboyant leaders. It is the duty of the in-coming governments to create political order in society by incorporating, excluding or liquidating all the discordant political noises in society. ... The victorious party at *Uhuru* (independence) must assert its political hegemony before it can hope to rule effectively. It must insist at all times that sovereignty, "national unity"

and "national security" are sacred and inviolate. He rules best, and lasts longest, who can ensure that Law and Order, in other words internal security, is paramount. Out of this wisdom emerged "regime-building" and the quest for the hegemony by the state in all spheres of national life. (Atieno Odhiambo 123).

One of the manifestations of the ideology of order is the high regard given in the Kenyan polity to constitutionalism. Anyang Nyong'o (1989: 250) observes that "there has been so much concern for the law in post-colonial Kenya. Even when it is obvious that the faction of the bourgeoisie which dominates the political process simply wants to get things done in its own interest, it must somehow reduce it to law, or act arbitrarily and then retroactively legalise such action." In the case of Kenya, the suppressive political culture was epitomised in the way the Constitution was used or changed in order to criminalize organised opposition politics, place the President above the law, strip the Attorney General of tenure protection, detain government critics without trial, muzzle the press, curtail freedom of expression and assembly etc. For this reason, any significant change in the political culture would have to begin with a change in the constitution. According to Anyang Nyong'o:

Part of the explanation is to be found in the colonial inheritance that dominates state action and processes of state legitimation. Things have been done legally from colonial times and they are only accepted or tolerated as legitimate if they pass through legal channels. ... Further, the process of law-making is believed to be carried out by the elected representatives of the people. Once certain interests pass through parliamentary validation as legitimate laws, they are expected to acquire a universal appeal and legitimacy beyond the particularistic social forces behind them. In this way, even when the interests of the bourgeoisie were being pursued much more directly through executive action, the need to

stick to the law for purposes of legitimation was always there (*Ibid.*).

From the above review one can argue that there emerged a suppressive political culture in most African countries with their adoption and establishment of the party-state. I will deal with the case of Kenya in more detail below. I will show that what emerged in Kenya under President Daniel arap Moi was a political culture whereby the ruling elite preferred the politics of control rather than political participation. Popular participation was accepted only in the form of approval of government decisions rather than expression of diverse interests. The difference between the state and the ruling party became blurred, effectively sidelining democracy. The party became part of the state deriving authority from law and making use of coercion as opposed to deriving legitimacy from persuasion. In effect, the party assumed a "supreme political existence which holds the last word on the social good and political truth" with the "singular object of monopolising power". Organised politics or political activity outside the state-party was criminalized by the Constitutional amendment of June 1982. This effectively prohibited organised and public articulation and expression of alternative views and interests.

The emergent political culture in Kenya as will be seen below, and indeed in most post-colonial Africa, was therefore a culture of fear among the citizenry, where there was little room to criticise the ruling party or its president. Political sycophancy flourished. One sees in this the development of a closed society. This resulted also from the fact that there were put in place legal limits on the rights of the citizens. Members of the public ended up being "spectators and rumour-mongers rather than actors and commentators". The effect was that a culture of silence set in on the part of the populace. Ideological support for the state-party or party-state was achieved by the main argument that it fosters and ensures "national unity". This in reality was an "ideological euphemism for imposed unanimity". What was being advanced was a political culture of

unanimity where "views of one side have to prevail ... by the logic of force rather than the force of logic". The ideology of order and respect for the law of the land was used to accord "legal legitimacy" to authoritarian rule.

1.1.5 Political change and Press Performance

One of the main concerns in this study is to investigate the proposition that a major change or process of change in the Kenyan political culture as described above would impact significantly on the performance of the country's political press; press performance here referring to both their coverage and their commentary on central issues pertinent to that transition (change). This proposition is based on the premise that in the above political culture, the freedom of the press to report and comment on the political process in a way that would be construed as openly challenging the legitimacy of the KANU government was curtailed both directly or indirectly. A situation then obtained in Kenya where there was media censorship, both overt censorship and self-censorship.

The *Dictionary of Political Analysis* defines political change as the

Transformation of structures, processes, or goals affecting the distribution and exercise of governing power in society. Political change may occur as a system adapts to new demands and a changing environment, or as one system – unable to maintain itself – is replaced by another... Peaceful political change may be called reform or simply be identified with constitutional change in leadership or the restructuring of political influence within society.

A momentous political change took place in Kenya when in December 1991, the ruling KANU government repealed the constitutional amendment that had made

Kenya a *de jure* one-party system, thereby ushering in a multi-party political system. This constitutional change resulted partly from a long politico-ideological struggle between the local opposition political elite and the ruling KANU government; a struggle that was fuelled by powerful and vested diplomatic interests from the West. This struggle was in itself the cradle of a process of change in the political culture, informed as it was by a determination among the opposition political elite to break KANU government's monopoly of politics in Kenya. The political elite got popular support from a populace that had grown weary of the suppressive Moi regime. I will discuss this in more detail below.

As already stated above, I am interested in finding out whether and how the political change to multi-partyism impacted on the proportion and nature of the daily newspaper's coverage of party-political news. It is my proposition that with the repeal of the single-party legislation that legalised opposition politics, the press could now freely report news and on issues and personalities that would have been taboo in the former political conjuncture. This proposition can be gauged firstly by finding out if there was any increase, and the extent of this, in party news as a proportion of all the political news carried by each of the two dailies, *Kenya Times* and the *Nation*. Secondly, it can be gauged by finding out if there were any changes in the proportion of publicity (coverage) accorded by each of the political groups by the two newspapers. From here I will then look at the nature of publicity accorded, whether positive or negative. This will help establish the party sympathy for each daily because positive or negative publicity for this study would imply giving or not giving a particular party public legitimacy.

It is in the above light that this study may be regarded as a "media performance assessment" study. According to McQuail (1992: 12), the expression 'media assessment' may refer to, among other things, 'critical evaluation of many possible aspects or cases of the work of media.' He goes on (1992: 17) to give the definition of media performance analysis as:

The independent assessment of media provision according to alternative 'public interest' criteria, by way of objective and systematic methods of research, taking account of other relevant evidence and the normal operating conditions and requirements of the media concerned.

Such performance analysis should be grounded in normative and historical perspectives. This would facilitate a systematic evaluation of what the media are doing according to some independent criteria of achievement. It is in this regard that McQuail (*ibid.*) suggests the way to go as follows:

The first aim is to develop as comprehensive a framework of normative principle as possible, consistent both with the historical record of social concern with public communication and with the requirements of coherence and economy of presentation... The need to specify some observable outward sign of supposed merit or public benefits from communication is a powerful incentive to clearer thinking.

1.1.6 Ownership Status and Press Performance

The press cannot be studied as a single entity as if the different institutions that comprise it have uniform characteristics and interests. This study is particularly interested in the daily newspapers. To a limited but important degree, this study will discuss issues pertaining to ownership. During the period under investigation, there were three daily newspapers in Kenya; one owned by the ruling party KANU and the other two privately owned. While the KANU paper, *Kenya Times*, is comparatively a more recent publication, the private ones, the *Nation* and the *Standard*, have a long history going back to pre-independence Kenya. They are sometimes referred to as the 'independent' press; independence here simply meaning freedom from direct state, political or ruling-party control.

On another level, this study will be comparative. I will investigate how the ruling party newspaper, *Kenya Times*, compares with a private one, the *Nation*, in covering the same political issues and the two political groups to be investigated. I consider the comparison between the two types of newspaper ownership to be significant because of the historical discussion in Kenya about press ownership. The discussion has centred on the question: What is the most desirable form of ownership, foreign or indigenous, that will serve the nation's interests? For my purposes, during the period under investigation, *Kenya Times* qualifies as being indigenously owned while the *Nation* qualifies as both privately and foreign-owned. This study will be comparative in a second way. I will investigate how the press coverage of the political transition before the constitutional change compares with the coverage after. The temporal comparison will be concerned with the influence of the change in the political culture on press performance.

Still on the question of ownership, there is the problem of private ownership versus political party-ownership of the press. It was argued in some circles, as will shortly be seen below, that a ruling party newspaper would of necessity give access only to party propaganda and monopolise news from the state thereby defeating freedom of the press. This argument implies that private ownership of the press is to be preferred to party ownership. If one considers also the above-mentioned preference for indigenous as opposed to foreign-owned press, the preferred press, it would seem, would be indigenous and privately owned. This study aims at finding out firstly, by way of literature review and by reference to case examples and secondly, by empirical research, whether these propositions are valid. I will do all this with the aim of recommending and developing the theory of the public sphere as a viable normative theory against which one can judge the Kenyan and African media systems and make recommendations for their improvement.

1.2 The Importance of News

The newspaper is chosen for this study because of some very important and apparent reasons. Newspapers report news in a format that is easily accessible and enduring. Historically, this is the medium that is strongly identified with news. As McQuail (1987: 203) puts it, 'It is arguable that the newspaper is the archetype as well as the prototype of all modern mass media and ... that the central ingredient of the newspaper and those media modelled on it, radio and television, is what we call news.' In Kenya where the broadcasting media has for a long time been in the hands of the state, politicians, especially opposition politicians, and other politically motivated persons rely on print media for alternative and relatively more balanced news (see Chapter 3 below).

It is generally agreed that people can get information in the news about events that they cannot experience first hand and it can therefore be argued that news is for them a mirror or window on reality. The importance of news is further enhanced by the journalists' ideological belief 'that their role is to supply information that will enable their audience to come to its own conclusions' (Gans, 1980: 186). This belief is at the very heart of claims to objectivity, impartiality and independence by newsmen. However, although these may be major sources of legitimacy for the press organisations, other aspects of news warn against taking the assumption at face value.

It is Walter Lippman's (1922) observation that 'News is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself' (quoted in McQuail 1987: 204). An elaboration on this observation is provided by Schlesinger (1987: 164), who has this to say:

News does not select itself, but is rather the product of judgements concerning the social relevance of given events and situations

based on assumptions concerning their interest and importance. The 'reality' it portrays is always in at least one sense fundamentally biased, simply by virtue of the inescapable decision to designate an issue or event newsworthy, and then to construct an account of it in a specific framework of interpretation. News must be assessed as a cultural product that embodies journalistic, social, and political values. It cannot be, and certainly is not, a neutral, impartial, or totally objective perception of the real world.

From a practical point of view, therefore, 'National media cannot report all stories that affect the nation or the national audience they serve; consequently, they need an exclusionary consideration that limits the number of suitable stories' (Gans, 1980: 147). It is my argument that the metaphor of news being a mirror does not imply capturing most aspects, let alone the whole picture, of the nation's political configuration or development mainly because, 'the (news) media are institutionally under-equipped for this overwhelming responsibility' (Tiffen, 1989: 178).

The fact that the media have a limited capacity to carry national news has grave consequences for the political process. This is so because politicians rely on the press for publicity and legitimacy in the eyes of the public. However, as it will be argued presently, the media, in their news processing, employ selective and exclusionary considerations on events that have 'obtruded' themselves and in deciding on the perspective(s) in which to present them as news. This study aims also at establishing and illustrating some of the selective and exclusionary considerations employed by the Kenyan press in its news processing, and the perspectives in which they are presented.

Politicians are perennially preoccupied with *publicity* being mainly concerned with whether the media publicity that they are accorded is *negative or positive*.

The struggle for publicity on the part of political actors can be likened to a battle. In Kenya, the struggle for party-political change was in its seminal stage heavily dependent on, and waged through the media. I would like to make the argument that opposition politicians depended on the media to legitimise their agitation for change whilst the KANU government, through the media, resisted this by trying to ensure that the Opposition was not accorded any media publicity or/and that they were on the average accorded mostly negative media publicity.

One can therefore argue that 'Battles for favourable news coverage are a major arena in political conflicts, and the news provides a common reference point to which the different sides relate in their subsequent actions' (Tiffen, 1989: 178). Gans aptly captures the importance of the quest for good publicity when he says that, '... news organisations are surrounded by individuals and groups wanting to get their messages into the arena *with a maximum of helpful and a minimum of harmful publicity*' (1980: 249 my italics). The implication of these arguments is that preference and search for *positive publicity* gives birth to a litany of struggles; for access to the news media, for legitimacy in the news and for control of access to and performance of the news media, among other things. It is my proposition that whatever the nature of the publicity struggle in the realm of politics, power lies at the heart of it. This is mainly because, 'The centrality of the news media in political communication makes them a strategic arena in the struggle for power' (Tiffen, 1989: 7). It is my argument that opposition politicians in Kenya were in the main seeking after political power and recognition. They could achieve this only by being legitimate players in the political arena. Before the 1992 constitutional change, this legitimacy was denied them because opposition party-politics was proscribed. It can be argued, therefore, that the seminal stage of their fight for legitimacy was carried out through press publicity.

The metaphor of the news media as an arena captures the element of the inequality that is inherent in political news coverage; there is no equality or

equity in the news arena. Furthermore, being featured in this arena does not guarantee having 'helpful' publicity. Tiffen (1989: 7) expounds on this as follows:

An arena is not necessarily a neutral or inert venue in participants' battles. The advantages and disadvantages of newsworthiness and access are not bestowed equally. *The factors that produce publicity are rarely within the control of any one group.* The publicising efforts of rival participants, the intrusion of unplanned newsworthy events, independent information-gathering by reporters all conspire to make the process of news coverage one of the less predictable elements in the political equation. Similarly, publicity cannot be simply equated with success. Its political impact is far from uniform - being apparently vital at some times and seemingly irrelevant or marginal at others. (my italics).

I think that one of the major considerations to bear in mind when discussing the import of news in the political process is the ideological nature of the impartiality problematic inherent in news-gathering and news reporting. According to McQuail (1987: 208), it is hard to resist Gerbner's (1964) conclusion that there is no fundamentally non-ideologically, apolitically, non-partisan, news-gathering and reporting system. Hoggart suggests that it is erroneous to claim that news presentation can be 'objective', or a mirror of reality, or neutral channels for representing the 'facts'. Referring to television news workers in Britain, he asserts that '*Of course, what they call 'the news' is biased...*' (Glasgow Media Group, 1976: x).

In Hoggart's view, there are four 'filtering processes' by which 'the news select itself. Of the four, he opines that '... the most important filter - since it partly contains the others - is the cultural air we breathe, *the whole ideological*

atmosphere of our society, which tells us that some things can be said and others had best not be said' (*ibid.* my italics). The implication of Hoggart's argument, and I agree with this, is that we should remember when looking at the content of news, as aptly put by Gans (1980: 60), that 'News, like other kinds of symbolic fare, consists of explicit and implicit content, and no single content analysis can grasp them all.'

I intend to demonstrate presently that the political-ideological cultural 'air' or 'atmosphere' during KANU's power monopoly was a major 'filtering process' that determined the selective and exclusionary considerations of the Kenyan press in their political performance. I will demonstrate that KANU's political ideology and performance was averse to opposition and criticism and that Kenya's daily press performance was greatly constrained by this reality. The change to multi-party politics, for the purposes of this study, suggested that the daily press would now operate in a new 'atmosphere' and breathe new 'air'. This study will investigate how this changed atmosphere affected the way the two daily newspapers performed as a political public sphere.

On another level of precision, in this study I am interested in both political events and political issues. It is my proposition that a daily press covering a political process that is changing in the direction of greater political diversity would cover both the political events and the political issues with equal importance. In fact, if the role of the press is to contribute in the direction of effecting greater democracy, the definition and/or discussion of pertinent political issues as opposed to that of events should be given precedence. The determination of which of the two, *events* or *issues*, is accorded overriding coverage in the press is not made easier by the fact that, usually, issues emerge via events. In his study of *News and Power* in Australia, Tiffen (1989: 178) says that, 'The definition of issues in the news is a by-product from its primary orientation of reporting recent developments. Coverage of issues depends on how their

abstract principles, amorphous conflicts or continuing conditions become crystallised into newsworthy events.'

One can therefore argue that news coverage is skewed in preference of dramatic events having an element of novelty. This brings to mind the 'man bites dog' news characteristic. Tiffen (1989: 178) illustrates the dialectic of preference for events over issues when he observes that; 'the press thrives on people robbing banks, not banks robbing people.' He goes on to explain that:

News responds primarily to two main influences: *the development of politically consequential controversies* and the occurrence of 'spot' news (accidents, crimes, disasters, etc.). Whatever their commitment to diversity, no news organisation functions by promoting debate in the abstract. Their priorities are shaped by perceptions of the exercise of power, the imminence of decisive developments, the intensity of conflict and their sense of what is important to their audience. (my italics).

The political change in Kenya during the period that I am investigating had everything to do with fundamental political issues. The crusade for multi-partyism was one of the most important politically consequential controversies in the history of Kenya. However, the pertinent issues were mooted in dramatic fashion during dramatic political events (mainly during public rallies). It can be argued that the press highlighted the political issues in the process of reporting on these events. Tiffen on his part argues that, 'Issues ... emerge publicly not as autonomous topics for debate but embedded in, and secondary to the reporting of conflicts and power plays.' He also subscribes to the belief that 'avoidance of issues is institutionalised into the work patters and norms of the press gallery. He goes on to say that, 'The intrinsic properties of issues are less important in determining news coverage than the developing direction of the political conflicts

and the balance of contending voices' (1989: 178).

The peculiarity of news, and its primary political significance, is that it is an institution devoted to *disclosure*. Disclosure is important because it puts events and issues on the public agenda. This journalistic importance of disclosure was expressed by *The Times* as long ago as the 1850s thus, 'The press lives by disclosure - it is daily and forever appealing to the enlightened force of public opinion, anticipating if possible the march of events, standing upon the breach between the present and the future' (quoted in Tiffen, 1989: 186). The emphasis in the news on disclosure and publicity as against the substantive issues does not, however, guarantee that what gets prominence will be of most significance or that options will emerge in a manner which aids democratic choice.

In the realms of politics, depending on other factors such as, in this study, a major political change, publicity may crucially enhance the salience of issues. This is because publicity can determine and transform the priority accorded an issue in a positive direction. However, this mechanism may work in the reverse direction too. Frequent and intense coverage of some issue and the intermittent coverage or neglect of others helps to shape public agendas. *News presentation* involves a hierarchy of importance between stories and information within stories. Some aspects of the political issues may gain prominence in the news to the implied subordination of others. *News coverage* is thus implicated not only in the priority of issues, but in their definition.

In summary, I can say that the basic import of the news media in politics is that they are an institution in the business of disclosure and commentary; being an institution of mass dissemination, they communicate to a large audience of mixed social classes and political persuasion. Having a relative degree of communicator autonomy, they do occasionally impose their own priorities and conventions upon what is presented. As a result, they are the targets of political

players who are interested in *positive publicity*. This is more so because their presence and activities affect the timing, the manner, and, most important, the extent of revelations about powerful groups and personalities.

1.3 Editorial Commentaries

From the above discussion on news, I wish to argue that the way a newspaper reports or covers political events and political actors, when analysed may give some but not all of the clues as to where that newspaper's sympathies lie ideologically and/or politically. I propose therefore that when it comes to gauging a newspaper's expressed or implied ideological and, therefore political preferences, editorial columns and editorial commentary pages are the places to study. It is my observation that it is in the editorial pages that the Kenyan daily newspapers openly *comment* or give their opinions on political issues and political personalities. It is here too that they respond to any accusations and complaints against their performance. Generally speaking, editorials are of particular concern to politicians and politically motivated persons. According to Gans (1980: 291):

Editorials provide overnight approximations of public opinion; public officials also analyse the news for implicit opinions, believing the value implications of the news to reflect the journalists' opinions. When normally objective reporters express an explicit opinion, public officials become even readier to treat them as agents of the *vox populi*.

Hays (1969) mentions a sequence of editorials as examples of a typical stream of linguistic data that may be a subject of scientific analysis. He opines that:

The staff of a newspaper, *experiencing an epoch*, produces a series of essays, recapitulating some of the day's events, placing them with respect to historical trends, theory, and dogma. It expresses opinions about the true nature of situations that are necessarily not fully comprehended, and opinions about the responses called for (quoted in Krippendorff, 1980: 42; my italics).

It is in this regard that in the qualitative section of this study I will investigate the two selected newspapers to find out their editorial position with regard to the issues raised in the political-ideological debate which I will presently detail below.

From a careful study of the data, I have observed that in most cases editorials are prompted by news as reported by the newspaper. The commentaries may be carried on the same day as the news stories to which they are attributed, or later. As already indicated above, the editorials attempt to put or contextualise these news stories into historical or dogmatic perspectives. All this is done with the reader in mind, partly with a view to influence opinion and belief. However, as will be seen below, the history of the daily press in Kenya has a few examples of how the editorial pages can be used by editors as a weapon against political enemies. In short, the editorial section of the daily newspaper is the most easily politicised and potentially most sensitive and controversial. The relevance of studying daily newspaper editorials is enhanced by my belief that the results can also provide a backdrop against which to review findings from the investigation of the main news stories.

1.4 Thesis Outline

In the section above, I have discussed the different aspects of the research problem: the relationship between political culture and press performance; and

secondarily, between ownership status and press performance. This comprises the first part of Chapter One: The Introduction. In the second section of the chapter, I give a brief history of party politics in Kenya since the pre-independence period until 1991 when the single-party legislation, which turned Kenya into a *de jure* one-party state, was repealed. I will document and illustrate here the development, under the KANU government, of a political culture that progressively became intolerant of dissenting political views. The whole thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter Two deals with theoretical argumentation. Firstly, I will develop here an argument to underpin my decision to treat a society's political and ideological culture as a major determinant of the political performance of the press. Secondly, I will discuss and develop the normative theory of the public sphere and recommend its application to African media situations. In chapter Three I will give the history of the daily press in Kenya, reviewing the main issues that have dominated discussions on media politics and, the major socio-structural factors that have impacted on the performance of the press in the political process since the pre-independence era. I will go on to make and illustrate the argument that political considerations, emanating from the political culture discussed in Chapter One, have been the major sources of constraint on the press. In the end, I will illustrate how this pressure was used to deny the nascent Opposition press publicity. This will form part of the basis on which to review the findings in Chapters Six and Seven.

In Chapter Four, I will explain why I have decided to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches to content analyses. Chapter Five will deal with the research design; giving the operational definitions and then delineating the period for the empirical study. I will present and discuss the quantitative and qualitative research findings in Chapters Six and Seven respectively. The conclusion will be presented in Chapter Eight.

1.5 The Colonial and Pre-Independence Period

It is important for the purposes of this study to give a concise review of the historical development of party politics in Kenya. This is intended to show how the birth and development of a party-state gave birth to a suppressive and non-democratic political culture. The consequences of this development for the press will be the subject of Chapter Three below. The focus at this stage, however, is to show how organised political opposition to the ruling KANU government during both the Kenyatta and Moi eras was strongly suppressed. Though there are some differences in the way the two leaders actually effected this suppression, they shared major attributes which included disapproval of multi-partyism, aversion to and harsh dealing with government critics, use of legal instruments to achieve their ends, amending of the constitution to their political convenience when need arose. All these contributed, with time, to a marked erosion of various fundamental and human freedoms, especially the freedom of association and expression. As I have already said above, I will argue in Chapter Three that the curtailment of the freedom of political expression described here, meant that the daily press was likewise under immense pressure not to play the role of the political public sphere.

The Moi era however, gives this study its temporal positioning or time frame. It is during Moi's regime that the KANU government's monopoly of Kenyan politics was brought to an end in December 1991. It is also during this era that Kenya was made a *de jure* one party state with an all-powerful Presidency. I will show that during this period, Parliament lost most of its functions and became an arm of KANU and the executive's rubber-stamp; amending the constitution at the executive's whim to entrench the KANU government's hold on power. The limited political space that existed during Kenyatta's era was now effectively circumscribed and political views criminalised. The early years of the 90's saw a world-wide hue and cry for democratic governance and for

the end of one-party and military states. This coincided with an unprecedented show of daring by a number of prominent political activists and others in positions of leadership in their criticism of Moi's regime. The demands of donor countries and international financial institutions for political transparency, accountability and good governance and their eventual tying of aid to the satisfaction of these conditionalities added the last straw that humbled the KANU government.

By illustrating the developments mentioned above, I intend to show and argue that the debate about multi-partyism was waged from two different ideological grounds. I will show that the major issue was whether or not multi-partyism as opposed to a single-party system was the desirable political system for Kenya. This will form part of the background for the analysis in Chapter Six.

Kenya became a British 'protectorate' in 1886, when the East African Treaty was signed between Britain and Germany over the colonisation of East Africa. The Imperial British East Company (IBEAC), which was formed in 1888, was entrusted with the administration of Kenya; being given in the same year a royal charter to develop the territory, officially known as British East Africa Protectorate. The imposition of British rule was widely resisted by African peoples, provoking military retaliation from the imperial power (Ochieng, 1985: 87).

Effective administration of Kenya by the British began in 1907 with the transfer of Kenya's capital from Mombasa to the European railway town of Nairobi. With time, a situation obtained where a white minority imposed and maintained its privileged position of domination through the manipulation of government machinery. Despite their small number, the British government gave in to settler demands in 1906 and introduced a legislative council in Kenya. It was not until 1944 that the Legislative Council was opened to the first African, Eliud Mathu, who was in actual fact a government appointee. Mathu's appointment

was an effort to channel the budding African nationalism toward the support of the colonial administration.

The Kenya African Union, KAU, was formed in 1944 with the immediate aim of giving African support to Eliud Mathu but it also had as one of its aims the unity of Africans and advocacy of their social and economic progress. Its leadership was composed of educated Africans who strove to advance a constitutional and legal nationalism (Maloba, 1989: 185). Kenyatta became leader of KAU in 1947. In 1952, Sir Evelyn Baring declared a state of emergency in Kenya. During the Emergency period, the British government and some of the European settlers in Kenya made a determined effort to mould African political thought and to develop the confidence of the budding African intelligentsia, who had positions of relative importance within the colonial structure. They wanted to help constitute a small but rich African landed middle class that would promote Western values.

In the period 1952 to 1960, a multi-racial society, the Capricorn African Society was formed to harmonise and promote the relationship between the races. It provided a multi-racial approach to political, economic, educational and land problems of the country. The society, elitist in outlook, aimed to create a new African patriotism to which all people would give allegiance, setting aside their loyalty to the conflicting aspirations and nationalism of the different races which threatened the country.

Following the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, the first direct elections for African members of the Legislative Council were held in March 1957. By this process, the elected African leaders got the legitimacy not previously enjoyed and a platform from which to voice African grievances. For the next three years, these leaders persistently agitated for 'one man, one vote' (Ochieng, 1985: 139). Following the Lancaster House conference of 1960, the British government decided in February of that year to grant independence to Kenya

with a Westminster model constitution. In March 1960, the majority of the African members of the Legislative Council formed the Kenya African National Union, KANU, with James Gichuru as president, Oginga Odinga as vice-president and Tom Mboya as general secretary.

1.6 A Multi-Party Beginning at Independence

Vested European interests, through their organised groups, began to appeal to the smaller African groups to join the whites against the Kikuyu and Luo politicians. On the threshold of independence, elected members from other ethnic groups saw KANU as urban-centred, dominated by Kikuyu and Luo influence and too radical. After seeking assent from leaders of other minority groups, Muliro and Ngala launched the Kenya African Democratic Union, KADU. Whilst KANU's objective was to work for a predominantly African government, KADU hoped to form a multi-racial government together with the smaller political groupings of settlers and Asians. One of KADU's major aims was to resist a Kikuyu and Luo dominance in Kenya by pressing for a *majimbo* (federal) constitution (Ochieng, 1985: 151; Widner, 1992: 134).

KANU emerged victorious in the 1961 elections but refused to form a government until Jomo Kenyatta was released from detention. Ronald Ngala was persuaded to form a minority government in coalition with European and Asian members of the Council. The last Lancaster Conference of 1961 was primarily preoccupied with KADU's demand for a federal constitution (see Widner, 1992: 51; Matheson, 1992: 69). KANU once more emerged victorious in the May 1963 independence elections and in June 1963, the now free Jomo Kenyatta, who had replaced Gichuru as President of KANU, became the first Prime Minister of Kenya. Because the colonial government for its part had all along favoured a *majimbo* constitution, this was initially introduced on 1 June 1963 when self-rule was first accorded to Kenya (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 96).

On December 12, 1963, Kenya became an independent African State. At this time, Kenya had three major parties, the third one being the African Peoples Party, APP. While KANU and KADU claimed support throughout the country, the APP led by Paul Ngei, had support mainly from the Akamba ethnic group. The major political divide between the two major parties, KANU and KADU, as explained above, originated in the fear of ethnic domination on the part of minority tribes. This concern found support also from the Colonial government and white settlers. However, within KANU itself, there were two contending groups separated on political-ideological grounds. According to William Ochieng (1985: 147), by early 1960's it was obvious that there were two schools of thought in Kenya with regard to her future development. One group lead by Kenyatta and Mboya and the other led by Oginga Odinga. The former was pro-West (Capitalism) and the latter pro-East (Socialism).

It was not surprising then that on Independence Day Jomo Kenyatta stated his commitment to a democratic African socialist state. In this new dispensation, the benefits of economic and social development were to be distributed equitably. Differential treatment based on tribe, race, belief or class would be abandoned, and every national whether black, white or brown, would be given equal opportunity to improve his lot (see Widner, 1992: 51, 54). By the end of 1965, all the members of the Opposition, after persuasion from KANU, had voluntarily crossed the floor of Parliament and joined the ruling party, making Kenya a one-party state (Tostensen and Scott, 1987; also see Widner, 1992). Beneath this apparent success in the direction of national unity, there emerged a glaring discrepancy between the rhetorical promises before independence and the performance of KANU later. Instead of the equity promised in the run up to independence, there evolved an exploitative relationship in the wake of independence between the haves and have-nots (Ochieng, 1985: 148).

The radical pro-socialist wing in KANU made demands for the above situation to be redressed. As a response to these demands, the pro-West and conservative in KANU came up with the Sessional Paper number Ten of 1965, *African socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. 'Apart from its rhetorical character, this blueprint clearly had no intention of altering the inherited colonial economic and social structures, and especially their law and order aspects.' The 'Left' in KANU vehemently opposed the Paper and this earned them the following response from President Kenyatta: 'It is a sad mistake to think that you can get more food, more hospitals or schools by simply crying communism ... There is no room for those who wait for things to be given for nothing. There is no room for leaders who hope to build a nation on slogans' (Ochieng, WR, 1985: 149). However, the pro-socialist wing believed that the government had failed to make a concerted effort to put the country's social and economic institutions in the hands of the African people.

In 1966, some of the more radical members of KANU led by Oginga Odinga, the vice-president, broke away and formed the Kenya People's Union, KPU, demanding more socialist measures and policies. They were deeply disillusioned with the way in which, as they perceived it, the Kenyatta government had betrayed the people after independence (Ochieng WR, 1985: 153; Widner, 1992: 58-59). KPU had a populist orientation and Luo ethnic predominance, albeit also including prominent Kikuyu leaders such as Bildad Kaggia, who became its vice-president. The defectors to KPU were compelled, as a result of a series of legislative moves on the part of the incumbent KANU government, to stand for re-election in their respective constituencies. In this 'Little General Election', a majority of the KPU group lost their parliamentary seats largely as a result of administrative harassment by the state apparatus which, in effect, intervened in favour of KANU (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 96; Widner, 1992: 69-70).

KPU's frustration by Kenyatta's KANU government was selective and strategically effected. Widner (1992: 69) observes that only in Western Kenya and especially Luo areas did the government at first restrain from using intimidation and harassment against the opposition, 'with the consequence that the "radicals" appeared, wrongly, to have a particular ethnic base and to have acted on narrow, sectarian interests ... The rigging of opposition in this way destroyed the KPU's national electoral appeal and provided the government with the pretext necessary to further curtail its actions.' For the next three years KANU and KPU called each other names until 1969 when KPU was banned following a disturbance in a Kisumu political rally at which President Kenyatta was pelted with stones. KPU leaders were detained without trial and once again Kenya reverted to being a one-party state (Ochieng, 1985: 154).

1.7 The Kenyatta Legacy and the Nyayo Era: The Rise of a Party-State

From the time the KPU was proscribed until June 1982, when legislation was passed to make it a *de jure* one-party state, Kenya remained a *de facto* one-party state. The 1982 legislation was passed mainly to forestall the registration by Oginga Odinga and George Anyona of an opposition political party which was to be called the Kenya African Socialist Alliance, KASA, and which was intended to have a socialist orientation (Widner, 1992: 145). Anyona was subsequently detained and Odinga placed under house arrest after the August 1, 1982 coup attempt at toppling President Moi. Though the 1982 amendment arguably only sanctified what already existed, a *de facto* one-party system, it nevertheless radically changed Kenyan politics in 'legitimising' the ban on all political parties other than KANU. It effectively licensed the persecution of opposition groups by criminalising them and creating an 'underground' context (see HRW, 1991: 10-11).

Between 1969 and the June 1982 constitutional amendment, KANU had become moribund, ceasing to function as a party between elections, and overly sensitive to criticism. A telling example can be found 'in the mid 1970's, (when) Martin Shikuku claimed in Parliament that KANU was dead. When asked by other members of the House to substantiate his claim, the Deputy Speaker, Jean-Marie Seroney, ruled that it was not necessary to substantiate the obvious. Shortly afterwards, they were both detained' (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 97; Widner, 1992: 1; *Weekly Review* 12.01.1990: 11). According to Mazrui (1983: 288):

In reality, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), was at its most vigorous when it faced competition from another party... But when, after 1969, KANU successfully eliminated all party competitors, KANU itself began to experience a progressive process of atrophy. The dilution of elite competition through intimidation and the elimination of other parties resulted in the dilution of the vigour of the ruling party. This was particularly so since the Kenya African national Union did not even experiment with mass mobilisation as an alternative dynamo to multi-party elite competition.

During the 1970's, one of the few politicians who dared to lock horns with the Kenyatta government was Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, popularly known as 'J M'. This is what he had to say about the socio-economic situation obtaining at that time in the country:

A small but powerful greedy, self-seeking elite in the form of politicians, civil servants and businessmen, has steadily but surely monopolised the fruits of independence to the exclusion of the majority of people. We do not want a Kenya of ten millionaires and ten million beggars. (Talking about his political predicament, he had said) My concern

about the owners of property has been misconstrued as rebellion against the government, and I have been accused of being controversial in matters affecting my brothers and sisters who happen to be less endowed with the material wealth of the world. If this is what controversy means, I do not regret the accusation (Ochieng WR, 1985: 145).

Kariuki was found murdered on Ngong Hills in March 1975. (see Widner, 1992: 76). This assassination of a popular leader further compounded in the public mind the fear of dissidence and more deeply engraved in it the culture of silence.

Observing that KANU during the Kenyatta era existed only as a loosely-knit group of politicians, Widner (1992: 3) argues, however, that 'the party had tolerated some internal criticism and debate over its platform, albeit to a gradually diminishing degree'. It is the provincial administration, not the party, she notes, that Kenyatta used as a vehicle to secure compliance with government policies and stances. According to Widner (*ibid*), in fact, there was a shift in government-party relations brought about by the move from a single-party system in which KANU remained a loosely organised 'debating system' with little policy system, toward a Kenya 'party-State', during Moi's tenure, in which KANU increasingly became a vehicle for the Office of the President to control political opposition.

While acknowledging the above observed difference between the two regimes, my aim at this stage is to stress that Kenyatta, like Moi later, eschewed multi-party competition and believed firmly that Kenya would thrive only if there were a single political party (Widner, 1992: 31). The Kenyatta government introduced and used various 'techniques of political intimidation, including detention laws and violence.' During the KADU opposition days, according to

Widner (1992: 55), 'Kenya said that those who were slow in recognising the virtues of the single-party system were often the same people who had been "warming their bellies under imperialist wings" ... What mattered, he argued, was whether the party or parties established were mass parties. A one-party state with a mass base was as democratic, in his view, as a state with two mass based parties.' Those who opposed Kenya's one-party system were as a result usually put in jail or subjected to various forms of police intimidation and general human and political rights deprivation.

When Daniel Toroitich arap Moi took over the Presidency, following Kenya's death in 1978, he vowed to follow in the *nyayo* (footsteps) of his predecessor. Soon after, however, measures were taken to revamp the ruling party KANU with recruitment campaigns being held frequently throughout the country. In order to nip the opposition in the bud, a clearance system was effectively employed to bar candidates who did not follow *nyayo* (meaning did not follow Moi) from contesting for parliamentary seats. The methods used to recruit members into KANU sometime bordered on coercion (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 97; Widner, 1992: 1-3, 92).

Compulsory membership was introduced for all government/public employees and there were cases in which civil servants would be barred from entering their offices when they failed to produce KANU membership cards. At this time it was customary for people looking for employment to buy or carry KANU cards in case possession of one was used as criteria for employment. State and party organs seem indeed to have merged into a one-party regime. 'KANU membership became necessary as a protection against intimidation by unruly KANU youth wingers and the police ... KANU was increasingly promoted as a mass movement and periodically restructured to increase party power' (HRW, 1991: 13-14; also see Widner, 1992: 162).

Silencing Opposition: Legal Instruments of Suppression

Throughout both Kenyatta's rule and during Moi's tenure, good use was made of a host of legal instruments of control and repression inherited from the colonial era. Detention without trial of politicians critical of the regime has remained legal under the preservation of Public Security Act. Widner (1992: 68) observes that 'in the immediate post-independence period, the Office of the President (Kenyatta's) moved rapidly to amend the constitution in ways that would ... limit the chances that an official opposition party would secure a significant foothold in parliament.' One such instrument was the 1966 Sixth Amendment to the constitution, which empowered Kenyatta to detain political opponents without trial.

The Preservation of Public Security Act empowered the president to detain any person who is considered a threat to public security. Such acts of preventive detention have been exempted from legal action under other constitutional provisions. The detention laws were suspended between 1978 and 1982 but Moi's parliament voted on June 4, 1982 to reinstate them. The practice of preventive detention without trial has been rarely questioned in public debate on grounds of principle. One exception was in 1982, when the former editor-in-chief of the *Standard*, George Githii, spoke in an editorial against preventive detention as a method of silencing political opponents of the government (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 116-7).

People opposed to the ruling oligarchy have for a long time been denied the *freedom of association* through the Public Order Act which empowered the Provincial Administration to issue or deny licences for holding public meetings. A licence is meant to be issued on the basis of an application stating the purpose of the meeting, time and venue, and a list of speakers. The commonest pretext for refusal is that a meeting is adjudged likely to cause a

breach of the peace. *Legal existence* for associations critical of KANU has been denied mainly through the Societies Act, which requires all societies and associations to be registered. These measures of suppression resulted in the congestion of channels of expression and legitimate dissent giving rise to the formation of clandestine movements and publication of so-called 'seditious publications such as *Pambana* published by the December Twelve Movement before 1982, and *Mpatanishi* published by Mwakenya in early 1986 (*ibid.*: 99).

There was a coup attempt to overthrow Moi in August 1982, which was successfully resisted. This was later used as a pretext for a general clampdown on all forms of political opposition, which involved, *inter alia*, imprisonment and detention without trial. The Moi regime was determined to wipe out opposition elements before they were able to mobilise popular support. In August 1986, the KANU Annual Delegates Meeting unanimously adopted a new procedure for preliminary election of candidates for parliamentary seats. This system, dubbed 'queue-voting', meant that voters would queue or line up, in the open, behind the candidate of their choice. The KANU government argued that this would obviate election rigging because it would be done in the open air for all to see. However, the system was criticised because of the concern that it would antagonise people and also that it would render the filing of petitions of complaint meaningless, as *ex post facto* verification of results would no longer be possible (see Widner, 1992: 191-192).

In December 1986, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment, the most debated provisions of which were the removal of security of tenure of the Attorney General, and that of the office of Comptroller and Auditor-General. These removals were seen as a political design meant to erode the system of checks and balances within the constitution. In respect of the latter office, there would be a weakening of public accountability because it is meant to

function as a watchdog over the government's conduct of the nation's financial affairs. There was also grave concern about the ease with which the President could change the Constitution, which was the very foundation of the country's political, social and economic structures (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 114).

A Political and Ideological Culture Intolerant of Criticism

On the basis of the above concerns, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, NCCCK, called for a referendum on the constitutional amendment. The Catholic Bishops for their part called for a dialogue between the government and *Wananchi* (the citizens) and voiced sharp criticism of the KANU party to the effect that 'discussion is precluded by the allegations of party officials, so that *any questioning of the system is tantamount to disloyalty. Already the party is assuming a totalitarian role. It claims to speak for the people, and yet it does not allow the people to give their views'* (*ibid.*: 115 my italics). The church organisations, because they criticised the KANU government's political performance, were frequently accused of attempting to play the role of an opposition party, and of engaging in subversive activities.

During this heyday of the KANU party-state's monopoly of politics, Parliament lost both its independence and its role as a forum for debate. There was frequent lack of quorums in Parliament making it a farce and members wouldn't voice criticism against the government for they feared falling foul of the party because of the disciplinary measures it meted out. President Moi had by now established the practice of enlarging the 'government' side of the House so that Ministers, Assistant Ministers, and presidential nominees to Parliament formed a majority in the House (Widner, 1992: 329). The result was that it made ineffectual the constitutional provision that Parliament may cause the government to resign if a vote of no confidence is carried in the National Assembly.

Because of the government majority in the House, it became very easy for the wishes of both KANU and President Moi to pass through the House. Parliament was then used as a mere rubber-stamp. As already mentioned above, vital constitutional amendments were passed through Parliament without any debate. For example, the 1982 June amendment that made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state was rushed through Parliament in a matter of twenty minutes and without a single MP speaking out, let alone objecting. The above-mentioned removal of security of tenure for the Attorney General and Auditor-General were also passed without debate (HRW, 1991: 19; also see Widner, 1992: 145). This was a result of the fact that the political space available to members was severely limited. There was deep erosion of parliamentary immunity, which insulated members of parliament and enabled them to obtain information from the executive and therefore hold the government responsible for the actions of its officers.

With time, a political culture had developed in which the authority of the President was formally unquestionable - constitutionally and politically. Criticism of the President and his Government (as distinct from individual Ministers and civil servants), however constructive and well grounded in facts, tended to be dismissed out of hand, and branded as anti-*nyayo* (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 94). Even the sharpest critics of the government preferred to criticise the president by implication only; very often done by quoting the 'wisdom' of the president's words and then the way in which they are 'abused' thereby contrasting the reality with the rhetoric (HRW, 1991: 25). Whatever genuine debate previously existed in Parliament had been replaced by a personalised style of rule by virtue of which Presidential directives and orders were issued whose constitutional basis may not always have been fully evident (Tostensen and Scott, 1987: 94; also see Widner, 1992: 136, 163, 198).

According to the human rights publication, *Human Rights watch* President Moi had developed a personality cult:

Schools sing in praise of him wherever he goes; mass choirs exalt him on national holidays; the national radio plays music in his honour after every newscast; the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation TV news always begin with the activities of 'His Excellency the President, Mr Daniel arap Moi...' The result of this cultivated reverence is that President Moi's powers were considered supreme and his exercise of them wise; yet at the same time, he was distanced from all the abuses of the state. This was done by attributing all excesses to his bad 'advisers' (HRW, 1991: 25).

Moi used the concept of *nyayo* to signify his intention to perpetuate Kenyatta's style and principles in governing. He later tried to develop it into a philosophy (Moi, 1986). However, to most Kenyans, following *nyayo* came to mean accepting Moi's leadership without question or criticism (Widner, 1992: 150, 161). This has been a political fact in Kenya even though the grounding of freedom of expression in the constitution means that criticism of the President is not a criminal offence in itself, and can only legally be seditious if deliberately used to agitate others into rebellion against the state. One of the ways of following *nyayo*, according to its architect, is to demonstrate blind loyalty. Moi said the following on September 13, 1984:

I call on all ministers, assistant ministers and every other person to sing like parrots. During Mzee Kenyatta's period I persistently sang the Kenyatta tune until people said: This fellow has nothing to sing except to sing for Kenyatta. I say: I didn't have ideas of my own? I was in Kenyatta's shoes and therefore, I had to sing whatever Kenyatta wanted. If I had sung another song, do you think that Kenyatta would

have left me alone? Therefore you ought to sing the song I sing. If I put a full stop, you should also put a full stop. This is how this country will move forward (HRW, 1991: 27).

1.8 The Concerted Struggle for a Multi-Party System

In December 1989, there was a major political stand off between Professor Wangari Maathai, leader of the Kenyan environmental group, the Green Belt Movement and the KANU-government led by President Moi. The issue at stake was a plan to construct a new sixty-eight-office tower to house the headquarters of KANU and the party's media centre. "Foreign funds committed to the construction in Nairobi of Africa's highest tower-building ... were withdrawn when vocal publicity drew attention to the fact that the project entailed ruining one of the city's few public parks." (Decalo 1992: 17; Widner, 1992: 1). This is just one example of the ways in which members of the opposition political elite had become bold in the face political suppression. Wangari's persistence in her opposition to Moi received wide local and international press coverage because she persisted when the intimidation and persecution from the KANU government was overwhelming.

The year 1990 saw an unprecedented show of daring by government critics dissatisfied with the political performance of the KANU government. In January, Rev. Timothy Njoya, a vocal cleric, argued that one-party systems in Africa had completely failed to be democratic and should therefore be replaced with multi-party systems, which are more consistent with democracy. The condemnation he got from the ruling political establishment was true to form, with one cabinet minister arguing that those who make such statements, even from the pulpit, should be detained without trial. One lawyer, supporting the cleric, had said that the one-party system adopted in Kenya had created 'a class of citizens with no political rights and others with parallel absolute rights.'

(*Weekly Review*, 12 January 1990). As a result of increasing criticism, the President was constrained to devote most of his time defending the one-party system arguing that pluralism would breed tribal alliances in which political parties would express tribal sentiments instead of genuine public opinion. Whilst an argument can be made that both systems can work in Africa:

The failure of both multi-party and one-party systems in Africa stems from the concentration of both political and economic power in the hands of a few individuals who then devise methods and systems for perpetuating their dominance *ad infinitum* (*Weekly Review*, 20.01.1990).

In April, another cleric, Rev. Okullu, called for the repeal of Section 2A, the 1982 Constitutional amendment that made Kenya a one-party system. This call was later in May taken up by two prominent politicians and former cabinet ministers, Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, who had been expelled from KANU. The two called a press conference where they made a case for the legalisation of opposition parties. They strongly denounced the KANU government and accused it of inability to curb corrupt practices, poor civil service performance, '... "tribal patronage" that supplanted merit as a criterion for advancement, inflexibility and indifference to demands for public accountability. However, the main theme of their platform was interference with freedom of association outside the political realm' (Widner, 1992: 175). The Moi government denounced the conference and the politicians as foreign-inspired.

The political events that were unfolding had an educative and sensitising effect on the urban populace whose involvement in opposition politics had been hitherto almost non-existent. The political assassination early in 1990 of

Foreign Minister Robert Ouko was such an event. There was widespread belief that the KANU government was responsible for his death because he had become too popular for president Moi's liking and that he opposed cabinet colleagues who practised corruption. The rumours that circulated incriminating the KANU government provoked substantial grass-roots outrage and urban riots that lasted for several days. During these riots, the people openly showed their support for the agitation for a multi-party political system. Then in June 1990, government bulldozers moved in and brutally demolished the shanty village of Muoroto in Nairobi. A few people were killed and others injured and many were left homeless in this inhuman government action.

When the MP for the area, Maina Wanjigi expressed outrage and sought restitution, his colleagues in Parliament denounced his actions as divisive and "tribalist". He eventually lost his seat and his position in KANU (*Weekly Review* 8 June 1990). According to Widner (1992: 194):

Although the members of the informal sector could not provide an organized forum for discussion, at least some of their number began to lend economic and social weight to the demands for greater openness.

Coincidentally, even as the two politicians, Matiba and Rubia, were making their call for freedom of expression and association, the American ambassador to Kenya, Smith Hempstone disclosed in May that the US Congress was thinking of linking economic aid to the practice of multi-party democracy. In June of the same year, after touring the whole country defending the one-party system, President Moi ordered a stop to the 'debate' saying that it was time to turn to other matters. His main argument was that the public rallies that he had addressed during his tour of the country had convinced him that Kenyans were solid in their support of the single-party system. Bishop Okullu aptly responded to this by saying that the debate could not have ended as it had not even

began. He observed that what had taken place so far was more of a monologue on the part of Moi than a debate (*Weekly Review* 22 June 1990).

In an attempt to comply with the law of the land, Matiba and Rubia applied in early June to the Provincial authorities in Nairobi for a licence to hold a political rally on 7 July, to further argue their case and also gauge public opinion on this. As expected, the request was denied and a strong warning came from the Moi's KANU-government to the effect that it had not licensed any meeting on multi-partyism. On Wednesday, July 4, Matiba and Rubia were arrested and detained. This was soon followed by a spate of arrests of other multi-party advocates. The crackdown provoked widespread riots in Nairobi and other towns, beginning on July 7, or 'Saba Saba Day', as it was later popularly called. It was on this day that the two detained politicians were to have sponsored their public rally for multi-party democracy at Nairobi's Kamukunji meeting ground. Widner (1992: 176) correctly observes that though largely unorganised, the riots caught world attention and brought the plight of Kenyan advocates of political pluralism under scrutiny.

It is against this backdrop that President Moi mandated the Saitoti (his vice-president) committee to gauge the public's view and come up with recommendations for the reform of the electoral system. This was a colossal novelty in Kenyan politics, as the *Weekly Review* observed:

... for the first time since the debate on political options started, the public is being treated to the spectacle of the ruling party's top brass having to listen to a litany of complaints and criticism without the party trying to silence those appearing before it (3 August 1990).

In August, veteran politicians Masinde Muliro and Martin Shikuku plus George Nthenge, Ahmed Bamahriz and Philip Gachoha joined Odinga in forming the

pressure group Forum for the Restoration of Democracy, FORD. Later in the month, the President declared FORD an illegal political organisation. This was followed by a crackdown on FORD leaders and supporters by the state machinery bent on carrying out the presidential directive to suppress the pressure group. FORD met these moves with defiance and went ahead, in the middle of November, to plan for a public rally without government permission. The government responded with a hard crackdown on, and arrest of, opposition activists. They were all charged with contravening the Public Order Act but were soon released in the wake of strong grass-roots show of support when their cases came up for mention in the law courts, and protests by Western governments led by the US (*Weekly Review* 30 August 1990).

All these events are believed to have earned Kenya very poor international publicity. Towards the end of November 1990, a consultative meeting of aid donors in Paris, France announced the suspension of further aid to Kenya for six months during which they expected fundamental reforms of Kenya's political economy. This came at a time when the Nordic countries, partly as a result of the diplomatic fallout between Kenya and Norway, and the US had substantially reduced their bi-lateral aid to the country. These developments were in line with the 1989 World Bank Report (reviewed in Beckman, 1991) that called for, among other things, good governance as a condition for donor aid to Africa. The new policy of "the new superstate: the World Bank, the IMF" (Hellinger, 1992: 85), strongly spoke against the failure in African countries of public institutions, lack of accountability in governance, massive corruption, oppression and nepotism, and the breakdown in the judicial system.

The Report called for the rolling back of the state. It argued that what was needed was less state involvement in the political economy with the state playing a facilitation role rather than a controlling one. It went further and called for "not just less but better government." It argued that a better balance is

needed between the government and the governed. The people should be empowered to take charge of their lives. This means that “a more pluralistic institutional structure including non-governmental organisations and stronger local government should be fostered.” Good governance requires “ a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that it accountable to its public. This calls for, among other things, a concerted attack on corruption. The condition was spelled out clearly, “unless governance improves, economic reforms will not go far, nor will much economic aid be forthcoming” (Beckman, 1991: 45-52).

On 3 December, the KANU government bowed to increased internal and external pressure and through its Annual General Conference instructed Parliament to repeal the single-party legislation (*Weekly Review* 6.12.1990). The legalisation of a multi-party political system came into effect in December 1991. One can argue therefore that the internal pressures and agitation for political change away from the authoritarian and undemocratic single-party system became bolder and more frequent in the wake of the wind of change that swept through the former Soviet Bloc. This coupled with Western donor pressure, unilaterally and through the Paris Club, which pegged the disbursement of further aid to Kenya on tangible and demonstrable political change, forced the KANU government to legalise multi-party politics (Ajulu, 1992; Beckman, 1992; Decalo, 1992; Hellinger, 1992).

1.9 Two Ideological Positions with regard to Political Change

It is important at this stage to give in summary the ideological arguments posited by the two political groups that were involved in the public discourse about the desirability or not of the change to a multi-party system in Kenya. These arguments are ideological for the reason that they attempt to make a case for the political supremacy of one group's portrayal of reality about

Kenya's democratic situation. During this time of change, KANU was the super-ordinate group trying to cling to power, and retain its attendant privileges, which it monopolised for the greater part of post-independence Kenya. The subordinate group comprised all those opposition politicians advocating for a stop to this monopoly. Most of those comprising this group actually fell foul of the KANU government and were now fighting for a come back to professional politics.

The first ideological position argued that the status quo is democratic enough and should be maintained. This was the position of the KANU government supporters who argued that a multi-party system is unsuitable and undesirable for Kenya. Politicians in this group insisted that multi-partyism by its very nature, was a recipe for ethnic tensions and chaos mainly because Kenyans were not yet cohesive enough for such a system. They saw a multi-party system as a luxury, which had to wait until Kenya was more 'cohesive'. They made reference to the early multi-party period that involved KANU and the KADU, highlighting the fact that both parties relied on tribal alliances which polarised the country.

Most poignant were references to the era of KPU, which drew the bulk of its support from Luoland. Because its support base was among the Luo ethnic group, the KPU was easily branded a tribal party. The violence associated with the party's proscription in 1969 was greatly highlighted by the opponents of the multi-party system. It was also argued by the KANU government supporters that accountability and democracy that were being mooted could very well thrive in a one-party environment, and that a multi-party system would not necessarily guarantee democracy or cure Kenya's political and economic problems.

KANU also argued that the concept of multi-partyism was not indigenous to Africa and that Kenyans would face problems if they absorbed wholesale fashionable political prescriptions without adapting them to local realities (*Weekly Review* 30.03.1990). It was said that the traditional African approach to government was through consensus and participation, as opposed to the competition of a multi-party system. A historical argument was made that the one-party tradition in Africa arose out of the experiences of colonialism and as such, ruling parties were not merely factions but nationalist movements representing the interests and aspirations of entire nations (*Weekly Review* 22.06.1990). One of KANU's pet accusations against the opposition was that the advocates of multi-partyism were 'puppets of colonialists'. This argument formed the basis of the accusation that Western countries were trying to dismember African countries, including Kenya, along ethnic lines (*Weekly Review* 30.03.1990).

The second ideological position argued that the status quo was undemocratic and begged for change. The major aim of those who agitated for political change was for the introduction of a more accommodating, and to them therefore, a more democratic political system. It was their opinion that the KANU government's performance had shown that a single-party system worked against democratic ideals. They argued that there was lack of openness and accountability in the one-party system. The proponents of multi-partyism complained that tribalism was being used as an excuse by the ruling single parties to entrench themselves undemocratically. They argued that tribalism is neither created by a multi-party system nor cured simply by maintaining a single-party system. To some of them, tribalism existed even under the one-party KANU government and it is not therefore bred by the kind of political system that a country adopts.

Among the decisions that multi-party advocates slated KANU for were: the adoption, even in the wake of strong criticism, of the election system of queue-voting; alleged rigging of elections, especially of the 1988 General Elections; frequent expulsions from the party; the constitutional amendments making Kenya a *de jure* one-party state; and, removal of the security of tenure of the Attorney-General, Comptroller and Auditor General and of High Court judges. The position taken by this group was based on their conviction that the one-party arrangement had stifled political debate in the country and undermined the democratic process.

The advocates of change argued, therefore, that a multi-party system would allow freedom of expression which, they insisted, KANU had denied Kenyans by victimising those who held views different from their own. It was argued that Kenya could not isolate itself from the changes that were taking place elsewhere in the world at the time, especially in the former Soviet Bloc and in Africa; 'Kenya must stand up to the challenges of the winds of change that is blowing across the world.' The only solution, they argued, was to introduce a multi-party system in which political opposition would be institutionalised. This would be achieved only by the repeal of the constitutional amendment (Section 2A) of 1982 that made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state (*Weekly Review* 11.01.1991).

1.10 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the research problem. The main focus of the study is to investigate the performance of two major Kenyan daily newspapers during a period of fundamental political change. The background to this political change has also been provided. For most of its post-independence existence, Kenya has had a political system that progressively, until 1992, became intolerant of political opposition and criticism. This chapter has

enumerated ways and means by which this political culture came into being, culminating in the adoption of a one-party political establishment. The effects of this culture on the human and political rights of the citizenry have been established. The reasoning behind this historical review is that it is necessary as a variable or backdrop against which to analyse the performance of the daily press during a period when the dominance of this culture was legally brought to an end.

The major assumption of this study has been shown to be that the performance of the daily press as a public sphere was directly and indirectly hamstrung by the existing undemocratic political culture. However, there have been in the media debate in Kenya other reasons and propositions to explain the performance of the press. These propositions, centred mainly on modes of ownership, have been given in this chapter as part of the major problem. The goal here is to argue that the political culture had the overriding determination. The next chapter will therefore make a review of theoretical formulations that explain different determinants of press performance. Arguments in this review will provide a connecting link between elements of the research problem and the history of the press to be given in Chapter Three below. The main aim in Chapter Two will be to argue that media performance analysis should be grounded in normative and historical perspectives.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

My main objective in this chapter is to develop a theoretical grounding for the argument that the political practice, ideology and culture of a particular society or nation is a major determinant, alongside and at times independent of the economic practice, of the performance of the press in the political process. I intend to argue that a society's stage of historical development and extent of democratisation directly determines the freedom with which its press will perform in the realm of politics, both as a political public sphere and as a crucial participant in this sphere. In a situation of heightened political activity, especially at a time when, as it was in Kenya during the period of empirical investigation, the hegemony of the ruling social group is seriously contested and undermined, the resultant change, or process of changing, in the political process will be reflected in the changed way in which the political press will perform.

A significant volume of the literature that informs the discussion in this chapter comes from Western media scholarship. This literature is relevant to this study in a number of ways. The issues and concerns that are debated in Western media studies are very similar to some of those that have occupied African scholars and politicians. In fact, most of the African media scholarship is deeply rooted in the academic traditions of the West. The democratic political process which the media is expected and believed to facilitate likewise has its cradle in the West. For this reason, Western theoretical traditions and perspectives are important for any reasonable discussion of the role of the media in the democratic process of African countries. They are important for historical and comparative reasons. As will be seen below, media professionals, academics, politicians and government

functionaries in Africa have formed their ideas on the role of the media in politics either in support or in opposition to the Western tradition.

But the special conditions obtaining in Africa, being part of the so-called Developing, Third or Less Developed World, has with time necessitated the birth and growth of literature dealing mainly with the role and performance of the mass media in these countries. The peculiar conditions of African countries, it would seem, must give rise to pertinent theoretical formulations or perspectives. These theoretical formulations, being especially of a normative nature, reflect the body of knowledge from within and without Africa with regard to the role and the experiences of the mass media in Africa countries. A review will be made therefore of this literature generally as it relates to Africa and specifically as it has informed the debate around the general theoretical perspective on the media in developing countries. This discussion will be important in that it establishes the framework by which to analyse the performance of Kenya's daily press during a time of fundamental political change.

2.2 The Import of the Media in the Political Process

Most, if not all, of the literature cited below take it as a given that the media of mass communication are very important in the constitution of modern societies, both developed and developing, because of a number of reasons. They are strategic if important information is to reach a widely dispersed mass population within a limited time-span. While fulfilling this transmission function, the media operate concurrently as interpreters or translators of social phenomena. This double function is related to the conceptualisation of the media as message carriers: a conceptualisation that constitutes the media as symbolic systems.

The media are also economic institutions; they need to be heavily funded in order that they may start and continue to operate. They may be owned privately

by organisations or individuals or by the state as public corporations. For them to be viable economically, they must make a profit from advertisements and sales or be subsidised privately by people or organisations, which own them, or publicly by means of licence fees and/or state subsidy. Another possibility is a combination, in varying degrees, of these modes of funding. This economic or commercial dimension constitute media organisations as material systems (see especially Murdock, 1991).

The problem of the nature and influences of the relationship between the symbolic and the economic aspects of the media and the implications of this for the performance of the media especially in the democratic process has occupied and still occupy mass communication theorists and researchers (Bennett, 1982; Boyce, 1987; Curran, 1977; 1982; 1991a; 1991b; 1991c; Curran and Gurevitch, 1991; Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, 1982; Curran and Seaton, 1991; Gallagher, 1982; Garnham, 1986; Golding and Murdock, 1991; McQuail, 1987; 1991; 1992; 1994; Murdock, 1982; 1990; 1991; 1992; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Negrine, 1989; Naero, 1988; Schudson, 1991). This concern emanates from some basic and central socio-theoretical assumptions about media and about politics and the relationship between the two. The concern is also based on particular assumptions about the larger society within which the mass communication media operate.

The literature cited above reveal that the mass media have become an integral part of a complex network of institutions in society and they contribute and give meaning to the relationships between institutions and groups in the political system. As a result of *specific historical reasons* and because of *their operational nature*, the media of mass communication have become embedded in the political system so that it is hard to imagine that political activity in its contemporary form could be possible without them. Of particular importance is the fact that the media are able to reach a vast and differentially composed and

dispersed citizenry at one point in time. This has critical implications for the notion of opinion formation, the propagation of dominant ideologies, and political legitimacy.

The importance of the media derives partly from the fact that as symbolic systems, they are characterised by the fact that a few organised communicators can reach a vast mass of people with a particular set of information. Here it is believed, lies the power of the media in that, independently or in concert with other institutions, they are regarded as a source of power for those who control them. This belief rests on the premise that whoever has access to the media has access to the citizenry and can therefore use the media as a means of controlling their political beliefs and actions. This understanding is a result of the realisation that, for all its strong aspects, the media cannot carry all the information in all the perspectives at the same time. It therefore seems to follow that in the realm of politics, it becomes very crucial who owns the media.

The above literature also indicates that the political process itself is laden with struggles for power and dominance. At the symbolic level, most Marxist perspectives argue that a superordinate or ruling class will always ensure that information dissemination and ideological imagery favour and legitimise their hold on power. In liberal democratic theories, however, this power is believed to lie with the electorate through the secret ballot box. Throughout modern Western society, the media of mass communication have been seen to offer the most strategic means for politicians to woo votes during elections and to argue for legitimacy when they are in power.

For the citizenry to fully participate in the electoral, and therefore, the democratic process, they must of necessity depend on the media for information and commentary. Conversely, for politicians it is by means of the media that they can have their divergent views disseminated to the wider community. As a result, *the*

media are a potential carrier of conflict and an arena for political struggle. Those who have power over and/or overriding access to the media may want to have their views given positive treatment and those of their opponents muffled. A more subtle approach would be to present ideologically slanted messages as if they were common sense or the objective reality. This raises the concern for the necessity of the presentation in the media of views that reflect the diversity of opinion and political inclinations in any given society.

In order to study the role of the media in any social process, one will have to review first what is believed that the media can do, or have done before, and consider them against the expectations people have for the media to fulfil. I will here consider first the normative perspectives on, and then the socio-scientific theories about, the performance of mass communication media.

2.3 Four Theories of the Press and Normative Media Analysis

There is considerable literature on the media and democracy in Africa, especially after the so-called second liberation or revolution that is believed to have come in the wake of the wind of change that started in the former soviet-bloc and spilt over into Africa (Ansah, 1988; 1992; Boafo, 1992; Mak'Ochieng, 1993; Ochieng, 1992; Ochilo, 1993; Odhiambo, 1991; Omwanda, 1991; Ronning, 1993; Ziegler and Asante, 1992).

However, some of the above literature, especially that on Kenya, up and till very recently, borrows too heavily from Siebert et al. (1956) and McQuail (1987). It is my argument that this should not be the case especially after the criticisms that have been levelled at these theoretical formulations and the accompanying suggestions for their rejection or reformulation. It is aimed therefore to discuss some of the reasons that have been given for such suggestions and to recommend the theory of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) as a viable

alternative for Kenya and other African countries. The critiques of these normative formulations are presented below to underpin their relative unrealizability in existing societies and as arguments for their adoption as ideal types instead.

I will begin by discussing two important aspects that are shared by the formulations by Siebert et al. and McQuail on the one hand and Habermas on the other. Firstly, as will be seen presently, both have been heavily criticised, with accompanying suggestions for their reformulation, for historical and empirical misrepresentations and gross generalisations and omissions. Secondly, both have as their strength, in media studies, their normative thrust. This is to be expected since normative evaluation of the media as political institutions constitutes a theme that has a long and strong tradition in communications studies.

It was Siebert et al.'s (1956) project to argue that in the last analysis the difference between press systems is one of philosophy and they therefore set out to concretise the philosophical and political rationales or theories which lie behind the different kinds of press existing in the world at their time. According to them, since the beginning of mass communication, there have been only two or four basic theories of the press - two or four, that is, according to how one counts them. They argue that the *Soviet Communist* theory is only a development of the much older *Authoritarian* theory and the *Social Responsibility* theory is only a modification of the *Libertarian* theory. The authors treat the two theoretical derivations separately because, they argue, the Soviets had produced a system so spectacularly different from older authoritarianism and so important to the world, and also because they consider the social responsibility theory to chart the apparent direction of development which the Anglo-American press was seen to be taking (1956:1-6).

Siebert et al.'s work received wide international attention when McQuail (1987) categorised them among six normative media theories. According to McQuail (p. 111):

The first attempt at a comparative statement of major theories of the press dates from 1956 (Siebert et al.) and it remains the major source and point of reference for work of this kind. The four-fold division by Siebert et al has been retained, although supplemented by two further types, in recognition of more recent developments in thinking, if not in practice. It may be that the original 'four theories' are still adequate for classifying national systems, but as the original authors were aware, it can be often be that actual media systems exhibit alternative, even inconsistent, philosophical principles. It is thus appropriate to add further theories to the original set.

Since 1956, various media scholars (Curran, 1991a; 1991b; Gurevitch and Blumer, 1990; McQuail, 1991; Negrine, 1989; Skogerbo, 1991; Syvertsen and Knapskog, 1987) have subjected Siebert et al.'s *Four Theories* to criticism. Most of the criticism is based on observation that *Four Theories* can be placed solidly within a liberal pluralist approach. It is accused of ethnocentrism for using the American system as the model for democracy. The underlying idolisation of the American political system is seen to gloss over the fundamental biases within that society. From a neo-Marxist position, the libertarian premise that potential political interests will organise and take part in the bargaining process is seen to be wanting, as only some among the large number of potential interest groups will be powerful enough to organise successfully and gain political influence.

Another major weakness that comes to the fore is the apparent main criterion applied by Siebert et al. for their classification of the various press systems; thus, the continuum of *state control - freedom from state control*. This classification is

made on the basis of the state's control over the content of the media, as opposed to press freedom per se. An apparent exception, however, is the "social responsibility" theory, which is not distinguished along this dimension. It is singled out as a separate category that came into being as a consequence of what the authors perceived as an internal development inside the pressroom. This theory, however, is still solidly placed within a liberal tradition, but modified according to the extensive criticism with which the libertarian theories and practices have been faced. The emphasis placed on *freedom* in the libertarian context is merely extended to include *obligations* as well in the social-responsibility framework (Skogerbo, 1991;143).

As indicated above, Denis McQuail (1987:109-134; 1994:127-133), in his account of media theories, revisited the typology by Siebert et al. under the heading of *normative* theories. To the original four, he added two more theories; *development media* theory and *democratic-participant* theory. As a basis for concern with the African situation, I will here expound on the first of these two theories. This is mainly because of the extent to which it has been embraced in African perspectives both in practice and in theory. Among other sources and basic postulates, McQuail stresses particularly Unesco's McBride Commission (1980) as advocating for a development media theory. The major reason for this theory is given as the general inapplicability of the four theories and the great attention on matters to do with Third World communication.

In development media theory as formulated by McQuail, one notices that there is a clear statement that the special conditions, values and aspirations of developing countries call for a particular normative orientation for the press prescribing roles that will serve their development goals. However, the contents of the theory shows, on the other hand, that most of these roles have already been prescribed in some of the other theories by Siebert et al.. But more importantly, as aptly argued by Skogerbo (1991:144-146), in this "theory", the

development support role is given overriding importance to the extent that its achievement is seen to justify the abridgement of other human and institutional rights and freedoms, especially press freedom. This is a major source of weakness in the theory because it contradicts what McQuail says is the theory's other concern; namely, respect for democratic communication as expressed and inhered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

More recently, McQuail (1991; see also 1994) has argued for abandoning Theories of the Press because:

The confusion over the status of and possible application of normative theory has been made worse by their: high level generality; their lack of direct connection with actual media systems and often the lack of correspondence between normative pretensions and reality of performance... In many, if not most countries, the media do not constitute any single 'system', but are composed of many separate, overlapping, often theoretically inconsistent elements. For instance, values of independence and impartiality can be pursued with equal chance of success (or lack of it) by systems based either on principles of the free market or under strict public control...(p.69).

In spite of its weaknesses, I find Siebert et al.'s typology important for, modified to accommodate the above criticisms levelled against it, it provides a good starting point for the development of arguments for normative media analysis as a prescriptive and analytical tool. I wish to argue that normative theories and analyses can be used to chart out roles for media performance and give yardsticks for evaluating that performance. Such theories and analyses can be used also to suggest how a particular society's media system should be organised.

As for the applicability of normative theories to specific/particular societal contexts, including those of Africa, I hope to demonstrate the importance of taking them as ideal types. This will make them useful and applicable universally, leaving the latitude for the consideration of pertinent and overriding conditions in the society of interest. The central normative ideals found in Siebert et al.'s typology can be refined and reconsidered in the context of changed political and socio-economic conditions. I believe that most normative communication values are relevant to most societies at all times, though differentially. This means that there is no reason why norms and values to do with unity and order should not, for example, be pursued together and concurrently with those to do with the democratic ideals of equality and freedom. Furthermore, critical normative analysis can be used to uncover power structures, relations of subjugation and systems of oppression.

2.4 The African Experience: A Suppressed Press for Planned Development

In the first three or so decades since independence, most African governments embraced a developmental philosophy in their approach to political and economic issues. Free at last from the yoke of colonialism, they had good and legitimate reasons then to make efforts to formulate and put into effect the best possible institutional structures and systems in politics, economics and social arrangements to address the peoples' educational, social and material needs. (see Ansah, 1988, 1992; Mak'Ochieng, 1993; Ziegler and Asante, 1992). But there was another important aspect to the struggle for independence: The obvious and taken-for-granted promise of greater human freedom and respect for human rights that had been so grossly violated under colonialism. It must be remembered that in most African countries, the fight for independence was and has been a fight for the right to greater or full participation in the political process.

However, with time, most African rulers cultivated politics of suppression and intolerance as their economies also failed to register meaningful improvement. The peoples of Africa have seen a tendency toward the creation of monolithic political institutions in most of their countries. This development can partly be attributed to the propensity by their rulers to deprive their subjects of the right to contribute to discussions concerning their well being and, more important, to question how their governments went about achieving the national well being. There has been a systematic suppression of organised opposition, and the elimination of all forms of dissent saw the establishment of one-party states or military regimes. These are some of the reasons that led Ansah (1992: 53) to state that:

The wind of change that has been blowing over the continent and other parts of the world, assuming the dimensions of a hurricane in certain countries and cutting dictators to size, is a manifestation of a yearning for human dignity and respect for human rights. An objective assessment of the human rights situation in Africa leads to the conclusion that contrary to expectation, independence has not brought about greater individual freedom; on the contrary, human rights have suffered considerable diminution as a result of undemocratic laws enacted ostensibly to protect fragile national institutions, forge national consensus and promote accelerated development.

These observations lead us to ask why things came to be the way they have been. What reasons, if any did the political leaders give to justify their style of governance? From the literature cited above, we can cull out a number of reasons. It was argued that in the face of the enormous problems facing many African and other developing countries, it was necessary to abridge civil and political rights in order to accelerate development. What was implied by this position was that human and political rights had to come secondary to the

imperatives of economic development because the two could not be pursued simultaneously. Therefore, the argument goes, it was collective development and not individual rights and freedoms that needed to be emphasised. Some of the features of collective development were seen to be national identity and national unity. It was argued that during this initial period of growth, stability and unity had to be sought, criticism minimised and the public faith in government institutions and policies had to be encouraged. The result of this can only be seen to have been enforced or imposed consensus in the name of national development, and this was clearly at variance with the more enlightened view of development which sees free and active participation as an essential ingredient.

The reasons given above to justify the abridgement of human rights and establishment of undemocratic governments in the name of development were likewise used to chart and prescribe a particular role and philosophy for the media in Africa and other developing countries. The specifics of this role and philosophy gave rise to, and have found expression, in the development media theory (McQuail, 1987;1994), which is sometimes referred to as developmental theory, developmental theory of the press (Ansah 1988; 1992), or development communication (Melkote, 1991; Moemeka 1989; Servaes, 1995). However, as is illustrated presently, a closer look at the above sources reveals that this media perspective has three distinct orientations. The orientation that has received the most attention is that which looks at the various ways in which communication media can best be used to meet the development needs of Third World countries. This tradition has its birth during the development decade of the fifties and sixties whose philosophy was to assist in the alleviation of the perceived abject poverty and general backwardness of Third World countries.

2.4.1 Development Support Communication

There has occurred a development within this first version of development media theory from narrow concerns with the diffusion of innovations, persuasion of

developing peoples to abandon their anti-development values and mores, to the realisation that there are also external socio-economic constraints on development and that there is the need to search for 'factors which could presumably make development projects more relevant to the needs of the disadvantaged groups.' These realisations gave birth to what has come to be known as development support communication (DSC) (Melkote, 1991; Servaes, 1995). This particular tradition has a materialist, mechanistic and instrumental approach to the role of the media in development, its emphasis being to enable the DSC specialist bridge 'the communication gap between the technical specialists with expertise in specialist areas of knowledge - health matters, agriculture, etc. - and the users who are in need of such knowledge and its specific applications to improve their performance, increase their productivity, improve their health, etc.' (Melkote, 1991:29). One can say, therefore, that this version of development media theory has a practical and instrumental, and not normative, thrust.

2.4.2 Controlled Media for Development

The second orientation or version of development media theory is somewhat related to the one above to the extent that its point of departure emphasises socio-economic development. However, its main emphasis is different, and therefore important to this study, because it has normative implications for the role of the media in the political public sphere of African countries. It brings us to an understanding of how the media was expected, and made, to serve the same interests that worked against democratic practices and abridged fundamental human rights, all in the name of development. The point of departure for this perspective is the acknowledgement that African countries have poor communication infrastructures, few professional skills, and a paucity of production and cultural resources, among other things. They are also heavily dependent on the developed world for technology, some specialised skills and cheap, but expensive to produce cultural products (McQuail 1987: 119-121).

These reasons are then used to support the argument that, as a result, the media in Africa are ill equipped to support a free press and serve the ends of democracy. This type of argument easily degenerates into a prescription that because they are ill equipped, the media should not be used for the promotion of democracy and human rights.

In this second orientation of development media theory, collective ends as opposed to individual ends have been given overriding priority. The implications of this orientation are that the mass media must cooperate by stressing positive, development-inspired news, by ignoring negative societal or oppositionist characteristics and by supporting governmental ideologies and plans. Government ownership and suppression of the media are then justified for the reason that it needs to inform the people about its plans and programmes and to mobilise them for development, using all channels available. African governments have considered it their duty to provide information to their people as a service in much the same way as they provide other social amenities and services. It is also argued that given widespread illiteracy and inadequate political consciousness, a diversity of the sources of information or a multiplicity of voices in the media can only create confusion in the minds of the people and thus render the task of nation-building and development more difficult (see specially Hachten 1971; Mytton 1983; Ochieng 1992; Wilcox 1975; Ziegler & Asante 1992).

It can be said further that in the propagation of this undemocratic political culture, an active political press is eschewed for the perceived risk that opposing views and dissent may be irresponsible and calculated to undermine stability. It is felt that opposition elements and critical press may take advantage of the illiteracy of the masses and exploit their ignorance to destabilise the state. An argument is made to the effect that since political institutions in developing countries are fragile and any criticism of the government may be interpreted as a challenge to

its legitimacy, the media should refrain from scrutinising the affairs of the government too closely. It is obvious from these observations that African political leaders have found the control, and subservience, of the press as well as other media, to be necessary to their exercise of political power, and the use of this media, therefore, has been closely controlled so that they are not used to propagate views and promote interests that are at variance with those defined by the national leadership.

As has been differently put by various writers, in African countries, the press was expected to forego, by way of being open to restrictions, some of its freedoms in order to serve the society's collective interests (Ansah, 1988; 1992; Boyd-Barrett, 1982; Golding, 1977; Mak'Ochieng 1993; McQuail, 1987; 1994; Mytton, 1983; Omwanda, 1991; Ziegler and Asante, 1992). This is the point made by McQuail (1987:121) when he mentions the argument that, 'in the interest of development ends, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operations, and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified'. These arguments and their normative implications have been used to justify the adoption of an authoritarian system of political governance, and the concomitant abuse of various human rights and freedoms in general and the freedom of expression in particular. As Ansah (1988:9) put it: 'the virtual monopolisation of the mass media has been explained in terms of the need to ensure that people are not distracted by 'false propaganda', and that all media resources will be harnessed and directed towards national development.'

2.4.3 Reasons for a Democratic and Participant Press in Africa

The third orientation of development media theory is more in keeping with that supported by this study. This orientation is close to the public sphere theory with its emphasis on freedom of expression and discussion as a means of reaching the best strategies, alternatives and results for and in development. Popular and grassroots participation for socio-economic development is emphasised. But

more important, there is an increasing emphasis on freedom of political expression to stimulate constructive debate and to enable the press to act as a check and watch-dog on abuse of power and violation of human rights (Ansah, 1988, 1992; James, 1990; Omwanda, 1991). There is perceived here the need to develop and nurture democratic ideals as human development objectives.

An argument is being made in this orientation for the consideration of socio-economic development and democratisation as two sides of the same coin of human development. According to Rogers (1976) development should be a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment. This third version of development media theory can therefore be seen as a counter to the second orientation that sanctions authoritarianism for the sake of socio-economic development. The second version of development media theory made it too easy to claim that a state's interests were at stake at the first sign of legitimate criticism. Indeed, anything could be proclaimed as being against state interest.

As is already evident above, the preferred concept of development also recognises the need for material development, but more than the others do, it puts the emphasis on human dignity and the active involvement and participation of the people in the development process. It puts a premium on the right of participation in the decision making process. One can therefore argue, however, that full and meaningful participation cannot be achieved or ensured in the absence of the right to express oneself freely and frankly. For the purpose of national development and self-development, people should be both able and enabled to share ideas and discuss freely, exchange views, evaluate alternatives and criticise where necessary. One of the functions of communication should be the provision of avenues for social interaction and participation. The mass media of a country wishing to develop, therefore, should provide a forum or platform for

collective discussion and the weighing of various options in order to arrive at well considered decisions. In other words, to serve the ends of development, the mass media should provide a public sphere for the exchange of comment and criticism regarding public affairs.

The role of the media in a developing country should also be seen in the context of participation, meaning the critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance, enactment and impact of development. In order to undertake this critical evaluation, it is essential that the media be sufficiently free and independent of governmental control and political pressures. The role of the journalist inspired by the development theory is to critically examine, evaluate and report the relevance of a development project to national and local needs, the difference between a planned scheme and its actual implementation, and the difference between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is (Aggarwala, 1979:181). This observation is informed by the belief that social and political criticism and public debate are not, and should not be seen as, necessarily disruptive. In prescribing such a role as suggested above, or engaging in a critique to see whether such a role has been played, I recommend the theory of the public sphere.

2.5 The Theory of the Public Sphere

From the discussion above, one can argue that there are two major ways in which media functions can be conceptualised. First, media functions may emanate from an objective and empirical observation of media activity (see Curran, 1991a, 1991b; McQuail, 1987, 1991; Skogerbo, 1991). These observed functions are then used to describe what *function* the media plays in terms of what it does or accomplishes. From this functionalist perspective, the recurrent and institutionalised activities of the media may be seen as serving the needs of the particular society in which it belongs. The media are also believed to achieve

a number of unintended benefits for the society as a whole by responding to its demands in a consistent way.

Secondly, media functions expressed mainly as normative ideal-types can be seen as a particular society's expectations, prescriptions and conditions for media performance. These ideal-types are variously conceptualised by theorists in their formulations of normative functions for the media (see Ansah, 1988; Curran, 1991, Siebert et al. 1956; Mak'Ochieng, 1996; McQuail 1987, 1991; Skogerbo, 1991). These normative functions may also form the evaluative ideas and principles against which to appraise media performance. According to McQuail (1991: 70), a normative framework is important because it is underpinned by a 'fundamental assumption that the media do serve the 'public interest' or 'general welfare'. This means that the mass media are not the same as any other business or service industry, but carry out some essential tasks for the benefit of a wider society, especially in the cultural and political life.'

It is in the first sense above that Habermas came to describe the role of the press as a public sphere. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) argues that it was the development of competitive market capitalism that provided the conditions in eighteenth century Britain for the development of both the theory and practice of liberal democracy. This it did by making available to a new political class, the bourgeoisie, both the time and the material resources to create a network of institutions within civil society such as newspapers, learned and debating societies, publishing enterprises, libraries, universities and polytechnics and museums, within which *a new political force, public opinion*, could come into existence. As a result of the dynamics of market capitalism, access to the public sphere, hitherto restricted, was open to all since the cost of entry for each individual was dramatically lowered by the growth in scale of the market. As a result, the public sphere took on a universalistic aspect.

An important argument developed by Habermas in *Structural Transformation* is that the public sphere came to obey the rules of rational discourse. Political views and decisions in the sphere were open not to the play of power, but to that of argument based upon evidence, and its concern was not private interest but the public good. It was thus constituted as the space for rational and universalistic politics distinct from both the economy and the State. However, Habermas went on to argue that the public sphere was destroyed by the very sources that had brought it into existence. The development of the capitalist economy in the direction of monopoly capitalism, among other things, led to an uneven distribution of wealth, to rising entry costs to the public sphere. These trends represented the development and rise of direct control by private and State interests of the flow of public information in the interest, not of rational discourse, but of manipulation.

Structural Transformation has recently been widely criticised and reformulated (Calhoun, 1992; Curran, 1991a; 1991b; Dahlgren, 1991; Fraser, 1992; Garnham, 1992; Habermas, 1992; Keane, 1991a; 1991b; Schudson, 1992). Curran (1991a) argues that the newspapers celebrated by Habermas were engines of propaganda for the bourgeoisie rather than the embodiment of disinterested rationality and that their version of reason was challenged by radical papers whose other project was developing a set of ideas that generalised the interests of a class excluded from the political system. Curran also makes reference to the fact that the 'independent' eighteenth century press was caught up in an elaborate web of faction fighting, financial corruption and ideological management - a far cry, in his opinion, from Habermas's idealised portrayal of the eighteenth-century press as the embodiment of reasoned discourse of private individuals.

A more important observation by Curran (1991a) is that a significant part of the press was subject to some form of political control by organised interests from

the eighteenth century through to the twentieth century. For him, this refutes the contrast made by Habermas between the early press as an extension of the rational-critical debate among private citizens, and the later press as the manipulative agency of collectivised politics. He continues that Habermas's characterisation of the modern media is positively misleading because his implicit contrast between the demotic manipulation of the modern media and the ratiocination of the eighteenth century press is difficult to reconcile with historical reality.

Craig Calhoun (1992) takes issue with Habermas's neglect of social movements by his conforming too closely to the liberal bourgeois ideal in imagining the public sphere simply as a realm into which individuals bring their ideas and critiques. He argues that social movements are crucial to reorienting the agenda of public discourse, bringing new issues to the fore. Moreover, social movements are occasions for the structuring not just of issues but of identities. Nancy Fraser (1992) brings into focus the exclusion of women from the official public sphere and the privatisation of gender politics. For her, Habermas's account reveals mostly a bourgeois, masculinist conception of the public sphere, which also subordinated workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians.

2.5.1 The Press as the Political Public Sphere

All the above criticism granted, most, if not all, of the above writers have subscribed to the import of the theory of the public sphere. According to Garnham (1992), criticism levelled at Habermas's model of the public sphere are all cogent and serve as a necessary basis for the development and refinement of Habermas's original approach. However, they do not detract from the continuing virtues of the central thrust of that approach. Elsewhere, Garnham (1990) observes that the concept of the public sphere and the principles it embodies represent an Ideal Type against which we can judge existing social

arrangements, and which we can attempt to embody in concrete institutions in the light of the reigning historical circumstances.

Habermas himself has come to argue that the public sphere could only be realised today on an altered basis as a rational reorganisation of social and political power under the mutual control of rival organisations committed to the public sphere in their internal structure as well as in their relations with the state and each other (see Garnham, 1990). Schudson (1992: 147) prefers a concern with Habermas's model of the public sphere not so much as a "paradigm for analysing historical change, but more as 'a normative category for political critique'. According to Curran (1991b: 83), Habermas's work, '... offers nevertheless a powerful and arresting vision of the role of the media in a democratic society, and in this sense its historical status is irrelevant.' According to Dahlgren (1991: 2):

The concept of the public sphere can be used in a very general and common sense manner, as, for example, a synonym for the processes of public opinion or for the news media themselves. In its more ambitious guise, as it was developed by Jurgen Habermas, the public sphere should be understood as an *analytical category*, a conceptual device which, while pointing to a specific social phenomenon can also aid us in analysing and researching the phenomenon. ... As an analytical category, the bourgeois public sphere consists of a dynamic nexus which links a variety of actors, factors and contexts together in a cohesive theoretical framework. It is this configurational quality, with its emphasis on institutional and discursive contingencies which gives the concept its analytical power.

In fact, in one of his latest contributions, in which he addresses some of the criticism levelled at *Structural Transformation*, Habermas (1992: 451) stresses

the importance of what he now calls *the political public sphere* to democratic theory and praxis. This importance is encapsulated in 'the concept of deliberative democracy' otherwise called 'the discourse-centred concept of democracy'. The expectation deriving from a discourse-centred theoretical approach, which obtains rational results, is based on the inter-play between a constitutionally instituted formation of the political will and the spontaneous flow of communication unsubverted by power, within a public sphere that is not geared toward decision making but toward discovery and problem resolution.

In this later formulation by Habermas, he puts emphasis on 'the conduciveness of specific processes for the democratic formation of opinion and will'. It is his submission that the *political public sphere* is appropriate as the quintessential concept denoting all those conditions of communication under which there can come into being a discursive formation of opinion and will on the part of a public composed of the citizens of a state. This is why it is suitable as the fundamental concept of a theory of democracy *whose intent is normative*. As already stated above, a public sphere that functions politically requires the institutional guarantees of the constitutional state. But it requires more: 'it also needs the supportive spirit of cultural traditions and patterns of socialisation, of the political culture, of a populace accustomed to freedom' (Habermas, 1992: 453).

In summary, the central characteristics of the theory of the public sphere, and the role of the media in it, have been captured well by Curran (1991b: 83) when he suggests that:

From (Habermas's) work can be extrapolated a model of a public sphere as a neutral zone where access to relevant information affecting the public good is widely available, where discussion is free from domination by the state and where all those participating in public debate do so on an equal basis. Within this public sphere, people collectively determine through the process of rational argument the way in which they want to

see society develop, and this shapes in turn the conduct of government policy. The media facilitates this process by providing an arena of public debate, and by reconstructing private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion.

2.6 Liberal-Democratic Tradition and the Role of the Press

In its original formulation by Habermas, the public sphere theory is strongly grounded in liberal-democratic theory though striving to go beyond it. This observation is captured by Dahlgren (1991: 3) thus: "... one could see that with its emphasis on democracy and the role of the media, Habermas's notion of the public sphere actually has a good deal in common with prevailing liberal thought in Anglo-American traditions. At the same time, the concept has ambition beyond those developed within the traditions of liberal democratic theory, of which his analysis also in part presents itself as a critique."

Liberal democratic theory prescribes a political process whereby the various groupings, and/or individuals, of society articulate their interests in terms of demands on societal resources, the formulation of collectively significant goals and participation in policy formulation for the achievement of these demands and goals. A precondition to this process is the presence of Western-style political institutions; mainly, universal suffrage, free electoral competition, political parties and parliamentary democracy. The successful working of these institutions is seen as the source of political legitimacy. This type of legitimacy implies that power lies with the led, a power exercised through the ballot box.

For a government to be considered democratic, therefore, it must be a national government legitimised by a democratic polity; that is one where consensus in execution of leadership is mediated through the secret ballot-box by a fully enfranchised citizenry, and where the articulation of political interests occur

through a multi-party system which reflects the plural character of the social order. In this regard, a basic requirement of a democratic political system would be the institutionalisation of 'freedom of speech' and the articulation of public opinion in the press. In the realm of politics, therefore, *the democratic process* is one in which political actors are enabled and guided by the functioning of the democratic institutions, including the media.

It is clearly evident that the notion of a press that is actively involved in the democratic process has roots in the liberal democratic theory. From a communication perspective, liberal democratic theory (see Keane 1991, McQuail, 1987, 1991; Negrine, 1987; Siebert et al., 1956; Skogerbo, 1991) puts at centre-stage the supremacy of the individual, the belief in reason, truth and progress and the sovereignty of the popular will. This theory prescribes freedom for the individual in both the symbolic and the material forms; the freedom to hold and express opinion through the press without risk or persecution and to own and use means of publication without restraint or interference from government. In fact, the normative aspect of liberal-democratic theory prescribes a central role for the press in the democratic political process. It proposes that mass media should play a pivotal role in making the relevant information publicly available and in providing the spaces in which the full range of argument and policy proposals can be debated, so people can make informed choices in their capacity as citizens (McQuail, 1987; 1992; Murdock 1991; Curran, 1991a; 1991c).

In its material meaning, press freedom in the liberal democratic tradition advocates private ownership and free market principles. Among other functions, the free press should: provide a safety valve for dissent or political opposition, be a people's defence against misrule, and a means of arriving at the truth. The central argument here is that free and public expression of all contending ideas is the means to arrive at truth and the only way to expose error. "The nearest

approximation to truth will emerge from the competitive exposure of alternative viewpoints and progress for society will depend on the choice of 'right' over 'wrong' solutions" (McQuail, 1987: 113; Siebert et al, 1956).

From a historical perspective, the rise of the press in the West as a medium of mass communication was met with both implicit and explicit opposition and hostility among the ruling elite (Curran, 1991c; Curran and Seaton, 1991; McQuail, 1991; Negrine, 1989: 50; Schwebbs and Ostbye, 1988: 38). Censorship and regulation of the press was exercised on the grounds that freedom of the press was a threat to the stability and security of the state. Also, by reaching and sensitising the masses, the media were seen as a potential threat to the established order and distribution of power. Arguments for freedom of the press were initially arguments against these controls.

On the political scene, freedom of the press from state control was closely linked to the development of parliamentary politics. This was further linked to a general and growing opposition to authoritarian rule. Arguments in favour of freeing the press emanated from a real and direct experience of oppression. Freedom of expression meant freedom from state control, which further meant freedom to express a political opinion and make a political choice. The notion of the fourth estate was seen to express the need to curb the excesses of the power of the state. There was envisaged a press which was a watchdog, taking governments to task and representing the public interest. But this role of the press is not without limitations.

2.6.1 Economic Limitations to a Democratic Press

The strongest theoretical arguments about the limitations of the role of the media in the democratic process are rooted in Marxism. According to Fiske (1987: 254):

(M)arxist assumptions (...) start from the belief that meaning and the making of them (which together constitute culture) are indivisibly linked to the social structure and can only be explained in terms of that structure and its history. Correlatively, the social structure is held in place by, among other forces, the meanings that culture produces ...

On the basis of such assumptions and arguments, Classical or traditional Marxist perspectives dwell on ownership of the means of material production by the capitalist class and the subsequent unequal distribution of wealth and property. The industrial order is seen as having produced a class society dominated by a bourgeois minority class. Following Marx, it is argued that the class which controlled the means of material production also controlled the means of mental and psychological production and distribution, including the media. As a result, the ideas of the dominant class are the ruling ideas of the epoch. This is the position that was articulated by Marx and Engels (1974: 136-7) in a much quoted passage from the *German Ideology* (quoted in Teer-Tomaselli 1992: 11):

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling *material* force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has the control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. [...] The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think [...] hence among other things [that they] rule also as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.

From this perspective, private owners of the media of mass communication by definition belong to the capitalist class. Because of their vested capitalist interests, they are believed to use their power and control to ensure that, the media they own carried dominant ideological messages and representations that supported the interests of the ruling capitalist class. A more refined view of economic determinism posits that the communications industries taken together bolster the general interests of the capitalist class, or of dominant factions within it (Murdock, 1982: 141). Other perspectives such as the Frankfurt school and critical theory make a contribution by giving reasons for the failure of revolutionary overthrow of capitalism as theorised and predicted by Marx. Market forces in collusion with the culture industry, which in the process of processing culture for sale defeats its critical and oppositional purpose, is blamed for this failure. The media, regarded as a vehicle for culture, ends up being just a 'powerful mechanism for containment of change', a function which subverted the fundamental economic change that was seen as inevitable by Marx.

As a result of arguments given above, the media is seen as instrumental in preserving the *status quo* in that as the carrier of the dominant class ideology (that of capitalism) that celebrated 'technological rationality, consumerism, short-term gratification, and the myth of 'classlessness'" (McQuail, 1987: 65), it has served to perpetuate the economic base by subverting and assimilating the underprivileged class. The universal, commercialised, mass culture was the chief means by which this success for monopoly capital had been achieved. A closer look suggests that this theory rules out any significant chance in the media for oppositional politics that question the dominant ideology. Politics, as mediated by media content, may be seen by inference as serving and as the preserve of the powerful owners of capital.

However, in a situation where ownership does not translate unproblematically into control, nor where control does not always directly determine content, *structural analysis* becomes imperative to latter-day Marxist political economists:

Analysis at this level is focused not on the interests and activities of capitalists, but on the structure of the capitalist economy and its underlying dynamics ... it does not matter who the key owners and controllers are. What is important is their location in the general economic system and the constraints and limits that it imposes on their range of feasible options (Murdock, 1982: 127). (Such an approach) could ... be used to demonstrate how media institutions could be articulated to the production of dominant ideologies, while at the same time being 'free' of direct compulsion, and 'independent' of any direct attempt by the powerful to nobble it (Hall, 1982: 86).

2.7 Pluralist Determination of Press Performance

At another end of the theoretical divide, liberal-pluralists dwell on the declining influence of the capitalist class and of ownership as a source of power. In this perspective, significant and effective control over production is seen to have passed over to those who directly commanded the necessary industrial technologies and organisations. Murdock (1982: 128-135) provides a review of this perspective. From this perspective, it is argued that it was the property-less professionals who were seen to emerge as the new key power-group. This development was largely attributed to the rise and spread of joint-stock companies. Legal ownership was seen as a result, to have dispersed among a widening group of shareholders. These new shareholder-proprietors tended to be 'absentee owners' *leaving the business of supervising production to professional managers* (Murdock, 1982: 130; also see Murdock and Golding, 1977: 29; Negrine, 1989).

From a historical perspective, the press was very much affected by this shift in industrial organisation. Newspaper ownership became more spread and the scale of newspaper organization increased. As these changes came into effect, more and more owners relinquished their control over the day-to-day operations to full time editors. As a result, owners are seen as having been relegated to the position of those who merely supply the means whereby the editors may exercise their power. With such arguments, managerialists have stressed the *relative impotence* of owners and the autonomy of administrative and professional personnel (Murdock 1982: 128).

Alongside managerialism is a pluralist conception of power. According to Murdock (1982: 129):

Where Marxists insist that the capitalist class is still the most significant power bloc within advanced capitalism, pluralists regard it as one elite among a number of others composed of leading personnel from the key institutional spheres - parliamentary, the military, the civil service, and so on. These elites are seen as engaged in a constant competition to extend their influence and advance their interests, and although some may have an edge at particular times or in particular situations, none has a permanent advantage. Hence, instead of seeing the effective owners of the communications corporations as pursuing the interests of the dominant capitalist class..., pluralists see the controllers of the various cultural industries as relatively autonomous power blocs competing with other significant blocs in society, including the financial and industrial elites.

The pluralist notion of power structure is linked to the *laissez-faire* or free-market model of the economy. As seen in Murdock's review (*ibid.*), just as there is a

competition for power and influence between institutional elites, so media corporations are seen as having to compete for the attention and loyalty of the consumers in the market. In the final analysis it is the demands and wants of the consumers that determine the range and nature of goods corporations will supply (consumer sovereignty). Accordingly, the professionals are not free to pursue their interests just as they like; their actions and options are limited by the power and veto of consumers.

Because of arguments such as those presented above, liberal theory is opposed to government or state ownership of mass communication media. Even state support of media institutions is abhorred because it is believed to lead to government and official domination. It is opined that private ownership of the media is the only true and sure guarantee of freedom of the press and of free expression. It follows then that any strongly motivated private citizen who so wishes is free to own the media and use it to express whatever political view s/he holds. Her/his success or failure would depend on her/his ability to produce a profit and this in turn depends on her/his ability to satisfy his consumers. By this argument, the citizenry would be the final judges of what type of media existed (Siebert et al., 1956).

For the liberal-pluralists then, the political scene is seen as a market place of ideas. All views should be given the opportunity to compete in it (Curran 1991b; 1991c; Habermas, 1989; Negrine, 1989; Siebert et al., 1956). The citizenry will choose and support the right and true ideas. They would express their choice by buying the media that carried what to them were the true ideas. The media so chosen would attract advertising because advertisers would prefer the media that received public acceptance.

2.8 Media Ownership, Control and Performance: Empirical Arguments

Empirical evidence has produced a reality that is not in complete harmony with the theory as presented above. With the development of parliamentary and party politics in Western Europe, the press aligned itself heavily with the political parties. Party partisanship became rampant. The party-press became heavily biased against the views of contending political parties. The press is seen to have merely moved from state control to control by politicians. Those who owned or subsidised the press used it for avowed political ends. With time, the ownership and control of the press gradually passed over to individual owner-entrepreneurs. This was mainly because the parties could not bear the escalating cost of running newspapers. The press had to be self-supporting in order to survive (Boyce, 1987; Curran, 1991b; Curran and Seaton, 1991; Murdock, 1982; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Negrine, 1989). The rising importance of advertising is seen to have saved the situation; the implication being that *the press would be run as commercial enterprises and not as tutors of the public and defenders of the truth.*

The new owners of the press tried to use it as an independent source of power with which to challenge reigning politicians and their policies. This source of power was effective in some special circumstances only. The press barons believed that they wielded this power because they commanded the opinion of million-readers. For a time they gained the reputation as king-makers because they successfully brought down a leader and crowned another to leadership. Some of the press barons ran their press as commercial enterprises in order that they may use them principally for ideological ends (Boyce, 1987; Curran and Seaton, 1991; Negrine, 1989).

However, on the average, and in the normal run of events, it came to pass that the press could not function as an independent locus of political power. *The nature of political circumstances, more than the press, determined the short-lived influence mentioned above.* The accusation of power without responsibility was also levelled against the press. It transpired that the press depended to a great extent on a close and harmonious relationship with the ruling elite both for information and legitimacy. Even though the relationship could be said to have been symbiotic, with politicians also depending on the press to accomplish their goals, *the real power rested with the constitutionally elected leaders* (Negrine, 1989; Boyce, 1987: 109).

A rapidly *changing economic situation* further altered the structure of press ownership in two major ways. First, as the press became more and more expensive to run, advertising emerged as the motor that ran it. The advertisers, because they wanted to reach a more differentially constituted audience, encouraged the press to eschew the partisan politics of owner-entrepreneurs. Secondly, it became more economically sound to run the media as joint stock companies with shares being floated to the public. Ownership became dispersed and as the organization of these institutions became more complex, control is believed to have shifted to the professionals.

The observations presented above are advanced by liberal-pluralists to counter criticism from Marxists who still argue that the capitalist class does control the media and that the media serves the interests of the capitalist class. Marxist scholars argue that the cost of starting media enterprises, thus, market entry costs, are so high that only the rich capitalists can venture into the business. Even then, they must in most cases depend on other sources of capital in order that the media can get off the ground. This means that it is those with diverse connections with other successful sectors of the economy that can start new media (Murdock, 1982; Murdock and Golding, 1977; Negrine, 1989).

Marxist analysts agree with the liberal-pluralist observation that share ownership has indeed been spread. However, they argue that effective ownership in terms of controlling shares still remains in the hands of a few capitalists. These are the people who have voting rights in the governing boards of media institutions. They have the power to map out company objectives and allocate capital for expenditure. These capitalists who have controlling shares usually have interests in other sectors of the economy. The resulting picture is one where a few capitalists control the most important sectors of the economy including the media industries (Murdock, 1982). The most important implication for media performance being that they wouldn't allow in their media content that threatened their overall economic and political interests in society.

In the media sector, a few examples can be found whereby those who own majority shares have directly interfered in, and influenced, editorial work. It has also been demonstrated that journalistic interests and ownership/management interests collide, it is usually the latter that prevail. As new communication technologies emerge and take root, it has become more apparent that media professionals can be laid off easily as they become oppositional or redundant. Even the advent of new media technology has not held out the promise of diversity of ownership and enhanced access to the media for the masses. Ironically, however, it is the control by owners that is seen to have been strengthened (Boyce, 1987; Curran and Seaton, 1991; Murdock, 1982; Negrine, 1989; Naero, 1988).

Though advertising is seen from a liberal perspective to have freed the press from political control, it introduced its own form of constraint. Radical theorists make the observation that advertisers form part of the competitive commercial and capital context within which the media operate, and their decisions and

relations to the media reflect that context. It can be argued that in the competitive market:

... the voices which survive will largely belong to those least likely to challenge the prevailing distribution of wealth and power. Conversely, those most likely to challenge these arrangements are unable to publicise their dissent or opposition because they cannot command the resources needed for effective communication to a broad audience (Murdock and Golding, 1977: 37).

One of the major arguments advanced is that advertisers have clients who wish to sell their products and services and their task is to enable clients to reach as many potential customers as possible at the lowest cost. In this sense, advertisers are not interested in readers or viewers as such, but in those who are able to buy their products. They are willing to pay several times more for their wealthy readers than they are for the less wealthy or poor. Further, advertising has immense ideological implications. It creates a dream world and therefore masks and distorts real relationships of power and dominance (Negrine, 1989: 80). For Marxist structuralists then, the influence of market forces can be expressed thus:

In general the needs of production, limitations of cost, and concern for audiences, produce news in which the world is portrayed as fragmented and unchanging, and in which dissent and opposition appear ephemeral, peripheral or irrational. News become palliative and comforting, intentionally undisturbing and unthreatening, focusing on institutions of consensus maintenance and the handling of social order... In seeking to maximise this market, products must draw from the most widely legitimated central values while rejecting the dissenting voice or the incompatible objection to the ruling myth (Murdock and Golding, 1977:

40). (And also that) ... the expression of dissenting or challenging views rooted in interests unable themselves to support media, are also largely absent from the spectrum of legitimated views and ideas provided by the major media (*ibid.*: 38).

There is no doubt that ownership of media organisations has important implications for control. It can also be asserted that this control definitely impacts on media performance (content). *The contested issue is whether or not ownership has the overriding determination.* Arguably, it may not be easy at any one time to state the unambiguous source of influence for media content. This problem is compounded by the fact that the concept of the media is generic and does not therefore refer to a single entity. The media may be electronic or print. Although there are some suggestive pointers in this direction, it is not easy to prove a causal relationship between media ownership and media control, nor indeed, between media ownership and media performance. Such relationships are generally regarded to be complex and their determinations not linear.

The above comments notwithstanding, one can hazard a general argument that to some extent, private ownership of the media is skewed in support of dominant capital interests and ideological preferences. In concert with market forces, private ownership has real implications for content. In the event that not all news get equal access to, nor fair coverage by, the media, the privately owned media, underpinned by purely business principles - making the most profit cost-effectively - cannot be seen to foster a truly democratic political process (Golding and Murdock, 1991; Murdock, 1982; Negrine, 1988; Naero, 1988). However, owner influence is mitigated by elements of consumer-sovereignty, which partly dictate media performance and success on the market. It is also mitigated by the power and relative autonomy of editors and other creative personnel, and the general relative autonomy and competitiveness of media personnel vis-à-vis other institutional elites.

From the theoretical discussion that I have presented so far, it is apparent that power and control are differentially located in society. I have demonstrated that media personnel are a source of power in their own right but they have to contend with, and sometimes be upstaged by other loci of power; especially media owners and other socio-economic interests in general, organised interest groups that constitute the civil society, and politicians. I would like to go further and argue below that the political locus of power may under specific conditions determine how the other loci of power, especially the press, operate. In the words of Gallagher (1982:170-171):

The complex of constraints... within which communication organisations and professionals operate, makes it difficult to sustain a view of the media and media practitioners as autonomous 'watch-dogs'. On the other hand, to the extent that the media can be observed to negotiate the parameters of constraint - exercising at least at times, a policy of 'brinkmanship' - they cannot be dismissed as subservient 'tools of government'. Rather, the general conclusion must be that mass communication is indeed bound with, and bounded by, the interests of the dominant institutions of society, but that these interests are continually redefined through a process to which the media themselves contribute.

2.9 The Importance of the Concepts of Ideology, Class and Hegemony

For the purposes of this study, I would like to argue for the use of the concept of ideology to refer to the ideas and positions of the two political groups that were contending during the period under investigation. I also argue for the consideration of these politico-ideological groups as a function of the political practice in the same way that class is a function of the economic practice. It is

not my intention to mobilise these two concepts for use in an ideological critique nor is the short review below intended to be a comprehensive discussion of the concepts. I will do the former in Chapter Five. Simply put, they are meant here to be a simple basis for the categorisation that was provided at the end of Chapter One and to therefore underpin the decision to regard the two political groups as social groups and their ideas and arguments as ideological.

The concept of ideology, according to Larrain (1983) has undergone revision to the extent that it has lost most of its original negative and critical meaning. He observes that in its original formulation by Marx, ideology is both that process and result, by purely mental and discursive means, of providing solutions to life's real contradictions. The ideological forms of consciousness conceal or misrepresent the existence and character of these contradictions, which are seen to be inherent in capitalist social formations. These misrepresentations or ideological distortions contribute to the reproduction of the same conditions of oppression. They are therefore mistaken or false ideas, which when exposed and acknowledged, thereby exposing the exploitative nature of capitalism, should hold the key to the liberation of the oppressed. Marx used ideology both as a criticism of capitalism and as a characterisation of its distorting nature. It is arguable, therefore, that ideology is in Marx's formulation a restricted concept in that it applies only to those distortions which are connected with the concealment of a contradictory or inverted reality.

With time, ideology as a critical concept in the analysis and exposure of the dynamics of capitalist distortions of reality was given secondary importance. It came to refer to the whole spectrum of social consciousness, a totality inherent in such concepts as 'ideological superstructure', 'ideological spheres', and 'ideological domain', giving way to a conception of *ideology as the political ideas connected to the interests of a class*. These neutral renditions of the concept of ideology gradually came to replace the original negative connotation. What came

to be preferred was an interpretation of *ideology as an all encompassing superstructural sphere* in which men acquire consciousness of their contradictory social relations' (Gramsci, 1971: 138, 164, 377).

Another development, according to Larrain (1983:222) came from Lenin's extension of the concept of ideology. He observes that:

For Lenin, ideology becomes the political consciousness linked to the interests of various classes and, in particular the opposition between bourgeois and socialist ideology. ... *Ideology is no longer a necessary distortion which conceals contradictions* but becomes a neutral concept referring to the political consciousness of classes, including the proletarian class (my italics).

With Gramsci, the above conceptualisation of ideology was elevated to the realm of struggle for hegemonic control. Gramsci (1971: 377) considers ideology as being more than a system of ideas, it refers also to a capacity to inspire concrete attitudes and provide orientations for action. Ideology becomes 'the terrain in which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.' It is in and by ideology that a class can exercise hegemony over other classes; that is, secure the adhesion and consent of the broad masses.

Further development by Althusser (see White 1992) brings the above arguments to the concrete level of interest to this study. Though recognising the importance of economic mode of production, he argues that society is comprised of a variety of interrelated social and intellectual practices or activities including the economic, the political, and the ideological. Economic practice involves the mode of production while the political practice describes social relations and forms of social organization. Economic and social analyses are therefore concerned with the nature and relations of power expressed in particular economic and social

systems. *Economic, political and ideological practice are distinct but co-existing arenas of human activity. They mutually influence and exert pressure on one another, but operate with relative autonomy.* The political and ideological practice do not function as direct expressions of the class interests defined by economic practice but have a life of their own. They have *relative autonomy*; meaning that they are not mere reflections of class interests dictated by the economic practice. *The political and ideological practice are, along with the economic, also arenas of contestation among social groups* (White, 1992: 168).

Althusser argues that 'the reproduction of the submission to the ruling ideology' requires the cultural institutions of the Church, the mass media and the political apparatuses. He calls these apparatuses, whether or not they are strictly organised by the state, 'ideological state apparatuses'. Because the terrain of ideologies is not simple but complex and consists not simply of ruling ideas but of a field of ideological thematics, he argues that what the ideological state apparatuses (ISA's) reproduce must be the ruling ideology precisely in its contradictions. *Ideological reproduction thus becomes' not only the stake but also the site of class struggle...'* (Hall, 1977: 336 my italics).

Having established, by way of the arguments given above, grounds for considering the ideological and political practices as potential sources of influence and pressure on the media, it must now be argued that actors in these practices need not necessarily be categorised by the traditional Marxist concept of class. One may begin by looking at a class as a social group. However, *the very concept of social groups is complex*; there are numerous ways of conceptualising groups that one set of terms cannot be assumed to sufficiently explain social identity. Groups may have conflicting, intersecting, and parallel interests. According to White (1992: 169) a given individual may be defined and positioned by a variety of categories -including class, nationality, gender, and race. etc. *Categorisation by class may be a function of economic practice but the*

other terms may emerge specifically within the contexts of political or ideological practice.

The notion of *the struggle for hegemony* is used to illustrate how the dominant class or dominant group propagates their interests by projecting their ideas as the prevailing, common sense view (White, 1992). As used by Lenin, hegemony refers to *political leadership* in the democratic revolution, based on an alliance with sections of the peasantry. According to Gramsci, in modern conditions, a class or social group maintains its dominance not simply because it uses force but because it also exerts a moral and intellectual leadership and makes compromises, within certain limits, with a variety of allies who are unified in a social bloc (Sassoon, 1983: 201-203). The exercise of hegemony *thus depends on a combination of force and consent* (Hall, 1977: 332).

The leading hegemonic class or social group is in Gramsci's definition truly political because it goes beyond its immediate economic interests. It follows from this that any economistic notion of politics or ideology that looks for immediate class interests in politics and culture is incapable of accurate analysis of the political situation and the balance of political forces and cannot produce an adequate understanding of state power. Accordingly, ideology does not simply reflect or mirror economic class interests but is an area of struggle. *Hegemony cannot be won in productive and economic spheres alone; it must be organised at the level of the state, politics and the superstructures, the terrain on which hegemony is accomplished* (Hall, 1977: 332).

2.10 The Political Process and Press Performance

The brief discussion that has been presented above is meant to argue for the necessity of taking political/ideological consideration as a relatively autonomous source of determination of media content. It is important here to stress again the

observation that the ideological terrain is complex and full of contradictions and continuing struggle. The media as the political public sphere should be conceptualised both as carriers of and as the arena for political struggle. With these observations, I hope to have established a case for considering political struggle as meaning ideological struggle in the realms of politics and governance. The notion of hegemony may also feed into this construction when one considers that political struggle in the end result is a struggle for leadership and dominance. For these reasons therefore, depending on a particular society's history and level of political development, the struggle for political hegemony may involve force and consent in varying proportions.

Media content becomes a central and sensitive arena where a double struggle is fought. In a situation where there is already a dominant or ruling political ideology, one can still expect a contestation from the dominated social groups. The status of ruling incumbency may give advantage to the ruling political ideology in which case the possibility of a serious erosion or threat to the ruling ideology may precipitate a situation of heightened struggle in the ideological apparatuses, especially in the media. Because of their importance in the political process as the public sphere and thus an arena for political discourse, the media have become very crucial for contending political groups. Tiffen (1989: 129) gives the advantages of ruling incumbency as follows:

A party may win the election with promises that store up later problems - but once in government the party has substantial means to manage the timing and appearance of these embarrassments in the least damaging way. Governments enact decisions and because action is more consequential than criticism they are inherently more newsworthy than Oppositions. Governments enjoy more initiative in their media relations; by their activity and show of concern they can help focus the news agenda into particular areas... Governments have further publicity

advantages as the custodians of the administrative and ceremonial roles of the state. They may embody national unity on occasions of both national tragedy and triumph... Publicity through news is more vital but less easily attainable for oppositions than governments.

Because this investigation will dwell partly on the influence on the media of party-political hegemony in Kenya, it is pertinent here to consider the observation by Hall (1977: 333) that: 'there is no permanent hegemony: it can only be established, and analysed, in concrete historical conjunctures... Even under hegemonic conditions, there can be no total incorporation and absorption of the subordinate classes'. One can argue, therefore, that a major change in a society's political process may give birth to a new political conjuncture which may substantially impact on the performance of mass media in the realm of politics. Such momentous change took place in Kenya. In a country where the constitution had for a long time established a one-party state and criminalised opposition politics, a constitutional revision that legitimised multi-party politics was a great change indeed.

2.11 Summary

This chapter has reviewed theoretical formulations that attempt to explain factors or variables that affect media performance. It is generally agreed that the media of mass communication have an important role to play in the democratic process of any country. The media are conceptualised both as significant participants in the democratic process and as constituting the main public forum or sphere where this process takes place. The media are therefore expected to be free from all sorts of interference and influences. This chapter has reviewed the debate about the fact that there are sources of interference and influences that limit the media's ability to play both roles. This debate is very similar to the one that has occupied media politics in Kenya since independence and can be used

to explain and make sense of that debate. The Kenyan debate is the subject of Chapter Three below.

It is my opinion that the theoretical route to follow in order to analyse the performance of the daily press in Kenya is to use a normative orientation. This chapter has therefore reviewed the normative perspectives on media performance preferring to use the theory of the public sphere. The Kenyan daily press will therefore be conceptualised both as a political public sphere and as a significant actor in the same. The history of party politics given in Chapter One and that of the Press given in Chapter Three below will be used to support reasons for this conceptualisation and also to provide normative principles against which to analyse their performance.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF THE DAILY PRESS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will endeavour to give an instructive history of the daily press in Kenya. I will highlight the main issues that have dominated media politics in Kenya since the end of the last century until just before the 1992 multi-party general elections. It is my intention that some of the issues identified should provide, on the one hand, some understanding of the expectations of politicians and government functionaries about the role of the press and, on the other hand, what newspaper editors themselves consider to be the role of the same press. Since pre-independence days, the press has been constrained by various economic, political and organisational pressures. It is obviously difficult to delineate a particular source of influence as the overriding determinant of press performance. However, my intention is to demonstrate that the political performance of the daily press in Kenya has been influenced most by power dynamics in the political arena.

I will show that the above reality has been the case with the two oldest private and foreign-owned dailies, *The Standard* and the *Daily Nation*; that an indigenous private press has faced similar problems; and lastly, that the same has held true of a press that is both indigenous and political party-owned. Before addressing these historical issues on the daily press, however, a brief section will be devoted to the broadcast media. This is intended to establish the fact and extent to which the broadcast media was completely controlled by the government. This brief section will dwell largely on the period after independence. I intend to demonstrate that for all intents and purposes, the Kenyan broadcast media was a publicity extension of the ruling KANU Government.

3.2 Broadcasting and Politics before Independence

A commercial telecommunications company first introduced radio broadcasting into Kenya in 1928 for the English speaking community. According to Heath (1986:51), Kenyaradio was primarily intended to entertain its listeners and to provide a cultural link between widely scattered European homesteads and missions and with Britain. The station, which was opened in Nairobi in August 1928, was a pioneering effort on the continent. In fact, Kenya was the second British colony, after India, to have regular wireless broadcasts. Although there must have been a good number of Asians and even a few Africans in Kenya who could have afforded radio receivers in 1928, racist policies in every other sector coupled with European cultural arrogance, apparently prevented consideration of a multi-racial audience until the 1940's.

Broadcasts especially for Asians and Africans in their languages were introduced by the government information service during, and mainly because of, World War II. These services were intended mainly to apprise listeners of the progress of the war in which their kith and kin were involved and to urge their co-operation and support for the war effort. Heath (1986: 80) goes on to state that:

In many respects Kenyaradio was like the colonial press. Both institutions served to keep Kenyans in touch with the outside world and, in particular, the metropolitan country. Both reflected and reinforced European Kenyan political opinion and cultural norms. Both were commercial media whose contents were guided by market considerations and by professional standards borrowed from Britain rather than by citizen advisory committees or official regulation.

There occurred fundamental developments in the broadcast environment during the 1950s especially after the Emergency of 1952. An Information Department

In his contribution to the above debate, Tom Mboya said:

It is not a matter of saying "this is the truth we are telling you; we are the Government." You must give them a chance to decide for themselves whether the Government is right or wrong otherwise it is to underestimate the intelligence of the people whom I believe all of us would like to serve (*ibid.*)

In September 1959 the KBC within the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, MIB, assumed responsibility for all broadcasting in the country. However, on November 14, 1961 the Legislative Council passed the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Ordinance and the new corporation assumed responsibility for broadcasting. Just two years later, the National Assembly nationalised the KBC and named it the Voice of Kenya (VOK). According to Heath (1986: 161):

Although establishing the KBC as a means to ensure independent, impartial broadcasting was given considerable lip service, it seems the primary objective in establishing the corporation was to introduce television and, in so doing, strengthen the cultural and economic bonds between Kenya and the West. The door to multi-racial partnership in Kenya's government had been closed at Lancaster House in February but the door to multi-racial partnership in the country's economy was still wide open... Television, which would have to be supported by advertising and fed with foreign films, appeared to be an ideal vehicle for that manoeuvre.

3.3 Broadcasting and Politics after Independence

At independence, the general agreement was that the Kenyan broadcast media would be accessible to proponents of diverse political perspectives on an

equitable basis. African members of the legislative Council had argued for that right. As a result, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) Ordinance (No.24 of 1961) had specifically required that the corporation provide an 'independent and impartial broadcasting service of information, education and entertainment' and 'to keep a fair balance in all respects in the allocation of broadcast hours between different political view points'. In compliance with these provisions, the KBC adopted an election policy for the May 1963 election designed to give all parties access to radio. Fifteen 14-minute segments were allocated to the three J parties, KANU (Kenya African National Union), KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union) and APP (African People's Party), in proportion to the number of candidates slated by nomination day.

In principle, there was to be no censorship by the KBC but all scripts were to be submitted in advance and pre-recorded to enable the corporation to check for libel, sedition or anything contrary to the laws of the land. The order in which the segments were broadcast was to be determined by the KBC by ballot. The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (Nationalisation) Act (No 12 of 1964) retained the above provisions with respect to a fair balance in the allocation of airtime between different political viewpoints. Daniel arap Moi, then opposition KADU MP and the only member to have clearly dissented, had sounded a warning saying that, 'I hope the Government will not use this organisation as a means of propaganda to suppress the opposition or other people who would like to say what they want to say' (*Official Record, Kenya National Assembly, 25 June 1964*). The KBC then became the Voice of Kenya (VOK).

Tom Mboya, then Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, was one of those who clearly articulated the developmental agenda for the broadcast media. Contributing to the KBC Nationalisation Bill of 1964, he had answered Moi thus:

[He] asked whether the take-over means the Government using the Voice of Kenya as a propaganda machine for the Government. Now, Sir, the answer is yes. What else do you do with a broadcasting service or information service of the Government but propagate Government policy and teach people to understand and appreciate the meaning of Kenya's nationhood according to Government's interpretation of it? ...The Government intends to use the Voice of Kenya for the purpose of building, strengthening, consolidating the new nation of Kenya and educating its citizens to understand their duties, their responsibilities, their privileges, their opportunities, and the role that they can play in making that nation what all of us want it to be. It is not intended to be used for the promotion of individual, personal ideas. It is intended to be used for the promotion of what is and must be the interest of Kenya (*House of Representatives Official Report, 24 June 1964*).

It soon became apparent that the government's use of the VOK to popularise its programs and perspectives was to take precedence over its obligations to keep a fair party-political balance. Members of the opposition, backbenchers, and even some ministers found it increasingly difficult to obtain access to the public through the broadcast media. Kenya's first Minister in charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), Achieng Oneko, saw the role of communication in terms of national building. Under his leadership the VOK was purposefully used to consolidate support for KANU and the government in power. It was used to advise and guide the government to ensure that the government spoke with one voice to the public. This was deemed necessary to avoid conflicting statements from different departments and thus avoid popular confusion and potential instability. In his contribution to the above debate, Oneko had said that:

...our primary aim is not profit-making but rather that these powerful weapons should become instruments for the constructive development

of our country .We want to use them to educate our people, to popularise our Government's programme and our peoples' initiatives and generally to keep the people of this nation adequately informed. It is not the intention of our Government to work against anybody or any loyal society; any loyal society includes the Opposition (*ibid.*).

In his address to the IPI in Paris on 17 May 1962, Mboya suggested that 'freedom of the press' might have to be redefined in the African context. He argued that for all the value the press placed on liberty and self-determination, it had, in fact, been hostile to the struggle for self-determination in East and Central Africa. As a result Africans were asking what freedom of the press means, 'does it include licence to do and say what they please, even if it means directly or indirectly wrecking all our efforts at consolidating our dearly won independence or our efforts for economic reconstruction' (Mboya, 1970: 140).

Kenya's second development plan described the VOK as 'an essential instrument in Government's programme for building a prosperous and united nation' (*Kenya, Development Plan, 1966-70*). The Ndegwa Commission of 1971 stated that 'The Ministry of Information has the wider responsibility for the public image of the Government as a whole. It projects and presents to the *wananchi* (the citizens) the policies and achievements of the Government. In doing so, it must work in harmony with all Ministries and Departments.'

In 1981, contributing to a motion to start a KANU newspaper, Oloo Aringo, then in charge of the MIB, had said that the government had advocated a free press not from weakness but in the belief that the 'free flow of ideas enhances a healthy society' but added that 'freedom is limited by our national philosophy of promoting national unity, national integration, socio-economic development and our cultural heritage. We have defined that very precisely and expect newspapers to walk within that context of our national commitment'. In general, the Kenyan public has regularly been reminded that their constitutionally

protected freedoms have 'natural limitations,' that is, one's conduct must not 'infringe on the right of others or threaten their security' and that 'freedom of the individual is better achieved and more greatly enjoyed when, and only when, it operates within the boundaries of the common good' (*Kenya Times*, April 28, 1984).

The above policy positions about the role of the media in Kenya have had adverse consequences for access on the part of opposition political voices. For example, no provisions were made to give Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) leaders an opportunity to speak to the nation on radio and television during the mid-term "Little General Election" of May 1966. Quite the opposite, extraordinary administrative efforts were used to kill the opposition. In December 1966, Luk Obok, KPU MP for Alego introduced a motion in Parliament titled "Unfair Treatment of Opposition."¹ He alleged that the VOK was being used to conduct anti-KPU propaganda and had refused to publicise any KPU activities only mentioning the party when someone resigned from it.

As a government department, the VOK received all its funds for recurrent and capital expenditures from the national treasury. Cuts in government expenditures, which have affected all departments, were obviously extended to the VOK. Particularly, shortage of foreign exchange placed severe constraints on departments like the VOK, which relied almost entirely on imported equipment for capital developments as well as for replacing and upgrading production equipment. In this respect, lack of substantial financial support derives from very real fiscal constraints. Kenya's economy being a dependent and developing one, there has simply not been enough money to meet all the developmental and other demands on the nation's purse.

Kenya News Agency (KNA) journalists, main news suppliers for VOK, have seldom had their own transportation. As a result, they have tended to attend and cover meetings called by the Provincial and District Commissioners to

which official transportation is made available. Politicians who want to be assured of press coverage have found it necessary to send vehicles to collect journalists. Clearly, with its limited resources the VOK could not possibly attend and fairly report on all the nation's political and other activities. On the other hand, the VOK was not permitted to become self-supporting, apparently to prevent it from becoming an independent and potentially challenging voice. In the absence of adequate government subventions for program production, the VOK was obliged to make arrangements to obtain programme materials from external sources, commercial sponsors, private voluntary agencies, and religious establishments (Heath, 1986).

In 1989, the Kenya Government set up the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, KBC, a semi-autonomous commercial entity, to take over responsibility for the running of VOK. This was meant to improve it technically without placing an additional financial burden on the government. However, things have not changed much with regard to political control and pressures. The KBC is governed by a board whose membership comprises ministerial appointees or senior bureaucrats and is chaired by a presidential appointee (KBC Act, section 4). Most of these appointments are political. The KBC radio and television are practically KANU-government loudspeakers, access to which almost non-existent for those with views and messages that are different from the official KANU-government views and positions.

In the run up to the 1982 multi-party general election, the opposition party FORD Kenya filed a suit in the High Court seeking to compel the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) to give equal airtime on radio and television to all political parties in the country. The party was also seeking to prevent the KBC from campaigning for KANU and its President, who is also the State President, by giving them extensive exposure to the detriment of other parties. It was looking for constitutional protection against adverse and discriminatory publications and pronouncements by and through the KBC against them on

behalf of the President of KANU. In its submissions, the party argued that the publication of news, comments and music in praise of the president of KANU and its officials was discriminatory, unlawful and wasteful (*The Standard*, Oct.15, 1992; see also Andreassen et al., 1993).

In the case of broadcasting in Kenya, therefore, it is fair to say that access to radio and television for diversity of political opinions and views is hamstrung by a monolithic and authoritarian grip of the ruling KANU-government. As observed by Heath (1990:3), 'Broadcasters privately complain that political interference makes it impossible for them to meet standards of impartial news casting as required by professional norms as well as broadcast law'. When launching a medium wave radio transmitting station, part of a modernisation programme funded by Japan, President Moi said that 'Irresponsible broadcasting and journalism can lead to national disintegration and loss of national identity... The use of radio and T.V. in promoting cohesion in our society, economic development and national unity cannot be over emphasised' (*The Standard*, August 19, 1992). Legitimate as these goals are, as we observed above, it is argumentation such as this that is invariably used to cow critical journalists into toeing the establishment line.

In their appraisal for the 1992 General Elections in Kenya, Andreassen et al., (1993) had the following to say about the findings of an evaluation of the broadcast media's coverage of the contending political parties:

It concluded that news coverage, particularly that of KBC, was heavily biased in favour of the ruling party KANU. It was found that not only did KANU receive disproportionately more air-time than the opposition, but also that news items about KANU were invariably positive and those about opposition parties always negative (p. 18-19).

3.4 The Early Settler and Asian Press

The printed press has a fairly long history in Kenya. This history has been covered variously by Ainslie (1966), Abuoga and Mutere (1988), Barton (1979), Hachten (1971), Mwaura (1980), Matheson (1992), Mytton (1983), Ochieng (1992) and to a lesser extent by Ziegler and Asante (1992) and Wilcox D (1975). From these sources, we learn that one of the oldest publications to appear in Kenya was a quarterly called *Taveta Chronicle* published by the Church Missionary Society from as far back as 1895. However, the first English weekly was the *Leader of British East Africa* published in Mombasa from August 1899. The publication carried articles covering news and issues from England and the British Empire. In 1908, the *Leader of British East Africa* moved to Nairobi and was then established as a weekly tabloid. It became a daily in 1911.

Like most of the colonial media in Africa at the time, the *Leader of British East Africa* identified closely with colonial and settler causes. Referring to Kenya, Mwaura (1988:60) concludes that, "Indeed the settler press - as it has come to be called was used by the settler community as a political and social instrument to agitate for their interests and maintain their political domination." According to Coppard (1988: 160), "Throughout the colonial period the media were owned and, to all intents and purposes, run by Europeans...their output was directed almost exclusively towards the European settlers, traders and administrators..." Ainslie (1966:99) argues that, "Newspapers in East Africa were from the beginning vehicles for the culture and concepts of the rulers, with considerable resources of White capital at their command."

The second most significant event in the history of the daily press came in 1902, when Mr. A M Jeevanjee, an Indian merchant, launched *The African Standard*. This publication catered primarily for civil servants and businessmen who inhabited Kenya's coastal town of Mombasa, which was the headquarters

of British East Africa. However, it was sold in 1905 to two wealthy Europeans who renamed the paper, *The East African Standard*. According to Ochieng (1992: 193)

W.H. Tiller (was) invited from England to edit the paper. However, Tiller's vituperative criticisms against Britain's colonial policy soon embarrassed Jeevanjee into selling the paper to Messrs Anderson and Mayer, who immediately changed its name to *East African Standard* and set it on the pro-white course it was to follow all the way to independence in 1963 and considerably beyond.

The East African Standard became a daily in 1910 and the largest and the most influential publication in East Africa. After years of competition, it took control of the *Leader of British East Africa* in 1923.

A publication of a somewhat different nature was launched in 1919 when another Indian, Mr. Desai, established the *East African Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* was the mouthpiece of the East African Indian National Congress (EAINC) whose president was Desai himself. This publication attacked colonial policy in Kenya, accusing the British colonial administration of subjugation, repression, and discrimination against Asians and Africans. According to Mwaura (1980:60), the Asians started their press to articulate and defend their interests, and where it suited those interests, to support the political rights of Africans. *The Chronicle* was edited by Pio Gama Pinto who, according to Ainslie (1966: 107), "Turned his paper into a far more than a communal organ, for he voiced demands of Africans as well as Asians for social justice and a share in government."

For Gachie (1992:16), Pinto was one of the few radical Asians courageous enough to use the media to agitate for multi-racialism and justice. However:

Few Asian community leaders or the Asian press sought to identify with the aspirations of the African majority, opting to steer clear of any confrontation with the Colonial Government as long as their interests were protected.

Kenya's settler press on the other hand was keen to oppose any colonial laws that were less accommodating to Europeans. The editorials of such papers as the *East African Standard* and the *Leader* generally reflected the views of leading racist settlers such as Lord Delamere who owned large tracts of land that had been unjustly and forcibly expropriated from defenceless Africans. Issues that touched on the suffering of Africans, such as the unrest in Kikuyu-land arising from land shortage, were, if not abhorred, simply ignored by the colonial press (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988). According to Barton (1979: 101), the settler press portrayed African leaders as "Objects of scorn and encouraged their European readers to regard them as irresponsible agitators". In fact, earlier on in his book, Barton (1979: 71) says that:

Indeed in the case of Kenya, the most important of Britain's East and Central African colonies, the fact that independence came late ... was due in part to the resistance to African nationalism by the White owned press, representing not the Whitehall attitudes but settler's viewpoint... Up until the morning of independence on 13 December 1963, Kenya's biggest daily newspaper, *The Standard*, carries the British Coat of Arms.

During this early period, a mere request from an African for permission to start his own press brought a reactionary response from officials of the colonial administration. Such newspapers were not permitted. Notwithstanding these restrictions and limitations, such publications were soon to appear and the colonial administration's response to them, cautious at first, soon became hostile. We learn from Mwaura (1980) that in the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's, a number of African-owned periodicals were started; they included Harry Thuku's

Kiswahili news sheet *Tangazo*, *The Nyanza Times*, *Ramogi*, published in the Luo language and the Kikuyu Central Association's monthly journal, *Muigwithania*. More about the African press will be said below.

In summary, it is clear that the early history of the press in Kenya was dominated by the settler press whose main reason for existence was the promotion of the settlers' vested interests at the expense of those of Africans. This press was used to promote and sustain the *status quo* of African subjugation, exploitation of their labour and alienation from their land. The press was racist in orientation and heavily biased in their content, policy and approach (Mwaura 1980: 11, 60). The rise of the Asian press saw the birth of press-political challenge to white supremacy. Though business oriented, this press easily became politicised as it questioned the discriminatory and inhuman treatment of Asians and, to a limited degree, of Africans. There arose at this time some nascent collaboration between Asians and Africans in their endeavour to agitate for common political and land rights, a struggle that to a great extent included use of the press. This explains the political orientation of such papers as the *Chronicle*. Access to the press was limited for Africans who desperately needed to put their grievances on the political agenda (Ainslie 1966:107; Hachten 1971).

3.5 A Press for Africans

The need to develop a moderate African press that would support official policies was recognised early by the colonial government. In 1921, the Native Africans Department began issuing the monthly *Habari* (Kiswahili word for 'news'). It was published to counter the propaganda published by Thuku and Desai and to keep anti-government, anti-European and anti-Christian papers from gaining readership among literate Africans. According to Abuoga and Mutere (1988: 14), however, *Habar/1 s* influence among Africans was limited because it supported even the most objectionable of government policies without question or criticism.

In January 1928 Jomo Kenyatta became honorary secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and became the first editor of their journal, *Muigwithania* (the Arbiter). *Muigwithania* was popular among the Kikuyu largely because it challenged colonial authority. According to Abuoga and Mutere (1988:16), moreover, it had a much more important role to play. The paper helped restore the confidence of Africans in their capacity for political action and in their power to influence their history. It carried much information about how government worked, reporting on Kenya Legislative Council debates and even speeches from the British House of Commons. It tried to convey to Africans information about how the outside world operated and suggested that they too had a place in that world.

According to Mytton (1983:44) and Mwaura (1980), Kenyatta halted publication of *Muigwithania* in 1934 when he left for Britain to agitate for African self-determination. However, Abuoga and Mutere (1988: 16), claim that the paper was banned because of what the colonial government regarded as the subversive activities of the Kikuyu Central Association (also see Ochieng P 1992:193; Widner 1992:51). Hachten (1971:201-202) estimated that before the Mau Mau rebellion in 1952, there existed over forty "... of these violently written papers, mainly in Kikuyu, mainly mimeographed, mostly highly seditious and taking a bitterly anti-white, 'quit Kenya' line."

The colonial government, in a bid to win the support of Africans, renewed and strengthened its interest in producing newspapers for Africans. It founded the Kenya Vernacular Press Company. In September 1939, it began publishing *Baraza*, a Kiswahili weekly. *Baraza* proved so popular that the *East African Standard* soon took it over completely and turned it into the first successful vernacular newspaper in Kenya. It is important to stress here that the colonial government's information services were directed at explaining its policies and popularising them among Africans. The government newspapers, news sheets and broadcasts provided no outlet for Africans except for those Africans of

unquestionable loyalty (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:22; Ochieng P 1992:193). Popular as they were, the colonial government's newspapers such as *Baraza* did not prevent the emergence immediately after the: Second World War of an independent African press (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:21; Mytton 1983: 44; Wilcox 1975: 5).

With the flood of newspapers and magazines that promoted African interests (Mytton 1983: 44; Wilcox 1975:10), came repression from the colonial government. Months before the State of Emergency was declared in October 1952, white settlers, through their representatives in the Legislative Council, urged the government to restrain the situation and stamp out the subversive elements by banning the more radical newspapers. The State of Emergency declaration proscribed all African-owned newsheets and broad-sheets. However, an Asian by the name Vidyarthi, who was publishing the *Colonial Times*, seized this opportunity and launched a Kiswahili paper, *Jicho* (the Eye). This publication filled for the Africans the vacuum that was created by the banning of African newspapers during the Emergency. *Baraza* and *Jicho* became the only two newspapers catering to Africans (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:22-23; Mwaura 1980:1 1).

It can be argued that with the rise of a press agitating for the rights of Africans and Asians' the colonial government established for Africans a press mainly for propaganda and indoctrination purposes. This was an obvious admission by the colonial powers that the daily press had a central role to play in the political process. The colonial government's media efforts should be seen as an attempt by the colonial government to defeat the Africans' struggle for self-liberation. Both *Habari* and *Baraza* were vehicles used to achieve socio-political control of Africans and the colonial government's self-preservation.

For the Africans, the press was primarily an instrument for liberation, both mental and physical. This press was intricately entwined with the political activities of freedom movements and liberation politicians. This can be seen in

the involvement of both Jomo Kenyatta and Harry Thuku *in Muigwithania*. The press was also seen as a strong forum for cultural expression at a time when African cultural expression suffered serious setbacks at the hands of Western religious and cultural influences. Mytton (1983:44) says that:

After the war a series of anti-colonial, anti-settler, Kikuyu language newspapers existed that went mainly unchecked because the British colonial administrators knew Swahili but not Kikuyu. These papers were ruthlessly suppressed during the Mau Mau Emergency of 1952. However, the importance of the press in forging links between people had now been demonstrated. The establishment of this network proved to be a critical factor in African nationalism ...

In short, the African press was one of protest against the human and land exploitative and alienating colonial status quo (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:16; *Hachten* 1971: 201-202; Wilcox 1975: 3-5, 10-11). However, the African press did not survive for long because of financial, technical and human resource problems. According to Mwaura (1980: 61):

The African press was particularly vulnerable. It was at the mercy of the Asian who owned the printing presses ... it did not receive any real advertising support as all advertising was controlled by Europeans and Asians. Also, the Africans had no training in journalism and most ... were full-time politicians and only part-time journalists.

3.6 The Private Daily Press in Post-independence Kenya

It is Abuoga and Mutere's (1988) argument, (also see Ochieng W R 1985; Widner 1992), that the Emergency compounded the concerns and fears by the settler community about their colonial economy and the security of foreign investments. As a result of these concerns, some members of the white

community found it expedient to seek an alliance with those African leaders who were prepared to accept the private enterprise system. This initiative led to the formation in 1959 of the New Kenya Party under the leadership of Sir Michael Blundell. This collaboration between European and African interests facilitated the transition to political independence, without the necessary radical changes in the economic and social structures. The post-independence press grew and increasingly became a reflection of those interests and the classes that had a stake in sustaining them.

It is in the above spirit of continuity and status quo preservation that Kenyatta is seen to have insisted that private property should be respected and that the settlers should be accommodated in the new political dispensation. This readily became the official line for the emergent African leadership (Widner 1992). Whilst it could be argued that the oppressive European masters were on their way out, an African leadership with similar interests and ideals with theirs had emerged. It began to harness the Press to provide channels through which the techniques, life-styles, motivations and attitudes of the modernising sector could be diffused to the 'more backward traditional sectors'. Sensing that the press would continue to serve the interest of the emergent African elite, as early as 1963, Kenya's first Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Ramogi Achieng Oneko, lamented that:

It is vital that every new nation should have a government newspaper. This is because commercial newspapers aim primarily at making profits, so they are not likely to undertake the publication of newspapers for small linguistic groups. The government will have to fill the vacuum even it means running the newspapers at a loss ... (Barton 1966: 39).

Oneko argued that the capitalist private press tended to favour socio-economic groups that had the highest spending power and therefore attracted the most advertising (Abuoga and Mutere 1988: 26-28; Mytton 1983: 68). During this

transition period, the emergent African leadership apparently failed to address the deep inequalities inherited in, and the need for the overhaul of, the colonial legacy. Abuoga and Mutere (1988) argue that the Capricorn Society and later on the New Kenya Party successfully co-opted the emergent African political and economic elite into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. Already at this time, there could be seen a budding crop of African leaders interested in cosmetic changes and seeing to it that the state machinery inherited from the colonial government was retained. The post-independence press became a major player in the promotion and preservation of the colonial socio-economic legacy. At this time also, the developmental philosophy of the media had taken root. The media were seen and expected to play the role of a vehicle whose function was the diffusion of modern western values (see Barton 1979).

An event of great significance in the development of the private daily press in post-independence Kenya took place in 1959 when the Aga Khan became involved in the Kenyan daily press. In the previous year, a European by the name Charles Hayes had established *Taifa*, a small weekly newspaper published in the Swahili vernacular language. According to Ochieng (1992:194), in 1959 Michael Curtis set up, on behalf of the Aga Khan, a company called East African Newspapers (Nation Series) Limited which proceeded to buy ownership interests from Hayes who, however, was retained as editor. It was hailed to be the first major newspaper group to identify editorially with the aspirations and interests of African people (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:23, 29-30; Ochieng 1992:194). In Aga Khan's own words:

I felt strongly at the time, and still feel, that the printed media are profoundly important as instruments of mobilising peoples of the new countries of Africa and Asia for the complex and continuing task of national building ... In those days, it was something of a revolutionary idea to found a newspaper which was intended to be edited and staffed by Africans, to contain news of specific interest to Africa and to express

an African point of view... (*Nation 25th Anniversary Celebrations Souvenir Magazine* 1985:18).

In 1960, the management of the Nation Series launched *Taifaleo* (Swahili word for 'the nation today'), the first Swahili daily. On 20 March of the same year, they launched the *Sunday Nation* and on 3 October, Kenya's second daily, the *Daily Nation*, went into circulation. As indicated above, the entrance of the Nation Group of Newspapers on the press scene was an event of great import because their publications aimed at reflecting and supporting the interests and views of Africans (Mwaura 1980:65). Soon after it was launched' the *Daily Nation* surpassed the *East African Standard* in circulation while the *Sunday Nation* with a circulation of 70, 076, became the largest selling weekly in East Africa (Abuoga and Mutere 1988; Ochieng P 1992). According to Mwaura (1980:65), the Nation series newspapers 'posed a serious challenge to the long established but rather staid and dull *East African Standard*.'

In Ainslie's view (1966: 105), the *Nation* papers were an entirely new experience for East Africa, tried to bring a new professionalism and sophistication to local journalism with emphasis on entertainment and glamour. *Hachten* (1971: 212) concurs that the "tabloid *Nation* was bright, interesting, newsy and intelligently edited". On the day when the *Daily Nation* hit the streets as a daily, it pledged:

To do our utmost to help Kenya and other East African territories perilous transition to African majority rule and full independence as peacefully and constructively as possible ... *The Daily Nation* will also be a watch dog, guarding the liberty of the individual against bureaucracy and totalitarianism, however they may manifest themselves (25th Anniversary Magazine 1985: 18).

Barton (1979: 178-179) observed "*The Nation* has probably more influence on the government of the country than any Fleet Street newspaper has over political life in Britain". However, *Hachten* (1971: 213) came to a similar but slightly different conclusion: "Like *The Standard*, *The Nation* has followed a policy of basic support for the Kenya government, but has criticised certain aspects of government..." In the sub-section below, I will provide examples of case events, which illustrate what for me were the strongest sources of constraint on the political performance of the private press in Kenya.

3.7 Media Politics and the Private Daily Press in Post-Independence Kenya

A case that would best introduce this section is the following. On one occasion in the mid-1960s during the early days of opposition politics of the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, President Kenyatta of KANU had gone to Kisumu, a predominantly KPU stronghold, on an official visit. During a meeting, an altercation erupted between Kenyatta and Odinga. The crowd became unruly and in the commotion that later ensued, the heavily armed security personnel who formed Kenyatta's security detail shot and killed innocent children and adults who had lined the streets to cheer the President. Joram Amadi, the editor of *Taifa* series, because he simply allowed a news story about this incident to be published, was immediately sacked (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:31; also see Ochieng W 1985).

Senior civil servants frequently articulated the government's official sentiments with regard to the press. On 6 June 1977, the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Darius Mbela, delivered a scathing attack on foreign-owned press in Kenya and Africa, charging it with 'self-censorship' and calling for 'a people's press' as an alternative. Mbela urged local journalists to be committed to the interests of the masses and to serving as the 'vanguard of the forces needed to neutralise foreign influence and to promote our cultural aspirations' (Ochieng 1992:49). He called for a press in

Kenya 'genuinely belonging to the masses to avoid some of the grossest interference by foreign owners' and criticised the private newspapers for 'belonging to some tycoons enslaved by borrowed ideologies'. He lamented that it was even more tragic that the power barons are foreigners (*Ibid.* 50).

Top newspaper managers were not to be left out of this great debate. George Githii⁷ then the editor-in-chief of the *Nation*, defending the foreign-owned press had answered Mbela thus, '... we work to assist the Kenyan government and all it stands for; we work for the cause of Kenya's progress; we work to defend the freedoms...' Joe Rodrigues, an editor with the same paper, is reported to have said that '... the Kenyan press have since independence in 1963 by and large given the government every backing in its efforts to develop the country and in its quarrel with its neighbours.' In response to Mbela's argument that the press in Kenya was 'first and foremost interested in politics', Githii had responded that it was true that the *Daily Nation* was interested in politics, '... but not first and foremost. And there are other easier and more lucrative areas of operation. The newspapers have to satisfy their stockholders while at the same time satisfying their readers and serving the national interest...' (see OchiengJ1992: 49-79).

About the ownership of the *Nation*, Githii had said that since 1970 it had been:

... our ambition that the newspaper would become not merely edited and run by Africans but actually owned by Africans through the widest possible share-holding. That process has already started and Nation Newspapers' parent company (Nation Printers and Publishers' who are also the holding company for Kenya Litho) has numerous indigenous shareholders ... (Ochieng P 1992:54-55).

Joe Kadhi, then managing editor of the *Sunday Nation*, was also constrained to support the foreign-owned private press. According to him:

One does not need to be a qualified journalist to realise that the press in Kenya is free... It is by looking at the freedom of the press in Kenya that one becomes so proud of the democratic society in which we live... Today there is not a single European on the staff of the *Sunday Nation* and 'yours truly' happens to be its editor (*ibid.*: 63).

In a different incident during the same year, Githii wrote a vitriolic attack on Jaramogi Oginga Odinga when the controversial former vice-president claimed that interference from absentee owners was the greatest obstacle to freedom of the press in Kenya. Ironically, within just two weeks, in a dramatic twist of events, Githii was forced to resign from the *Nation* accusing the Aga Khan (the majority share holder) of constant editorial meddling (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:31; Ochieng P 1992: 60).

The debate about the performance of the Kenyan daily press was not limited to that press sector that was in the hands of foreigners. Just before Kenya's general elections of 1979, Hilary Ng'weno sent out, through the pages of the *Weekly Review*, of which he was owner and editor, a set of questionnaires. He was seeking to establish - Gallup style - what kinds of candidates were likely to be returned to Parliament and to publish his findings before the elections themselves would take place. The government did not take kindly to this plan believing that such findings would influence the voters. When the day arrived for Ng'weno to publish his findings, he did not but instead he wrote a long commentary in the *Weekly Review* saying that the government had vetoed the publication of his findings. He strongly censured the government for interference with the 'freedom of the press'.

A few weeks later Ng'weno wrote a circular to all staff at Stellascope (his publishing company) giving them a month's notice to look for jobs elsewhere because there was no prospect of the company continuing to exist for longer than a month. According to Ochieng P (1992:60), the government had

instructed all its departments and parastatals to cancel all advertising contracts with Stellascope. These advertisers included the Industrial Development Bank and the National Bank of Kenya, to which Stellascope owed considerable amounts of money in the form of loan capital. It was only when Ng'weno had undertaken to 'behave' that the government's directive was rescinded (also see Abuoga and Mutere 1988:95).

Another event of significance on the part of Ng'weno took place later on in the same year 1979. He wrote a circular, this time to all editorial staff, banning them from contributing articles to any publication other than the *Weekly Review*. This action was prompted by an article that appeared in the London-based magazine, *New Africa*, describing the extremely grave political and economic situation at the time developing in Kenya. The government was incensed by the story and suspecting it to have been penned by a Stellascope employee, had been in touch with Ng'weno to warn him.

Strangely enough, in 1981 Ng'weno told a Nairobi meeting of the International Press Institute (IPI) that Kenya was the envy of African countries because of the freedoms enjoyed by its citizens. He attributed this to a healthy political atmosphere pervading the country. However, in the same year that Ng'weno was praising press freedom in Kenya, government interference landed Rodriguez, who was now editor-in-chief of the *Nation*, most of his top editors and a couple of senior reporters, in police cells for nearly a week. The *Daily Nation* had carried a story in which it had referred to an unsigned statement from the ruling party headquarters as 'anonymous'. This was at a time when Kenya faced a crisis during a two-week doctors' strike. President Moi had attacked the *Nation* of misleading people when it reported that the source of the party's statement was anonymous. He argued that the 'anonymous' description meant that the newspaper regarded leaders of the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) as 'non-persons' (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:31-2; Ochieng P 1992:19).

In the meantime, George Githii had been appointed Chairman of the Standard Newspapers Limited in 1980, following his departure from Nation newspapers on 'matters of principle'. Observers (Abuoga and Mutere 1988; Ochieng P 1992) attributed his appointment to the Standard Newspapers Limited to the influence of the former Attorney-General, Charles Njonjo who was now Minister for Constitutional Affairs. Njonjo was also a good friend of "Tiny Rowlands", the Lonrho chief who owned *The Standard*. After Githii's appointment, *The Standard* appeared to have lost some of its independence and became what observers regarded as Njonjo's mouthpiece. Njonjo's political rivals and foes were criticised mercilessly through Githii's editorials. Githii provoked, teased and even openly abused the office and person of the then vice-president Mwai Kibaki (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:83; also see Ochieng P 1992).

The following year Njonjo himself was named in a widely reported treason trial, which the *Daily Nation* gave a banner headline. He was reported to have complained bitterly that the headline was aimed at smearing his name. Consequently, a section of the government identified with Njonjo soon launched a series of strong criticisms against the *Daily Nation*. The editorial team was accused of turning the Aga Khan papers into 'an opposition party.' As a result of all this, coupled with the need to appease Njonjo, then respected and seen as a strategic personality by the business community, Nation Printers and Publishers, the holding company for Nation Newspapers and Kenya Litho, decided to replace Rodrigues and other senior journalists at the *Nation* (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:34; Ochieng P 1992:67).

Having been sacked as editor, Rodrigues told the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, that the press in Kenya though the freest in Africa, was not completely free and that the editors had to decide what they could and could not print. He noted that there was a tendency to err on the side of caution. According to him, a newspaper in the Third World is as free as the government wants and that editors do walk a tightrope. He said that a newspaper editor in

an African country could find himself in trouble whether the country boasted of parliamentary democracy or whether it was a crass dictatorship (Ochieng 1992:20).

On the government policy front, cabinet minister Oloo Aringo mooted in 1981 the idea of an official 'Press Council' with responsibilities which would include: ensuring professional ethics by stopping self-censorship on the part of editors; protecting the public from injurious advertisements and by promoting professionalism among reporters and sub-editors. The minister warned against permissive reporting and witch-hunting, arguing that, 'As a young developing country we cannot afford the luxury of permissive reporting practised by the developed countries ... The press must not appear to be inciting the public to rise against the popularly elected government' (*ibid.*: 42).

After a remarkably rare stint as editor-in-chief of both *Nation* and *The Standard*, Kenya's leading dailies, things came to a head for George Githii. On 21 July 1982, he wrote a very critical editorial entitled 'Preach Water and Drink Wine.' In the editorial, he strongly censored the government for detaining people without trial simply because they had criticised the practice of detention without trial. He lamented the then rapidly worsening economic situation in the country and bluntly accused the government of suppression. He called for the release of all detainees and the repeal or amendment of the Preventive Detention Act. He went on to disclose that, 'There are instances ... when our national papers have been told in no uncertain terms that they publish certain things at their peril and there have been instances where they have been humiliated in public' (Ochieng 1992:57; also see Abuoga and Mutere 1988:34). This time Njonjo, Githii's political patron and godfather, joined the political establishment in condemning the editor and described the editorial as 'diabolical'. By 2.00 p.m. of the same day, there was a special edition of *The Standard* on the streets of Nairobi, brought out to announce the board's decision to fire the editor on the spot and to dissociate itself from the editorial (Ochieng P 1992:58, 59).

3.8 The Birth and Performance of KANU's Daily Press

As the debate discussed above unfolded, there was a concomitant debate around the wisdom or not of founding a ruling-party press. On 28 October 1981, Lawrence Sifuna, MP, moved a motion in parliament proposing for KANU to establish its own newspaper to counter the habit of foreign owned media of slighting certain politicians. Reacting to this initiative, Ng'weno (*Weekly Review*, 6.11.1981) had the following to say about political party-owned press:

Given a choice between a constant harangue of party 'news' and the admittedly flawed menu which relatively independent newspapers can offer, readers will quite understandably choose a freer Press. And the danger in a party newspaper is that in order to keep from losing readers - any ruling party will be tempted to secure a monopoly (of news and advertisements) for its newspaper thereby curtailing freedom of the press...

Later experience by Ng'weno proved the above statement to be most ironic. Ng'weno and his wife had founded Stellascope Limited, a publishing company, and launched a weekly political magazine, the *Weekly Review*, in February 1975. The following year, they launched a children's magazine - *Rainbow*- and in 1977 came a Sunday newspaper, *The Nairobi Times* (*Weekly Review* 01 April 1983).

In November 1981' the publication of *The Nairobi Times* was suspended because of cash flow problems. However, in May 1982, the first issue of the *Nairobi Times* as a daily newspaper went into circulation. The daily soon found itself in a financial quagmire as the national economy became depressed and the cash-flow problem became more acute. In Ng'weno's own admission, the economic situation as a whole was to blame for his lack of success as an indigenous publisher of a daily newspaper (*ibid.*).

It was when the *Nairobi Times* failed as a daily that Ng'weno started to negotiate with the ruling party KANU, for the party to acquire Stellascope Ltd., its printing subsidiary (later named Press Trust Printers) and the title of *The Nairobi Times*. It was agreed that KANU take over *The Nairobi Times* and the two companies including their assets and liabilities (Abuoga and Mutere 1988:95-96; Ochieng 1992: 180). Describing the circumstances at that time, Ng'weno had said:

Advertising in Kenya is dominated by non-Africans. Until this changes, the prospects for indigenous independent press in Kenya are bleak. As far as the commitment to the concept of freedom of the press is concerned, Ng'weno thinks that the government of Kenya is more committed to that concept than many others who profess to support Press freedom. I have tried to salvage our operations since 1978. I have spoken to a dozen American newspaper publishers. I have been to Sweden. To Holland. I have talked to Foundations. I have tried virtually everything I could think of to keep the *Nairobi Times*, *Weekly Review* and *Rainbow* going. When the chips were down, it was two Governmental institutions - the National Bank of Kenya and the Industrial Development Bank - who kept us alive. Their belief in Press freedom showed itself in concrete terms, unlike a lot of empty rhetoric which I have heard on this subject only too often...' (*Weekly Review* 1 April 1983; also see Abuoga and Mutere 1988: 95).

As a result of the economic woes of this indigenous publisher, coupled with the KANU government's problems with foreign-owned dailies, the Kenya Times Group of Newspapers were founded by KANU in April 1983, when it launched its first English daily newspaper, *Kenya Times*. The *Sunday Times* was launched on 8 May 1983 and the Kiswahili daily *Kenya Leo* (Swahili word for 'Kenya Today'), a week later. The launching of these newspapers into the

market was not easy, as they had to fight for acceptability against stiff competition from existing newspapers. (Abuoga and Mutere, 1988: 64). The party papers were received with overwhelming cynicism. It was generally feared that such papers would be allowed to print only party propaganda from KANU leaders.

Right from the start, the KANU newspapers were bedevilled with financial and organisational problems. Faced with stiff competition from the private daily newspapers, the ruling party co-opted in 1987 the assistance of Robert Maxwell, the late British press magnate of the Mirror group, to help sort out problems at the Kenya Times Group (Matheson 1992:124). When the deal was finally signed in October 1987, a new venture called the Kenya Times Media Trust (KTMT) went into operation on 1 November 1987. For many months later, good journalists remained circumspect about joining the party newspapers, despite invitations to many of them to do so. Many were apprehensive, among other things, of the apparent absence of job security at Kenya Times.

According to Ochieng (1992:154-155), KANU Investments Limited, which represents KANU in KTMT, existed only on paper and has never invested even a cent in the venture since it was re-launched in February 1988. The various government departments and civic authorities simply refused over the years to pay for the advertisements they place in the paper' perhaps assuming that it belonged to them and should therefore charge them nothing. He argues that KANU and the government owed the publishing group hundreds of millions of shillings, with the result that they couldn't begin to make a profit with which to expand. In September 1991, 'the company's financial position was extremely tenuous as a result of the failure by the owners to invest there and to collect the huge debts owed to it for many years'.

Ochieng, who was appointed editor of the KANU newspapers in September 1988, claims further that despite the bleak and negative aura with which *Kenya*

Times was received, it:

... has survived. What is more striking, it has often been much busier in its content, more vigorous in its analysis and greatly more courageous in its exposition of corruption in government and the private sector than have the privately-owned newspapers, including its predecessor, the *Nairobi Times* (*Ibid.*).

This apparent self-analysis by Philip Ochieng of *Kenya Times'* performance under his editorship seems to have been shared by the *Weekly Review*, for a long time Kenya's leading political magazine, when it observed that:

Ironically, the KANU-owned *Kenya Times* has never shied away from reporting on sensitive political topics, especially under the stewardship of Mr Philip Ochieng, under whose direction the party paper has come to overtake the nearly 1 00-year old *Standard* in sales to take second place in the market (5 July 1991).

The above reputation did not augur well for Ochieng's future at *Kenya Times*. In April of 1991, he used the pages of the paper to harshly criticise the poor performance and low quality of debate in, the KANU parliament and the persistent lack of quorums in the House. He described the legislators as 'conmen, layabouts, idlers, thieves and ne'er-do wells' (*Weekly Review* 12 July and 4 October 1991). In fact, by July 1991, *Kenya Times* was now publishing a daily list of Members of parliament who were attending in the House. As a result, parliamentarians came out with strong criticisms of *Kenya Times*, Philip Ochieng and journalists in general with one MP calling them 'dangerous fools'. The legislators complained that 'the paper was out to discredit them in the eyes of their electorate by portraying them as inefficient representatives' (*Weekly Review* 12 July 1991). Many of them called for the paper to be barred from covering parliamentary proceedings.

If the rank and file of KANU had hoped that the party press would be a friendly and supportive alternative to the 'hostile' coverage of the independent press, the performance of the party's *Kenya Times* under the editorship of Philip Ochieng was a big disappointment. Being a strong supporter of the one-party political system, he attacked individuals and groups, especially lawyers and religious leaders, who agitated for a multi-party system. However, politicians, whether or not they belonged to the ruling-party KANU, were not spared Ochieng's pen. He exposed corruption both in government and other public offices. According to the *Weekly Review* (4 April 1991), for the time being, he seemed to have had the blessing of the President.

3.9 Factors That Have Affected Press Performance

From what has been presented above, it can be argued that political interference is a major, if not the most important, influence on the performance of the press in Kenya. This influence manifests itself in various ways, most of it indirectly. Oversensitive to the way they are perceived by the public eye; most Kenyan politicians would go to a great length to avoid negative portrayal in the press. However, this is usually not very easy and most politicians make do with public condemnation of newspapers or media in general. One source of interference emanates from political patronage of editors by politicians. The example of Githii's support for⁷ and protection by Njonjo shows that this type of symbiotic relationship can make an editor fearless in his criticism of politicians so long as his 'godfather' is on his side. However, in the Kenyan situation for a long time, the daring that Githii was famous for must be seen as exceptional.

Political pressure in the form of government interference is the most potent in this category. Government departments are major sources of revenue in the form of advertisement placed in the daily press. A move by the KANU government to withdraw this source of revenue would most probably make media organisations 'behave' as exemplified by the case of Ng'weno and

Stellascop Ltd. There are several examples above in which this type of pressure saw the sacking of prominent and able editors. Even though this is usually an *ex post facto* interference, it served as a reminder to editors and other journalists of the treacherous nature of their profession. I have also observed that it is not uncommon that editors are rounded up by police, roughed up or threatened on the instigation of politicians and over-enthusiastic functionaries in the government (HRW 1991 185-216; Tostensen and Scott 1987:118).

The way in which journalists perceive their freedom from political influence is sometimes dictated and clouded by personal expediency. Most Kenyan journalists are seen to deny this kind of influence when their professional performance is under scrutiny and when they feel secure in their employment positions. At such times they laud both press freedom and the 'atmosphere of freedom pervading the country.' However, when their personal position, or that of their organisation, is threatened, they usually lament government interference in the freedom of the press.

In most of the press bashing by politicians and government functionaries that I have given above, foreign ownership is always blamed for the perceived 'dysfunction'. This type of absentee ownership', it is argued, works against the interests of Kenya because it dictates the propagation of foreign ideologies and interferes with the freedom of local editors in their employment. Some politicians see this as 'the greatest obstacle to freedom of the press in Kenya'. Editors, most of them Kenyans⁷ have always hit back at these allegations while at the same time asserting that they do not take orders from their employers in their editorial work; thereby dismissing the existence of owner-interference. Ironically, I have given above a number of cases where editors have been relieved of their duties following disagreement with owners or employers. At such times, the editors have regrettably acknowledged the existence of, and strongly attacked owner-interference.

Another strong argument against foreign ownership has been that the main interest of the press organisation so owned is to make profit. This profit-motive is seen as taking precedence over the national interest. The view of the editors is that though it is true that the press may be interested in making profit, this is not their major goal. The editors as the prime concerns advance the needs of readers and the national interest. It is also argued that newspaper ownership has become more spread with the floating of shares to Kenyans. This coupled with the fact that only Kenyans are to be found in editorial positions, it is claimed, negates or minimises the effects of owner-influence.

Both politicians and government functionaries accuse editors of self-censorship. In their understanding, this is necessitated by the need to please either newspaper owners or powerful politicians or both. On their part, editors do not dispute self-censorship but would easily attribute it to political interference and the concomitant instinct to survive. This instinct is borne out of the unpredictable nature of the political climate (See especially HRW 1991:185-216; Ochieng P 1992; Tostensen and Scott 1987: 1 18).

The nagging concern about the relationship between ownership and the press's political performance was at the heart of the suggestions by KANU politicians that the ruling party found its own press. An argument was made that because the two major daily newspapers at the time, *The Standard* and *The Nation*, were foreign-owned, foreign influence would perpetually support the press in its belittlement of the ruling-party politicians. A press founded by the party, because it is indigenous and because it would be answerable to the party, would be the answer to the politicians' press-publicity problems. However, it is for similar reasons that there was concern by government critics that a party press would end up being a mere propaganda machine. It was feared that it would hurt 'freedom of the press' should the ruling-party press monopolise advertisement and news from the government. It is this realisation that made

Ng'weno, an indigenous newspaper publisher, opine that a foreign-owned press, though not the best answer to the country's interests, would be preferred by readers to the ruling-party press.

If one then assumes that foreign ownership of the press does not serve Kenya's national interest, and that a party press runs the risk of being overly biased in the interest of the ruling-party politician, then *a private indigenous press* would be the desirable alternative that would provide objective, non-partisan Kenya-friendly news and views. But Ng'weno's experience suggests that this may not necessarily, nor practically, be true. He has been subjected to the constraints and vicissitudes of both the market and the political climate in ways similar to those experienced by the private foreign-owned press. His experiences show that even a private indigenous press is susceptible to political interference. It is these experiences that made Ng'weno loathe the KANU government's interference in the freedom of the press.

As he himself put it, Ng'weno's later attempt to publish a daily newspaper, the *Nairobi Times*, was jeopardised by market forces. Hard economic times and a dearth of advertisement forced this indigenous publisher to sell his short-lived daily newspaper to the ruling party. At this time Ng'weno considered economic conditions in the form of advertisement rather than ownership to be crucial to freedom of the press. Since two state-owned banks came to Ng'weno's rescue 'when the chips were down', his understanding of the relationship between the government and freedom of the press was reversed. He now came to the conclusion that because the KANU government, through the banks, had come to his help, it was more committed to freedom of the press.

The ruling party's *Kenya Times* has been beset with problems not unlike those that faced the private commercial daily newspapers. The party found it imperative to solicit the financial and organisational assistance of none other than Robert Maxwell to save the paper from imminent collapse. In doing this

foreign interest became a factor even in the ruling party's press. The relationship between the ruling party and the government was to prove consequential for the paper's professional and financial position. According to Ochieng (1992), public servants found their way into the paper's employment bringing with them a bureaucratic ethos in management. The KANU Investments Limited, which represents the ruling party in the Kenya Times Media Trust, has not made any substantial investment in the joint venture. This, plus the failure by government departments to foot their advertisement bills in the paper, has not augured well economically for *Kenya Times*.

3.10 The Daily Press, Political Pressure and Multi-Party Politics: 1990-1991

I have demonstrated above that political commentary in the daily newspapers had definite limits. It is clear from the examples given that there were, as Tostensen and Scott (1987:1 18) observed, 'limits beyond which political commentators (could) not venture lest risking intimidation, victimisation and possibly detention.' There were moments when the daily press managed to be critical of the powers that be in their news reports and editorials but for the most part these criticisms were 'inconsequential and ineffective'. Even the exceptional editorial by Githii in 1981 on detention without trial ended with the editor's immediate sacking. Describing the self-censorship ethic, and therefore the degree of press freedom obtaining at the time, Tostensen and Scott observed that 'sharp criticism is tolerated as long as the addressee is not specific, or easily identifiable, as one of the President's protégés or as the President himself.'

The daily press's political performance at the time could be summarised thus:

For the many who do not master the techniques of writing between the lines, self-censorship may represent the only logical response. Articles then tend to focus on themes which are unlikely to cause any offence or

controversy. If not, the author may be branded, in the name of national building and consensual politics, as an anti-nyayo radical, or as a purveyor of foreign ideologies, or a disloyal rumour monger (*ibid.*).

This seems to be the situation that still obtained at the time when the agitation for multi-party politics was gathering momentum. For example, when Rev. Njoya in a church sermon in January 1990 called for an end to KANU's monopoly of Kenyan politics, the *Daily Nation* gave it a banner headline and extensive coverage. This infuriated KANU who said that they were "keenly looking at those organs of the media, which provide a forum for people with misleading views and statements' (*Weekly Review* 12 January 1990). A study of the press coverage at the time suggests that beginning in 1990, the two private dailies had already showed an increasing readiness to carry stories about people who advocated for an end to KANU's single-party monopoly of political power (Mak'Ochieng, 1993). As was to be expected, this was met with intimidating pressure from the KANU government machinery. A few examples below will illustrate how the verbal and physical attacks on journalists were meted out.

In March 1990 Minister for Labour Peter Okondo "slapped and indefinite ban on newspapers from reporting any of his functions in Busia District because they had become 'malicious'" (*Kenya Times* 12 March 1990). The minister went on to take the kind of action that was popular with KANU government politicians, "I have already talked to the top management of Kenya Times Media Trust about their stringer and I am happy they have promised stern action against him" (*ibid.*). On June 21, 1990, the editor of the *Daily Nation*, George Mbuggus, was arrested simply because he had attended a press conference given by lawyer Paul Muite on behalf of multi-party advocates Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia. The press conference was broken up by police, who stormed the building where it was being held, confiscated notebooks, film and cassettes and ordered journalists to leave. Plainclothes officers told Mbuggus that he was being detained for security reasons.

Seven days later, police arrested Mitch Odero, deputy managing editor of *Standard* along with three colleagues: Francis M'Thiya, managing editor of the *Sunday Standard*, Francis Githui Muhindi, managing editor-designated, and production editor, James Kimondo. They were held overnight and later charged in court for publishing reports "likely to cause fear, alarm and despondency" (HRW, 1991: 190). The charges related to the *Standard's* coverage of the violent evictions from Muoroto shantytown, in which it had been alleged that a number of people died, including a city employee. On July 9, 1990, Mohamed Amin, Visnews bureau chief, and a cameraman, were stopped by police and roughly handled. An officer slapped Mohamed Amin over the head, and the journalists were forced into a police truck with detainees taken from the scene of the July demonstrations and riots. They were taken to separate police stations and later released without charge. (HRW, 1991: 200).

On March 3, 1991, two *Weekly Review* reporters, Gacharia Gaitho and Julius Bargorett, were whipped and beaten with sticks by plainclothes police after they attempted to attend a public meeting held between Nicholas Biwott, Minister of Energy, and the villagers in Kerio valley. The meeting was embarrassing for the minister because it concerned a land dispute, in which the villagers were seeking compensation for land taken by Kenya Fluorospar Company, which he owned. Plainclothes police, believed to include members of Biwott's own security team, ordered the journalists to leave and confiscated their notebooks and film. Before they were able to leave, however, one of the four security men took them into a room and beat them with sticks (*Weekly Review* 15. 03.1991).

During June 1991 member of parliament for Rongai, Mr. Eric Bomett, stood up in parliament to accuse local journalists of being the "cause of all evils in the country", and of being a highly immoral people "who move with beautiful girls during the night" (*Weekly Review*, July 12, 1991). During the first week in July, members of parliament went full-out to blast parliamentary reporters for their alleged inaccurate reporting of proceedings in the house, with the member for

Msambweni, Mr. Kassim Mwamzandi, calling them “dangerous fools” (*Daily Nation*, July 5, 1991). During the same month, during a fund-raising meeting, Mr Mulu Mutisya, nominated MP, is reported to have described local journalists as “people born out of wedlock and conceived along river beds and road sides” in what the *Weekly Review* described as “one of the most shameless and offensive tirades against local scribes yet” (July 12, 1991).

The greatest source of intimidation and censorship, however, came from the Office of the President. According to Joe Kadhi, one of Kenya’s most prominent journalists and formerly a long serving senior editor of Nation Newspapers:

If the powers of some politicians and indeed that of a number of civil servants in one party state appear to be formidable, those of the people at the Big House were insurmountable. Any telephone call from that area, even if it was only from a mere press officer had to be heard and obeyed. Thus when the dreaded telephone calls were received in the newsroom, a number of editors were conveniently “not in”. Those who were in became butchers of important national stories, which were only heard on the BBC and never read in the local newspapers. Editors who ignored telephone directives to “kill” stories expressing the opposition’s viewpoint did so at their own peril. They could not expect sympathy from proprietors or their board of directors if they found themselves on the firing line from the powers that be. (*Daily Nation* June 17, 1992).

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Kenya’s first vice-president and erstwhile opposition leader, declared the intention to form a political party to rival KANU long before the repeal of the single-party constitution. It has been argued that one of the KANU government’s major press-publicity strategies was to put pressure on the daily newspapers ‘to give Odinga’s statements a blackout. When Odinga first declared that he was in the process of forming an opposition party in October 1990, the announcement was considered a bombshell, but it was not carried in

the daily media' (*Weekly Review*, 22 March 1991:5). When in February 1991, Odinga announced that he had formed an opposition party to be called the National Democratic Party, NDP; the daily press again gave him a news blackout. The story was only carried and commented on by the local dailies after the local political magazines and the foreign media, especially the BBC, had carried it. As one political commentary at the time observed, 'The limited press coverage ... reduced the momentum of Odinga's activities and precluded the necessity of a major uproar by the government and politicians' (*Ibid.*).

In July 1991, President Moi mooted the idea of enacting legislation that would bar foreign ownership of the media in Kenya. This was in response to the 'often defiant editorial policies of ... the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*' (*Weekly Review*, 5 July 1991). Moi lamented that the foreign-controlled papers were party to the fuelling of anti-government propaganda. He went as far as threatening to ban the two newspapers if they did not mend their ways, claiming that they were being used as a forum for highlighting the views of government critics and for destabilising the country. The *Nation* and *The Standard* had grown bolder and bolder as multi-party advocates stepped up their agitation. The KANU leadership led by Moi accused the *Nation* of 'pro-Ford bias giving the impression that KANU does not have mass support' mainly because the paper gave government critics press coverage (*Weekly Review*, 20 December 1991).

I have demonstrated that *Kenya Times* under Philip Ochieng also carried editorials critical of KANU politicians. The *Weekly Review* described Ochieng's editorship as follows:

... He was a courageous editor rarely willing to defer to any sacred cow despite the public's association of the *Times* with the establishment arising from KANU's stake in it. In his own way, Ochieng helped to revitalise the newspaper and made it, if not always popular, necessary reading all the same. It even began making important gains in

readership, which was quite a turn-around for a newspaper that was largely unfocussed and bereft of bite ever since KANU took it over in 1983 (4 October 1991).

At the same time as he chided the 'independent', private and foreign-owned dailies, President Moi asked the *Kenya Times* to concentrate on party news instead of competing with the two foreign-owned daily newspapers. In August 1991, he censured *Kenya Times* for having given the impression that the recently created political pressure group, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy, FORD, was legally established while the government had said that it was not. In September of the same year, it is reported that Ochieng was forced to retire as the editor of *Kenya Times* for suggesting that the arrest of a FORD political activist was politically motivated while the government had insisted that the arrest was about criminal investigations (*Ibid.*).

3.11 Legal and Administrative Suppression of Political Magazines

There are a number of legal instruments that the KANU party-state has used to control the political press in Kenya. These instruments have been deployed mainly against the independent political magazines. These magazines defiantly refused to succumb to self-censorship in their open support for multi-partyism and its advocates. They consistently published news and views challenging the KANU government's politics of control. A discussion of some of the legal measures will be helpful in providing an important aspect of the context within which the media operated under the suppressive political culture that prevailed in Kenya. I will discuss five such legal control measures and how they have been used and abused. I will also show that just before the 1992 multi-party elections, the state attempted to widen the *Defamation Act* in order to intimidate the political press into silence.

The first legal instrument that has been frequently used against political magazines is the requirement of registration and execution of a bond under the provisions of *The Books and Newspapers Act* (Chapter III, Laws of Kenya). Every publisher of a newspaper is required to send daily returns of the registrar and also submit returns of vital information regarding publication and circulation annually (Section 8). In addition, it is a requirement of the act that no newspaper is to be printed without a bond of Ksh. 10, 000 having been executed, registered and delivered to the Registrar of Newspapers by the proprietor (Section II). The purpose of the bond is security towards the payment of any penalty, which may be adjudged against the paper (Okoth-Owiro, 1990:20). Printers also have to register by completing a similar form and signing a bond. If at any time the magazine is taken to a different printer, then the printer must be re-registered.

According to the Human Rights Watch (1991), a political magazine that has been targeted as anti-government initially comes under economic pressure through the unwillingness of printers to print at an acceptable charge and the withdrawal of advertising. The loss of advertising quickly hurts a small publication. Fear of harassment or direct pressure by the government, persuades printers to either stop printing the magazine completely, or raises the charges to reflect a high-risk assignment. Kenya's most outspoken publication, the *Nairobi Law Monthly*, has had continual problems finding printers willing to print at reasonable cost. The so-called failure to submit annual returns is commonly used by the authorities to undermine magazines considered critical of the government, by simply refusing to accept the annual returns; a magazine is left open to criminal charges of failing to submit the necessary papers. Some editors have confronted this tactically by sending their annual returns by registered mail in order to record the submission if a prosecution is brought.

The second legal instrument against political magazines is the power to prohibit a publication. This power is contained in Section 52 of the *Penal Code*, which

defines a publication to include newspapers and periodicals. It provides for the banning of "all past and future issues" of a publication when it appears to the minister of home affairs that the prohibition is in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality and public health. The measure must also be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society. It then becomes a criminal offence punishable by up to three years imprisonment to print, make, import, publish, sell, supply, distribute, reproduce, or possess the prohibited publication" (Okoth-Owiro, 1990: 20).

Three monthly magazines have been banned since 1988, and a fourth one received a banning order, which was later overturned. Banning orders have typically followed a KANU government public campaign against a publication, including condemnation by politicians in parliament of the magazine and its editor. Announcement of a ban goes to the press first, not to the owner or editor of the publication, and is issued without explanation. The editors of *Beyond*, *Financial Review* and *Nairobi Law Monthly* all learned of the ban issue against their publications after journalists from the daily papers telephoned their offices to ask for comment. Banning is the greatest threat that hangs over a critical publication.

Beyond was a monthly magazine published by the National Council of Churches of Kenya. It was banned in March 1988 after publishing detailed accounts of election rigging during the general elections of that year. When *Beyond* was originally launched under editor Bedan Mbugua, it concentrated on issues relevant to social morality and family life. It was perceived as politicised when it supported the church in the latter's opposition to the new queue-voting system, introduced in 1986. The magazine began to carry long articles by some of the most critical clergymen and ran campaigns of its own against all forms of public mal-administration. After publication of the March 1988 exclusive election issue, circulation figures reached 90, 000 from a low of 15, 000. In that issue, *Beyond* published an editorial condemning the manner in which the KANU government

had used force and rigging to manipulate the election results (HRW, 1991: 197). Two weeks after publication of the March issue, *Beyond* was banned. All past issues were proscribed, with an order for their destruction. Bedan Mbugua was arrested and charged with the technical offence of failing to submit annual sales returns to the Registrar of Books and Newspapers. He was sentenced to six months in prison and spent two and a half weeks there before he was released on bail, pending appeal. The Court of Appeal acquitted Mbugua in August 1989 after numerous court appearances and international pressure.

The third instrument widely used against the political press is the felony of sedition. This offence is pegged on the idea of a seditious intention, which is defined in Section 56 of the *Penal Code*. According to this section, a seditious intention is an intention: (a) to overthrow by unlawful means the Government of Kenya as by law established; or (b) to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the person of the President or the Government of Kenya as by law established; or (c) to excite the inhabitants of Kenya to attempt to procure the alteration, otherwise than by lawful means, of any matter or thing in Kenya as by law established; or (d) to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the administration of justice in Kenya; or (e) to rouse discontent or disaffection among the inhabitants of Kenya; or (f) to promote feelings of ill-will or hostility between different sections or classes of the population of Kenya. The section goes on to explain that a seditious publication is a publication containing any word, sign or visible presentation expressive of a seditious intention (Okoth-Owiro, 1990: 21).

In March 1990, the *Nairobi Law Monthly* was denounced by a group of MPs after an assistant minister, Noor Abdi Ogle, called the magazine “anti-Kenyan, anti-government, anti-progress and subversive.” Ogle called on the security forces to take action against it and said its contributors were “sworn enemies of Kenya and the government.” (*The Standard*, March 22, 1990). The offending issue had carried the merits of a multi-party system. Imanyara, the magazine’s

editor, described this as “a very dangerous accusation – people don't want to be seen with me; we've lost a lot of advertisement revenue; our printers will not print our magazine except at a high cost that we would not normally pay. A member of parliament has stood up and said the magazine is subversive – yet it is readily available in the streets and people buy it... I don't think it's right for an MP to call someone anti-government in parliament when that somebody has never been tried in a court of law and found guilty. They are making life very difficult for people when they brand them anti-government or subversive – because their families are shunned and they must live in constant fear. (HRW, 1991: 210).

During the height of the multiparty agitation in June and July 1990, Imanyara was under surveillance by the Special Branch. He was being watched 24 hours a day just before he was detained under preventive detention regulations. After three weeks he was charged with publishing a seditious publication. The so-called seditious edition was titled *The Historic Debate – Law, Democracy and Multi-Party Politics in Kenya*, and included articles for and against a multi-party system. The *Nairobi Law Monthly* was the only magazine to print articles in favour of multi-party politics. Imanyara was held incommunicado in a windowless, filthy cell and suffered from constant noise of mentally ill inmates in adjoining cells. He was released on bail after five days, had his passport confiscated, and faced a new criminal charge of failing to submit two copies of the “Historic Debate” issue to the authorities before publication. On a third count, he was charged for failing to submit financial returns for the magazine in 1989. These charges were in addition to a previous charge in April 1988 of failing to register the magazine and not filling official returns. (HRW, 1991: 210).

In October 1990, the former attorney general, Mathew Muli, issued an order banning all “past, present and future” issues of the magazine. No reason was given, but it followed publication of an issue that catalogued anti-government submissions to the KANU Review Committee. Given prominent attention were

elite opposition to the queuing system, the single party, corruption and land grabbing. In his editorial column, Imanyara called for a return to democracy and the rule of law, an independent judiciary, multiparty democracy and accountability of the occupant of the office of the president (HRW, 1991: 211). Imanyara challenged the ban in court and on October 8, his lawyers won the first successful legal challenge to a banning order in Kenya. The ban was found to be unconstitutional by Justice Frank Shields. In the week following suspension of the ban, some thirty plainclothes police officers seized sidewalk news vendors and confiscated copies of the *Nairobi Law Monthly*. The vendors and hawkers who were selling the magazine were told it was an "illegal publication" despite the High Court Judgement, and a blanket ban was temporarily enforced on all magazines and periodicals sold on the street (*The Standard*, October 10, 1990).

In February 1991, the *Nairobi Law Monthly* featured the formation of Oginga Odinga's National Democratic Party and printed its political manifesto – despite a blackout in the daily papers. Two other monthlies, *Society* and *Finance* also covered the launch of the new party. Imanyara's accompanying editorial said one of the greatest problems facing the country was favouritism on a tribal basis in public offices and state-owned and operated organisations, and listed positions held by the president's own minority tribe, the Kalenjin. On February 27, 1991, plainclothes police confiscated thousands of copies of the *Nairobi Law Monthly* from newsvendors. In a sweep of the city, confiscation of the *Nairobi Law Monthly*, *Society* and *Finance* magazines was carried out without any regard to legality; the officers did not identify themselves or cite authorization. Eight plainclothes officers seized Imanyara as he entered his office early in the morning of March 1. He was subsequently charged with publishing a seditious document with intent to incite tribal hatred and remanded at the Kamiti Maximum Prison. However, on May 5, 1991, the new attorney general, Amos Wako, dropped all eight charges against the editor and ordered his release. (HRW, 1991: 215-6).

The fourth legal instrument of control has to do with the protection of the reputation of the individual by the law on libel, which is to be found in the *Defamation Act* (Kenya 1969) and the *Penal Code* (Kenya 1969). The burden of this law is that any person whose reputation has been injured by a published statement may seek redress in the courts. If he can satisfy the court that he has been defamed, he will be awarded an appropriate sum in money as compensation. In addition to this arrangement, the *Penal Code* criminalizes the publication of defamatory matter thus (S. 197) 'Any publication of defamatory matter concerning a person is unlawful ... unless (a) the matter is true and it was for the public benefit that it should be published; or (b) it is privileged...' (Okoth-Owiro 1990: 21). This legislation has not been used much especially by politicians and KANU state functionaries. This is because it has not afforded them the tough measures that they would love in order to silence the press. It is for this reason that in the heat of the multi-party debate, they tried to use Parliament to widen the scope of this legislation.

In late March 1992, Mr Peter Okondo, MP, moved a motion in parliament intended to curb what he termed the media's "irresponsibility" in news coverage. By this motion, he was seeking the establishment of a watchdog body, the "press complaints commission", modelled on the British press arbitration organ that bears such a name. He argued that newspapers "often misuse and abuse" the freedom of expression enjoyed by the Kenyan press "with grave consequences and risks to national security or damage to society and individuals". He wanted the commission to be given the power to punish errant newspapers and other publishing media". He said the motion was intended to stem what he called "press tyranny", adding that what he was seeking was some kind of control to ensure that the press maintained ethical standards of journalism instead of manipulating stories to suit "their profit motive' (*Weekly Review* 3 April 1992).

The motion generated a great deal of discussion, with members recounting tales of their trials and tribulations at the hands of the press. "They are becoming a dangerous weapon that could plunge the country into blood shed," charged an assistant minister for information and broadcasting, Mr Shariff Nassir. He attacked newspapers for taking sides in the current multi-party political set-up, accusing the *Standard* and the *Daily Nation* of being particularly hostile to KANU and aligning themselves with the opposition. He challenged the two papers to come out and register themselves as political parties if they wanted to go into politics. (*Weekly Review* 3 April 1992). Though Mr Okondo's efforts did not get too far, they provided fertile ground for the Attorney-General's own effort.

The Attorney-General published early July 1992, the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill, 1992 which contained proposals for amending the Defamation Act Cap 26. A new section 7A stated that "Any person or body of persons shall be entitled to a right of reply to any factual inaccuracy affecting them which has been published in a newspaper and which is damaging to the character, reputation or good standing of that person or body of persons". It went on to provide that where a person is entitled to a right of reply, a correction shall be printed in the next possible edition of the newspaper. The correction shall be printed free of charge and shall be given similar prominence as the item complained of and appear at a similar place in the newspaper. The correction must also be of such length as is necessary to identify the original item (*Sunday Standard*, July 19, 1992).

A new section 16 (A) in part restated the traditional legal provision that in actions for libel, the court shall assess the amount of damages payable in such amount as it may deem just. However, this clause had a proviso, which seemed to be the most important part of the Bill. It was seeking to have newspapers and magazines found guilty of defamation or libel to pay no less than KSh. 1 Million in damages to the aggrieved party where the libel or defamation is in respect of

an offence punishable by death. In instances where the libel is in respect of offences punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, the Bill said, the sum of money courts can award would not be less than KSh 400, 000 (*Daily Nation* July 15, 1992). A prominent Nairobi advocate, Lee Muthoga, had the following to say about the above proposed amendment to the *Defamation Act*:

One gets a distinct feeling that this legislation is being amended now so that when suits by the Government or those highly placed individuals arise damages awarded will be such as to drive the publication out of circulation. It also appears that the amendment is brought now so that during the forth coming election campaign, people in high places will be spared the wrath of the pen and their past misdeeds will be kept away from public glare. The provision is singularly destructive of Press freedom and comes at a time when we need that freedom most. The most effective method of protecting democracy is allowing greater not lesser freedom to the Press (*Daily Nation*, Wednesday, 22 July 1992).

The fifth legal instrument that has been used against the political press is found in that part of the Constitution of Kenya that provides for the regulation of procedure in the National Assembly such that the Assembly may make standing orders for the orderly conduct of proceedings. This power has been used to make Standing Order (Kenya 1983) 170 which provides as follows:

Any newspaper whose representative infringes these Standing Orders or any rules made by the Speaker for the regulation of admittance of strangers, or persistently misreports the proceedings of the House or refuses on request from the clerk to correct any wrong report thereof to the satisfaction of the Speaker, may be excluded from representation in the press gallery for such term as the House shall direct. (Okoth-Owiro, 1990: 24).

In June 1989, the *Daily Nation* was accused in parliament of being disrespectful to Kenya's political leadership when it criticised the lack of debate in parliament and carried recent reports on corruption in the Custom and Ports Authorities and in the awarding and administration of public tenders. Accusing the paper of frustrating the work of politicians, and practising tribalism in its employment policies, the KANU parliament took the unprecedented step of banning the paper and its sister publications from covering parliamentary proceedings. Barely a month before the ban, Moi made his disapproval of the paper clear when he accused it of promoting subversive activities against his government and setting itself up as an “unofficial opposition party” (HRW, 1991: 192).

3.12 Summary

This chapter started with a brief review of the history of broadcasting in Kenya. Right from the colonial era, the broadcast media has been in the hands of the Government: first, the Colonial and then since independence, the KANU government. The Government has used it mainly to inform the public of its plans and policies and to secure for itself positive publicity. In the same way that the Colonial Government denied African Elected Members access to the broadcast media, the KANU-government denied oppositional voices and critics similar access. In short, the broadcast media was used as the Government's propaganda machine and could not therefore serve as a political public sphere.

This chapter has attempted to show that the early press in Kenya was mainly either settler- or Asian-owned. The settler press was used to advance and protect settler interests that were discriminatory, racial, repressive and hostile to indigenous Kenyans. To some extent, the Asian press was used to question this status quo; a tendency that was to greatly characterise the indigenous African press. Even though Africans were lacking in skill and resources to run a successful press, they used what they had to agitate for their economic and political rights and freedoms. The two dailies, whose existence goes back to

pre-independence days, *The Standard* and the *Nation*, were both foreign-owned. The former was for a long time the voice of settlers' interests but it changed gradually because of political expediency. The *Daily Nation*, however, claimed from the beginning to follow an independent and critical stance toward the powers that be; beginning by championing African claims against the colonial administration.

I have also demonstrated that since independence the relationship between the press and politicians has not always been a smooth one. For most of the time the press was seen to be free, but within limits. Whenever the press proved to be excessively critical of the political establishment, the blame was put on foreign and private ownership. Some of the examples that I have given suggest that one cannot rule out organisational and professional factors, owner-interference and economic factors as being major constraints on the political performance of the daily press in Kenya. However, it can be argued that political pressure seems to have been the major constraint. Political pressure often translated into police harassment and intimidation, not to mention detention. As a result, the editors understandably reverted to self-censorship and if the pressure was too immense, they were simply sacked to appease the powers that be.

An indigenous private press was also subjected to pressures similar to those suffered by the private foreign-owned daily newspapers. The case of the ruling party press wasn't much different either. The review of the performance of *Kenya Times* has given the following important observations. Firstly, because market conditions threatened its existence, the party press solicited the expertise of press magnate Robert Maxwell, thereby partly perpetuating foreign-ownership of the daily press in Kenya, a characteristic that the party had abhorred about the other two dailies. Secondly, *Kenya Times* registered its major success under the editorship of the controversial Philip Ochieng, surpassing *The Standard* in sales. This is partly because the paper did not shy

away from-carrying strong criticisms of the poor performance of KANU politicians, public servants and government functionaries. This seems to suggest that party ownership does not necessarily make for a subservient press.

I have shown that before October 1991, *Kenya Times* had grown to be more critical of the KANU government politicians than the other two private daily newspapers. At the time, it received the greatest bashing from members of parliament, with some suggesting that it be banned from covering parliamentary proceedings. However, it can be argued that it was the multi-party advocacy that posed the greatest political threat to KANU's monopoly on power. As a result, beginning in 1990, there was a heightened effort on the part of the government to make sure that the advocates of multi-party politics were not given positive press publicity. President Moi who even threatened to ban foreign-ownership of the media especially targeted the private press. Though Phillip Ochieng was a staunch believer and supporter of single-party democracy, he was now considered a liability because of his critical stance and daring against corrupt KANU politicians. He was eventually sacked. It is my conclusion, therefore, that the freedom of the daily, press, including the party-owned one, was seriously abridged just as the agitation for multi-party politics was gaining ground.

The above measures of control, including direct State House intimidation, were successful in deterring the daily press from supporting multi-party advocacy. However, they did not work with the political magazines. In the last section above, I have demonstrated how the State used legal instruments and violence to control and suppress the independent magazines. This happened mostly in 1991 and 1992 before opposition politics were legalised. What irked the government most was the eagerness and boldness by the magazines to give publicity and support to opposition views and politicians. Whilst state violence reinforced the wisdom of self-censorship among the daily media, the boldness

of the political magazines was a great motivation for their own courage. It is my thesis that with the political change legalising opposition politics, the daily press would gain significantly more freedom to play the role of the political public sphere.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT ANALYSIS: TWO RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

4.1. Introduction

In this study, I will make use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the analysis of media content. This is because this study is a media performance assessment study. Performance is here conceptualised as the coverage (news) and commentary (views) by the daily press of the KANU government and of the Opposition and also of the issue of multi-party politics. The investigation will therefore take the form analysis of the changes in the way the two daily newspapers, the *Nation* and *Kenya Times*, differentially performed in their coverage and commentary on the political transition from a party-state political culture to a multi-party political system. For the purposes of this part of the study, therefore, the content of the daily press is the main object of study. I have therefore considered content analysis as the appropriate research method. Issues to do with relations between the state, political elites, political parties and the media are important in the evaluation of media performance (content). These issues have been dealt with in Chapter Three above.

I will analyse newspaper news stories and editorial commentaries and opinions as media texts. By way of literature review, this chapter is meant to explain the reasons for this decision. This is important because there are different and conflicting ways by which media content is conceptualised and about the means by which meaning is constituted. These are fundamental epistemological and ontological issues without which this study's research design would be difficult to defend. I will begin with a discussion and review of the literature on the traditional, thus *quantitative*, content analysis and then proceed to discuss the reasons why in this project, I have chosen to make use of both *quantitative* and

qualitative approaches to content analysis. Issues to be addressed will include how textual meaning is conceptualised, where meaning is located, how meaning is 'produced', how best to study textual meaning and why a methodological triangulation is preferred.

It is quickly evident in the literature cited below that media content is understood to be both manifest and latent. This content is 'contained' or 'carried' by the media products in the form of texts, messages and meanings. In fact, the term 'media content' is variously used to mean media texts, messages or meanings. According to McQuail (1994: 235), the most visible and accessible evidence of how the media of mass communication performs is the vast and enormously varied body of 'messages' and 'meanings', which are continuously being transmitted and received by all kinds of different media. He observes that there is a clear and significant distinction between message and meaning. It is the physical text of the message in print, sound or pictorial image that we can directly observe and which is in a sense 'fixed'. The meanings that are embedded in the texts or perceived to be present by their producers or eventual audiences are largely unobservable and not fixed. Such meanings are therefore both diverse and often ambiguous.

To elaborate further on the term 'text', one can say that it has been used in two basic senses. One of them refers very generally, like McQuail does, to the message itself - the printed document, film, television programme etc. The other usage, recommended by Fiske (1987:14), is to reserve the term 'text' for the meaningful outcome of the encounter between content and reader. For instance, a television programme 'becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings/pleasures that it is capable of provoking'. This concept of text, however, is what McQuail above regards as meaning. In textual analysis, Lindkvist (1981: 26) observes that different textual approaches usually have

different concepts of 'text'. He provides three definitions of 'text' as:

(1) every *semiotic* structure of meaning (This is a broad definition of the text concept, common in structuralism and hermeneutics. Such a concept includes not only language but music, architecture, picture, events, and social actions.);

(2) every *linguistic* means of expression (thus, music, for example, is excluded for the text concept),

(3) *written* language (which would exclude, for example, audiovisual language).

It is quickly evident, then, that the concept of media text and the concomitant identification of the meaning of a text is variously understood in the literature. In fact, there are those who, rather than focusing on the text, put much emphasis on authorship. They argue that one way to identify the meaning of a text is to ask the author what he means or to try to reconstruct his intention from the text (Lindkvist, 1981: 23). According to Hirsch (1967: 5-6), 'If the meaning of a text is not the author's, then no interpretation can possibly correspond to the meaning of the text, since the text can have no determinate or determinable meaning'. I will not be overly concerned with the question of authorship and meaning in this thesis. This is an important perspective to which I will come back later, but just briefly. But as observed above, when one focuses on the text as the carrier of meaning or content, it becomes obvious that the author is not the only determinant of content. Most of the literature that I am going to consider shortly discusses the problem as to whether the meaning of media products is embedded in the text or in the receiver.

4.2 The Locus of Textual Meaning

Any content analysis must grapple with the problem of where meaning is located. Interpretive media scholars insist that the meaning of media texts is found not in the texts themselves but rather in “audience activity” in relation to them (Barkin and Gurevitch, 1987; Fiske, 1986; 1987; Lindolf, 1988; Wren-Lewis, 1983). According to Barkin and Gurevitch (1987: 18), the television, is an “empty vessel” that can be all things to all people”. Wren-Lewis (1983: 196), argues that media texts are “meaningless” clusters of narrative forms/devices. An argument has even been made which puts a political spin on this perspective thus: “Anyone who thinks that the meaning of a text is in the text itself is an elitist” (Wolfe 1992: 261). In short, these researchers contend that texts have no meaning in and of themselves. Meaning is therefore not inhered in the text and it is rather the audience that decides what meaning the text has. As far as the production of meaning is concerned, therefore, this perspective is seen to privilege the audience. With some exceptions, argues Wolfe, audience-privileging research typically slights the role played by texts in the meaning-making process.

There are a number of objectors, especially Carragee (1990: 87), who argue against views of meaning production that privilege audience activity and slight the role played by texts properties and structures. According to Carragee:

Interpretive mass communication research has failed to place media texts and media audiences within meaningful historical, social and cultural contexts. While properly emphasising the significance of understanding audience decodings of media messages, interpretive researchers have neglected the contexts and pressures that influence these interpretations. *As a result they fail to explore troubling questions relating to political and social power.*

A close examination of interpretive approaches reveals problems in how these approaches assess media texts. These problems include failure to address media texts as products of organisations, the scant attention devoted to the texts' properties and structures, the often unsupported characterisation of media texts as polysemic, and the related failure to examine how media content expresses dominant ideological meanings (*ibid.* my italics).

Audience privileging research, in Carragee's opinion, ignores the differences in cultural, social, economic, and "discursive power" that may set apart the meanings individual viewers assign to media texts from those meanings preferred by such politically, culturally, socially, economically, and discursively powerful institutions as television networks and newspaper houses. What is more, characterisations of texts or indeed media as empty vessels by Barkin & Gurevitch (1987:18), "deny the ways in which texts and media help to constitute meanings for their audiences by highlighting certain meanings... while excluding others." If the claim by Wren-Lewis (1983) that texts are meaningless is true, then they could hardly "engender" anything in audiences or readers. A full account of the meanings of the media texts, suggests Carragee (1990:89), should be matched with *close readings* of the texts themselves and he therefore calls for *more detailed analyses* of texts. In a similar review of audience-privileging literature, Gripsrud (1990: 127) contends that if researchers seek to "contribute to an improved ... understanding of our societies and cultures as historical phenomenon, studies of empirical reception (of texts) must not replace the semiotic analysis of the equally empirical text" (see also Curran 1990).

Another objector is Wolfe (1992: 262) who suggests that "an approach to mass media texts derived from certain literary-critical, film theoretical, and communication perspectives can account for *identifiable textual elements* that arguably enunciate meanings such texts may be said to convey" (my italics). He

argues that texts are incomplete, they are not immaculate completions but rather the product of choices, whether message-makers are conscious of having made them or not. In his opinion "An analysis of a mass media presentation grasped as a text asks not so much "What does this work mean?" as "How can the elements of the given *text* be structured so that it can mean what it can mean? The meaning so construed may be multiple and even contradictory" (*ibid.*: 264). These observations sensitise us to the possibility that text structuring can delimit textual meaning(s).

From semiotics-influenced literary criticism, one learns that communication springs from "a context of shared symbolic meanings - i.e., culture. It is this shared culture that may be conceptualised as codes (Barthes, 1977:159; Dyer, 1982: 131; Scholes, 1982). A code is understood to be a culturally shared arrangement of exchangeable, repeatable, potentially meaningful utterances. Within and due to the existence of such codes, each utterance can have the same meaning for its consumer that it has for its producer. In Wolfe's opinion, to "claim that message-makers can encode meanings that are received and understood by message-receivers is to claim that nothing more or less than communication takes place in such instances..." (1992: 264). It is pointed out as a major weakness that audience-privileging research gives no account of the formal elements of texts (Budd et al., 1990: 170; Carragee, 1990: 87). One can in fact argue that the choice of a particular form of text organisation is directly meaningful for the entire quantity of transmitted information. What counts most in expression is not the thing said but *the way of saying it*. " Journalism", Carey (1983) reminds us, "is a symbolic strategy; journalism sizes up situations, names their elements and names or depicts them in a way that contains an attitude toward them" (p. 129 quoted in Wolfe, 1992).

The better approach, suggests Wolfe (1992: 270), is to reposition the concept of "text" within the context of semiotics. In his opinion, textual analysts who have

found semiotics of use maintain that both text-making and interpretation are governed by "norms", or codes that both text-makers and consumers share. He argues that, as a matter of fact, the very term "mass communication" implies broadly shared meanings: "...*the single most salient and puzzling fact about a ... literary text is that it can have a range of meanings but not just any meaning.*" (my italics). Interpretation is a culturally determined practice rooted in codes shared by message-makers and -consumers belonging to the same culture. The interesting question in all the above arguments has been whether or not the meaning of mass media texts is "owned" by the audience or the text. Following Budd et al. (1990: 174), Wolfe (1992: 272) argues that "the meaning of media texts is not determined by individual audience members interpreting media texts in wholly personal or uniquely, idiosyncratic, individual ways." For him, the meaning of what could be called artistic text is owned neither by the text nor the audience; it is, however, "enabled and constrained by the culture of its origination and completed, even if not created, by its audience" (*ibid.*:273). The comprehensive meaning of a text must, therefore, be a blending of meanings made by different populations or audiences plus the meanings specified by content analysis.

From the above discussion, one comes to the conclusion that meaning can be conceptualised to some degree as being inhered in the text. Media texts have formal textual elements. There are ways in which textual elements are structured in media texts in such a way that they enunciate the meanings that they convey. The fact that producers and consumers of media texts share symbolic meanings support the assumption that by means of study, one can identify textual meanings that may be shared. This assumption is further supported by the observation that media texts are understood better when placed into a historical, social and cultural context. Such contextualisation will enable one to see how media content expresses dominant ideological meanings. In this sense, the media cannot be seen as empty vessels but as greatly determining the meanings

that they convey.

4.3 Berelsonian Content Analysis and the Nature of Textual Meaning

The focus of my empirical investigation being the content and meaning of news stories as texts, a discussion of the nature, location and constitution of content and meaning is important. One can probably understand better the meaning of content by defining it as that which is the object of content analysis. A quick perusal of the pertinent literature reveals that there are major differences as to the nature and object of content analysis. It is therefore important to understand what content analysis is variously understood to be and whether or not it actually accomplishes its goal. In this section, I will introduce the traditional perspective whilst the others will follow below. To begin with, I suggest that we first look at two dictionary definitions of content analysis. *Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary* defines content analysis as:

analysis to determine the meaning, purpose, or effect of any type of communication, as literature, newspapers, broadcasts, etc., by studying and evaluating the details, innuendoes, and implications of the content, recurrent themes, etc.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines content analysis as:

a detailed study and analysis of the manifest and latent content of various types of communication (as newspapers, radio programs, and propaganda films) through a classification, tabulation, and evaluation of their key symbols and themes in order to ascertain their meaning and probable effect.

From the above two definitions, one gets the understanding that the object of

content analysis is to *ascertain or determine the meaning or probable effect* of content. The content that is analysed can be *manifest or latent* or both. The process or means of analysis is by *detailed study and evaluation*. However, content analysis as a research methodology has obviously meant different things to different mass communication theorists and researchers (Andrén, 1981; Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1977; 1980; Larsen, 1991; Lindkvist, 1981; McCormack, 1982; Rosengren, 1981; Sepstrup, 1981). In the social sciences and media scholarship in general, content analysis has traditionally been defined as a technique for quantitative analysis of extensive media texts. It can be said therefore that in its traditional meaning, content analysis is synonymous with quantitative analysis of media content (Holsti 1969). In many discussions, Berelson's definition of content analysis is regarded as capturing the traditional position.

Berelson (1952: 18) defined content analysis as '*... a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication*' (my italics). For Berger (1991: 25), content analysis is '*a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something ... in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form*' (my italics). Whilst several other scholars have provided various definitions of content analysis (see Holsti, 1969: 2-3), they agree with the above definitions to the extent that they emphasise the requirements of objectivity, system and generality. This is the understanding also adopted by Lindkvist (1981: 27) for whom, also, content analysis is exclusively *quantitative* and just one of the four approaches of textual analysis which identify the meaning of a text with the text itself. *Content* analysis is for Lindkvist principally a technique for the quantitative analysis of extensive texts *within the framework of a communication model*. He elaborates his understanding as follows:

Content analysis has in common a fundamental assumption about the interest of the text producer and the quantitative profile of the text. The

text “hides” the interests of the text producer, but it can be revealed by quantitatively measuring the text. The manifest text is coded, but when relating the measured result to a general communication model, the character of the different textual elements can be explained (Lindkvist 1981: 28).

It is clear from the above definitions that traditional content analysis prefers to focus on manifest as opposed to latent media content. This seems to be for the reason that it is the *manifest* and not latent content that is objective and can systematically be quantified. With regard to this Berelsonian quantification requirement, Krippendorff (1980: 14), in a review of early content analysis research literature, points out that quantification was a method used to solve the 'dominant methodological problem' of corroborating 'journalistic arguments by scientific facts. *Because these facts had to be irrefutable, they had to be 'quantitative.'* Consequently, column inches were measured to determine the space newspapers allocated to particular issues or subjects and thereby demonstrate, for example, that they favoured trivial matters to 'worthwhile' news items (Mathew, 1910). Some researchers, on the basis of such content quantification, believed that they had found a way of demonstrating that the profit motive was the cause of 'cheap yellow journalism' (Wilcox, 1900). Others became convinced that quantification had enabled them to establish 'the influence of newspaper presentation on the growth of crime and other antisocial activity' (Frenton, 1910).

4.4 Berelsonian Requirements of Validity and Reliability

The problem identified above that pitted journalistic arguments against the results of quantitative measures of the products of journalism is very similar to that which compares humanistic tradition in social studies to the positivistic tradition. To be more specific, Sepstrup (1981: 135) identifies quantitative

analysis with the positivistic research tradition and qualitative analysis with the Marxist/critical tradition. He observes, on the one hand, that the Marxist or critical school has a highly developed theory of the social role of mass communication and a substantial *critical potential*, with special emphasis on the social role of the media. This school, identified with qualitative analysis will always be necessary to produce actual understanding, to give detailed descriptions and analyses to describe and comprehend overall media content. The problem with it is that its research results have not been considered reliable and serious. They have been perceived as individual examples, exceptions, subjective interpretations, and predetermined results. It is argued further that the Marxist/critical approach will always be unable to cope with large amounts of data, their results may be difficult to communicate, and they will always have low general credibility.

On the other hand, the reliability of the positivistic empirical research has usually not been questioned; the findings are considered reliable because the research approach corresponds to the commonly accepted notions of research and its methods. It is evident in the above reasonings that *epistemological* and *ontological* issues or problems are at the centre of the discussion. The definitions that have been considered above are based on the understanding that to qualify as science, content analysis must be empirical, objective and systematic. In Evan's (1990: 155) rendition, "To be *empirical* means to base the knowledge on experience or observation. The logical positivist position argues that empirical knowledge can be verified and admits only those statements so verified". The objectivity requirement stipulates that each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures: To qualify as science "... empirical observations (must) be ordered, analysed, and generalised objectively and systematically."

The scientific method is further elaborated by Krippendorff (1980: 11) thus: "... as researchers we do our best to avoid biases, distrust a single individual's

interpretation, make explicit what we are doing, share our findings so that others may examine and replicate them". In Holsti's construction (1969: 4), this means that decisions about what categories are to be used, how to distinguish between categories, how to place content units into the various categories, etc.:

should be guided by explicit rules that minimise - although probably never quite eliminate - the possibility that the findings reflect the analyst's subjective predispositions rather than the content of the documents under analysis. Thus, one test of objectivity is: can other analysts, following identical procedures with the same data, arrive at similar conclusions? The investigator who cannot communicate to others his procedures and criteria will have failed to fulfil the requirement of objectivity.

The above formulations are merely different ways of saying that if research is to satisfy the requirement of objectivity, the measuring instruments must be reliable. This means that repeated measures with the same instrument on a given sample of data should yield similar results. This traditional position is captured well by Berelson (1950) who demands that "regardless of who does the analysis or when it is done, the same data should be secured under similar conditions". Krippendorff (1980: 21) expounds on this requirement thus: "Any instrument of science is expected to be reliable. More specifically, when other researchers, at different points in time and perhaps under different circumstances, apply the same technique to the same data, the results must be the same. This is the requirement of a content analysis to be replicable."

Reliability assessments or tests are, therefore, very important in quantitative content analysis studies. They are seen to serve as important safeguards against the "contamination" of scientific data by effects that are extraneous to the aims of observation, measurement, and analysis. In Krippendorff's words (1980:

129), "Reliability assesses the extent to which any research design, any part thereof, and data resulting from them represent variations in real phenomena rather than extraneous circumstances of measurement, the surreptitious biases of a procedure." The term reliability refers to at least three distinctive types. The first one is variously called *stability, consistency* or *intra-observer reliability*. This type of reliability is achieved when the same coder codes a set of data twice at different points in time and finds no major variations between the two. Disagreements or variations would reflect intra-observer inconsistencies or noise, the cognitive changes that took place *within* that observer, or that coder's difficulty in interpreting the recording instructions. This type of reliability is considered as "*the weakest form ... and should not be trusted as the sole indicator of the acceptability of content*" (Krippendorff, 1980; 130 my italics).

The second type of reliability is variously called *intercoder* or *intersubjective reliability, consensus* or *reproducibility*. This type of reliability is in fact a measure of the degree to which a process can be recreated under varying circumstances, at different locations, using different coders. To establish this type of validity, two or more coders apply the same recording instructions independently on the same set of data. The coders involved are not supposed to communicate because "Communication invariably influences coding toward higher agreement and this *lack of independence is likely to make data appear more reliable the they are.*" The third type of validity is called *accuracy* and is defined as the degree to which a process functionally conforms to a known standard, or yields what it is designed to yield. It is established by comparing the performance of a coder or measuring instrument with what is known to be the correct performance or measure. Accuracy is considered to be the strongest type of reliability. Arguing that in "most situations in which observations, message contents, and texts are coded into categories of a data language, the standards against which accuracy would be established are rarely available", Krippendorff concludes that in content analysis one cannot insist on this type of reliability (1980: 132). He insists,

however, "*Data should at least be reproducible...*"

4.5 A Critique of Berelsonian Requirements of Reliability and Validity

However, not everybody agrees with the stringent requirements of content analysis that have been presented above. To me the most notable objector is Andr n (1981) who considers the standard notion of reliability as consensus and the idea that something is valid when "it measures what it is intended to measure" as unproductive. He instead proposes that *reliability be identified with truth*, and *validity with relevancy*. His proposal is based on an interesting critique of the traditional requirements of content analysis that we have considered above. He argues that within the social sciences, discussions about reliability and validity usually, in fact, deal with issues to do with scientific trustworthiness and productivity. These discussions deal with the determination of what activities can justly be called "scientific" and what scientific grounds can be used to assess the results of such endeavours. Whether it is necessary that a scientific result be true is a difficult and controversial question. Much as it is the agreed opinion that the object of science is to give us knowledge, and thus to produce true propositions, Andr n argues that the history of science is to a large extent a narrative about delusions, fallacies, and mistaken or otherwise unsuccessful measurements. He contends that:

The crux is, however, that it is seldom easy to know whether or not a result is true or relevant. In order to be *certain* that the results from a particular measurement (for example, a coding procedure) are true, one must, if not conduct the analysis oneself, replicate the investigation; and in many cases, have an intimate understanding of the theory it is assumed to be relevant for, and master the theory as well as the scientist who maintains that it is relevant. *As these requirements are seldom fulfilled, or even possible to fulfil, we must ordinarily trust the*

scientist and let the future developments tell us whether the results were productive and trustworthy (1981: 45 my italics).

In Andrén's opinion, there are various conceptions of reliability and validity in the research literature that it is sometimes difficult to grasp them in detail and to understand precisely how they are related to each other. In fact, the conceptions used in the discussions of reliability and validity in content analysis seem to be taken from the theories and methodologies employed within psychology. For this reason it cannot be taken for granted that the concepts constructed in order to solve certain problems connected with testing and interviewing are adequate instruments, in all respects, for the appraisal of the results of a content analysis.

4.5.1 An Alternative to Berelsonian Reliability Requirement

In a quotation given above, Holsti argues that measurements must be reliable in order to satisfy the requirement for objectivity. An objective result is naturally assumed to be that which is independent of the subject who conducted the investigation. It is Andrén's opinion that the traditional endeavour to make the results as independent as possible in a population of coders which is maximally large, has both good and bad sides. While it has been possible to analyse large bodies of material, *the cost has been the impossibility of affording the coder the more demanding tasks, resulting in a kind of superficiality.* He argues that there are no fundamental scientific reasons for demanding that the epistemic independence should be maximised. For him, it is only ontological independence that is required by an adequate concept of objectivity. He finds it absurd to demand that a content analysis should be replicable by *any* person under whatever circumstances.

It has already been made evident above that one major way of ensuring reliability is the traditional requirement of *intersubjective testability.* To this requirement,

Andrén (1981: 47) suggests that:

One way of making these concepts more reasonable is to demand that only persons “properly qualified with intelligence and the technical devices of observation and experimentation” make measurements that yield similar results. Another way of making the concept of intersubjectivity *less exacting and more feasible* is not to prescribe that repeated measurements will always, *in fact*, yield similar results, but that it is *possible* for one scientist to replicate the findings of the efforts of another scientist.

The above suggestions by Andrén are informed by his conviction, and also form the basis for his proposal, that an accurate result is one that corresponds to reality, meaning that it is true. “As far as I can see, it is the *truth*, and nothing but the truth, that the requirement of reliability should be about” (*ibid.*: 49). For him, content analysis proper is nothing more than *semantic content analysis*. He elaborates further by explaining that there are, in fact, different kinds of content analysis: - *pragmatic*, *semantic*, and *syntactic*. Whether epistemic independence is possible and desirable will probably vary depending on which kind of content analysis is being undertaken. When a proposition refers to the linguistic vehicle used in a text or speech act, it is *syntactic*. A *semantic* proposition tells us something about which references or meanings the speech act or text has according to the linguistic rules. Finally, a *pragmatic* proposition contains some reference to the sender or the receiver of the message. One can then describe a content analysis as syntactic if it only results in or presupposes syntactic propositions; as semantic if it results in or presupposes at least one semantic proposition; and pragmatic if it results in or presupposes at least one pragmatic proposition (*ibid.*: 55).

It would be odd, argues Andrén, to demand indiscriminately that every content analysis be epistemically independent. It would be equally odd to claim that the

results of every investigation within the humanities or social sciences could have been accomplished by someone. He notes that scientific progress is sometimes contingent upon forms of creativity and/or perseverance that cannot be ascribed to every scientist. From a strictly scientific point of view, the important question is whether or not a measure is correct and whether the results are true or false; *“whether the results can be replicated by anyone is a problem with no scientific significance.”*

In Berelsonian content analysis, one convenient way of assessing the trustworthiness of a result appears to be to replicate the measurement and see if the results remain the same. There is however a certain uncertainty associated with this method. It is certainly true that a high degree of consensus is something positive. If two independent measurements give the same results, this is a strong indication of the correctness of the measurements and the truth of the results. But the converse, argues Andrén (*ibid.*: 57), does not necessarily hold; *lack of agreement does not in itself imply that the results are flawed by serious errors.* When the results from two different measurements of the same objects are not identical, it can be inferred that it cannot be the case that both results are true; one of the results, or both, must be false.

For Andrén, therefore, there is a possibility that the results of an investigation are completely correct or true at the same time as the coefficient of “reliability” is low because the control-coder has done a poor job. This means that the conventional coefficients are not informative enough. The prevalent belief that scientific measurements ought to be intra- and inter-subjectively reproducible is connected with the natural science as an ideal for all scientific activity. A distinctive feature of modern science is that it makes use of mechanical devices that to a large extent make the measurements and observations; and this means that the raw data of these sciences in many cases will be epistemically independent of the scientist. It is Andrén’s contention that it is not always possible or productive to

try to make content analysis and natural science similar in this respect. He proposes as an intelligent policy, rather, to make use of the special talents - accuracy, acumen, discernment, creativity, and tenacity - that the coder might possibly possess (*ibid.*: 58).

When it comes to *semantic* content analysis, analyses in which it is presupposed that the observer *understands and correctly interprets* the material of the investigation, it will in many instances be counter-productive to aim at eliminating the influences of human skills of the coder. In this context it seems instead wise to exploit the linguistic and social competence of human beings. To count heads is a comparatively simple task. It is usually more complicated to infer the semantic contents of a text and or picture. A process of this kind necessarily involves *interpretation*. For Andrén, to interpret a certain text or picture is to apply to its syntactic surface those linguistic rules that define the language of the text or picture. It is indeed an intricate procedure. It is a process that involves the adoption of *intuitively known rules - rules of interpretation and rules of inference* (Andrén 1981: 59 my italics). He illustrates the problem of coding semantic content as follows:

The coding of semantic contents is thus, as is the proof of a theorem, a constructive process. If two coders produce different results - one of them records that the proposition *p* is expressed in the material of the investigation and the other does not record the presence of *p* - this must not be due to carelessness or laxity. Assuming that *p* was in fact expressed in the material investigated, we can say instead that the disagreement was contingent upon the creativity of the first coder. The moral to be drawn from this is that it will not always be feasible to prescribe that two independent coders must attain the same data, if their task is to record semantic contents.

There are two different objects of a *pragmatic* content analysis identified by Andr n: either to reveal the intentions or mental life of the communicator or to make propositions about the reactions of the receivers or the effects or consequences of the communication. Analysis of this kind requires that the coder possess special forms of knowledge and/or sensitivity to nuances and the like; and thus it seems counterproductive to demand that different scientists must attain the same results. "Syntactic data are not, however, as relevant as semantic data, if the pragmatic object of the investigation is to trace the beliefs and attitudes of the communicator. In a context of this kind, *the form or surface of a message is not as pertinent as its content or deep structure*" (Andr n 1981: 60 my italics).

Sometimes it will instead be productive to turn our attention on problems pertaining to what is *not* present in a given material and on *possible*, as opposed to actual, effects of a communication. There is no natural language such that *one* interpretation of a given sentence is the true or correct one. There will always be a variety of possible interpretations; and quite often more than one of these interpretations will be plausible enough. But which of these plausible interpretations will be the *most* adequate? The answer to this question, contends Andr n, will be contingent on the object of the interpretation. He argues that a semantic investigation into the propositional contents of a text/picture always has *some* relation to intents and effects (*ibid.*: 63). I believe therefore that the purpose of the investigation, to a great extent, determines the most adequate or pertinent meaning or interpretation. Semantic content analysis is an activity that often demands extensive knowledge and sometimes other rare capacities; in some cases the required knowledge can be acquired through *a long and laborious process of intensive studies*. This means that it may be futile to demand that the task must be such that "regardless of who does the analysis or when it is done, the same data should be secured under similar conditions."

At the same time, it is certainly true that one wants to be in a position where one can trust the results of a semantic content analysis; it is a strong desideratum that there is some kind of check on the results. It is wise not to forget that science is a human activity and that it is always somewhat risky to trust a human being. Thus, not only can the results of coding procedures be false, figures from reliability tests can also be false. There is need therefore to have some kind of check on these. According to Andrén (1981: 65):

When we make a conventional reliability test, we get a measure of the consensus between different coders; but we do not get any information about the source of the disagreements. The consensus coefficient has two defects. A poor coefficient can cast doubt upon reliable (that is, true) data. A high coefficient in certain cases may insinuate that a set of raw data is trustworthy, although it is unreliable (has a high frequency of false data). If we are interested in the truth of the data, we want instead to have a measurement of the tendency of the coder who is the source of the data to make inadequate interpretations and wrong classifications and hence to produce false data.

First, we should let another person recode a random sample of the investigated material. Then we can identify the disagreements and so reach the position where we can calculate the ordinary coefficient. Then we will be able to analyse each disagreement in order to determine if the disagreement is due to an error by the original coder or an error by the test-coder. Thus, we can attain a measure of the tendency of the original coder to produce false data. The more people we can engage in this process and the larger the amount of the material coded, the more we can trust that the data are reliable.

It is obvious that this can be a time-consuming and costly procedure; and there is room for irrational influences in the discussions that will tell us whose coding is the correct one. But, as this seems to be the only feasible way of attaining a measurement of the veracity of data concerning semantic contents, we must (at least tentatively) try to trust the results of such judgements. Andrén concludes with one fundamental assertion: that interpretation is not, or must not be, a subjective process. For him, then, it is an *objective* fact that a proposition or concept is expressed by a certain set of signs: thus, the question concerning what is expressed by a text/picture has *true and false* answers. This implies that semantic data are ontologically independent. And that means, contends Andrén, that intersubjectivity is not the ultimate arbiter (Andrén 1981: 66).

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It is clear from the above discussion by Andrén that the requirements of traditional content analysis with regard to reliability are not only too restrictive but also unrealistic as far as content analysis is concerned. For a study such as the one I am carrying out, pragmatic content analysis is the most appropriate. This is because the focus is on views, beliefs and attitudes. These require an approach that makes use of interpretation. For that matter, as aptly put by Andrén, “the form or surface of the message is not as pertinent as its content or deep structure.” One major objection to such an understanding would be that interpretation is basically a very subjective process. I agree here to Andrén’s contention that interpretation is not, or must not be, a subjective process. Instead of striving for natural-science type of epistemic independence, one should rather look for the most adequate interpretation or meaning of a text based on the object of the study. When the nature of the study is such that epistemic independence should be seen to be there, I agree that the analyst should strive to design it in such a way that it is possible to be replicated by another analyst.

4.5.2 An Alternative to Berelsonian Validity Requirement

Together with reliability, the other important requirement of Berelsonian content analysis is that of validity. Validity is usually defined as the extent to which an instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure (Berelson, 1952: 169; Holsti, 1969: 142; Janis, 1965: 58). According to Krippendorff (1988: 155), "Validity designates that quality of research results which leads one to accept them as indisputable facts... We speak of a measuring instrument as being valid if it measures what it is designed to measure, and we consider a content analysis valid to the extent that its inferences are upheld in the face of independently obtained evidence". He underscores this point by arguing that, the importance of validation lies in the assurance that it provides that research findings will be taken seriously. It reduces the risk involved in acting on misleading research findings as if they were true.

Instead of the above stated goal of validity, Andrén (1981: 51-52) suggests rather the concept or term "realism" to represent that goal. He observes, however, that realism is not the same as truth. A realistic description need not be literally true, but it must help us acquire an *adequate* or *realistic* picture of the world either by telling us straightforward truths or by offering us points of view, concepts, and the like which are fruitful in relation to this purpose. He distinguishes three meanings of the requirement for validity, thus, three different interpretations of "realism": The realism of a certain set of data consists of: 1. Its *correspondence* to some facts - i.e., *its truth*; 2. its *connection* with some significant problem or with the purpose of the study - i.e., *its relevancy*; 3. its *correspondence* with precisely those facts that are *connected* with some real problem or the purpose of the study - i.e., both *truth* and *relevancy*. The problem is that discussions of validity and the relation between reliability and validity are often difficult to follow because the meaning of the term "validity" oscillates between the second and third meanings given above, thus between either relevancy *only* or truth and relevancy *together*.

One can identify several “validation efforts” in content analysis. According to Krippendorff (1980), *semantic validity* assesses the degree to which a method is sensitive to the symbolic meanings that are relevant within a given context. In content analysis high semantic validity is achieved when the semantics of the data language corresponds to that of the source, the receiver, or any other context relative to which data are examined.” It is Andrén’s (1981) argument that this concept of validity is an instance of relevancy and that realism in the stronger sense of both truth and relevancy is not claimed. He goes on to demonstrate that *only* relevancy is addressed in the other requirements of *sampling validity, correlational validity and construct validity*. It is only predictive validity that Andrén considers as calling for both relevancy and truth. This is evident in Krippendorff’s definition:

Predictive validity is the degree to which findings obtained by one method agree with directly observed facts. In content analysis, predictive validity requires that the obtained inferences show high agreement with the states, attributes, events, or properties in the context of the data to which these inferences refer (regardless of whether these are past, concurrent, or future phenomena) and high disagreement with the contextual characteristics that these inferences logically exclude (1980: 157).

It is for the reason that all the other definitions of validity, except the one given above, require *only* relevancy that Andrén proposes that we take the problem of the relevancy of raw data to be the domain of the concept of validity. For a study that is focused on the relevance of media content and performance on the constitution of a nation’s democratic polity, relevance as a criterion of validity makes a lot of sense.

4.6 Qualitative Content analysis and Criticism of Berelsonian Analysis

Whilst the traditional view is that content analysis must deal objectively, systematically and quantitatively with manifest content, there are alternative views which contend that content analysis can be either quantitative or qualitative or both. This is the position taken by Andr en (1981) who believes that "content analysis proper" is semantic content analysis. For some, the very idea of quantifying manifest media content is untenable. Larsen (1991: 69) discusses the work the German sociologist and cultural critic Siefried Kracauer, who argued that it is impossible to quantify textual meaning, and that meaning can only be grasped by means of interpretation. Kracauer (1953) used the term '*qualitative content analysis*' to distinguish the *interpretative approach* from that of the social scientists (see Larsen, 1991: 68). His understanding of the text and its meaning is summarised as follows:

Documents which are not simply agglomerations of facts, participate in the process of living, and every word in them vibrates with the intentions in which they originate and simultaneously foreshadow the indefinite effects they may produce. Their content is no longer their content if it is detached from the texture of intimations and implications to which it belongs and taken literally; it exists only with and within this texture - a still fragmentary manifestation of life, which depends upon response to evolve its properties. Most communications are not so much fixed entities as ambivalent challenges. They challenge the reader or the analyst to absorb them and react to them. Only in approaching these wholes with his whole being will the analyst be able both to discover and to determine their meaning - or one of their meanings - and thus help them to fulfil themselves (Kracauer 1953: 642 quoted in Larsen, p.70).

On the basis of the above statement, one can see Kracauer make a number of claims about the text and about textual interpretation. For him, on the one hand, the textual object is a meaningful whole and should be analysed as such. It is on the other hand, not a closed object but more like a field, an indeterminate complex of texture of meaning in which original intentions and several future effects intersect. Textual analysis is understood as a specific kind of conscious intellectual reaction, or operation, on the texture and its indeterminacies, an operation which in a way closes the text in so far as its meanings are, as he puts it, "determined" by the analyst. Larsen (1991: 70) concurs with Kracauer in the latter's major criticism of quantitative content analysis; that this methodological choice, which begins by breaking down a text into quantifiable units (words, phrases, etc.), is an inevitable source of inaccuracy because it destroys what it is supposed to study. The results of 'frequency counts' and other forms of statistical computations are of little use since the atomistic nature of the basic data precludes the analyses of internal relations among the units themselves, as well as between the units and the textual whole. 'Because quantitative analysis is incapable of catching semantic complexities, it always runs the risk of repressing what might be important aspects of the textual meaning.'

In Sepstrup's opinion (1981), Berelsonian positivistic demands are not in themselves inferior. He concedes, however, that in their rigorous form and in the rigorous tradition in which they are followed, they have developed tyrannically in relation to the research process. He also makes similar criticisms to those given by Larsen and Kracauer about the atomising nature of Berelsonian analysis:

Traditional content analysis is further blamed for isolating and atomising the text... Atomising the text means, for one thing, that the *analysis is based on isolated observations* of individual dimensions of the content, and thus it is not realised that an overall understanding cannot be found by summarising the various sub-dimensions. Second, atomising

suggests that the *content is analysed independently of its social context*; that is, society's existence in the text is not realised. The more comprehensive the theories behind the study, the less significant the problem, in that such theories ensure a considerable number of ways to approach the text and make it possible to incorporate categories which include the social context of the content (Sepstrup 1981: 39 my italics).

Some of the above feelings are shared by Krippendorff (1980: 17), who observes that it was with the conviction that content analysis should not be inferior in explaining human intellect that numerous writers e.g. Kracauer (1947, 1952) and George (1959), challenged the simplistic reliance of content analysis on counting qualitative data. Krippendorff notes that Smythe (1954) called simplistic quantification an 'immaturity of science' in which *objectivity is confused with quantification*. He argues that Stone et al. offer a definition that may be seen as an improvement on Berelson and others in that they recognise the *inferential nature* of coding textual units into conceptual categories. They also illustrate the importance of making these inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within a text. For them therefore, "Content analysis is a research techniques for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within a text" (Stone et al., 1966: 5).

Another modified definition, given by Holsti (1969: 14), is very similar to the one given above by Stone et al. For him, "Content analysis is *any technique* for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages". Krippendorff (1980) does not, however, see these definitions as significant improvements at all because they fail to emphasise "the importance of *relating* the classifications, categorisation, and frequency counts of these forms *to other phenomena*... Any content analysis must be performed relative to, and justified in terms of the context of the data". He continues that "A communication research may interpret the meaning of a message in relation to a

researcher's intentions, to a receiver's cognitive or behavioural effects, to the institutions within which it is exchanged, or to *the culture within which it plays a role*' (*ibid.* 24 my italics). It can be argued that the most crucial feature of messages, for example news, is that they inform vicariously; providing knowledge about events that cannot be experienced at first hand. This 'vicarious' nature of symbolic communication is what forces a receiver to make specific references from sensory data to portions of his/her *empirical environment*', referred 'to as the context of the data' (Krippendorf, 1980: 23). *It is therefore imperative to make explicit the context relative to which data are analysed* for 'there are no logical limits as to the kind of context an analyst might want to consider' (p. 26).

It is clear from the discussion above that content analysis can be either qualitative or quantitative. The shortcomings of traditional content analysis have been amply highlighted. The importance of contextualisation in content analysis studies has been underscored. It is clear that depending on the goals of a study, simplistic quantification that leads to atomisation of texts cannot be trusted to reveal pertinent meanings. More about quantification will be said below. By these observations I do not suggest that quantification has no place in content analysis studies. To the contrary, the point here is to stress that it depends on the nature of the study and how the study is carried out. In fact, one of the ardent supporters of contextualisation in content analysis studies is Krippendorf for whom qualitative content analysis is a contradiction of terms..

4.7 A Critique of Berelsonian Quantification Requirement

The discussion by Holsti (1969: 5-12) with regard to whether content analysis must be quantitative is very instructive. According to him, although the issues underlying the quality - quantity debate are not trivial ones, one must reject the rigid dichotomy, which is sometimes implied in the debate. Especially by those

who espouse either the view that "if you can't count it, it doesn't count," or that "if you can count it, that ain't it". He observes that, it is generally agreed by measurement theorists that qualitative and quantitative are not dichotomous attributes, but fall along a continuum. He goes on to state that:

Moreover, whether stated explicitly or not, many of the most rigorous quantitative studies use nonnumerical procedures at various stages in the research. This is likely to be the case in the initial selection of categories. Because content analysts are not generally agreed on standard categories, even for given classes of problems, the investigator often finds himself in the position of having to develop his own for the question at hand. Hence, before constructing categories, he may want to read over a sample of his data to get a "feel" for the types of relevant symbols or themes. Prior to coding, he must also read over the data to identify any idiosyncratic attributes which, if not taken into account, might adversely affect the results. After coding and data analysis have been completed, he may want to check the "face validity" of the quantitative results by rereading parts or all of his documents. Or, conversely, quantitative results may highlight qualitative aspects of the text which might have escaped the analyst's scrutiny ... *Thus the content analyst should use qualitative and quantitative methods to supplement each other* (Holsti 1969: 11).

The above reasoning by Holsti, that the problem of quantity or quality is a quasi-problem, is supported by Lindkvist. For the latter, the relevant question is, 'which is the theoretical relevance of the measure I use?' He argues that isolated data are meaningless. *Only by linking data together with theoretical questions is analysis meaningful* (Lindkvist, 1981: 34; my italics). Holsti is also of the opinion that "... asking the right questions about the data is even more important than the system of enumeration used to present the findings..." (1969: 12). In his

evaluation of the use of content quantification in propaganda analysis, Krippendorff (1980: 17) observes that one of the lessons learnt was that 'quantitative indicators are extremely insensitive and shallow in providing political insights. Even if large amounts of data are available as required for statistical analyses, they do not lead to the 'most obvious' conclusions that political experts are easily able to draw upon and to agree upon by observing qualitative changes more in depth'. It is on the basis of the above observations and criticisms that he defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts" and is characterised as a method of inquiry into symbolic meanings of messages (Krippendorff 1980: 22).

Further to Krippendorff's 'improved' definition which we have seen above, we may add that of Watson and Hill (1989: 47), according to whom 'Research into media content identifies, categorises, describes and quantifies short-term and long-term trends... Content analysis serves an important function by *comparing the same material as presented in different media within a nation, or between different nations; or by comparing media content with some explicit set of standards or abstract categories*' (my italics). What we learn therefore is that media content can take many formats and also that content analysis can be carried out in various ways to accomplish different pertinent objectives. McQuail (1987: 175) points out that "We would not pretend to be able to speak of the content of (something) except by specifying more precisely which aspects or parts of the content we are talking about".

A major problem that Krippendorff highlights is that there is no way one can establish the indisputable meaning of symbolic data. About this, he makes the argument that:

messages do not have a single meaning that needs to be "unwrapped."
Data can always be looked at from different perspectives, especially

when they are symbolic in nature. In any single written message, one can count letters, word or sentences. One can categorise phrases, describe the logical structure of expressions, ascertain associations, connotations, denotations, elocutionary forces, and can also offer psychiatric, sociological, or political interpretations. All of these may be simultaneously valid. In short, a message may convey a multitude of contents even to a single receiver. Under these circumstances, the claim to have analysed THE content of communication reflects an untenable position (1980: 22).

The above argument is used by Krippendorff to conclude that mere inquiry into *symbolic meaning* of messages does not qualify as content analysis. For him, “meanings are always relative to the communicator”. He is therefore of the opinion that only manifest and not latent content should be the object of content analysis. In that case we have a scenario in which, on the one hand, the process of quantification is considered not to be a necessary criterion of content analysis. This is mainly because they do not lead to the most obvious conclusions. In this scenario emphasis is put on research questions and theoretical relevance. The conclusion is that it should not matter so much whether the content analysis is quantitative or qualitative. The issue is therefore a quasi-problem. However, on the other hand, Krippendorff's view is that for the reason that symbolic data can convey a multitude of contents even to a single receiver, such ‘deeper’ meanings cannot be analysed objectively.

The above understanding of the nature of symbolic data given by Krippendorff is very similar to that advanced by interpretive media researchers. Interpretive studies (see Barkin and Gurevitch, 1987; Fiske, 1987; Liebes, 1988; Lindolf, 1988; Newcomb, 1984; Newcomb and Hirsch, 1984) view media texts as polysemic - that is, as characterised by a multiplicity of meanings. This polysemy invites multiple interpretations of a single text. Put in a different way, the

"polysemic character of media codes" produces texts that permit multiple decodings. As already seen above in a quote from Carragee (1990: 87), interpretive approaches have certain limitations in the way they assess media texts. In short: they fail to address media texts as products of organisations; they devote scant attention to the texts' properties and structure; they often characterise, without support, media texts as polysemic; and they fail to examine how media content expresses dominant ideological meanings.

It is Carragee's suggestion (1990: 89) that "Interpretive researchers need to devote far more attention to the properties and structures of media messages, to the symbolic power of texts. Characterisations of texts or indeed media as empty vessels... deny the ways in which texts and media help to constitute meanings and realities for their audiences by highlighting certain meanings and values while expanding others." In a study of how two people, one strongly opposed to and the other strongly supportive of abortion, interpreted an episode of the American television detective serial *Cagney & Lacey* that dramatised the abortion controversy, Condit (1989: 106) argues that:

There were, nonetheless, important elements in their responses which lead me to suggest that the term "polyvalence" characterises these differences better than does the term "polysemy." *Polyvalence occurs when audience members share understandings of the denotations of a text but disagree about the valuations of those denotations to such a degree that they produce notably different interpretations.* In this case, it is not a multiplicity or instability of textual meanings but rather a difference in audience evaluations of shared denotations that best account for the two viewers' discrepant interpretations (my italics).

In reviewing critical research on audience reception against her findings, Condit (1989; 107) provides the following insightful observations on polysemy:

The emphasis on the polysemous quality of texts thus may be overdrawn. The claim perhaps needs to be scaled back to indicate that responses and interpretations are generally polyvalent, and texts themselves are occasionally or partially polysemic. It is not that texts routinely feature unstable denotation but that instability of connotation requires viewers to judge texts from their own value systems.

It is Kracauer's argument that the risk of "subjective" misinterpretation on the part of the qualitative analyst is limited due to the fact that any historical period only produces "a limited number of major philosophical doctrines, moral trends and aesthetic preferences...", and that these influences therefore "can be controlled and discerned" (1953 quoted in Larsen, 1991: 71). On the basis of this understanding, Larsen makes the argument that:

Although media texts are conceived of as complex, "indeterminate" entities, they are in the last instance "overdetermined" by various contextual, socio-historical factors and can therefore be read as "symptoms" or "expressions" of *general ideological trends, characteristic of the historical period in question*' (*ibid.*, my italics).

The above discussion has mainly tried to contradict the notion put forward by Krippendorff and interpretive scholars that symbolic or textual data can be so indeterminate as to defy measures to identify its common meaning. I suggest that it is possible when a number of factors are taken into consideration. One should recognise that media texts are products of organisations populated by human beings that are, together with the organisations, part of a larger discursive societal context. Media texts also have structural elements that make it possible for meanings to be shared. Condit's observations sensitises one to see that it is possible indeed to have a common understanding of media texts. Larsen and

Kracauer argue that the risk of subjective misinterpretation is limited by a number of factors and can be discerned and controlled. In fact there is then a basic understanding that interpretation is not necessarily a subjective process. For these reasons, there is no sufficient reason to argue that symbolic meaning cannot be analysed as content. If this premise is acceptable, I do not see any reason why once identified, such meanings cannot be quantified.

4.8 Towards More Comprehensive Content Analyses

It can be argued that the main weaknesses of the two mainstream approaches to content analysis and communication research in general, has been total reliance on either one or the other of the two principal schools of thought in research theory. Obviously, each perspective has strong points, but also very crucial weak points which limit their epistemological values. On the one hand, as we have already seen, the term qualitative analysis covers a wide range of content analysis methods, from more or less impressionistic, intuitive, and interpretative to systematic and strict content analyses carried at the nominal level (see Rosengren, 1981: 11).

On the other hand, as Sepstrup (1981: 135) observes, traditional quantitative content analysis is considered to be suitable for describing many simple forms of data, and their results are easily communicated and normally enjoy considerable credibility. However, he claims, such research results do not contribute to a greater understanding, but merely define and reproduce readily observable phenomena. They are considered inadequate when it comes to understanding the texts and explaining their content, especially in *a broader societal context*. As a result, observes Rosengren (1981), this Berelsonian content analysis is criticised as exemplifying naive positivism, characterised by fetishism of quantitative techniques and lack of theory and therefore, a sterile methodology.

It is Sepstrup's argument (1981: 139) that *triangulation*, that is, a combination of the two methods, bears the promise of considerable possibilities for better understanding of media content. The idea being to combine critical/Marxist theory and its comprehension of social relations and the social role of mass media, with the ability of quantitative methods to treat substantial amounts of material, to gain a more comprehensive view, to create credibility, and to ease the understandings of findings. Sepstrup himself made such an attempt and though 'the attempt to combine the two approaches has obviously not been fully successful... it does seem to illustrate the possibility of combining the advantages of the two approaches and of reducing their weaknesses...' (*ibid.*: 155).

If Sepstrup recommends Marxist theory, or indeed any theory to be used together with the scientific method (positivist empiricism), Gripsrud (1990: 124) argues that one must avoid the pitfalls of "*empiricism*, taken... to mean a strict restriction to, or even fetishization of, concrete data in order to avoid all forms of speculation". He suggests that if the object of research is:

the social meaning of phenomena studied, research along these lines must always relate empirical facts to an abstract, theoretical notion of the social whole - which, in the research process, comes prior to the data collected ... It does not, of course, mean that the theoretical reflection thus privileged is to be elevated above empirical data, whether quantitative or qualitative. What it means is that the desired multidimensional, critical understanding of the social phenomena studied can be attained only through the reflective process known as *interpretation*, a process that attempts to establish the relations between highly heterogeneous pieces of information. *Interpretation implies a distance between the interpreter and that which is being interpreted* (Grisprud 1990: 124).

4.9 Conclusion: The Two Methodologies Applied

Let me conclude this chapter by saying that this study will use both quantitative and qualitative analyses in two different but not mutually exclusive ways. The discussion that has been presented above, beginning with a presentation of the quantitative approach and the various criticisms levelled against it both from the qualitative perspective and from within itself, is meant to demonstrate the methodological strong and weak points of both quantitative and qualitative content analyses. There are two conclusions to be made: First, there exists now some understanding that there is a case for using quantitative and qualitative analyses as complementary. Secondly, an argument has been made for the need to put emphasis on such things as context, theoretical and other perspectives, precisation of the object of study and the exact nature of content, historical and cultural variables; and that these, *inter alia*, are the factors that make content analysis not only realistic but also meaningful.

In short, I hope to have demonstrated the need to combine content analysis data with other sets of data: those on media content, *intramedia content*, and those on relevant conditions outside the media, *extramedia data*. It is Rosengren's opinion (1981: 18) that extramedia data can 'be used in arguments about possible causes and effects of various types of media content.' He observes that it is futile to argue for the overall superiority of a given approach or methodology. The different approaches to the study of messages briefly reviewed above are important and relevant for each offers its own special contribution to the understanding and explanation of textual content. Approaches and methodologies are never good *per se*; they are good for something. A discussion of that 'something' can be instructive.

I intend to use the two methodologies somewhat differently; whilst the quantitative part will deal with news stories, the qualitative part will analyse

political commentaries, editorials, as texts. However, the quantitative part will have a decisive qualitative aspect. In order to classify or categorise a news item or story, instead of a highly structured coding book, qualitative judgements are to be employed to determine which actors or activities dominate it and to infer inherited values and attitudes (to be found between the lines). The qualitative part will have a quantitative aspect for the reason that in a temporal perspective, the incidence of argumentation for a preferred or desired ideological position can be *a fortiori* suggestive of the existence of that ideological position. The next chapter will give the research design in detail.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

A content analysis of the kind that I intend to undertake is not easy to carry out. It is my belief that I have laid, in the previous chapter, a good explanatory and methodological foundation for the research design that I am about to explain. It is evident from the discussion in the above chapter that content analysis raises a number of both methodological and "methods" questions. The more important methodological issues concerned with the nature and location of content or meaning in media texts; the epistemological and ontological issues with regard to the validity and reliability of qualitative and quantitative research processes; and the need to use a triangulation of methods in content analysis have been addressed. In this chapter I will mainly concentrate on the research methods, that is, the techniques or tools that I will use to gather and analyse data.

The unit of analysis in our study will be the individual news item or story. All news stories covering the democratic-political change in Kenya will be analysed. These news items will come from two daily newspapers, *Kenya Times* and the *Nation*. The reasons for the choice of these two dailies have been explained in Chapter One. *Kenya Times* is a local party-owned daily newspaper while the *Nation* is a private daily with a foreign majority-share ownership. The study will cover a time span of four months, from November 1991 through February 1992. The two months, November and December 1991 will represent the period before the democratic-political change whilst January and February 1992 will represent the period after the change. The

Bill to restore multi-party politics received presidential assent, thereby becoming law, on December 19, 1991. However, the first opposition party was registered on January 1, 1992 and only then could it be seen to operate legally. For this reason, I will consider this latter date as *de jure* marking the end of KANU's one-party monopoly of Kenyan politics.

5.2 The Quantitative Stage: Data Collection and Analysis

In this section of the study, I am interested in finding out the tendencies, if any, with which each newspaper differentially covered the KANU government and the Opposition. Coverage here simply means news reportage. I will make a comparison between the two newspapers to establish differences in their reportage. For each daily, and also between them, I will also make a temporal comparison between the period before and the period after the constitutional (political) change.

I will first look at a) *all the news stories covering the democratic-political change*. For each newspaper, all the stories of a political nature concerned with the democratic change to multi-party politics will be included. These will be stories covering individuals or groups of people, and/or issues and/or events or happenings related to the political change. The findings here will be used to establish whether the political change had a significant impact on the volume of stories directly concerned with multi-party democracy. Because of the fundamental nature of the democratic-political change, it is assumed that the daily newspapers will give the process substantial publicity. However, because of the nature and extent of the KANU government's suppression of the press with regard to this issue, it is further hypothesised that it is only after the constitutional change that the performance of the dailies will change.

From the above summations will be established b) *what percentage of all stories about the democratic-political change focussed on the activities of a) the KANU government and b) of the Opposition*. This is intended to establish what proportion of all the pertinent democratic-political change stories were primarily concerned with reporting about either KANU or the Opposition. This statistic will represent the extent of the publicity accorded by each daily to each of the contending political groups. I intend to compare between the two dailies to find out any possible party-favouritism or leanings for each newspaper. The above comparisons should help indicate whether any resultant party favouritism or its intensity was generated or influenced by the political change. In other words, by use of temporal comparison, I will establish whether the political change had any significant effect on the proportion of national news coverage accorded by each daily to each of the two political groups.

In the next step, I will then c) *categorise the news stories according to the nature of the publicity, a) positive or b) negative, that they afford the KANU government, or the Opposition*. For this purpose, all the news stories on the democratic-political change will be analysed so as identify those that have a publicity value for the two contending political groups. A decision will be made on whether the object of the news story (person(s), issue or event) is reported on in such a manner that the story "speaks" approvingly (positive publicity) or disapprovingly (negative publicity) of one of the political groups. This is meant to help infer the party sympathy, if any, generated by the news selection and processing values of the newspaper. Qualitative analytical tools will be employed in making these coding decisions (see 5.5 below). This statistic is important when one considers the fact that the two political groups each supported a different position with regard to the democratic change. A daily newspaper's support for a political group may therefore be regarded as its support for that group's ideological position.

Lastly, d) I will consider a universe of party-political news only. For each daily newspaper, I will identify and sum up all those news stories that covered the activities of the two contending political groups, the KANU government and the Opposition. From these summations will be calculated the percentage frequencies of all those stories that:

1) *reported on the Opposition criticising (or challenging) the performance of the KANU government.* This is meant to establish the effect of the political change on the incidence of party-political stories critical of the KANU government. This statistic will be taken as a measure of the extent to which the pertinent daily newspaper had or developed, with the change, a tendency to allow stories that helped build legitimacy for the Opposition thereby challenging the ideological position of the KANU government. Support for the Opposition at this stage in Kenya's political history will be regarded as a measure of support for a multi-party democratic dispensation.

2) *reported on the KANU government defending itself against criticism from the Opposition.* This is meant to establish whether the particular newspaper's overall party-political story content had a tendency to afford the KANU government the space within which to redress the negative image created by the Opposition's criticism. This may also be taken as a measure of the degree of support the newspaper had for the ruling party by helping to protect its legitimacy and public image. This statistic will also be taken as a measure of the daily's newspapers' support for the status quo.

A temporal consideration of the above results will highlight the role of the democratic-political change in the process. November and December 1991 will be collapsed to represent the period before the political change while January and February 1992 collapsed, will represent the period after the political change. The above process will then be repeated for these two

periods to find out if the political change had any major effect on the press' coverage of the two political sides.

It is not expected to be easy to delineate all the categories listed above. For example, a long news item may end up covering both the opposition criticising KANU and KANU defending itself against the criticism. This type of problem will necessitate continual scrutiny of the news item over a number of times. In order to overcome the problem, I intend to begin by firstly determining the original object of the news item aside from the other information carried. I will do this by way of considering, following Tiffen (1989: 65), aspects of 'the inverted pyramid' style of presentation. This is in the belief that 'the main point of the story is encapsulated in a 'strong lead' implying, therefore, that 'a news story ... begins with a crisp statement of the most significant or newsworthy fact.'

For the publicity and legitimacy categories of the individual news item, I will consider also, the ideological preferences in the headline, the lead and the subsequent sentences (see Dijk, 1991: 115; Gans, 1980: 5-7; 39-42). This will help in deciding which values were considered important by the newspaper; whether it intended the publicity or legitimacy for KANU or for Opposition. In the end, where there is ambiguity, I will decide, by using the above guidelines, on which party or any other value dominates the news item.

5.3 Quantitative Analysis: Indices, Frequencies and Tables

As I have already indicated above, the content analysis stage of this study will use frequencies and percentages as indices of the various categories and concepts that are to be analysed. It can be argued that the frequency with which a symbol, idea or subject matter occurs in a stream of messages, contents or texts, may be interpreted as a measure of importance, attention,

or emphasis. While the balance in numbers of favourable and unfavourable attributes of a symbol, idea or subject matter tends to be interpreted as a measure of the direction of bias. It can further be argued that the kind of qualifications made and associations expressed towards a symbol, idea, or subject matter tend to be interpreted as a measure of the intensity or strength of a belief, conviction, or motivation (see Krippendorff, 1980: 40).

I would like to sound a caveat here, however, that the frequency of occurrence is not the only guide to salience or to meaning. Much depends on aspects of context of a reference, which are hard to capture quantitatively, or internal relationships between references in texts, which may be lost in the process of abstraction (McQuail, 1987: 184). In some cases, frequency measures can be problematic. According to Krippendorff (1980: 41), it is one thing to use frequencies or repetitions to gain certainty about a proposition or hypothesis and quite a different matter to use it as an indicator of a phenomenon that is to correlate with it. The former pertains to scientific procedure, the latter to an empirical property. Frequency measures are likely to be successful indicators when the underlying phenomena are likewise frequency related.

In this study, the quantitative dimension of content analysis will have an overriding qualitative nature. Frequency of the occurrence of the categories explained above will comprise the main quantification. I will not measure column inches to quantify space nor will I count words, phrases, references etc. The more important empirical process of ascribing categories to the units of analysis will be a qualitative one. It has already been indicated at the end of the previous Chapter that in order to classify or categorise a news item or story, qualitative judgements will be employed to determine, for example, which political actors or activities dominate it and to infer inherent values and attributes (to be found between the lines). This qualitative and interpretive

process will shortly be discussed below.

Notwithstanding the above observations, the most common form of presentation of data, serving primarily the summarising function of analysis, is in terms of frequencies: *absolute frequencies*, such as the number of incidents found in the sample, or *relative frequencies*, such as the percentages of the sample size. The next most common form of representing data is in terms of *relations between variables*. Such relations may be seen in a cross-tabulation of the frequencies of co-occurrences of the values of one variable and of the value of another. In the analysis of the quantitative data, I will use simple relative frequency tables mainly to summarise the data and facilitate comparisons. I will also employ proportion-calculations for comparison purposes. These frequency and proportion comparisons will be presented in tables.

5.4 The Qualitative Stage.

In this section I intend to explain the nature and mode of the qualitative analysis that will be employed in this study. Qualitative analytical decisions will be made, firstly, with regard to the quantitative analysis elaborated above. This will take place especially at the stage of assigning values to news stories. Secondly, here in the qualitative stage, they will be made to find out if there is any ideological position with which the individual newspaper identified in the discourse about the democratic-political change. The focus of analysis here will be on editorial opinions and commentaries. I have two related hypotheses in this stage. Firstly, that because it is owned by the ruling party KANU, *Kenya Times* would support the ideological position that the one-party status quo be maintained and that this support would be intensified by the introduction of multi-party politics. Secondly, that because it is “independent”, the *Nation* would support the ideological position that the political change was

desirable and that this support would be intensified by the introduction of multi-party politics.

A quick perusal reveals that the views of both newspapers are normally penned in the editorial column, which in both *Kenya Times* and *Nation* appear in the first column of page six. However, the newspapers also carry commentaries both by their staff columnists and by guest columnists. These commentaries are normally also carried on page six. They touch on various topics and issues. While it may be argued that they are personal opinions of those who pen them, the analysis is meant to show that they do, as a matter of fact, have some consistency in respect to the position taken by the particular newspaper on the central issues in the political dispute.

In relation to finding out the party with which the individual newspaper sympathised, I am also interested in finding out how the political change to multi-party democracy impacted on the way the individual newspaper expressed its ideological preferences. This will be done by finding out what the individual newspaper had to say, its position that is, about whether a change to a multi-party democratic system in Kenya was desirable. This entails finding out its position on the overall performance of KANU during its monopoly on political power. Another issue to be investigated is, on the one hand, whether the newspaper agrees or disagrees with some of the arguments that the KANU leadership gave as underpinning their aversion to change. On the other hand, it should be interesting to find out whether the newspaper agreed or not with some of the arguments that the Opposition gave as making change necessary.

5.5 Rhetorical Analyses and Political Discourse.

The qualitative content analysis dimension of this study will be both rhetorical and ideological. The former characteristic is the subject of this section whilst the latter will be dealt with below. The overall aim is to establish the ideological stance taken by the individual newspaper regarding the political change to multi-party democracy. I wish to find out whether the individual daily regarded the political change as desirable. In ideological or political discourse, good use is made of rhetoric. In this part of the content analysis, I will employ rhetoric in its modern usage as a critical perspective and as an analytical tool. This is as opposed to its traditional artistic association with creative and persuasive oratory. In the usage that I prefer, rhetoric is understood as an art, employed in prose, which employs literary techniques, including figures of speech and ideological argumentation, for persuasion and attitude formation and/or propagation.

I wish to concur with Carroll (1998: 392) that, "The idea that the locus of ideology in mass art resides in the way in which specific works articulate their stories and images rhetorically", is a given. Carroll argues that:

Rhetoric is a matter of attempting to influence thought - a matter of persuasion, as a consequence of presenting material in a way designed so that its structure operates to facilitate an audience's agreement with certain conclusions, or at least, its favourable disposition toward those conclusions. Those conclusions may be stated outright by the orator, or the listener may be encouraged to embrace them in so far as they are strongly implied by, insinuated by, or presupposed by the rhetor in question.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1986), modern or *new* rhetoric is a 'theory of argumentation that has its object the study of discursive techniques and that aims to provoke or to increase the adherence of men's minds to the theses that are presented for their consent'. According to Hart (1997: 2-4), rhetoric is the art of using language to help people narrow their choices among specifiable, if not specific, policy options. It is often concerned with specificity and with drawing conclusions. Hart observes that "each day, in each profession, people ... produce rhetoric; much of it trivial, some of it important, all of it purporting to help others sort through their choices."

An information brochure introducing a research project on *Rhetoric, Knowledge, Mediation: A Project on Theories of Knowledge* (University of Bergen 1995-1997), which uses a rhetorical perspective, explains that:

In both classical and recent forms, rhetoric is about how the signifier and elements of 'form' influence what we call 'content' or 'message'. Second, rhetoric focuses on the persuasive functions of the signifier and elements of 'form', i.e. on how they in different communicative situations are geared toward making recipients accept the text in question's version of the (part of, kind of) 'world' or 'reality' it deals with. Rhetoric is in other words *pragmatically* oriented, something which is evidently important here. Third, rhetoric was originally not only about the craft or art of making speeches or texts, but about this craft or art as a form of *struggle* (p. 3).

The main objective that recurs in these definitions is that the discursive techniques employed in rhetorical argumentation have as their object to persuade, convince or win those addressed to the values or attitude of the argument-author or 'those of the theses for which (the argumentation) seeks assent.' Hart (1997: 5-8) argues that the rhetor always takes special pains to be sure that the moral of the story is clear to the audience. "The story rhetoric

tells is always a story with a purpose; it is never told for its own sake.” He emphasises that in the world of rhetoric, a speaker succeeds only when he or she can induce the *readers* to “contribute” their knowledge, feelings, and experiences about the matter in question. At its best, rhetoric is ordinary language done extra-ordinarily. Rhetoric is an art: “to be effective in persuasion one must have a delicate touch, an ability to use the right argument and the deft phrase at precisely the right time.”

5.5.1 The Rhetorical Process

It is my intention here to discuss the main ways by which rhetoric functions. An interesting observation to start with is that by Hart that in a way, rhetoric resembles science in that both the scientist and the rhetor want to be taken seriously. He argues that like the scientist, the persuader marshals evidence and uses this evidence to come to some real or imagined, feature of the observable world and then employs this package of arguments to support a policy recommendation. However, unlike the scientist, the persuader is willing to treat the perceptions of ordinary people as the acid test of demonstratedness. Whilst the scientist normally is expected to meet a more exacting standard of truth, “the persuader’s truth is often fifty-one percent truth: the majority judgement of ordinary citizens. For most persuaders on most issues, fifty-one percent truth is judged sufficient” (Hart, 1997: 9-10).

One of the major characteristics of rhetoric is that it distracts the attention of the reader or audience from other things to what it is saying. One way by which the rhetor attracts our attention is for him to control the premises of a discussion. As McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated, the power of the mass media derives not so much from their ability to tell us what to think but what to think about. By “setting the agenda” in this fashion, by controlling the premises pertaining to newsworthiness, the media can thus influence any

conclusions drawn from these premises. So the rhetor asks listeners to think about this topic, not that one, to try out this solution, not that endorsed by the speaker's opponent.

Rhetoric achieves its effectiveness in several other ways. According to Hart (1997: 15-23), among other things, rhetoric "tries to narrow our latitudes of choice without giving us the feeling that we are being thereby hemmed in"; rhetoric enlarges, thus, it operates by asking us to equate things we had never before considered equitable; rhetoric names - this naming function of rhetoric helps listeners become comfortable with new ideas and provide listeners with an acceptable vocabulary for talking about these ideas; and most importantly, rhetoric empowers, thus it is the delivery system of power. For instance, in an election campaign, "Purity of heart and a spotless record of integrity are assets to a political speaker but they are hardly enough to sustain a campaign unless those qualities are shared with the voters" (*ibid.* 23).

Another pertinent argument made by Hart (1997: 38-40) is that "... since each persuasive message is produced in a unique *rhetorical situation*, thereby constituting a unique speech act, the situation itself can make a statement apart from the statements contained in the words of the message". Further on, he argues that "... all messages "do" as well as say and ... all messages bear the imprints of the social situations that produced them, thereby making rhetoric a situated art that can be understood only when text and context are considered simultaneously". That the situation or context contributes to the overall meaning in persuasion is a fact also expressed by Hodge and Kress (1988: 39) who assert that "context is a crucial part of meaning". They explain further "The context, both the physical referents and the social conditions of semiosis, is decisive for communication to occur".

According to Mader (1973 quoted in Hart 1997: 95), a narrative must also have *rhetorical presence*, a vividness of detail that brings to life the ideas advanced. Hart (1997: 96-97) contends that although narratives do not argue explicitly, they do indeed argue. He reasons that although their style of argument is devastatingly natural because it uses a realistic time line to tell the story, "behind any narrative lie primitive rhetorical decisions for the speaker: Which facts should be stressed and which ignored? Which characters should be mentioned and which amplified? When should the story be started and when stopped? By making each of these decisions and dozens more like them, the persuader/ narrator is also deciding which ideas to amplify and which to thrust out into the background." In this case, an interesting question to ask is "What propositional content is the narrative designed to mask? This probe encourages the critic to inquire into the underlying purpose of the narrative at hand." For these reasons, news as narrative can be understood as a rich source of persuasion. Another rhetorical characteristic is that the news is fantastic. "Much of what we read in the news does not exist. There is no such thing as "public opinion", for example, until a writer labels a particular set of attitudes as popular etc". We are reminded yet again that, news is selective and "The essence of rhetoric is selectivity. To make a rhetorical decision is to choose this image rather than that one, to frame an argument for this audience rather than another" (Hart 1997: 203-4).

From the above discussion, one can now briefly summarise the nature and focus of the rhetorical analysis that is preferred in this study. My aim is to investigate how the two daily newspapers and the stories that they carried articulate their messages and images rhetorically. I am interested in identifying and explaining how the news stories and editorial opinions try to influence thought. In this case, how they persuade the reader to either support or reject the political change to multi-party democracy. The process of

persuasion is understood here to be achieved in the way the arguments and stories are structured in order to facilitate the reader's agreement with the newspaper's ideological position. The ideological position may be stated outright by the writers or the readers "encouraged to embrace them in so far as they are strongly implied, insinuated by, or presupposed by the rhetor". These objectives on the part of the journalist/editor as the rhetor are achieved by use of discursive techniques.

It is also apparent from the above discussion that rhetoric is concerned with drawing conclusions and recommending policy options. My focus here is to explain how this is achieved. To elaborate further on the above paragraph, the rhetorical analysis will attempt to explain how the stories use the signifier and elements of "form" to influence the "content" or "message". The analysis will show how the rhetor takes pain to be sure that the moral of the story is clear to the readers. It is assumed here that the news story or editorial opinion is always a story with a purpose. I will also attempt to identify the rhetorical situation in which some of the stories as messages are produced. It is my assumption here that the rhetorical situations during this important historical moment in Kenya made important statements aside from the rhetorical messages by the newspapers. I will also investigate how "rhetorical presence - a vividness of detail that brings to life the ideas advanced" is deployed by the editorial opinion and commentary.

5.5.2 The Rhetorical Process as a Semiological Process

The terms semiology and semiotics have been used interchangeably. Following Tomaselli and Shepperson (1991), I have chosen to use the former mainly because I am examining language and rhetoric. I wish to argue here for the import of understanding the rhetorical process as a semiological process. Semiology (or semiotics) can be understood, in Fiske's (1982)

words, as "concerned not with the transmission of meanings but with the generation and exchange of meanings ... the focus is on the role of communication in establishing and maintaining values and on how these values enable communication to have meaning". Following Peirce (1931-35) McQuail (1987: 185) observes that "semiology (or semiotics) is the general science of 'signs' (which) encompasses structuralism and other things besides, thus all things to do with signification, however loosely structured, diverse and fragmentally". He goes on to say that semiology has sought to explore the nature of sign-systems which go beyond the rules of grammar and syntax and which regulate complex, latent and culturally dependent meanings of texts.

The application of semiological analysis has the advantage of opening the possibility of revealing more of the underlying meaning of a text, taken as a whole. For McQuail (1987: 187), it:

is potentially as useful as, perhaps more so than, conventional (quantitative) content analysis in predicting or explaining effects; it has a special application in certain kinds of evaluative research, especially that which is directed at uncovering the latent ideology and "bias" of media content. (...) Attention is directed to latent rather than to manifest content and latent meaning is regarded as actually more essential.

It is Fiske's (1982: 153) opinion that such analysis:

Can help us to make visible the ideological meanings which normally lie unacknowledged in communication. Ideological meanings are so persuasive because they do not draw attention to themselves, they give themselves the status of the

taken for granted, the natural. Exposing the arbitrariness of that which assumes the mantle of the natural is the work of semiotics, and in this sense, semiotic analysis is, must necessarily be, a political act.

The above understanding sensitises one to those semiotic techniques that are so basic to rhetorical discourse. These discursive techniques, one can also call them rhetorical tools, which include mainly figures of speech, can help us infer the conceptualising processes of a writer's mind and anticipate an audience's or reader's desired or anticipated response. According to Dyer (1982:152), "figurative language is rhetorical language in that it tries to create effects by breaking or exploiting language rules". I wish mainly to deploy or make use of the following semiotic concepts: symbols, paradigms, syntagms, metaphors, metonyms, myths, and connotation.

The formation and understanding of messages (encoding and decoding) is made possible by codes - a set of rules or an interpretive device known to both transmitter and receiver, which assigns a certain meaning or content to a certain sign. Dyer (1982: 131) explains that "codes are forms of social knowledge which are derived from social practices and beliefs although they are not laid down in any statute. According to Fiske (1982), an object becomes a symbol when it acquires through convention and use a meaning that enables it to stand for something else. Convention is necessary in the understanding of any sign. It is the social dimension of signs; the agreement among the users about the appropriate uses of and responses to a sign. A metaphor, however, expresses the unfamiliar (tenor) in terms of the familiar (vehicle), thereby exploiting simultaneous similarity and difference. It works by a principle of association that involves transposing values or properties from one plane of reality or meaning to another. In this sense it works paradigmatically "for vehicle and tenor must have enough similarity to place

them in the same paradigm, but enough difference for the comparison to have (the) necessary element of contrast". The metaphor is not essentially realistic, but imaginative. It is Hart's (1997: 147) contention that "metaphors have entailments. That is metaphors mean certain things but imply other things too". He posits further that "Entailments are the policy implications of metaphor".

Metonyms, unlike metaphors, work by associating meanings within the same plane: making a part stand for the whole. "Selection of the metonym is clearly crucial for from it we construct the unknown remainder of reality" (Fiske, 1982: 97-98). Fiske explains that metonyms are powerful conveyors of reality because they work indexically, "they are part of that for which they stand ... where they differ from natural indexes like smoke for fire is that a highly arbitrary selection is involved. The arbitrariness of this selection is often disguised or at least ignored, and the metonym is made to appear a natural index and thus is given the status of the 'real', the 'not to be questioned.' An index, however, is a sign with a direct existential connection with its object. Myths also work metonymically. A myth, Fiske (1982: 93-100) explains, is "a story by which a culture explains or understands some aspect of reality or nature; a way of conceptualising or understanding something." Myths work metonymically because one sign stimulates us to construct the whole of which it is part. Both metonym and myth "are powerful modes of communication because they are unobtrusive or disguised indexes. They exploit the 'truth factor' of a natural index and build on it by disguising its indexical nature." One can say then that the myth is the 'cultural' meaning of a sign. Myths are considered as dynamic; they change and some can change rapidly to meet the changing needs and values of the culture of which they are a part.

If denotation refers to the common sense, obvious meaning of a sign, connotation describes the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the

feeling and emotions of the user and the values of his culture. This is when meanings move towards the subjective: it is when the interpretant is influenced as much by the interpreter as by the object or the sign (Fiske, 1982: 91). In Dyer's (1982: 128) explanation, "connotation is a term used to refer to meanings which lie beyond denotation but are dependent on it. Connotative readings of signs are introduced by an audience/viewer/reader beyond the literal meaning of a sign and are activated by the means and conventions or codes". Connotation is the primary way in which the mass media communicate ideological meanings. Seiter (1992: 39) explains that "connotative meanings land us squarely in the domain of ideology; the worldview (including the model of social relations and their causes) portrayed from a particular position and set of interests in society".

Because connotation works on the subjective level, we are frequently not made consciously aware of it. The interesting part is that it is often easy to read connotative values as denotative facts. Though connotation works on the subjective level, the subjective responses or understandings are not individualistic in nature, they are "subjective" responses which are shared to some extent by all members of a culture. "This intersubjectivity is culturally determined, and is one of the ways in which cultural influences affect the individuals in any culture, and through which cultural membership is expressed" (Fiske and Hartley, 1987: 46).

The above discursive techniques of presentation, it is assumed, will be employed by the journalist or writer, to reinforce the attitude, values and (or slant) the facts in their arguments and thereby present to the reader his preferred picture of the reality. It is my contention that, like politicians, journalists employ political rhetoric as an exercise concerned more with options, attitudes and values rather than with facts per se. I will therefore study and analyse the way these rhetorical techniques or devices have been

used by the two dailies in their news coverage and opinion columns. As will shortly be evident below, political rhetoric is ideological when it is used to portray a desired 'true picture' of the real political situation vis-à-vis other contending 'pictures'. Therefore, in the analysis of political rhetoric, it is not as interesting to analyse or establish the truth-content in factual propositions as it is to see how such factual propositions function and are used in the political situation (see Heradsveit and Bjorgo, 1987: 11-139).

5.5.3 Rhetoric and Ideology

I wish to argue that newspaper readers, and indeed all people, are motivated and galvanised not by how the world is, but by what they believe it is. It follows therefore that when a journalist or an author engages his readers in a textual or prosaic dialogic argumentation, the instrumental thing is what discursive reality he is able to create, among others, through rhetoric. The important thing then would be to see how rhetoric is used to arrive at certain desired pictures of reality. But since rhetoric is not inherently ideological, the deployment of the rhetorical devices explained above does not automatically make a statement, discourse or text ideological. Therefore, like Carroll (1998: 362), "I need a concept of ideology in order to determine whether or not the rhetoric of a particular instance of mass art is to count as ideological." For this purpose, the concept of ideology that I have developed in Chapter Two to refer mainly to the "political ideas" of a class, or any social group, will not suffice. For the purposes of rhetorical analysis, I have found the work of Carroll (1998) very helpful.

The notions or conceptions of ideology can be confusing. Fiske uses the term ideology to describe the social production of meaning. His usage is based on his understanding that, "Myths and connoted values are what they are because of the ideology of which they are the usable manifestations." He explains that the relationship between the sign and its myths and

connotations, on the one hand, and the user, on the other, is an ideological one. In short, "Ideology is the general process of the production of meanings and ideas" (Fiske, 1982:144-146). This conception by Fiske makes ideology virtually co-extensive with what is ordinarily called culture.

In my discussion of ideology in Chapter Two, I argued for the usefulness of taking ideology to refer to, in Carroll's (1998: 365) construction, the "body of ideas expressive or characteristic of a particular social group or class, or action oriented sets of political beliefs." This understanding distinguishes ideology from culture as a whole by correlating it to the beliefs of certain groups or classes, on the one hand, and with politics, on the other. Such a conception of ideology is not necessarily pejorative because it does not invoke the elements of suspicion and disapproval. But there are other uses of ideology both in ordinary language and academic discourse that are pejorative. Usually this usage takes ideology to comprise "the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination". (Thompson 1984 quoted in Carroll, 1998: 366). This, as already seen in Chapter Two, is the meaning that most Marxist/critical perspectives hold. In the same chapter other non-pejorative Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives were discussed.

I would like to concur here with Carroll (1994: 367) that for the purposes of ideological critiques, one necessarily needs to adopt or endorse a pejorative conception of ideology. The main reason for this is because ideological criticism is social criticism. And, critics "are in the business of advancing negative judgements of that which they identify as ideology". There are two conditions that Carroll identifies as being central for this conception of ideology. They are the epistemic component and the domination component. "The epistemic component requires that the ideas, concepts, beliefs, etc. in question be flawed epistemically in some way; that they be false, mystifying,

and so on" while "the second component refers to social oppression". Each is a necessary condition of ideology. Carroll concurs with the argument I made to the effect that the Marxist concept of ideology:

is too narrow for the purposes of contemporary ideological criticism. It is tied too closely to the notion of class. Thus, it can only be applied to societies that have social classes and, indeed, to societies that have dominant social classes. Moreover it is explicitly linked to class domination. But, arguably, phenomena like sexism and racism are ideological, yet they may not be reducible to class relationships. Thus, one way in which contemporary critics need to adjust the Marxist conception of ideology is to refrain from keying it exclusively to class domination (*ibid.*: 370).

Another suggestion by Carroll is to do away with the requirement that propositions should be false in order to fulfil the epistemic requirement of ideology. Such a requirement would be inadequate for being too narrow and restrictive; "sometimes true propositions are used to advance ideology ... a true proposition may be embedded in an otherwise ideological discourse in such a way that its import, overall, is misleading owing to its *discursive contextualisation*." It is restrictive, too, to restrict ideology to propositions. Ideology may also be comprised of concepts and categorical frameworks. Carroll (1998: 375) explains that "where categories and conceptual frameworks fail to fit the phenomena by demarcating it inaccurately, they may obscure the phenomena and distort it, for example, by over-simplifying the relevant forces in play or categories may draw distortions where they should not be drawn". She then gives the following operational definition of ideology:

Therefore, let us say that a proposition *x* is ideological if and only if 1. *x* is false (or otherwise epistemically defective) and 2. *x* is a tenet of or has contextually grounded implications favourable to some practice of social domination.

In this study, therefore, I will investigate the various ways by which rhetoric has been used ideologically by the two daily newspapers. I will investigate the way in which the propositions, ideas, concepts, beliefs, etc. that are used are false or epistemically defective. A significant element of this investigation will be to explain how a true proposition can be embedded in an otherwise ideological discourse in such a way that its overall import is misleading owing to its discursive contextualisation. I will also look at how the news stories and editorial opinions have used attributes, categories and conceptual frameworks to describe people, events and issues in ways which "fail to fit the phenomena". As indicated above, they may do this by demarcating the phenomena inaccurately and thereby obscuring and distorting it, or they may draw distortions where they should not be drawn.

5.6 Extra-Media Data

Throughout the previous chapter, I underscored the import of socio-historical factors (context) in the understanding of media content. The need for contextual information or data for the analysis and understanding of political commentary cannot be over-emphasised; one is dealing here more with ideological sympathies, opinions, argumentations, attitudes and the portrayal of 'desired pictures' of facts rather than with facts per se. In short, the focus is mainly on political and ideological rhetoric. In Chapter One, whilst I was discussing the importance of analysing editorial commentaries, I made reference to Hay's (1969) observation that a newspaper experiencing an epoch produces a series of essays recapitulating daily events, placing them

with respect to historical trends, theory, and dogma and expressing opinions about them. In order to meaningfully analyse the newspapers' editorial and opinion commentaries pertinent to the debate about democratic change to multi-party politics, one must of necessity make use of extra-media data.

The context of this study is mainly historical and party-political, with emphasis being put on how the suppression of a healthy party-political culture has had consequences for the fundamental human freedoms of association and political expression, especially press freedom. The extra-media information on the historical development of party politics in Kenya is given in Chapter One above while the implications of the resultant culture on press performance is given in Chapter Three. The effect of the more recent (1991 to 1992) political developments on press performance is the concern of our empirical study. In the analysis of the newspaper commentaries, their argumentations and ideological positions, therefore, I will make extensive reference to some of this contextual information.

The study and analysis of the changes in the performance of the daily press during, and as a result of, the political change will also draw on the information given in Chapter One. More especially on the sections that deal with the concerted struggle for a multi-party system, and the two ideological positions with regard to democratic change. This last section, concerned with the two ideological positions is important to the establishment of the individual newspaper's party sympathy. I would like to argue that the news items and commentaries in one newspaper might be considered as extra-media data in respect of, and in analysing data from, the other newspaper. For this reason, in the ideological analysis of the editorial and political commentaries of one newspaper, I will sometime make reference to data in the other newspaper.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described in detail the research design that will be followed in the empirical investigation. It is believed that the chapter is better understood when read together with the previous chapter. I have emphasised that the overriding method of analysis will be qualitative. This is mainly because the focus of the study presupposes an interpretive approach. The quantitative nature of the study will use basic relative frequencies but the process of establishing these statistics will be qualitative. This will involve a lot of reading and studying of the news stories as texts. The socio-historical and political context of the data exist will greatly inform the investigation. The statistics arrived at will be important when making performance comparisons between the two dailies and across time. The results of the qualitative analysis of editorial opinions and commentaries will require more space. Direct quotations from the texts will be given to exemplify and support the main findings. This will require detailed interpretation and explanation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

A major assumption taken as a given in this study is that the political culture of a particular society or nation has important implications for the nature and extent of the freedom with which the society's press will perform in the realm of politics. From this assumption is derived a concomitant proposition that a major change in a society's political conjuncture will be tangibly reflected in a major change in the political performance of its daily press. The two major ways by which the press may become a political player in a society are in its news transmission role, and in its news and political analyses or commentary. The former role will be the concern of this chapter while the latter will be dealt with in the next chapter (Chapter Seven).

In my review of the history of party politics in Kenya, I have showed how prior to 1991, a political culture had evolved in the country which greatly delimited freedom of expression and especially, freedom to question the KANU-government's single-party monopoly on power. Those who were brave enough to so question this monopoly were politically ostracised or criminalized. Occasions were when even assassinations of vocal critics were blamed on the State. It is obvious that this undemocratic political culture impacted on the way the daily press performed in its news coverage. In the early days of the multi-party crusade, the daily press gave it very little coverage, arguably because doing so would antagonise the KANU single-party political establishment. It has already been demonstrated in Chapter One that news publicity for politicians and political groups is a major source of political legitimacy. The KANU-government, apart from its legal monopoly on party politics, also succeeded in pressurising the media institutions to give

multi-party advocates very little publicity, if any at all. In the event that any publicity was given, it was invariably negative.

It is my proposition that with the repeal of the single-party legislation that legalised opposition politics, the press could now freely report news on issues and personalities that would have been taboo in the former political conjuncture. This proposition can be gauged firstly by finding out if there was any increase in the proportion of party news, related to the political change in the dailies. Secondly, it can be established by finding out if there was any change in the political sympathies of the dailies to the two contending political groups. One way of doing this is by finding out changes in the nature of publicity, negative or positive, given by each daily to each of the two political groups. Another way would be to chart any changes in the legitimacy accorded to these groups in the news. I intend to do these things in this chapter.

6.2 The Research Findings

As already stated above, I am interested in finding out whether and how the political change to multi-partyism impacted on the proportion and nature of the daily newspaper's coverage of party-political news. It will be significant to find out if there was any increase, and the extent of this, in party news as a proportion of all the political news carried by each of the two dailies, *Kenya Times* and the *Nation*. The next aim will be to find out if there were any changes in the proportion of publicity (coverage) accorded by each of the political groups by the two newspapers. From here I will then look at the nature of publicity accorded, whether positive or negative. This will help to establish the party sympathy for each daily because positive or negative publicity for this study would imply giving a particular party public legitimacy and vice versa.

Apart from the political-change variable, I am interested in the impact of ownership status. As already established, *Kenya Times* is a KANU newspaper while the *Nation* is a private and foreign-owned daily. If it is found out that there was significant change in the proportion of party-political news in *Kenya Times*, it will be important to establish, firstly, whether its coverage of the Opposition decreased and secondly, whether its coverage of KANU increased. And also whether the nature of its coverage of the Opposition was more negative than positive. I will also investigate whether the fact that this daily is a KANU newspaper meant that it carried largely KANU news and very little news on the Opposition and that the news about KANU were mostly positive and those about the Opposition mostly negative. In other words, I am interested in finding out whether it is true that the party newspaper would carry news that gave KANU public legitimacy and none or very little to the Opposition.

The *Nation* on the other hand considers itself to be 'independent'. I am interested in finding out whether it had any party-sympathy and which party was accorded that sympathy. It has been showed in previous chapters how the KANU government put pressure on the dailies, especially the private and foreign-owned *Nation*, not to give publicity to the budding Opposition. It is this study's hypothesis that the new found freedom in the wake of the political change means that the 'independent' *Nation* will now give the Opposition more coverage than before and that this will be predominantly positive publicity thereby conferring legitimacy on the Opposition. The concomitant hypothesis to this is that the *Nation* will now give less publicity to KANU and that the publicity given will be more negative than before. It is also hypothesised that in the *Nation*, there will be an increase in the daily news items whereby the Opposition criticised the KANU government.

6.3 The Proportion of News Stories Related to the Political Change

All the news in each daily newspaper that reported on the political change was included in the study for all the days of the study period. As mentioned earlier, the unit of analysis is the individual news story. In all a total of 1,323 stories were analysed; 633 from *Kenya Times* and 690 from the *Nation*. The findings follow below.

TABLE 1. Party news coverage as a percentage of all news related to change, by *Kenya Times* and the *Nation* for the months of November 1991 through February 1992.

		1991 Nov	1991 Dec	1992 Jan	1992 Feb
% Party News	<i>Times</i>	69	80	76	81
	<i>Nation</i>	80	73	79	94

The findings in the above Table show that for both daily newspapers there is an increase in the proportion of party news related to the political change from November 1991 to February 1991. Save for the month of December, the proportion of party news in the *Nation* is higher than that in *Kenya Times*. Between November 1991 and February 1992 there is a 12 per cent increase in *Kenya Times* while in the *Nation* the increase is 14 per cent. This change is also apparent, though less markedly, when the periods are collapsed into two: before the change (Nov-Dec. 1991) and after (Jan-Feb. 1992). When this is done, the proportion of party political news items for both newspapers becomes the same for the period before the change, thus 75 per cent. From this the proportion in *Kenya Times* increases, just minimally, by three per cent to 78 per cent for the period after the change whilst in the *Nation* it increases significantly by eight per cent to 83 per cent.

One significant finding to note here is that the impact of the political change with respect to the proportion of party news was partly registered by both

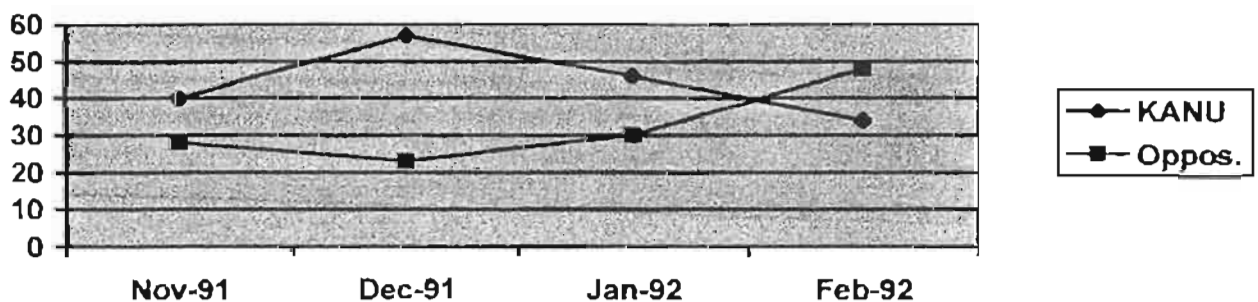
dailies firstly between November and December and secondly between December and February. During the first period, the proportion of party news in *Kenya Times* increased by a significant 11 per cent but in the second period, that is from December through February, there was no significant change. For the *Nation* there was first a decrease of seven per cent between November and December followed by an increase of 21 per cent between December and February. I can conclude that with the political change to multi-party politics, party news gained in importance between December and January, with the *Nation* registering a greater increase in political party coverage than *Kenya Times*.

6.4 Daily Newspaper coverage of KANU and of the Opposition.

TABLE 2. Coverage by *Kenya Times* of KANU and of the Opposition as a percentage of all news related to change, for the months of November 1991 through February 1992.

		1991 Nov	1991 Dec	1992 Jan	1992 Feb
% Coverage by <i>Times</i> of	KANU	40	57	46	34
	Opposition	28	23	30	48
	Non-party	32	20	24	18
	N=	99	111	220	203

CHART 1



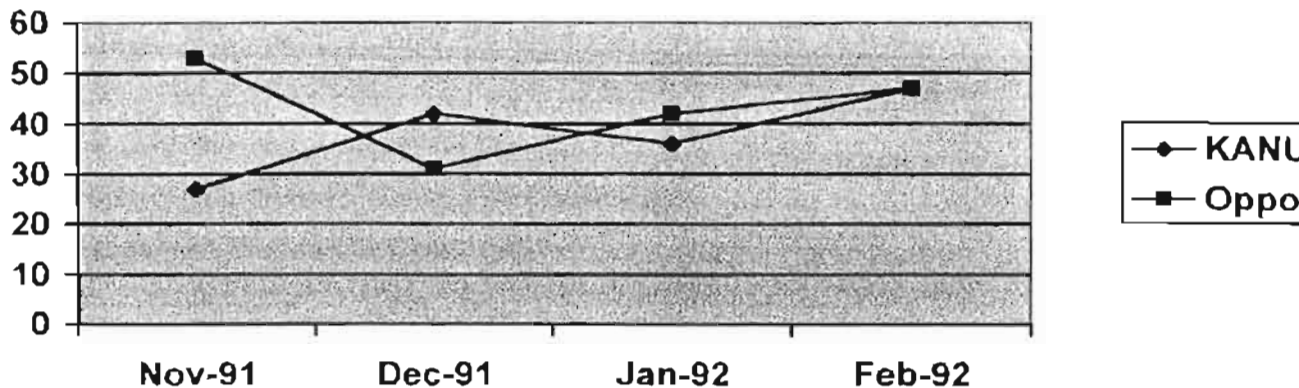
It can be concluded then that on the average the effect of the political change saw *Kenya Times* decrease its coverage of KANU while increasing its coverage of the Opposition. However, the period between November and December seems to be the crucial time. During this period, the changes were in the opposite direction; with the coverage of KANU increasing and that of the Opposition decreasing. This means that the changes that took place between December 1991 and February, as shown above, become much more significant than the average change. The fact that in November 1991, the KANU-government cracked down on the Opposition and put pressure on the dailies may explain the increase in KANU coverage and decrease in Opposition coverage. The reasons for the eventual decrease in KANU coverage and increase in Opposition coverage will be given below, when the nature of the publicity that the two contending political groups were accorded is considered. It is significant to note that the decrease in the coverage of KANU and increase in the coverage of the Opposition progressed until in February, *Kenya Times* gave the Opposition more coverage than it gave KANU.

Coverage by the *Nation* of KANU and of the Opposition, as a percentage of all news related to change, for the months of November 1991 through February 1992.

TABLE 3.

		1991 Nov	1991 Dec	1992 Jan	1991 Feb
% Coverage by <i>Nation</i> of	KANU	27	42	36	47
	Opposition	53	31	42	47
	Non-party	10	27	22	06
	N=	74	176	303	137

CHART 2



The above table and chart indicate that between the months of November 1991 and February 1992, the *Nation's* coverage of KANU increased while its coverage of the Opposition decreased. The *Nation* gave the Opposition more coverage than it gave KANU during November and January but gave KANU more coverage than the Opposition in December. The important finding is that in February 1992, the newspaper carried the same proportion of news items for both groups. The *Nation's* coverage of KANU increased significantly between November and December 1991 but changed only slightly between then and February 1992. On the other hand, its coverage of the Opposition decreased between November to December but increased between then and February 1992. The increase in KANU coverage and decrease in Opposition coverage between November and December 1991 can be explained by the fact that in November, the KANU-government cracked down on the Opposition and put pressure on the dailies not to give them publicity. This scenario changed when in the course of December, KANU embarked on the process of legitimising opposition politics and this explains the eventual increase in the *Nation's* coverage of the Opposition. Another interesting observation is that the *Nation* did not decrease its coverage of KANU as a result of the political change.

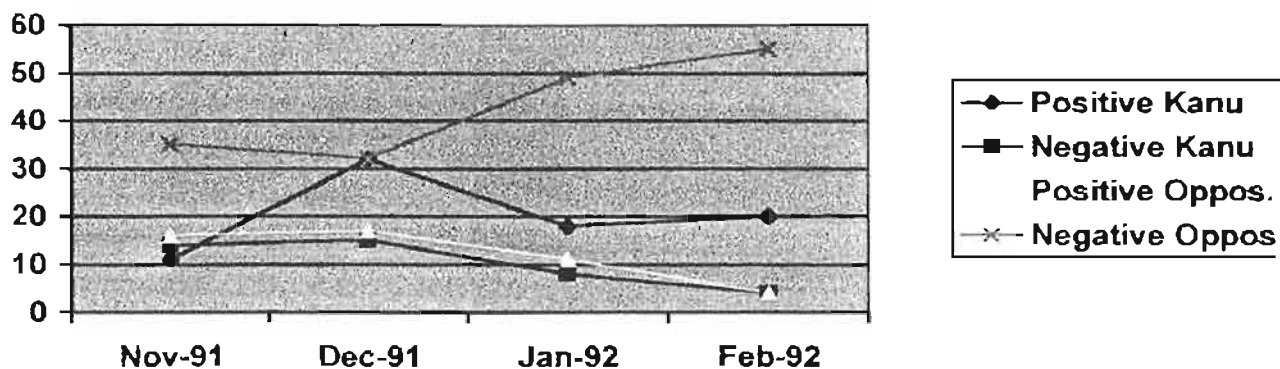
6.5 The Nature of the Publicity given to the Political Groups by *Kenya Times* and the *Nation*.

TABLE 4. The Nature of Publicity accorded to the two political groups by *Kenya Times* and by the *Nation*, as a percentage of all news related to the political change, and the Proportion of positive over negative publicity, for the months of November 1991 through February 1992.

			Nov 91	Dec 91	Jan 92	Feb 92
% Publicity by <i>Times</i>	About KANU	Positive (a)	11	32	18	20
		Negative (b)	14	15	08	04
		Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.1	0.4	0.4	0.7
	About Opposition	Positive (a)	16	17	11	04
		Negative (b)	35	32	49	55
		Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.4	0.3	-0.6	-0.9
% Publicity by <i>Nation</i>	About KANU	Positive (a)	03	13	14	15
		Negative (b)	16	28	15	25
		Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.7	-0.4	0	-0.3
	About Opposition	Positive (a)	16	25	31	22
		Negative (b)	43	14	14	24
		Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.5	0.3	0.4	0

- The - sign indicates more negative than positive publicity while + indicates more positive than negative publicity. Numbers closer to -1 and +1 indicate greater proportions of negative and positive publicity respectively

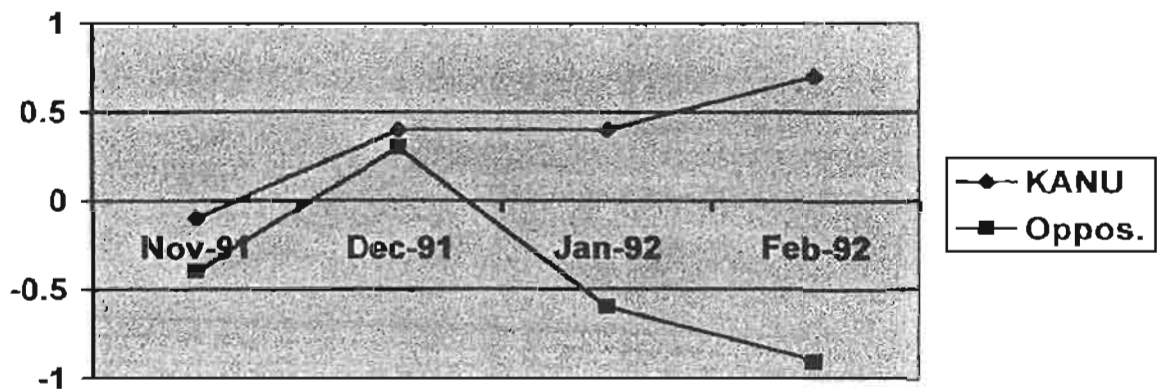
CHART 3



6.5.1 The Nature of Party Publicity in *Kenya Times*

It can be seen from the above table and chart that in *Kenya Times*' coverage of KANU, there was a substantial change between November and December during which positive coverage of KANU increased but only to decrease slightly between December and February. Negative coverage of KANU decreased substantially. When one considers the proportion of positive to negative coverage of KANU, as showed in the chart below, one finds that there was a strong preference for positive coverage of KANU by *Kenya Times*. However, the daily's positive coverage of the Opposition decreased between December and February whilst its negative coverage increased between December and February. As showed below, the proportion of positive to negative stories increased in the negative showing a very strong determination by *Kenya Times* towards complete negative coverage of the Opposition.

CHART 4



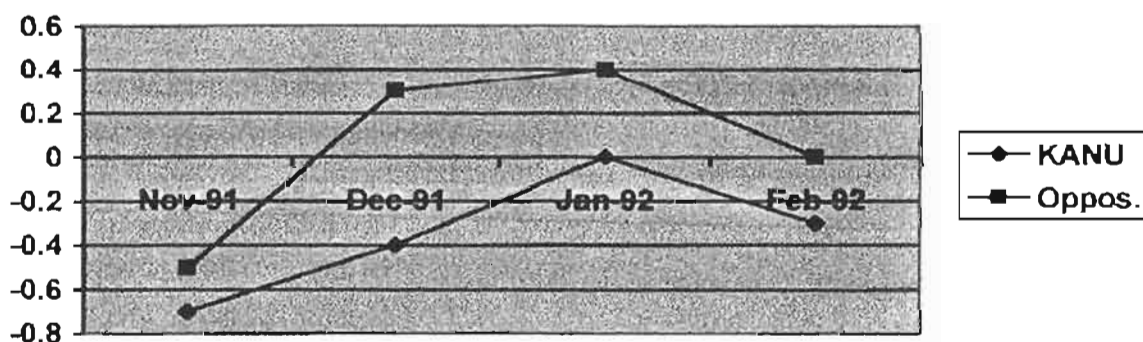
The above findings are important because even though *Kenya Times*' net coverage of KANU decreased (see Table 2 above), its positive coverage of KANU actually increased while, on the other hand, as its net coverage of the Opposition increased, so did its negative coverage. Following my

assumptions, I expected that with the political change, *Kenya Times*, because of its ownership affiliation to KANU, would increase its coverage of KANU and decrease its coverage of the Opposition. The findings shown above actually contradict this proposition. However, the findings presented above confirm the proposition but only when modified to refer to positive publicity and inversely in respect to negative publicity.

It can be concluded therefore, on the one hand, that most probably as a result of the political change, *Kenya Times* increased the net positive publicity it accorded KANU while decreasing the positive publicity that it accorded the Opposition. On the other hand, one can also conclude that *Kenya Times* decreased, most probably as a result of the political change, the negative publicity that it gave KANU while it increased the negative publicity it accorded the Opposition. So, in effect, the net decrease in *Kenya Times*' coverage of KANU can be attributed to the significant decrease in its negative coverage. Also, the net increase in its coverage of the Opposition comprised mainly of the substantial increase in negative coverage. As indicated above, these observations are supported by the proportions of positive to negative coverage for each political group.

6.5.2 The Nature of Party Publicity in the *Nation*

CHART 5



In the *Nation*, the proportion of KANU's positive coverage increased substantially between November and December, only to increase slightly between then and February. Negative coverage fluctuated but ended with a net increase of nine per cent. When one looks at the proportion of positive to negative coverage, one finds out that it leaned on the negative save for the month of January when it was roughly neutral. It can be concluded, therefore, that on the whole *Nation* gave KANU slightly more negative than positive coverage with the intensity of the negative coverage decreasing somewhat with time.

About the Opposition, the proportion of positive coverage by the *Nation* fluctuated from month to month with a slight overall net increase. Negative coverage had a substantial decrease between November and December, remained stable in January and then increased substantially in February 1992. The proportion of positive to negative coverage changed from negative to positive between November and December 1991 and then decreased until there was near parity between positive and negative coverage of the Opposition by *Nation* in February 1992.

I have made reference above (see Table 3 and concluding observations) to the crackdown by the government on the Opposition and to the pressure it exerted on the dailies in November. These can explain the increase in the *Nation's* net coverage of KANU and the decrease in its coverage of the Opposition between November and December. From December 1991 to February 1992, the net coverage of KANU did not change significantly while it increased significantly for the Opposition. This seems to support our proposition that for the *Nation*, as an independent paper, the political change meant that it could now carry more news items about the Opposition.

The above conclusion notwithstanding, as already seen above with respect to *Kenya Times*, an increase in publicity (net coverage) does not necessarily mean that this is favourable publicity. In this section it has been established that the *Nation* increased the positive coverage of both KANU and the Opposition, but it gave comparatively more positive publicity to the Opposition than to KANU. It has also been established that the *Nation's* negative coverage of KANU increased, but this was minimal. For the Opposition, negative coverage increased until in February there was near parity between negative and positive publicity.

It can therefore be concluded that from a situation whereby it gave both political groups more negative than positive publicity (in November) the *Nation* managed with time to give both groups balanced publicity. The political change, therefore, seems to have enabled the *Nation* to perform its role as an 'independent' daily newspaper. For the Opposition, this means that it received 'balanced' publicity from at least one of the national dailies. These observations are supported by the findings for the proportion of positive to negative publicity for each party.

6.6 The Nature of the Opposition Criticising KANU and of KANU Defending Itself.

TABLE 5. Coverage by *Kenya Times* and the *Nation* of the Opposition criticising KANU and KANU reacting to the Opposition, as a percentage of all party news related to the political change, for the months of November 1991 through February 1992.

		Nov. 1991	Dec. 1991	Jan. 1992	Feb. 1992
% in <i>Times</i> of	Opposition criticising KANU (a)	06	11	08	07
	KANU reacting to Opposition (b)	35	38	31	22
	Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.7	-0.6	-0.6	-0.5
% in <i>Nation</i> Of	Opposition criticising KANU (a)	14	03	24	22
	KANU reacting to Opposition (b)	31	10	20	20
	Proportion $[(a-b)/(a+b)]^*$	-0.4	-0.5	0.1	0

*The sign - indicates more items whereby KANU is defending itself, while + indicates more items whereby the Opposition is criticising KANU. Numbers closer to -1 and +1 indicate greater proportion of items whereby KANU is defending itself and items whereby the Opposition is criticising KANU, respectively.

It can be seen from the above table that the proportion between the two categories of coverage $[(\text{Opposition Criticising KANU} - \text{KANU reacting to Opposition})/(\text{Opposition Criticising KANU} + \text{KANU reacting to Opposition})]$ shows that *Kenya Times* maintained its preference for stories whereby KANU was fending off Opposition criticism. Even though there was a slight decrease in both legitimacy categories, this development did not change the preference by *Kenya Times* for carrying more news items whereby KANU fought for its legitimacy that was now being challenged by the Opposition. In this respect, the political change seem to have had no major observable effect on *Kenya Times'* stance vis-à-vis the two political groups.

In the *Nation*, the proportion between the two categories of coverage changed from a preference for stories whereby the Opposition criticised KANU to a situation whereby there was near parity in coverage. It seems that this is as a result of the KANU-government's crackdown on the Opposition, and the concomitant pressure on the daily press not to give the Opposition much publicity. During the two months of 1991, the *Nation* arguably gave KANU much more space to defend and argue for its legitimacy but very little space to the Opposition to question this and therefore establish its own legitimacy. In the two months of 1992, however, the *Nation* can be said to have increasingly given both political groups similar amount of legitimacy space; with the more important development being the increase in the news items whereby the Opposition criticised KANU. It can be said, therefore, that the political change seems to have enabled the *Nation* to live up to its claim to fairness in political coverage.

6.7 News objects: Public Figures, Crowds and Events.

As observed in Chapter One, the definition of issues in the press is a by-product of their reporting on recent events. In this respect, news coverage can

be understood as being skewed in preference of dramatic events that have an element of novelty. It can be argued that such dramatic events could be a sequence of politically consequential controversies. This is so for the reason that the priorities of the press are shaped by perceptions of power, the intensity of conflict and their sense of what is important to their audience. I also made the argument that disclosure is important in putting events and issues on the public agenda. Disclosure accords publicity and publicity may crucially enhance the salience of an issue. It is also apparent that political issues and events are in most cases intricately related to political personages.

It is my intention in this section to highlight the major sources of news coverage for the newspapers during the period under study. It is clear from the above quantitative results that there was an increase and a predominance of news items that were pertinent to the political change that was taking place in Kenya at this point in time. This can be seen to underscore the importance accorded by the newspapers to the whole process of change. When analysing the data, I observed that public figures were given most coverage especially when their statements were seen to be controversial and to give new dimensions to the whole debate about political change. In this category, politicians topped the list. In KANU, President Daniel arap Moi and other national party officials, especially the party's secretary-general, Joseph Kamotho, were widely covered. The same applies to the Opposition especially when there was controversy inhered in what was being reported about them.

Apart from the leading party officials, other political figures were also covered especially when they contributed to the debate about the political change or when they expressed support or criticism of the two contending political groups. The other public groups that featured a lot in the news were the clergy, especially those that belong to the National Christian Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) which is the umbrella Organisation for the

Protestant churches in Kenya and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. Prominent lawyers who were officials, or just members, of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) were also very prominent in the news. I discovered that in most cases when the clergy and lawyers were given prominent coverage, they would be criticising the KANU-government (mostly in the *Nation*) or being attacked by KANU politicians for criticising them (especially in *Kenya Times*).

The other group of public figures who were given prominent coverage were diplomats, especially in November when they took the KANU-government to task for cracking down on the Opposition and in December when they congratulated the government for legalising Opposition politics. Two diplomats stood out. The American ambassador for his outspoken support for the change to multi-party politics and the French ambassador for his support and defence of the KANU-government against some of the harsh criticism levelled against it. Members of the public can also be regarded as major players because they featured very prominently during public political rallies or in riots when the Opposition was denied licence to hold such rallies, especially in November 1991. During the same month they also showed support for the Opposition when its leaders were charged in law courts for organising illegal political rallies. The police received wide coverage because they were the ones who came to restore order during riots. As a result of which, and more importantly, because they were used as an instrument of State violence to crack down on the Opposition.

It is through the reporting of these events in which the political actors took part that the newspapers captured the major issues that were debated. The politicians used mainly the political rallies and press conferences. The President (who is both State and KANU President) used mainly State functions, political rallies and National holidays. The others in the KANU-

government used both political rallies and press conferences, while the rest in the KANU group the parliamentary floor or otherwise relied on public rallies. The Opposition politicians made most use of press conferences in November and December 1991 whilst in January and February 1992 they also used political rallies for they could now do that legally after the legalisation of multi-party politics. The diplomats were covered by reference to their press releases or when interviewed by the press. Some of them attended as observers, public political rallies or functions organised by the Opposition. An unusual exception was the American ambassador who himself addressed a couple of public political rallies. The clergy's views were captured during their customary Sunday church sermons while the church organisations (NCKK and the Catholic Bishops) made press releases. Quite a number of clerics, especially of the Protestant Christian faith addressed press conferences together with Opposition politicians. The above events then became the major ways through which the press highlighted on the pertinent issues.

6.8 The *Nature* and *Mode* of the Discourse between the Opposition and KANU

In Chapter One, I observed that news could be likened to a political arena where political battles are fought. I wish to take this argument further and argue that in a situation where there is no legitimate forum for political actors to meet face to face, the import of news is heightened because it is only through news or press reportage that a discussion can be held. The period that I chose for this study is a prime example of such a situation. This is a transition period that saw the legitimisation of opposition politics. During this period, before the holding of a parliamentary election, which could see the Opposition joining Parliament, opposition politicians had the press as the main public forum in which to engage the KANU politicians.

In this section I wish to register my observation that during the period under study, the two political groupings never came face to face to discuss issues or

attend the same political meetings, rallies or press conferences. They came to learn of the other side's views, accusations, arguments, etc., through the media and responded to them through the same or in a way that made it obvious that the media would carry the response. The KANU government had, apart from the press, the State-owned electronic media (both radio and television run by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, KBC) that it monopolised to the disadvantage of the Opposition. The latter depended therefore on the private dailies and weeklies. The Opposition out of necessity made most use of the press conference and the press release.

During the month of November 1991, the KANU-government still maintained its position not to allow legal opposition in the country. The Opposition's activities were conspicuous because of their defiance and daring in vowing to go ahead with a planned illegal political rally. They demanded that the government repealed the single-party legislation and let the people democratically fashion their fate. Their main arguments were, among other things, that the KANU-government was oppressive and violated human rights; not legitimate because of the 1988 rigged elections; corrupt and had wrecked the economy and that the single-party legislation was unconstitutional. The government responded with a heavy hand, harassing leading opposition politicians, arresting some and eventually charging most of them in law courts. As a result the news stories of both dailies were dominated by court appearances by the opposition politicians supported by large crowds of ordinary Kenyans.

The KANU-government politicians also used the media and public rallies mainly to warn the ordinary people against associating with the Opposition or attending their illegal rallies. These measures, especially the harassment of opposition politicians, prompted strong protest from several diplomatic missions in Kenya; most of them accusing the Moi-government of corruption

and human rights violation. The KANU-government politicians in turn lashed back accusing Western envoys of supporting dissidents. As the month came to a close, mainly as a result of the support for opposition politicians from the public and the diplomatic reprimand, the KANU-government backed down and dropped all the charges it had preferred against its critics.

December 1991 saw KANU bow down to pressure and in the end repealing the single-party legislation. This decision was projected by the KANU-government as the President's personal wise decision and initiative, even though as late as the previous month he had been categorically opposed to multi-partyism. In fact, most KANU politicians were strongly opposed to multi-party politics. The whole process of repealing section 2 (a) of the constitution received wide press coverage as politicians, the clergy, diplomats and other public figures welcomed the change. This change prompted some KANU politicians to publicly show support for their party, its President and the way the country had been hitherto governed and in the process they warned against the dangers of multi-partyism and criticised the Opposition. Whilst this reaction from KANU was not unusual, novelty came in two major ways. More and more politicians within the KANU-government openly criticised their party for some of the same undemocratic practices that the Opposition politicians criticised it. Secondly, there began to be reported criticisms of the President mainly by opposition politicians but also by other public figures including some from the KANU-government's own ranks. Both the *Standard* and the *Nation* daily newspapers, because they reported these developments, were accused by KANU politicians of being biased against KANU and in support of the Opposition.

6.9 Conclusion

The findings and observations in this Chapter clearly show that the two daily newspapers played an important role in the whole process of political change from a single party to a multi-party system. The dailies reported the activities of both political groups and by doing so, not only informed the public but also, provided the only forum in which the contending parties were able to communicate and exchange ideas and opinions. As I have already said above, there was no other forum that brought the two sides together. It can be said therefore that the pages of the daily newspapers provided the arena in which the political battle was fought.

Most of the issues were covered through the events being reported and as it turned out, because of their differential stance towards the political change, each newspaper underscored what it considered important by the events it chose to highlight. The political change affected the press performance in some important ways. The impact is appreciated if we first remember that prior to November 1991, the KANU-government put pressure on the daily press so that they could give the opposition a news blackout. This was necessitated by the propensity of the 'independent' press to give the opposition publicity and by *Kenya Times'* scathing criticisms, under Ochieng, of the performance of KANU politicians.

Kenya Times recorded very little change, if any, in its stance towards the central political issues related to the political change. However, it intensified its negative coverage of the Opposition and increased its positive coverage of KANU. It can be seen to have been biased in favour of giving KANU more space in which to fight for its legitimacy whilst giving little space for the Opposition's criticism of the ruling party. The *Nation* can be said to be the daily that was significantly affected by the political change from the single-

party to a multi-party system. Its coverage of party-political news increased slightly more than that of *Kenya Times*. The political change seems to have enabled the *Nation* to give the Opposition more coverage and progressively, this coverage became more positive. While on the average the *Nation* gave KANU negative publicity, the intensity of this decreasing with time, the publicity given to the Opposition changed from being negative to balanced between positive and negative publicity.

The proportion of news items whereby the Opposition criticised KANU increased markedly, and this is an important change, so that in February 1991, the *Nation* gave both political groups nearly equal chance to fight for their legitimacy. Seen against the situation that obtained just before December 1991, the most significant change, however, is that the newspaper's negative coverage of KANU and the proportion of Opposition criticising KANU both increased remarkably. The *Nation* became the daily newspaper that to some extent helped the Opposition to establish itself in the public sphere while at the same time questioning KANU's legitimacy. This may be the change that prompted KANU politicians to claim that the *Nation* was biased in favour of the Opposition.

When one compares the two dailies on the basis of ownership status, one finds out that this study's basic propositions are not borne out by the facts. Beginning in November, both the *Nation* and *Kenya Times* were critical of KANU politician's poor performance, even though the latter opposed multi-party politics. As a result of the KANU-government's pressure, both increased coverage of KANU and decreased that for the Opposition between November and December. It is important to repeat here the fact that the political change had its significant impact in December and not in January as hypothesised in this study. It is this political change that brought out the major differences

between the performances of the two dailies. It can be concluded, therefore, that because of the political change, ownership-status became important.

Instead of increasing its coverage of KANU and decreasing its coverage of the Opposition, as hypothesised above, *Kenya Times* did the reverse between December and February. Its coverage of KANU decreased while its coverage of the Opposition increased. However, with regard to the nature of publicity accorded the political groups, the hypothesis above was supported. *Kenya Times* gave KANU more positive publicity while it gave the Opposition more negative publicity. In fact, the increase in the coverage of the Opposition and the decrease in that of KANU comprised mainly of negative publicity.

In the *Nation*, the coverage of the Opposition increased but that of KANU did not increase as hypothesised. With regard to the nature of the publicity accorded, the *Nation* gave KANU slightly more negative than positive publicity. But this is clearly not as a result of the political change. The change just meant that the intensity of the negative publicity decreased somewhat. Between December and February, the *Nation's* positive coverage of the Opposition changed only slightly while its negative coverage increased significantly so that in February it was almost the same as positive coverage. For this reason, I conclude that the *Nation* was more accessible and fairer in its performance. A further discussion of the findings in this chapter in relation to the research problems will be given in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.0 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the editorial and commentary columns of both *Kenya Times* and the *Nation* in order to establish each daily's attitude towards the two contending political groups and to the political change to a multi-party democratic system. The method used here is qualitative and emphasis is put on what is said, how it is said and the conclusions arrived at. In analysing the data I am interested in how the issues and political players are portrayed and characterised, what arguments and premises are advanced to reach the conclusions that are arrived at. I am also interested in determining whether the arguments used are factual or rhetorical. Another major concern in this chapter is to establish the extent to which the political change had an effect on the daily newspaper's determination of who or what could and could not be commented on or criticised by the daily press.

As mentioned in the Chapter 2, it is my assumption that the political culture of a particular society is a major determinant of the political performance of that society's daily press. I have therefore proposed that a major change in the political configuration of a particular society would be reflected in the political performance of its daily press. A look at Kenya's political history reveals that a political culture had developed whereby fundamental human freedoms were abused and freedom of expression, especially to express a different political opinion, was greatly circumscribed. State violence and detention without trial, both gross abuses of human rights, were used against government critics. Other human rights, including press freedom, were curtailed. To institutionalise this political culture, legislation was passed that criminalized opposition politics and with time there was an apparent fusion between the ruling party KANU and the State in the emergent one-party KANU-government.

As demonstrated in Chapter Three above, the performance of the daily press in Kenya was to a great extent affected by the political whims of, and affiliations to, powerful politicians. But above all, the daily press was careful not to rub the government on the wrong side, and in the event that this happened, the press was always forced to succumb to government pressure. The oldest daily press, the *Nation* and the *Standard* have always been privately owned with controlling shares, during the period under investigation, being in the hands of foreigners. As a submission to the fact that complete control of the political performance of the daily press in Kenya is not possible, the KANU-government launched its own daily press, *Kenya Times*, which was meant to serve its interests which it claimed were being subverted by the foreign-owned daily press.

The call for political change away from the authoritarian and therefore undemocratic single-party system became bolder and more frequent in the wake of the democratisation wind that swept through the former Soviet Bloc. This coupled with Western donor pressure, unilaterally and through the so-called Paris Club, which pegged the disbursement of further aid assistance to Kenya on tangible and demonstrable political change, forced the KANU-government to legalise multi-party politics in December 1991. Until this time and after, the KANU-government had resisted the introduction of this political system because, among other reasons, it argued that plural politics would foster ethnic violence. It argued further, that Kenyans were not cohesive enough; that the single party system had an African origin and was popularly chosen by the Kenyan people and that democracy was (can be) achievable even under the one-party system. It has also been established above that the Opposition argued that the KANU-government's performance had demonstrated that the single-party system in Kenya had failed to be democratic.

For the purposes of this study, the above legalisation of opposition politics, by the repeal of Section 2(a) - the single-party constitution, means that the political views opposed to those of KANU could now be expressed without the fear, on the side of the critics, of dire consequences. This change it is proposed, will be reflected in the political performance of the daily press. The political issues that this study is interested in are those pertinent to the question as to whether multi-party democracy is desirable in Kenya. As already seen above, the ideological position of the daily press and its political sympathy can best be gauged by a qualitative analysis of editorial and opinion columns; and also that this section of the press is the most easily politicised and potentially sensitive and controversial.

I intend to investigate, therefore, the extent to which the political change had an effect on the way the daily press performed in their political commentaries concerning the question as to whether the political change to multi-partyism was necessary. The *Nation* and *Kenya Times* have been chosen because the former is private and foreign owned, has the largest circulation and claims to be 'independent', while the latter is indigenously owned by KANU, and therefore not dictated to by foreign interests. I have chosen four months. November and December 1991 are the two months falling under the period before multi-party politics became a constitutional reality while January and February 1992 are the two months after this change.

The period covered in this qualitative part is the same as that covered in the last Chapter, which dealt with the quantitative analysis. I will begin with the month of November 1991 to establish what the position of each daily was at the time and proceed from here by analysing the commentaries on the basis of the issues that were being discussed. I have included six appendices as a sample of the editorials carried by the dailies. These have been discussed on the following pages: Appendix One (page 238), Two (p. 239), Three (p. 244), Four (p. 248), Five (p. 255), Six (p. 264), Seven (p. 265), and Eight (p. 274).

7.1 November 1991: Multi-Party Democracy Not Desirable.

November is the month during which the pressure group FORD (Forum for the Restoration of Democracy) threatened to hold a public political rally with or without a legal government permit. This was meant to challenge and force the KANU-government to see that FORD was serious in its demands for the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya. Until now the KANU-government had ruled out the possibility of such introduction and had threatened that any such public rally, being illegal, would be forcefully clamped down. *Kenya Times* editorial of November, 15: *Why we should all keep away from Kamukunji* warned the people from attending the Opposition's planned political rally because it was illegal. It 'advised all peace-loving Kenyans to stay away' from the meeting arguing that 'a break in law and order must not be allowed in our capital, a city that has known peace for decades ... ' It therefore rhetorically provided two reasons why Kenyans should not go to the Opposition political rally. Firstly, by suggesting that most Kenyans are peace loving and secondly by supporting any measures that will ensure the preservation of law and order in the capital city. In fact, the editorial supports the government view that the planned Opposition rally is illegal.

The characterisation in *Kenya Times* of the Opposition in negative light began as early as on November 3, 1991 and probably earlier. What is seen at this juncture is the dismissal of democracy-advocacy for the reason that the motivation of those who are advocating for democracy is borne out of frustration. The editorial titled, *Kenyans tired of self-serving noise*, partly characterises multi-party advocates as 'political adventurers', 'masters of high-profile jinx' and 'political losers' in search of 'free publicity' and whose 'belated concern for democracy is but an attempt to vent their frustrations'. The readers are invited to disregard the Opposition as frivolous and what they say as a nuisance (noise).

The *Kenya Times* editorial of November 20, *Multi-party rule not panacea for Africa*, argues for an endogenously driven political change (see Appendix One). It argues, in part, that "When the imperialists arrived in Africa in the last century, they imposed a new system which largely served their interests'. The thrust of the ensuing argument in this editorial is to persuade the reader that the multi-party advocacy has a foreign imperialist origin. It 'is largely engineered from outside the continent' and should therefore be resisted because 'that is the only way we can be sure of maintaining some form of independence in this world where the rich nations now wish to dictate everything.' This editorial rhetorically invokes the value of independence that Kenya dearly fought for and therefore arouses anti-imperialist sentiments by arguing that the agitation for change is a ploy by Western countries to perpetuate foreign domination of poor African nations like Kenya by dictating change to them. The commentary clearly argues against the adoption of multi-party democracy in Kenya for the reason that it is an imperialist force from the West.

The above editorial concludes that 'what is needed now is the creation of a political environment where the rule of law is respected and the people's rights protected. *If that is possible in a single party, the country that chooses such a system should not be censured and denied aid*' (my italics). This editorial proposes that the agenda or issues for debate should be the cherished values of the respect for the rule of law and the protection of people's rights, and then argues that it is possible for these values to be observed in a single-party system. It concludes therefore that countries that choose such a system should not be censored and denied aid. The possibility, let alone the fact the KANU-government's performance negated the single-party's ability to observe and protect fundamental human rights is not explored. It is for this defective reasoning that this editorial is highly ideological.

It is significant that the *Nation* had only one editorial in November that commented on the political change. This editorial of November 19, *Another tack may be the way to go*, censures both political groups for their unwarranted blanket criticism of each other (see Appendix Two). Another significant observation to be made here is the *Nation's* cautious disposition by which it avoids antagonising the KANU-government. It censures FORD for condemning the KANU government, saying that 'There is a lot that is wrong with the system itself, but the system itself is not illegitimate. The blanket condemnation of the system ... is unacceptable precisely because it is blind to those aspects and practices of the system that are right.' The editorial suggests that the KANU government is capable of reform and that what is needed is for it to activate 'the many checks and balances which exist within the structure.' It opts not to address the fundamental systemic flaws that led to the agitation for multi-partyism. It concludes that:

We believe that the Government can successfully defuse this otherwise explosive situation, not by clamping down on it, but by letting it steam itself out. Talk, debate, argue and convince. That should be the way to proceed at this time of uncertainty, hostility and reforms.

It seems that the attitude of the *Nation* is that the Opposition is a temporary phenomenon and that the KANU government can afford to let it 'steam itself out'. This is a figurative expression predicting that the Opposition will be a short-lived phenomenon. In fact, this editorial views the whole agitation and advocacy for a democratic multi-party system in a negative light; as an explosive situation that the KANU government needs to 'defuse' in order to avoid 'uncertainty and hostility'. It seems therefore to be supporting the preservation of the political status quo with only minor changes to the polity.

One can therefore conclude that in November, when the KANU government still held onto its opposition and refusal to legalise opposition politics, the two newspapers clearly had no room for the Opposition or indeed multi-party democratic politics. It can be argued that *Kenya Times*, by way of dismissing opposition politicians also dismissed multi-partyism. It associated the advocacy for multi-party democracy with imperialist and neo-colonial designs aimed at depriving Kenyans and Africans in general of their sovereignty and therefore exposing them to the shame of vassalage and subjugation.

Casting the problems of Africa and especially Kenya in economic terms, *Kenya Times* argued that multi-partyism was not desirable for the reason that it would not solve all of Kenya's political, social and economic problems. An erroneous argumentation is made here which suggests that if multi-party democracy cannot usher in a panacea for all the problems facing Kenya, then it is not desirable. This can be seen as an attempt at redefining the pertinent problem that had to do with good governance, accountability to the electorate and lack of legitimacy on the part of KANU. This recasting of the problem steers us away from the real debate and can only be seen as ideological. It has already been stated above that the *Nation's* attitude to the Opposition pressure group was that it was a passing cloud. It urged the readers to believe that the KANU government was capable of real and radical change and what it needed, therefore, was to engage in discussion with the budding Opposition so that it would in due course 'steam itself out'.

7.2 The Description of Opposition Politicians in *Kenya Times*

I have demonstrated above that in November 1991, one method by which *Kenya Times* expressed its position about multi-party democracy, was the way it portrayed opposition politicians. While in November the commentaries merely dismissed multi-partyism as desirable and a distant reality, in December they had to reckon with the fact that KANU had already succumbed

to pressure and accepted to repeal the single-party legislation. However, *Kenya Times* did not desist from expressing strong opinions against the multi-party system. In this section I will provide an analysis that will illustrate the proposition that *Kenya Times*, by depicting opposition leaders in a negative light, metonymically argued against the change to a multi-party democratic political system.

The editorial on December 3, *The about turn of political opportunism*, articulates its opposition to multi-party politics by taking issue with the advocates of change. The thrust of its arguments is that opposition politicians are just self appointed 'political experts' who do not know what Kenyans want and do not 'speak for the masses.' It argues that:

In this group of "political experts" are people who were once given a chance to serve in public offices. While they were there, and since they were dropped, we have heard nothing from them. These people would like Kenyans to believe that though they served in key positions and did nothing to correct the mistakes they are now ranting about, now they have suddenly become wise today and have the right prescriptions for Kenya.

The line of argument in this editorial suggests that some of the multi-party advocates are unworthy of holding leadership positions because they were previously in the KANU government but were dropped from their leadership positions because of incompetence. This line of argument persuasively invites the reader to conclude that multi-party democracy is undesirable in Kenya because accepting it means elevating political failures to positions of national leadership. The editorial goes ahead to claim that these are the same people who caused the mistakes for which they are now accusing the KANU government. The political commentary of December 11, observes that:

The 32-member steering committee of the new political party, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) has in it over 20 members from two ethnic groupings, the Kikuyu and the Luo. It sounds more of the pre-independence days when such a coalition was formed into a political party KANU pitting it against other smaller groups who formed the defunct KADU.

This commentary argues that since its leadership is dominated by people from the two main ethnic groups in Kenya, FORD is a tribal party. This is made clear by reference to the pre-independence days when ethnic identity was seen as a major motivation for political party membership. This is clearly an era that most Kenyans would not like to re-live. This historical contextualisation is clearly meant to attribute the dark aspects of Kenya's multi-party political past to the currently nascent dispensation. The argument is that the apparent tribal composition of the Opposition leadership is proof that multi-party politics engenders tribal affiliations. Historical context has been used here to cast the advocacy for multi-party democracy in a negative light and in a way that supports KANU's position.

The commentary of January 7, *Little leadership stuff in emerging opposition*, argues that Opposition leaders are rejects from KANU who are not interested in 'restoring' democracy but are merely interested in power for their selfish ends. Another feature of the opposition leadership is now introduced: They are regarded as the rejects from KANU whose motivations are not democratic ideals but selfish interests. The suggested implication here is that KANU is inherently a good party and that those it rejects are not worthy of leadership positions. Consequently, the political group that they head, and the ideas which they claim to stand for, are not welcome. The negative description of the Opposition by *Kenya Times* reviewed here support the findings in Chapter Six that demonstrated that it gave the Opposition mainly negative coverage. It is my argument that a daily newspaper which is extremely biased in its opinions

about a contending player in the public sphere cannot itself be regarded as a democratic player in the same political sphere.

7.3 *Kenya Times* in Defence of KANU

I made the observation in Chapter One that the main argument by the advocates of a multi-party political system was that the KANU government had become undemocratic. It was argued that KANU has proved to be incapable of change and that, therefore, the only way to cultivate democratic ideals in Kenya was through the introduction of a multi-party system. To counter some of the arguments and criticisms that were used to support the demand for multi-party democracy, KANU politicians and supporters were at pains to give illustrations and arguments to project their party as being democratic. The same illustrations and arguments would also be projected as obviating the demand for multi-party politics. This section will show that the position taken by *Kenya Times* about multi-party democracy can be gauged from the arguments and illustrations it used to defend KANU, mostly against accusations from the Opposition.

The editorial of December 4, *Unity now crucial for peace and stability*, says partly that:

The unanimity with which the Kanu Delegates Conference yesterday endorsed the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Kenya is further proof that the ruling party is not opposed to change but determined to maintain peace and unity... And true to form, it was President Moi who yesterday proposed the amendment of Section 2(a)... The donor countries which have pegged aid to the introduction of pluralism in Kenya, should see Kanu's move yesterday as further proof of its willingness to listen to the views of all Kenyans, including its avowed

critics. The openness with which this and other issues have been discussed in the recent past is in fact a demonstration of democracy.

This editorial, which is predicated on the positive value of change, begins by giving KANU undeserved credit for 'accepting' to allow the re-introduction of multi-party politics (see Appendix Three). This apparently virtuous decision is then used to paint a rosy picture of the KANU government's past and present performance. The implication is that because the KANU government has deemed it imperative now to allow multi-partyism, it is and has always been democratic. It is claimed that this decision is proof that the KANU government is not opposed to change but dedicated to peace and unity; that it is always willing to listen to criticism and is committed to democracy. A look at Chapters One and Three shows that this is not true. These chapters have clearly showed how autocratic the KANU government had become. This is ironic because when discussing the agitation by the Opposition for multi-party democracy above, *Kenya Times* strongly opposed this system and supported KANU's determination not to allow it introduced in Kenya. As a matter of fact, *Kenya Times* regarded the advocacy for multi-party democracy as mere noise. It must be for ideological reasons that it is now supporting the system when it is positively, though falsely, portrayed as a KANU initiative.

The commentary of December 8, comparing the prowess of the two political groups, comes to the conclusion that KANU would come out the better party in an election contest because "the ruling party has a long tradition dating back to pre-independence days. It is the party that ushered Kenya to independence and managed to create one nation from the ethnic divides drawn up by the colonial government." This article, by transposing the celebrated fame of the yester-year KANU that fought for independence, to the beleaguered incumbent KANU, portrays the latter as a virtuous party. Historical fame and glory is being used to legitimise the present embattled KANU government. It is as if KANU has not changed since and has always, therefore, been

democratic. Mention is not made of the fact that some of the major players in the Opposition were members of that virtuous KANU that fought for independence. And also, that it is for its inability to accommodate criticism, foster ethnic harmony and embrace change that KANU is being challenged. This commentary achieves its rhetorical force because of the facts that it omits to say.

The editorial titled, *All that criticises is not transparent*, of January 3 argues that it is unfair the 'bashing' of the KANU government by the Opposition for the 'scandals and other corrupt deals that our public sector has been embroiled in'. In order to defend KANU, the daily puts the blame for Kenya's poor economic situation on the leader of the opposition Democratic Party (DP); "Mr. Kibaki, for example, was Finance Minister for years. Any shortcomings in the economic sector during that time should be blamed on him..."

Mass defections to the Opposition by members of the KANU government, including several of its Cabinet Ministers, at this time were widely regarded in the political circles as a demonstration of their dissatisfaction with the ruling party, a welcome to change and a show of support for the Opposition. As demonstrated above, *Kenya Times* regarded the defectors from KANU differently; it presented their defection as a process by which KANU was ridding itself of "bad eggs". The editorial of January 8, *Stop cooking up list of defectors*, claims that most of the defections are not genuine but fabricated by the Opposition to discredit KANU. This editorial, especially the title, is symbolic of the extent to which *Kenya Times* had gone in supporting KANU by discrediting the Opposition.

One of the articles that grossly misrepresented Kenya's past and current political reality to the extent of approximating naked ideological rhetoric and propaganda was carried by *Kenya Times* on January 25, under the heading *Kenya political reforms going well, says Wako*. This was an endorsement of a

speech by Kenya's Attorney General, Amos Wako, delivered to British lawmakers. It said in part that:

Kenya, *unlike other countries*, has always adopted pragmatic policies devoid of any ideology... Furthermore, *unlike other countries* although Kenya was a one-party state, the state and party apparatus were not fused. Kenya, *unlike other countries*, has on the whole upheld the virtues of constitutional government... (my italics).

These assertions are a clear attempt to portray Kenya as the country in Africa and the rest of the Third World whose political process best approximates a working and acceptable democracy. A look at the history of Kenya and a review of the criticism from the Opposition and the Church strongly suggest that these claims are a distortion. Such a review makes it clear that the State and the ruling party KANU have become as good as fused. This is seen, for example, in the extent to which the civil service and the central administration took part in election rigging, the constitution was abused and even amended to suit the KANU government. These obviously undemocratic practices negate the further assertion in this commentary that "Kenyans are not only as democratic as others but have been used to democratic practices and want to see democratic principles upheld..."

It can be said in summary to this section that in order to defend the KANU government, *Kenya Times* gave the credit for the introduction of multi-party politics to KANU thereby projecting it as a champion of democratic ideals. In fact, this undeserved credit is used to make the argument that KANU has all along been democratic and its stewardship is seen as the best illustration of a democracy in Africa. The historical fame that is associated with the KANU that fought for independence is used as a legitimating factor for the current embattled KANU government. In order to defend the KANU government, the mal-administration and corruption for which it was being criticised are

acknowledged but blamed on Mwai Kibaki, the leader of the opposition Democratic Party, who was Kenya's Finance Minister for more than a decade. These arguments are meant to persuade the reader into believing that the accusations against the KANU-government are unwarranted and therefore there is no real need for a multi-party political system in Kenya. In order to achieve its ideological goals, *Kenya Times* is not ashamed to twist historical facts and make use of false statements. Its performance reviewed here reinforces the findings in Chapter Six which show that it gave KANU largely positive publicity and a lot of space in which to defend itself.

7.4 *Kenya Times*, Foreign interests and Multi-party Democracy.

One way by which each individual daily newspaper's position on the political change to multi-partyism can be gauged is by establishing whether it saw this change either as coming from within Kenya, and thus as a Kenyan initiative, or as having been initiated from abroad to serve foreign interests. The history of party politics that I gave in Chapter One shows that the agitation for a multi-party democratic system in Kenya originated from within the country and had a strong popular support base. In this section, I will analyse the commentaries by *Kenya Times* regarding this question so as to establish its attitude to multi-party democracy.

Kenya Times' editorial of December 10, *Reform should be a matter for Kenyans*, suggests its attitude when it agrees with former President of Tanzania, Dr Julius Nyerere, when he is reported to have claimed that:

(T)he West is forcing reforms on African countries as a means of installing surrogate leaders under the guise of democracy...The installation of this surrogate leadership is aimed at reinforcing neo-colonialism.

The title itself rhetorically implies that the political change should not be supported because it is foreign. The picture conjured up by the concept of surrogate leadership and neo-colonialism is that of subjugation and loss of sovereignty. A change to multi-party democracy, argues *Kenya Times*, would subject Kenyans to Western neo-colonialism. The editorial goes on to claim, as an illustration of this connection, that the Opposition activists have actually received huge sums of money from the West and warns them not to use it to disrupt Kenya's "peace, stability and prosperity". This editorial achieves its ideological force by its implied argument that democratic reform is a pretext being used by neo-colonial powers to force their puppet leadership on Kenyans.

The editorial of January 5, *Kenyans do not need these foreign meddlers*, takes to task a British opposition leader, Mr. Peter Hain, who after a visit to Kenya had decided to table a motion in the British parliament asking Her Majesty's government to freeze all aid to Kenya. This case is used as an illustration of foreign meddling in Kenya's internal affairs by Western nations (see appendix Four). The editorial then argues that such actions are the cause of the problems facing African countries:

(I)t may be that Mr. Hain is of the neo-colonial types and imperialists who seek to influence every political decision taken by the sovereign states of Africa. The least Kenyans want is foreign meddlers at a time when they are trying to carry out political reforms and when the country is facing hard economic realities. Much of the political turmoil and economic ruin being experienced in many African countries is a direct result of meddling by foreign forces, mainly for their selfish interests.

It is not revealed here the nature of Mr. Hain's findings on the basis of which he made his conclusions. A pretext is found to blame such people and groups

as him for all the political and economic problems that bedevil African countries. There is a strong rhetorical argument here which connects democracy to neo-colonialism, political turmoil and economic ruin thereby persuading readers to reject it.

The January 9, commentary, *US meddling threat to Kenya's stability*, as the heading indicates, takes issue with the alleged interference by the US in Kenya's political affairs to "impose" democracy. This commentary is interesting because, in an attempt to defend the performance of the KANU government, it selectively makes a parallel between the political history of the US and some of the issues for which the Moi government is being criticised:

... the world's greatest democracy began as a single party democracy. Its first multi-party election was held to choose its second administration. *President Washington was chosen unanimously by 69 men representing their various states to be president, President Moi was chosen in the same manner. Did that make Washington an "unelected" president?* (sic. my italics).

The intended answer to the above rhetorical question is NO, the implication being that President Moi was also democratically elected. This commentary goes on to say that during the Adams Presidency in America, unconstitutional Acts were passed, "those in the opposition were detained" and that "it was not until 1824 that a popular vote for President was ever taken and in that election, all nominees were from one party". It is apparent that reference is being made to undemocratic actions similar to those for which the KANU government is being criticised. After the parallel associations between those moments in American history and the present Kenyan political reality, another rhetorical question is posed: "With these historical realities in mind why do we expect others to compress a 125-year struggle into 30 years?" This line of rhetorical questioning and argument is meant to persuade the reader to conclude that

the US should not censor the KANU government because it has gone through similar experiences. In an obvious defence of the KANU government, the commentary asserts that "For 25 years the type of democracy practised in Kenya has fit the needs of the people here". This is ironic because the commentary is penned after the introduction of multi-party politics, something that was done in response to the general discontent that many Kenyans had with the performance of KANU's one-party rule.

The commentary of February 8, *Kenyans should watch against foreign inspired change*, is interesting because its criticism against "American-inspired change" is predicated on, among other reasons, an argument based on the predicament of Black Americans in the US. Firstly, it argues that "With regard to the rights of the Black man, Kenya is more democratic than the United States in multiple ways... Where is the freedom of the press when the Black panthers cannot freely distribute their newspapers?" Secondly, because "All its facts of life including its branch of democracy is in a sorry state of putrefaction," the commentary argues, makes a mockery of democracy. It concludes that for these reasons "America has no business trying to show Kenya" the type of democracy to adopt "for it has nothing to offer." The above arguments and conclusion are used to convince the reader and KANU critics that the democracy advocated by the Opposition, because it is backed mainly by the US, also lacks moral legitimacy and is therefore uncalled for. The commentary concludes therefore that:

We must chart out a uniquely Kenyan form of government given that democracy is an obscurantist ideology that has yet to find a perfect actualisation anywhere in the world.

The commentary on December 15, *Things changes may not offer*, asks the rhetorical question, "Can Africa afford to be lured into believing that freedom and democracy cannot be sent into exile again?" The main argument here is

that the achievement of freedom and democracy is not something to be celebrated because it can only be a temporary victory since "history shows that all victories are temporary. Nothing is irreversible". The commentary is persuading the reader to believe that the change to a multi-party system is not something worth supporting because of the inherent nature of freedom and democracy to be elusive. It is also implied that this call for change is just a snare from the West and not an African initiative.

It can be concluded from the above analysis that *Kenya Times* was against the change to multi-partyism because it described it as a foreign initiative. It portrayed this change as a ploy by Western powers to subject Kenyans to Western imperial and neo-colonial influence. Opposition politicians were portrayed as mere surrogates waiting on the wings to sacrifice Kenya's sovereignty. Democracy as allegedly practised by some of the *foreign masters* (especially the US) is depicted as not being any better than Kenya's. In fact, it is argued that because the ills the KANU government is being accused of were committed in the history of the US, which took more than a century to reach where it is now, these accusations are unwarranted. Democracy is itself argued to be obscurantist and elusive and Kenya has therefore the right to be left alone to chart its own version. The thrust of these arguments is to persuade readers to believe that the foreign initiated change to multi-party democracy is undesirable and Kenyans would be better served by their own "single-party democracy".

7.5 *Kenya Times*, Economic Issues and Multi-Party Democracy.

In this section, I will look at issues that are mainly related to human rights and democracy, on one hand, and their relation to the dependency and disadvantaged nature of African economies, on the other. I will demonstrate that the line of argument taken by *Kenya Times* is that democracy and economic issues are two sides of same coin. And that human rights and

democratic politics at home cannot take root unless, on the international scene, the dependency and disadvantaged nature of African economies is redressed. An attempt to do otherwise is regarded by *Kenya Times* as imperialistic and neo-colonial.

Arguing that concern for the economy should take precedence over politicking, the commentary of February 18, *Politics must not harm the economy*, lashes at the Opposition for allegedly giving Kenyans empty promises about jobs. The commentary argues that the Opposition is not being realistic but merely playing on the people's emotions because no one can provide jobs to all deserving Kenyans. It claims, however, that the KANU government is the only one that is realistic because it has already taken the initiative to create more jobs. This is yet another commentary in which this daily redefines the agenda to focus not on the pertinent democracy issues, but on economic issues.

It is arguable that the whole discussion about democratic political change and whether or not it is desirable or even possible revolves around the issue of multi-party politics. About this, *Kenya Times* of January 10, *Behind the Euphoria Lies the Bitter Reality*, has the following to say:

To state that multi-partyism leads necessarily to democracy is a diversionary ploy... to pre-empt the Third World's demands for democratising the global trade system... a system created to suit the powerful economic nations of the West. Unless pax-Americana is democratised in global terms, Kenya's efforts will be hamstrung by the undemocratic international system in which we operate and which will continue militating against our development.

This editorial commentary is another apt attempt to recast the main issue or agenda in an economic light, stressing the 'undemocratic international system' and the consequent underdog position of poor Kenya in it. The reader is

implored to see the two sides of the coin of democracy. The viability of democracy at home is portrayed as intricately dependent on there being democracy in the global economic and political arenas. The impression created here is that, because the Third World countries have, justifiably, been demanding "for democratising the global trade system", the exploitative and imperialist West is using demands for multi-party democracy as a ploy to divert attention from global economic imbalances. The issue or agenda for debate, argues this commentary, should not be KANU, its undemocratic performance and the need for political change but the undemocratic global trade system.

The January 26 commentary goes further in debating the relationship between democracy and the North-South trade imbalance. This is what it has to say about democracy: "After all if there can be no freedom and democracy in the relationship between poor and rich countries with regard to international trade, then it doesn't sound possible for either of these sides to chant about democracy". This is another of the now familiar arguments that no democracy discussion is worth the effort if it does not address the economic disparity between the rich and poor countries especially with regard to international trade. There is a very strong attempt by *Kenya Times* to divert the attention of the reader away from the internal reasons that inform the agitation for political change.

The commentary of February 21, *Scholars in neo-political manoeuvre for change*, says that "Let us all be aware of the importance of a free and active participation on the part of Africans in the evolution of a more meaningful World Order." The commentary of February 22, *Unmasking African scholars' dependency* says in part that:

The number of parties Africa has will not change world commodity prices, and therefore, alter her economic fortunes... *If Africa is a victim of an international order which is not all that democratic or just, why*

aren't we able to see multi-partism as *irrelevancies* which do not address the real disequilibrium. (my emphases).

The above commentary by *Kenya Times* argues that a multi-party political system is an irrelevancy because it does not address the real problem facing African nations. It takes it as a given and as a logical conclusion from Africa's poor economic fortunes that economic disequilibrium is the issue democracy should be all about. The same theme is again addressed in the commentary titled *Foreign arm-twisting in Africa's political change* of February 28. In this commentary, the fight for a liberal multi-party democracy is described as a "mythical program". Decrying the undemocratic "international arena", it concludes that if there is no change in "global malpractice", "Kenya must not posit the problem of its development in terms of accomplishing some mythical program in the name of liberal multi-party democracy."

I wish to state in conclusion to this section that *Kenya Times* argued against multi-party politics because the economic issues facing Kenya are not being addressed. In its opinion, preoccupation with multi-party politics may eventually harm the economy. In fact, multi-partyism is seen as a ploy being used by the West to divert attention from the undemocratic nature of the World economic order. Democracy at home is seen as dependent on a democratic relationship between the rich North and the poor South. Without such a relationship, liberal multi-party democracy in a nation such as Kenya is simply a "mythical program". In the commentaries that we have looked at above, *Kenya Times* neither addresses directly the accusations and concerns of Opposition politicians nor the performance of KANU that brought about the agitation that forced KANU to unwillingly adopt a multi-party system. The daily's negative view of democratic values shows that it cannot be expected to be a fair and rational participant in the political public sphere.

7.6 *Kenya Times* against Opposition and Multi-party Democracy.

Right from November 1991, *Kenya Times* regarded the introduction of multi-party politics negatively. In defending KANU, however, it congratulated the KANU government for introducing multi-partyism and hailed this as proof that the government was committed to change and democratic ideals. But even then, the multi-party system itself was still regarded negatively and in most occasions when it defended KANU, *Kenya Times* gave reasons which suggested that the system was unsuitable. In this section, it is my intention to show that the daily's attitude to the Opposition was negative. I will also show that in portraying the Opposition in negative light, *Kenya Times* also strongly argued against the multi-party political system. In this regard, the Opposition symbolised the multi-party political system.

The first January editorial of this daily newspaper sets the accent that will be repeated and expounded on throughout the month both in the editorials and the commentaries (see appendix Five). The themes of economic priority, national unity and sovereignty, tribalism, respect for the Presidency, imperialism and neo-colonialism etc. will be used in the ensuing debate. They will be used to argue against the multi-party system and to highlight on the dangers of the Western concept of democracy in the Kenyan situation. The values of economic development, people's rights, non-violence, freedom to choose a party are rightly invoked *but it is the Opposition that is singled out as the villain that violates them*. The picture created by all these arguments is meant to persuade the reader that in practice a multi-party system would be worse than a single-party political system. This is the position that the January 1 editorial *This year, we must all rally for unity* seems to introduce:

Multi-party politics will present Kenya with a very special challenge and it is up to all the parties involved to ensure that the people's rights are not abused. Already there are numerous cases of individuals

being harassed by supporters of some organisations. This is shameful, for it goes to show that some of the government's biggest critics have no respect for the right of each Kenyan to support the party of her or his choice. There have also been criminal acts: individuals have been beaten up and KANU offices burnt, not all a good sign.

This editorial invokes the deeply cherished value of the need to protect the people's rights, especially the right to choose and support a preferred political party, which it says should be the objective of all political parties. Indirectly, however, it projects the Opposition as the political group that has violated these rights.

The January 2 editorial, *No place for anarchy in a true democracy*, characterises the Opposition's modus operandi as anarchist. This editorial is clearly a rejoinder to the Opposition's threat to use civil disobedience to force the KANU government to release opposition political prisoners. It suggests that "We should allow the judiciary to deal with these cases (political prisoners) and, of course, there is still the presidential prerogative of mercy. Hasn't the President on many occasions pardoned people convicted by our courts?" If the Opposition is here characterised as the villains, the daily claims, however, that the President has always been benevolent and merciful to such "wrong-doers". The rhetorical dimension here is in the impression created that while the Opposition is encouraging the violation of the laws of the land, President Moi is known to be benevolent even to people duly convicted by the courts for violating the same laws.

The editorial of January 10, *Let's heed the Catholic bishop's good advice*, while correctly observing that the multi-party system will not necessarily solve Kenya's problems, criticises the Opposition for blaming Kenya's economic problems on the KANU-government. It argues that this criticism is the same as

that adopted by the Catholic Bishops; one institution that has all along censured the KANU-government for its authoritarian rule. The editorial thanked:

The Catholic Bishops for their timely pastoral letter issued yesterday in which they warned Kenyans that the reintroduction of the multi-party system will not necessarily bring to an end the country's social, economic and political problems. The country already has serious economic problems which the Opposition would like to blame on the present Government to lure voters. The Catholic bishops seem to have realised this when they pointed out that the problems were not peculiar to Kenya. And the best example is in the economic area...

The argument that *Kenya Times* makes above is interesting because it is based on a press release that was reported as a news item in both the *Nation* and *Kenya Times*. From the *Nation* report, one learns that the Catholic Bishops had first and foremost remonstrated the KANU government for the way it has ruled the country suggesting its complicity in the assassination of its critics throughout Kenya's history and suggesting that because of this, change was needed. *Kenya Times* clearly chose to report and capitalise only on what the Bishops said to suggest that they did not share the Opposition's criticism of the KANU government. The Bishops had issued the pastoral letter principally to ask the government to reconvene the Ouko Commission of Inquiry which the government had dissolved at a time when crucial witnesses were about to testify before it. Ouko, a Cabinet Minister, was found brutally murdered and some members of the Moi government are believed to have been involved in his assassination.

It is clear, however, from what the *Nation* reported that the Bishops actually made similar accusations and demands on KANU to those made by the

Opposition. The *Nation* reported as a banner headline story on January 10, 1992, that the Bishops':

... pastoral letter touched on corruption, the violation of human rights, and disrespect for the constitution, among other issues (...). The prelates said it was not the first time that the mysterious death of a political figure had remained unsolved by the authorities. "The cases of the late Tom Mboya, JM Kariuki, (Pio Gama) Pinto and others are still fresh in the memory of the Kenyan people. ... (Their) recommendations included the release of all political prisoners, keeping the administration and the Presidency out of political campaigns and giving all political parties enough time to prepare.

It is obvious from the above reportage by *Nation* that the Bishops saw the murder of Ouko in the same light as those of Mboya, JM Kariuki and Pinto. The similarity here is that these were political assassinations and in all of them, the KANU government was implicated. The Bishops' demands on KANU are identical to those made by the Opposition. So, much as the Bishops argued that multi-party politics wouldn't solve Kenya's economic problems, their criticism of the KANU government only lends more credence to, and legitimises, those of the Opposition. It is clearly for ideological reasons that *Kenya Times* chose to distort the Bishops' press statement. What it was exploiting is the strong reputation that the clergy have earned as symbols of the fight against mal-administration and corruption in Kenya.

The editorial by *Kenya Times* on January 30, *Time to learn the rules of democracy*, also dwells on the need not to disrupt the government and the economy in order to safe-guard peace and continuity and stresses the need to preserve the country's sovereignty. The implication is that the multi-party system, which is being advocated by Opposition politicians, would only work against these values. The January 10 commentary, *Behind the euphoria lies*

the bitter reality, is an apt and succinct expression of support for the KANU government's official position. It argues that:

Kenya, in which political dissent has existed over the years, *does not require the emergence of a new democratic tradition*. But it needs to refine its democracy... It is however unfortunate that the desire for change is being cast in tribal terms here in Kenya... As Kenyans may eventually discover, *it is better to advocate no change at all than allow the destruction of our polity* by ignorant and tribally persuaded political bunglers and neo-colonial imperial designs in our political affairs (my italics).

The thrust of the above commentary is that Kenya will be better off without the political change to multi-party democracy. *Kenya Times* argues that the single-party democracy has served Kenya well and, much as this democracy can be improved, the present call for change is motivated by tribal considerations and "neo-colonial imperial designs" which, if conceded to, would destroy "our polity". Another reason why democratic change is undesirable, argues the commentary, is because "This nation has not attained the political maturity to drive towards a non-tribal political consensus hence the bizarre personal and tribal conflict that we have been witnessing". In essence, *Kenya Times* has on the one hand chosen to completely disregard the facts of Kenya's recent history as necessitating the need for political change. On the other hand, the arguments it is giving are to a degree identical to those that KANU has given in its opposition to political change. (see 1.10 in Chapter One above).

The January 17 commentary, *A past full of lessons for young Kenyans*, is important because it brings another dimension to the debate. The commentary argues that the democracy that the Opposition wants to restore, is the type which obtained during Kenyatta's rule. It goes on to say that, "the young people ... are made to believe that Kenyatta was a wonderful man yet he was

not." The "Kenyatta democracy" saw the "institutionalisation of tribalism and corruption in the first 15 years of independence ... land was grabbed ... a whole street was owned by people from one district." The Kenyatta era is therefore to blame for tribalism and corruption because during his reign, his ethnic group, the Kikuyu, institutionalised tribalism and corruption to gain a dominant advantage over the others. This commentary is countering the accusations levelled against the Moi regime by suggesting that the ills for which it is being attacked are a legacy of the Kenyatta years. The implied conclusion is that the present call for political change is undesirable because it is meant to restore that corrupt and undemocratic legacy. The eventual change would be retrogressive. The commentary acknowledges that there is corruption, tribalism, etc. within the Moi regime but the reader is persuaded to blame Kenyatta and not Moi for this.

The January 24 commentary, *Democracy elusive even under multi-party system*, touches on the issue of sovereignty and the allegation that the West wants to impose puppet leaders in Kenya in the name of democracy. Whilst it portrays KANU as a reform-happy party by claiming that "it is reforming itself extremely fast" the commentary depicts opposition politicians as "tribalists", "neo-colonial supported political burglars" with "ugly heads". The negative and abusive characterisation has become very personal and extreme here and is meant to show that Kenyans would be better off with KANU which, asserts the commentary, is ridding itself of these "hypocrites". The commentary carried on February 1, *Of Law and empty talk in changing politics*, warns that the Opposition should not think that they are popular because of the large crowds that have been turning up to attend their political rallies and other events:

Ford should not be deceived by a multitude of mainly *manambas* (passenger-vehicle touts), idlers, looters, clowns and merchandisers. They do not even have time and patience to vote ... These people have not been educated on the role of the law in social transformation.

Yet understanding law is a useful tool in any effort towards democratic reform.

The rhetoric of the above commentary is found in the use of extremely negative adjectives and name-calling to describe popular support. The issue being addressed is whether popular support for a political party or organisation is a credible source of legitimacy. This commentary argues that in the case of the Opposition in Kenya, this cannot be true. Support from a multitude or crowd comprising mainly "*manambas*, idlers, looters, clowns, etc.", who do not have the "time and patience to vote" cannot be seen as a source of legitimacy for a political group or Organisation. This commentary betrays the low, negative and disparaging attitude of *Kenya Times* writers towards the ordinary Kenyan who made up the multitude.

I wish to conclude by saying that the findings in this section clearly demonstrate that *Kenya Times'* attitude to the Opposition was negative. It is the Opposition that it considered as having no respect for the people's right to choose their parties. The Opposition is portrayed as anarchist having no respect for law and order. They are accused of unfairly blaming Kenya's economic woes on the KANU government and portrayed as the cause of the same problems. Opposition politicians are seen as neo-colonial hypocrites and tribal, and their call for multi-partyism as a pretext to restore the undemocratic Kenyatta legacy. The show of support for the Opposition from the crowd is portrayed negatively to suggest that the Opposition have no legitimate grassroots' support. These negative attributes are used to suggest that the Opposition and the multi-party system that they stand for are undesirable because they are undemocratic. These findings also strongly reinforce those in Chapter Six.

7.7 Two Exceptions: Scathing Criticism of KANU in *Kenya Times*.

Of all the political commentaries carried by *Kenya Times*, there are only two that go against the grain by their strong censure of the KANU government's performance. Of these two, the commentary carried on February 3, *Agenda for multi-party politics in Kenya*, while also lamenting the interference by Western powers in the internal politics of Kenya, had the following to say:

One interesting question that many people have so far asked is whether Kenyans are today cohesive enough for multi-party politics. Notwithstanding the shortcomings that we may witness, my opinion is that Kenyans are mature for pluralism. (Supporting the introduction of multi-partyism against its opponents, it concludes that) Multi-party politics therefore, gives people different alternatives from where to select and, indeed, makes the people the supreme rulers, since, by the same voting process, they can remove a party from power.

This is the only commentary in both *Kenya Times* and the *Nation* that says in so many words that Kenyans are cohesive and mature enough for multi-party politics. Most commentaries in the *Nation* have suggested the same but only indirectly by criticising KANU for saying the opposite or by supporting the Opposition's demands for multi-partyism. This commentary stands out in *Kenya Times* because the rest of the daily's editorial and commentary opinions take the opposite view about multi-partyism and national cohesion. It goes on to express support for multi-partyism and says that it would make "the people the supreme rulers".

The other commentary that went against the grain in *Kenya Times* was that of February 6, *Why leaders require professional guidance*. It says partly that, "Democracy cannot survive without freedom of speech. The basic tenet of democracy is that given the opportunity, common men have a unique and

significant voice in the conduct of their country's affairs". After enumerating the advantages of freedom of speech in a democracy, the commentary concludes that, "This is one way the KANU failed totally. So many things were going wrong but the masses were not given the opportunity to air them freely..." This commentary, unlike most others in *Kenya Times*, openly accuses KANU of muffling freedom of expression and concludes that in this regard KANU had failed totally.

7.8 The Performance of the *Nation*

I have already pointed above that the major issue about the advocacy for change is whether the KANU government had become so undemocratic that a change in Kenya's political system had become imperative. *Kenya Times* through its editorials and commentaries had answered this question in the negative. Just as we have done with *Kenya Times*, the *Nation's* answer to this question can likewise be gauged by the analysis of its editorials and commentaries. This is what this section will endeavour to do. I have already demonstrated that the *Nation* in November dismissed the Opposition as a passing cloud. The main reason being that it believed there was much good that the KANU government had done which the Opposition did not acknowledge. Further, it opined that the KANU government was capable of debate and argument and that if it activated the necessary checks and balances, the Opposition would "steam itself out".

It will shortly be clear that the position taken by the *Nation* after the repeal of the single-party legislation is quite different from the one it took in November. On its part, since it came out strongly to defend the KANU government, *Kenya Times* had very little or no criticism for KANU and the little it had was attributed to the KANU "rejects" who had defected to the Opposition. This fact is pertinent to the problem with regard to whether the political change enabled the daily press to comment more freely and critically on KANU's political

performance. It will shortly be clear that the performance of the *Nation* answers this question in the affirmative. Other issues related to the central question of the desirability of political change are intricately connected to the question of KANU's legitimacy. Consequently, these issues, such as the connections between multi-party politics and tribalism, multi-part politics and foreign influence etc.' will be covered in this section.

7.9 The *Nation* on KANU's Undemocratic Performance.

The *Nation's* editorial of December 4, *Issues on the way forward for Kenya*, is a clear step away from the position taken in November (see Appendix Six). The newspaper comes out with a strong censure of the KANU government's political performance. Though at this stage maintaining that neither KANU nor multi-partyism is the issue, the editorial:

Congratulate(s) the various pressure groups and organisations whose persistent clamour for a free, open and democratic society has, finally, forced the KANU leadership to open the way for all Kenyans to participate fully in the political, social and economic affairs of their country.

The Opposition, which was in December being chastised for condemning the KANU government wholesale, is now showered with praise. The assertion made here that the KANU leadership was forced to open the way to democratic practice does suggest that, in the daily's opinion the KANU government has all along nurtured an authoritarian political system. It is clear that the *Nation* is engaging both KANU and its supporters including *Kenya Times* in a public debate. I have demonstrated above how *Kenya Times* argued that it is KANU that brought multi-partyism without any external or internal pressure. This *Nation* editorial repudiates that argument and gives credit instead to opposition pressure groups and organisations. The editorial

goes on to describe the single party political system that has been followed in Kenya under KANU as inhibited and its institutions as unpopular. It warns that "Kenyans do not expect and must never again allow, the establishment of systems which could be manipulated by irresponsible leaders to harass the people, to loot the national treasury or to amass personal wealth". Unlike *Kenya Times* which blamed the undemocratic world trade system, this editorial clearly shows that the *Nation* believes that it is the corrupt KANU leadership that is responsible for Kenya's economic woes.

In the same editorial of December 4, the *Nation* strongly accuses KANU of encouraging and perpetuating belligerent tribal emotions, and through political demagoguery, of whipping up these emotions to promote political ends. It goes on to advise that the KANU government must cease its hostile and alienating aversion to criticism and also that "no Kenyan should opt to flee this country because his political views are not compatible with the mainstream political thinking". In the opinion of this article, this is the "opportunity for leaders to give Kenyans the Kenya they want". This is a strong censure of the KANU government because it rhetorically suggests that what the KANU leadership had given Kenyans is the Kenya "they do not want". This editorial goes on to show support for the Opposition by supporting their demand for the adoption in Kenya of a limited presidential tenure.

If the above editorial censured KANU, the one of December 12, titled *Republic Day with a different note* is partly ambiguous in the beginning. Anticipating the presidential address to mark the Republic Day celebrations on that day, the editorial argues that the President will most probably use the occasion to campaign for KANU by referring to and cataloguing what he considers to be his party's achievements. The daily concurs that what the president will say, mostly that the KANU government has performed a wonderful job, is true because KANU, argues the daily:

Held the country together, it has encouraged free enterprise, its government has overseen a fabulous growth of the education sector. Its foreign policy has seen Kenya develop cordial relations with most of the countries in the world, etc. It has been a commendable performance all round.

The lofty attributes listed above are difficult to reconcile with the censure in the previous editorial that blamed tribalism, corruption, etc., on the regime. More poignant is the fact that, whilst the above citation grades the KANU government's performance as satisfactory and good "all round", the rest of the editorial portrays it as very poor and in need of an overhaul. It continues with the following observation:

But *wananchi* (the citizens) will be acutely aware that it is the same Kanu which, through intolerance of dissenting opinion, undemocratic electoral practices, mismanagement of public finances by some of those in government, promotion of unpopular initiatives, corruption, etc., sowed and nurtured the seeds of opposition whose struggle culminated in the Tuesday amendment.

The two different opinions about KANU's performance are a demonstration of the ambiguous nature of *Nation's* editorials at this point in time. However, the latter part of the editorial is demonstrative of the accent that the daily will assume from now on. This argues that it is KANU's poor political performance that justified and made legitimate the Opposition's call for change. This latter critical spirit is the one that the daily assumes in its December 31 editorial (see Appendix Seven). This editorial, *Year to separate the wheat from the chaff*, welcomes the political change, which it observes, other African countries have already effected. It characterises single-party rule as autocratic and says that "having been force-fed on a single-party diet for so long, it is not surprising that Kenyans are eager for change". This statement clearly points

out that the system was not popular or legitimate but authoritarian. The figure of feeding "on a single-party diet for so long" invokes the idea that Kenyans had been politically "malnourished" while that of being "force-fed" portrays KANU as an authoritarian party that was forced on unwilling Kenyans.

If in December the editorials were restrained in their criticism of the KANU government's performance, the political commentaries were more blunt. The tone was set by the commentary on December 1: *What KANU must do now to save itself*. The writer sets the ground by asserting that multi-partyism does not guarantee democracy: "Countries are not democratic or undemocratic depending on how many political parties they have". But he goes on however, to enumerate some of the practices that have made the single-party system's performance undemocratic. Concurring with the multi-party advocates, the writer argues that the performance of the single-party parliament, and the "fact" that it came to parliament as a result of the 1988 rigged election, more than anything else makes the adoption of multi-partyism imperative. The writer argues that, "I have no doubt that if another party existed, KANU MPs would act a lot more responsibly than they do at the moment... It is difficult to hide the fact that the present parliament has performed to everyone's disappointment".

In the December 1, political commentary, we find yet another strong illustration that for most commentators in the *Nation*, the KANU government had lost its legitimacy because it is seen as having performed below par. And to drive home his point, the opinion writer says that, "there can be no democracy where the rules are chosen for the people..." The commentary concludes by saying that KANU in its present constitution is poorly suited for the management of change. It goes on to argue that external influence, the threat of tribalism, lack of national cohesion, and the threat to national unity, "the arguments so far advanced by KANU against the adoption of pluralist politics cannot stand scrutiny". In other words, the reasons advanced by KANU

against the adoption of multi-party democracy are mere propaganda designed to score political points.

The December 8th commentary, *The time for peace is now as Kenyans brace for democracy*, is a bold statement to the fact that there has not been democracy in Kenya before. It argues that KANU wouldn't on its own volition have conceded to the adoption of multi-party politics by the rhetorical relief it expresses at the fact that KANU actually succumbed to pressure; "But would you believe? The party has actually given in and the infamous Section 2(a) of the constitution will go!" This commentary in the *Nation*, unlike the view taken by both *Kenya Times* and KANU politicians, argues that it is the KANU government's undemocratic performance, and not foreign influence, that gave birth to multi-party advocacy. This happened "when, to keep the political monopoly, it condemned, vilified, suspended, expelled and, lately de-registered members who were critical to some of its policies". And when KANU finally decided to allow opposition politics, the decision "was not taken because KANU is a kind and merciful party. It is not because Kenyans did become cohesive overnight":

The decision was a result of unprecedented pressure, both local and international, and the final straw that broke the camel's back was the Paris Club. That gathering of international donors gave Kenya six months within which to carry out social and economic reforms before it could give the country any aid money. *Now I know who foreign masters are and who gets foreign money!* (my italics).

The above commentary attributes the credit for change both to internal advocacy for multi-partyism and to international pressure. A major difference between this stance and the position taken by KANU and *Kenya Times* is that, Western countries are regarded not as politico-economic powers, but as donor countries. The pressure coming from them is seen as necessitated, not by

imperialist and neo-colonial considerations, but by the fact that Kenya's political and economic performance was seen as seriously wanting reforms. In a twist of sarcastic rhetoric, this editorial opinion suggests that the donor countries who make up the so-called Paris Club are the *foreign masters* and that the *surrogate leaders* are not multi-party advocates but the leadership of the KANU-government. It is this leadership who have been made by the donor countries, to adopt multi-party politics against their wish.

Reviewing the events that saw the adoption in 1982 of Section 2(a), that legislative amendment that proscribed the formation of rival parties to KANU, this commentary observes that it was an illegal and opportunistic move. It was meant to forestall the registration of Odinga and Anyona's proposed opposition party, the Kenya African Socialist Alliance (KASA). About the consequent detention of Anyona and his lawyer, Dr. Khaminwa, the editorial argues that:

Their detention was, of course, illegal, partly because the process of forming a political party did not constitute an emergency or threaten State security in such a manner that the Government had to invoke the Preservation of Public Security Act in order to detain them.

With this commentary, one sees an attempt by the *Nation* writers not just to criticise generally the KANU government, but to allude to historical facts to illustrate or make legitimate their criticism and arguments against it. Here, the daily suggests that the detention of the main multi-party advocates of that time was an unwarranted draconian measure. One can see in this kind of criticism a strong negative attitude to the KANU government's performance record. It must be mentioned here that this kind of criticism would have been suicidal for the opinion writer, had it been penned in 1982 when the Preservation of Public Security Act was put to use against Odinga, Anyona and Khaminwa. It is therefore symbolic of the fundamental change that multi-party politics has brought to freedom of expression.

The commentary on December 9, *With Kanu subdued, the agenda is on calm change*, achieves its rhetorical objective by comparing and contrasting the performance of KANU during the early post-independence Kenyatta era and during the current Moi era; the KANU of "then" and the KANU of "now". The former is depicted as having been good and democratic and the current as being bad and autocratic. The commentary argues that, "That Kanu was a true nationalist party. Kanu today is a party of chameleons whose colours change according to the dictates of the stomach". This implies that President Moi's KANU cannot be trusted because its leaders, *like chameleons*, are not trustworthy and they are motivated by selfish interests (*dictates of the stomach*). For these reasons, the reader is persuaded to welcome the political change as an obvious necessity. Moi's KANU-government is further characterised as, and accused of, assuming infallibility and claiming the "ordained role to lead God's people". Its performance:

... is a far cry from the Kanu that told its opposition at the dawn of independence: "Brothers, let's sit at the same table and talk over matters for this country belongs to all of us." It was an accommodating Kanu, willing to give and take...

The commentary of December 10, *Reasons why a national convention is vital now*, makes the now familiar criticisms and comments against the KANU-government. These include detention without trial, international pressure on KANU to adopt plural politics, the 1988 election-rigging, and the necessity for a limited Presidential tenure. It argues at the end that "the worst crime that Kanu perhaps committed was the one of politicising the entire Government apparatus". The commentary of December 16, *This time round, voters will be demanding results*, raises the issue of the people's lack of confidence in KANU's single-party parliament and civil service, saying that "it will take a serious House to restore that confidence. (But) there is hope for that *since*

there will be opposition to wake up those who think Parliament is either a bedroom or a place to make a joke of matters of life and death" (my italics). The image of parliament being a bedroom invokes the idea that KANU parliamentarians had reneged on their duty to debate issues in the House and turned it into a sleeping and playground. It also shows the negative and low regard that the daily had for the performance of the KANU Parliament.

The criticism against the KANU in the *Nation* continued unabated. The commentary of December 21, *Let's not kid ourselves about multi-party politics*, argues that whilst "the solution to Kenya's economic, social and political problems is not one of multi-parties", Kenyans must protect themselves from a repetition of the non-democratic fashion in which the KANU government has hitherto performed. The article argues that, "among KANU's many ills, probably the worst was its inability (or unwillingness) to let people debate on decisions which had profound effects on their lives". The commentary indicts the KANU-government of gross violation of the freedom of expression and the people's right of participation in the political process. This is a bold support for a multi-party democratic system that will allow for debate and dialogue.

The next commentary takes up the question of tribal clashes that had become a big problem in Kenya at this time. In brief, this problem was located mainly in areas where the Kalenjin ethnic group (of President Moi) borders on other ethnic groups, mainly the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya. During this time, the Kalenjin engaged the other ethnic groups in bloody and violent clashes claiming that the latter groups had grabbed Kalenjin land. The whole question is pertinent to this study because it is connected to the KANU-government's argument that multi-party politics would breed tribal hatred and violence. The writer of the December 28 commentary, *A story that makes no sense*, suggests that this is a KANU government ploy to lend proof to the above ideological position:

It is hard to believe that the clashes over land - or tribal clashes as they are turning out to be - are not the work of a devious mind and a desperate soul which wants to make some political mileage out of the chaos and fears that the clashes have engendered.

The writer does not mention the KANU government by name but the reference is obvious from the following citation, remembering that it is KANU that has propagated the argument being criticised here:

I am more than inclined to think that the bogey of tribalism is being used to justify a stereo-type - that tribalism exist in abundance in this country, and that it will be worse with the arrival of multi-party politics. In other words it is a matter of having given a dog a bad name, you proceed to crucify it.

This is a very serious accusation for it implicates the KANU government in the fuelling and politicising of ethnic animosities, arguing as it does that the violence is a creature of KANU meant to lend credence to its aversion to multi-party politics. This is what is implied by the image of giving a dog a bad name and then going ahead to crucify it. One can see that the *Nation* is committed to addressing and countering most of the arguments that KANU and *Kenya Times* have given to oppose multi-party democracy. It goes on to show that in most cases, it is the KANU government that is to blame for the problems.

The editorial on January 12, *Wako's wise word to State counsel*, commenting on the performance of State counsel, suggests that they should remain neutral in the new era of multi-party politics:

... Our concern here is that in the transition to multi-party politics, Kenyans, all the parties and the Government, must take cognisance of

the rules of fair play which were non-existent in the days of Kanu's monopoly of power. Kanu, the party, must de-link itself from the civil service and the State's apparatus to ensure fair play (my italics).

The above editorial strongly supports the change to multi-party democracy in Kenya because it means that Kenyans can now create a system in which there is fair play in the political process. The "fusion" of KANU and the civil service is again given as one of the features that contributed to the violation of fair play in the political process, especially in the form of election malpractice, during KANU's monopoly of power. The nature of this article is important because it shows that the *Nation* has moved one step ahead from discussing the desirability of change to pointing out what should be done to underwrite that change. The change is seen as a good that having been achieved legally must now be institutionalised in praxis.

In the editorial of January 19, *Setting the pace for peaceful change*, the daily supports the opposition's demand for fair play; that they should participate in the appointment of an Electoral Commission; that the President be elected by a popular vote; and that presidential tenure be limited. The era of KANU's monopoly of power and political suppression, apart from violating "fundamental human rights and freedoms", encouraging nepotism, condoning corruption and "running down the economy", was said to have brought Kenya close to the Romanian situation, by the commentary of January 19. However, suggesting that the political change has brought political relief and freedom to Kenyans, the commentary asserts that:

Kenyans are talking without looking over their shoulders to see if the political police are listening. Kenyans are not talking in whispers and hushed voices or with fingers covering their mouths.

This graphic rendition of the freedom of expression being enjoyed in the wake of multi-party politics in Kenya is another example in the *Nation* which illustrates the positive attitude with which the daily embraced the change to multi-partyism. The above comment suggests that what obtained before the change was a culture of silence and fear, whereby Kenyans were intimidated into being suspicious of the next person lest they be the establishment's "political police". That KANU's performance was autocratic is suggested by the implied similarity with Romania.

As the title declares, the editorial of January 20 (see Appendix Eight) asks the KANU government to *Restore faith in the power of the vote* because:

Over the years, the misuse of power and office by some top Kanu officials has greatly undermined the confidence of *wananchi* and dampened their enthusiasm to participate in crucial processes like voting at elections. ... Somewhere along the way, politics was divorced from the concrete socio-economic issues it should address.

Apart from touching on the issue of election malpractice that we have now met several times above, this citation suggests that because of the misuse of power by the KANU government, politics did not address economic issues. In the *Nation's* opinion, one reason why KANU had become ineffective and undesirable is because it did not address the real socio-economic issues facing the populace. This argument is a clear rebuttal of *Kenya Times'* argument that Kenya's economic woes could be attributed largely to the undemocratic World economic system.

The commentary of January 22, *Can these parties offer the changes people desire?*, accuses KANU of "casting upon Kenyans" the "cancerous curse ... of personality cults" and of introducing "a stage-managed parliamentary democracy, where the party hierarchy becomes all powerful, even over

parliament" and this "is the root cause of our current woes". The image of a "stage-managed" parliament suggests that the KANU parliament operated according to the wishes and directions of the "leader". This underscores the observation I made in Chapter One that this parliament was used merely to rubber-stamp the whims of the KANU government. The commentary goes on to argue that for a democracy to function there must be efficiency, and of "all the checks and balances that guarantee the much-sought efficiency, the Opposition is the most important institution. An Opposition will, without doubt, generate an atmosphere of competitiveness that will result in efficient government". This support for the Opposition is a clear and long step away from the position taken by the *Nation* in November. At that time, KANU was portrayed as capable of implementing the checks and balances in the system (which, as we have demonstrated in Chapter One, it had actually eroded) thereby obviating the need for a multi-party democratic system.

It is my conclusion that the *Nation* now considered the KANU government's performance to have been undemocratic and regarded as legitimate and justified, the call for and eventual change to a multi-party system. KANU's single-party system is depicted as having been inhibited, unpopular and actually "force-fed" on Kenyans through intimidation and election malpractice. Tribalism was whipped up by the political demagoguery of KANU politicians for political ends. For the *Nation*, the performance of KANU's single-party parliament was a farce. KANU is accused of having politicised the civil service to the extent of merging the party and the State. Unlike the position taken by the *Nation* in November, the KANU-government is now considered as incapable of change and ill equipped for its management.

The performance of the *Nation* after the introduction of multi-party democracy shows that the political change had greatly impacted on its performance. The daily is now bolder and more daring in its political analysis and especially in its appraisal of KANU's previous and current performance. This is a long step

from the time when, as I described in Chapter One and Three, criticism of the KANU-government and its leadership could only be read between the lines. Most of what is being said now is open criticism. The findings also show that whilst in its news coverage the *Nation* strove to be no-partisan in according space to the contending political groups, as a participant in the public sphere it strongly supported multi-party democracy and criticised KANU and the one-party system.

7.10 The *Nation* about the Opposition

In this section I will investigate in more depth the question whether the *Nation* supported the Opposition or still considered it as a passing cloud. The analysis in the above section establishes that the *Nation* had similar criticisms against the KANU government to those advanced by opposition politicians and other government critics. This creates the impression that it supported the Opposition. In this section I intend to establish whether this is the case and if so, to what extent.

The December 14 commentary, *Victory belongs to those "commoners" in the street*, is important because it not only congratulates the multi-party advocates and hails them as patriots, but also declares the change to multi-party politics a victory won mainly by the common man. The latter, sometime seen and conceptualised as crowds, is here portrayed as being in tune "with what was happening" and as supporting the FORD:

Evidence that the common man was in tune with what was happening was demonstrated when the Government made the unwise decision to send members of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy to the districts to stand trial following the abortive November 16 FORD rally at *Kamukunji*. The FORD people were received as heroes, a clear indication of the sympathy that their movement enjoyed in the districts.

A couple of observations can be made from the above commentary. Firstly, it portrays the crowds as a positive phenomenon in the process of political change, a picture different from the one depicted in *Kenya Times*. Secondly, its assertion that the crowds received the FORD people as heroes shows that the commentary regarded this show of support from the crowd as a popular and grassroots source of legitimacy for the Opposition. Thirdly, it demonstrates that the *Nation* was engaging *Kenya Times* in a debate by differing with the latter's analysis of the same events.

The editorial of February 3, *Undemocratic show of support*, criticises members of the FORD for heckling and disrupting a KANU recruitment rally. It cautions that "Supporters of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy will have to exhibit a great sense of maturity if they expect to earn the respect and confidence of the people they are trying to woo." However, in the same breath, it also criticises harshly the KANU-government supporters for similar behaviour:

We condemn this juvenile behaviour in the same manner in which we censured the violence portrayed by Kanu supporters against Kenyans who had voiced their sympathy and support for the opposition. At one time it was routine that intimidation or outright violence was used to induce in people unfelt support for Kanu. It did not work then, it will not work now.

This is yet another assertion that the KANU-government had used state violence to intimidate Kenyans to support the ruling party. What is interesting here is that even though what prompted the commentary is the fact that the FORD supporters had disrupted a KANU political affair, the commentary ends up criticising KANU itself as harshly. Similarly, the commentary of February 9, *It is elections not selections, gentlemen of the opposition*, strongly criticises the FORD supporters who had, without any elections being held, endorsed

Oginga Odinga, the party's chairman, as the man to lead the party. This is seen as imposition of leadership, a practice for which KANU is detested. In fact, the commentary goes ahead to lash at the KANU government for "the infamous and singularly shameful 1988 parliamentary and KANU elections", citing this as an illustration of KANU's imposition of leaders on the Kenyan people. These commentaries prove that the *Nation* was committed to criticise both political groups whenever there was need. This fact supports my finding in Chapter Six that the daily was not merely concerned with supporting the Opposition but with debating the issues of the day.

The *Nation's* commentary of February 23, *What a savage approach to freedom of association*, is a bold and blunt critique of the KANU government's contention that tribal violence would come in the wake of multi-party politics. The commentary is directed at a recent violent encounter between alleged Maasai supporters of KANU and officials and supporters of the FORD; the latter had gone to open their party's branch office at Ngong, which though in the outskirts of Nairobi is located in the Rift Valley province. In the ensuing violent encounter, several FORD leaders were injured, some seriously. The KANU government's official position was that the attackers were Maasai supporters of KANU who had been provoked by FORD supporters.

A look at the press coverage at that time shows that most observers, however, saw it differently, wondering why the police did not act appropriately having been informed before-hand of the planned FORD branch-opening. Indeed, some people believed that KANU had stage-managed the violence to lend credence to its aversion to multi-party politics and to keep the FORD away from its (KANU's) "stronghold". This latter view is the one taken by this commentary which claims that, "somebody wants to keep the opposition out of Rift Valley". It observes that most of the tribal clashes have taken place in the Rift Valley province and that in all these cases, as is the case with the Ngong one, the police have responded in an "amateurish" fashion. The commentary

then bluntly blames the KANU-government for the Ngong violence by putting the violence in a historical context:

If one is to understand the Ngong-town violence, one has to go back into the history of opposition politics in Kenya and everything falls into place. My view is that the Kanu Government is going to pull all the stops out to make it very, nay, extremely difficult for the opposition to operate, just as was the case between 1966 and 1969 when the now-defunct Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) threatened the supremacy of Kanu.

It is clear that the above editorial commentary that the Moi government is regarded as trying to use all means, including fuelling tribal animosity, to kill the Opposition. This is reminiscent of short-lived multi-party era "when the 1968 Local government elections were due, "Kenyatta made it plain - not just to the voters but also to the electoral officials that he wanted the KPU obliterated". The implied argument is that KANU has not changed and is not ready to change. Commenting on the problems that the Opposition were now facing, the commentary alludes to the historical fact that "The KPU was denied access to the radio; licensing its rallies was a major problem" and now:

A generation later, the opposition will find it extremely difficult to operate and the hitches over licenses for the Democratic Party of Kenya and the FORD in Kiambu and Nakuru are but some of the frustrations the opposition will encounter, especially in Rift Valley Province. The Ngong violence is the work of the "open mouths" and closed minds of insidious and crafty animals. Those were Kanu not (Maasai) *morans*.

The commentary ends with a very negative characterisation of KANU politicians as "open mouths", closed insidious and crafty animals. It lays the

blame for the Ngong violence on KANU saying that those were KANU *morans* and not *Maasai morans* as officially claimed by the KANU government.

It can be concluded from the above observations that the *Nation* openly sympathised with the Opposition and what they stood for. The December 14, commentary clearly shows that it saw multi-party advocates as heroes and what they had achieved as victory; a successful agitation for political change. Whilst *Kenya Times* considered them as villains and self-interested puppets of foreign masters, the *Nation* hailed them as patriots. It came out and criticised the Opposition, especially the FORD, when the party leadership, or some of its supporters, were involved in undemocratic behaviour. However, in all instances when it thus criticised the opposition, the *Nation* balanced the criticism, in the same editorial or commentary, with a stronger criticism of the KANU government for the perpetuation of similar acts. On occasions, when the daily considered the Opposition unfairly accused, especially in the above Ngong episode, it defended them and laid the blame on the KANU government. It can therefore be concluded that unlike the case in November, the Opposition received favourable treatment in the *Nation* after the political change.

7.11 Description of KANU leaders in the *Nation*

The analysis in this section will show that from the month of December onwards, there is a heightened criticism of KANU politicians by the *Nation*, mainly for their political utterances. More pertinent to this study, however, is the general tendency by the editorial commentaries, from now on, to take the opportunity to criticise the KANU government's performance when the object of their criticism is the individual KANU politician. In some cases, it is apparent that KANU politicians and functionaries are considered to be symbolic of the party as an institution, which is then criticised by way of criticising them. More important in this section is the development that saw open and blunt criticism being levelled at the President himself.

In a clear reference to President Moi, the December 1 commentary, *What Kanu must do to save itself*, laments that "some governments have gone as far as proscribing debates on whether or not political pluralism is the right way forward" thereby restricting the freedom of speech and discussion. The commentary goes on to give examples to show that the President himself has performed very poorly. It claims, for example, that "many appointments which the President is only empowered to make on consultation or advice of other people or institutions are being made without such consultations or contrary to such advise." Demanding that this practice must change, the commentary now goes on to suggest that:

The president on his part, should make the widest consultations before making important public service appointments, and should resist tribal considerations. As long as the Civil Service and the Corporations remain predominantly staffed with people from one ethnic group, the people's right to exercise democratic choice is grossly curtailed.

The above editorial commentary is one of several that the daily newspaper carried that strongly censures President Moi's performance. It openly accuses him of tribal considerations in his public appointments and of not making wise consultations prior to making such appointments. Arguing that this practice on the part of the President has denied Kenyans "the right to exercise democratic choice", the commentary calls for change.

The December 15, *Sorry, the era of intimidation is over, Bwana PC*, takes to task a high ranking administration officer, the Provincial Commissioner (PC) who had been reported as having attempted to force his official guests to show support for KANU by flashing the party's one-finger salute. From accusing this PC, the editorial goes on to accuse the provincial administration of having taken part in defeating the democratic process. This they did when "On the

instructions of powerful (Kanu) politicians, god-fathers and power-brokers, District Commissioners flagrantly and massively rigged the 1988 parliamentary and Kanu elections (...) and, therefore, imposed on the electorate unpopular fellows to lead them. The administrators denied Kenyans the right to choose their leaders." That the civil service, being the central administrative arm of the government, had worked in concert with the powerful KANU leaders in election rigging is clearly indicated and abhorred. We see here that the Provincial Commissioner metonymically represents the civil service and, by extension, the KANU government.

The December 16 commentary, *This time round, voters will be demanding results*, takes the cue from the one above by saying that the people's confidence in Parliament must be restored and that the civil service must be de-linked from party politics. The main aim of the commentary is to censure KANU's secretary-general, Joseph Kamotho, also a Cabinet Minister, for accusing the *Nation* of pro-FORD bias. The commentary defends the position taken by the *Nation* partly by telling Kamotho and, by extension, his party KANU that a section of the population wants political change, wants KANU 'out' and that it is the daily's duty to report these feelings.

On January 4, the *Nation* was on Kamotho again with the commentary, *Pity so much effort can be wasted on misleading*, this time for denying that Kenya's military leaders had attended a special meeting of the ruling party. This event, widely covered by the local press, especially the *Nation and the Standard*, had raised fears of a possible suspicious alliance between KANU and the military. This opportunity is also used to chastise the KANU-government. The commentary argues that "Mr. Kamotho's sloppy handling of the whole matter is *symptomatic of the insensitive style that the Government has all along used to handle awkward situations, a style which has been responsible for its loss of popularity and subsequent poor publicity*" (my italics). Kamotho's behaviour is

portrayed not just as that of the ruling party's secretary-general but as the embodiment of the government's style of governance.

The January 5th commentary, *Watch out, the poachers have become game wardens*, criticised another KANU Cabinet Minister, Wilberforce Kisiero, because:

He told Kenyans the other day that the so-called clashes in the Rift Valley and Western and Nyanza provinces are a result of the advent of pluralism. He is dead wrong. He is trying to obscure the real issues behind the attacks on the Luhya, Luo, Kikuyu and others by the Kalenjin and the Sabaot (ethnic groups). *He is telling the lie that Kenyans are not cohesive and, therefore, not ready for multi-party politics. (...) How did these people know that pluralism was coming when the entire country had been told time and time again that there was no way multi-party politics would be introduced in Kenya? (my italics).*

This commentary takes on head-long the KANU-government's argument that the introduction of multi-party politics would breed tribal violence in Kenya. This is one of the numerous examples whereby a KANU-government leader had cited the tribal/land clashes, now taking place in Rift Valley province and other adjoining areas, as proof of the negative consequences of multi-party politics. The commentary is critical of these claims partly for the reason that the ethnic 'clashes' referred to actually started at a time when President Moi had ruled out the introduction of multi-party politics 'in the near future' because Kenyans 'are not cohesive'. Consequently, there is no way that tribal violence could have been caused by multi-partyism at that time, because it simply did not exist. The *Nation* argues that tribalism is being used 'to obscure the real issues' behind the violence. The moral argument of this commentary is that KANU leaders are the real perpetrators (poachers) of ethnic violence who are now disguising themselves as protectors (wardens) of peace.

The alleged monopoly of power by 'one leader' ostensibly by divine right is attacked by another commentary of January 5, *Political cacophony? Take heart, it's democracy at work*. This article also argues that the discussion or 'profusion of voices' and 'apparent cacophony of conflicting opinions', brought by multi-partyism is 'not necessarily a bad thing' but 'very good signs of a thriving democracy, bewildering as they may be to the electorate'. The commentary demonstrates that the *Nation* unlike *Kenya Times* encourages debate and the expression of diverse opinions:

This interesting process will ... eventually demystify leadership so that those elected to office do not start claiming a divine right to their position. When a society fails to recognise and correct its mistakes in the name of preserving stability, that society decays and eventually collapses.

Unlike the opinions of the KANU leadership and of *Kenya Times*, this commentary argues that the value and need for stability is wrongfully being used to justify the KANU-government's failure to recognise and correct its mistakes and warns that this is recipe for Kenya's collapse. President Moi is personally criticised for claiming that the opposition is tribal, by another commentary on January 5th:

Already President Moi has said that the emerging parties are tribal and are therefore going to disrupt the unity of Kenya. There is no way one can look at the FORD as a tribal party, cutting as it does across ethnic lines and having representatives from most ethnic groups in Kenya.

Whilst earlier references to 'strong leader' and the 'leader' clearly indicated that the President was being discussed, the above commentary is the first and only one that mentions President Moi by name and does so in a very negative light. Like the other KANU-government politicians criticised above, President Moi is accused of spreading the lie that the emerging multi-party system is

tribal in its constitution and therefore a potential threat to national unity. Apart from being a strong defence of the opposition FORD against accusations from the most powerful politician in the land, 'the strong leader', this commentary stands out as a symbol of the change in the political performance of the press ushered in by multi-party politics.

The commentary of January 12, *Presidency: shrouded in myths, rife with perils*, attempts to explain why the Kenyan Presidency developed to be averse to criticism. The thrust of this commentary is that the performance of President Moi has been undemocratic and the change to multi-party politics would help redress the situation. The image of a disciplinarian know-it-all, always-right 'father', which the commentary uses to describe the President, brings to mind the picture of an authoritarian, pontificating, patriarchal and rigid leader. The commentary explains that the President has become authoritarian because the KANU-government has propagated the belief that Kenyans are simply 'the President's children' and therefore have no right to freely question him because of the myth that the father 'knows best'. By the same myth, the 'father of the nation' has the right and duty to 'discipline' those who hold dissenting political views. The commentary is here alluding to the political harassment, including detention without trial that has been visited on dissidents during Moi's (and Kenyatta's) one-party monopoly on power. The broadcast media, it is argued, helped in the mystification and creation of the cult presidency. The media attributed to the President real and imagined characteristics, endowed him with 'extraordinary abilities and rarely, if ever, is anything said about his shortcomings'.

In the editorial of January 27, the *Nation* chides KANU's secretary-general for allegedly preaching violence. This behaviour is seen as 'a telling expose of why KANU's popularity has reached the current abysmal depths'. Here again, in the same breath that a KANU leader is criticised, KANU as a party is criticised too. This accusation is interesting because violence has been

attributed to the Opposition and the multi-party system by KANU supporters and *Kenya Times* in an attempt to discredit the desirability of democratic-political change.

The *Nation's* commentary on February 1, *Mwangale, let voters decide*, censures the Cabinet Minister Elijah Mwangale, accusing him of fanning tribal sentiments. Mwangale is reported to have claimed that members of his ethnic group, the Luhya, have no intention of voting for Oginga Odinga, the leader of FORD who belongs to the Luo ethnic group, as the President and that the Luhya (ethnic group) will remain loyal to KANU. The commentary argues that, 'It is such deplorable arrogance which precipitated the legitimacy crisis that KANU is currently going through and its perpetration is a big ballot repellent.' This is another example given by a *Nation* editor to show that KANU-government politicians are 'guilty' of the very tribal motivation for which they are accusing the Opposition. Similar views to the ones expressed above are repeated on the following day February 2, 1992, in an editorial that criticises, once again, KANU's secretary-general.

An editorial commentary appearing on February 16, has the following criticism of two KANU leaders:

Kanu stalwarts Sam Ongeru and Joseph Kamotho now want to behave as if they are angels and are asking the opposition not to insult Kanu. (...) Kanu stalwarts must be told in no uncertain terms that they are the ones who turned Kenya's political arena into a parlour of mudslinging and mud-raking. (...) When it comes to insult, especially in public, Kanu has always excelled.

From the above citation, it is apparent that the *Nation* is suggesting that KANU politicians have not the moral high ground to criticise the Opposition. This is mainly because they are themselves guilty of having actually started, nurtured,

and propagated the culture of "dirty politics" for which they now accuse the Opposition. The reader is persuaded to regard KANU, and not the Opposition, as guilty of "mudslinging and mud-raking".

It can therefore be concluded, from the observations presented in this section, that the *Nation* held the outspokenness of KANU leaders in very low esteem. Their actions and statements are taken as the outshoot and proof of the authoritarian style by which the KANU-government has ruled Kenya. The reader is time and again persuaded and reminded of the fact that the public service was politicised by KANU to serve the undemocratic interests of the party and to force the party on the people. It is KANU leaders who are portrayed as the people who preach violence and spread lies. They are repeatedly accused of instigating tribal violence to lend credence to their argument that multi-party democratic politics is a threat to national unity. The need for national unity is depicted as a ploy used by KANU politicians to gloss over the KANU-government's failure to recognise and correct its mistakes. KANU leaders are accused of turning 'Kenya's political arena into a parlour of mudslinging and mud-raking'. It is the *Nation's* argument and conclusion that, because of the poor image and performance on the part of the KANU leadership, the change to a multi-party system is necessary so that democratic values can be re-established.

One of the observations made in Chapter One on Kenya's political history is that the President was beyond public censure during KANU's single-party monopoly on power. It has been this study's aim to find out whether the general freedom of expression that came in the wake of multi-partyism meant that the President could now be criticised by the daily press. The findings of this section demonstrate that this is true in the case of the *Nation*.

7.12 Conclusion

This chapter has clearly demonstrated that the political change that ushered in multi-party politics in Kenya had a great effect on the performance of the two daily newspapers. It impacted on who and what they could comment on, and on the way they commented on the political issues pertinent to the desirability of multi-party politics. *Kenya Times* waged an ideological war against the Opposition. Poor economic performance, vassalage to imperialist and neo-colonial powers, failure to perform satisfactorily when in public office, disrespect for the law, anarchy, tribalism etc., were all blamed on Opposition politicians. All these things which are depicted as threatening the people's deeply cherished national values are meant to undermine the necessity and legitimacy of the Opposition, and by extension, of a multi-party political system.

It is evident from the findings that the above picture by *Kenya Times* about the Opposition was a misrepresentation of the issues that were being debated, something that was designed to redefine the political agenda in order to argue against the necessity for democratic change. For example, in an effort to present the KANU-government as good, Kenyatta's rule is portrayed as the one that was tribal and authoritarian and the Opposition is then accused of working towards restoring that legacy. The openness with which the Kenyatta era is criticised is a manifestation of the change in press performance because this kind of criticism was taboo before the change to multi-party politics. In the meantime, very little, if any criticism of KANU under President Moi is made.

The effect brought about by the political change was more remarkable in the *Nation*. In November 1991, this daily played it safe, criticising both political groups for trading blanket accusations against each other. However, the daily took the position that KANU was capable of the kind of the debate that could withstand opposition criticism and advised the party to do just that, arguing

that as a result, the Opposition would die a natural death. With the change to multi-party politics, the newspaper, now arguing that the issue is not KANU or multi-partyism, came out to criticise the performance of the KANU government. With time, especially in January and February 1992, the *Nation* clearly showed that KANU and multi-partyism were the issues.

After the constitutional change that ushered in opposition politics, the KANU government was portrayed in the *Nation* as being rigid, authoritarian, undemocratic, corrupt, and incapable of change on its own. The KANU parliament was depicted as a place where leaders who were 'force-fed' on the people went to sleep and make fun of matters of life and death. The *Nation* argued that a multi-party system was made necessary, not because of foreign interference, but because of KANU's illegitimacy and its violation of fundamental human rights. It accused KANU of fanning tribal violence in order to lend credence to its arguments against multi-party politics. For the *Nation*, all this called for change and made it imperative. The newspaper argued that in principle democratic values could be upheld even under a single-party system but that the performance of the KANU government had proved that this is much more difficult than it would be under a multi-party system.

Unlike *Kenya Times*, who blamed the opposition for the same, the *Nation* argued that it is the KANU government that was the cause of Kenya's political and economic problems. This new found freedom to take the ruling party to task got its strongest expression when the daily criticised President Moi for claiming that the composition of the emerging Opposition was tribal. It can be argued that the political change enabled the *Nation* to be more supportive of this change and that its attitude towards the KANU government's performance became increasingly negative. However, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the *Nation* was pro-Opposition. What is most manifest is the increased tendency by this daily newspaper to accuse the KANU government of the same things as those levelled against it by the Opposition. It can also be

argued that in an attempt to give a more balanced picture of the situation, when criticising the Opposition for a particular offence, the daily would give examples to show that the KANU government too committed similar if not more serious offences.

Another issue about which the two dailies differed was whether or not the turning up of large crowds during Opposition-organised public rallies was a sign of popular support for multi-party politics or for the Opposition for that matter. It is arguable that because it was against the political change, *Kenya Times* saw this phenomenon as inconsequential; the crowd comprised of idlers who were not schooled in the laws of the land to appreciate and participate in a democratic political process. The *Nation*, however, portrayed the crowd as an expression of the popular demand and support for democratic change. Whilst the attitude of *Kenya Times* towards the ordinary Kenyan was negative and spiteful, the *Nation* hailed him as the hero of the struggle for multi-party democracy in Kenya.

The above differences in the way the two newspapers saw the pertinent issues can be said to be ideological. The dailies were selective in the way they chose and used the fact and arguments. On some occasions, in order to come to desired conclusions, they advanced falsehood. This is evident, for example, when the *Nation* claimed that Kenyatta's regime was democratic and that in a brotherly spirit had accommodated dissenting politicians; and when *Kenya Times* claimed that the change to multi-partyism was KANU's initiative and proof that the party has always been democratic. Arguments, figures used to characterise issues and personalities, historical material, news items, etc., were used selectively to argue for the attitude and ideological position of the particular newspaper. For *Kenya Times*, the adoption of a multi-party system was a step in the wrong direction while for the *Nation* its achievement was a heroic feat.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The major aim of this study has been to assess the performance of the daily press in an African country during a period that can be seen as the beginning of a fundamental change in its political culture and to discuss the implications of this for the performance of the daily press as a public sphere. The investigation has taken the form of exploration and analysis of changes in the way two daily newspapers differentially performed in their coverage of (reporting) and commentary on the political transition in Kenya from a single party to a multi-party system.

The study's major hypothesis was that in Kenya, the country's political culture and praxis, more than any other single variable, has contributed most to the pressures and influences that have constrained or enabled the performance of its press in the realm of politics. For this reason, I have argued that one needs to appreciate the dynamics of the influences between political culture and press performance, as they were before the political change in order to investigate and understand how this change impacted on the political performance of the daily press. Following Gallagher (1982: 171), I have argued that the daily press, like all mass communication, is indeed bound with, and bounded by, the interests of the dominant institutions of society, but that these interests are continually redefined through a process to which the media themselves contribute.

8.1 KANU's Undemocratic One-Party State

One of this study's propositions was that in practice, a one-party political system does not, in some important respects, foster or guarantee an open and genuinely representative body politic. This means that in the political process

of such a system, some basic and fundamental tenets of democratic practice are not upheld. A situation of this nature may result both from an established but unwritten political culture and from legal instruments. This proposition has been supported by the brief but concise review-analysis of the historical development of party politics in Kenya that I have given in Chapter One. I have established how the realities of a one-party State had undermined some fundamental and human freedoms. I have showed how opposition to the ruling KANU government during both the Kenyatta and Moi eras were strongly resisted. Both leaders disapproved of multi-partyism, were averse to and harshly dealt with government critics, made use of legal instruments to achieve their authoritarian ends, and amended the constitution to their political convenience whenever the need arose. All these contributed, with time, to a marked erosion of various fundamental and human freedoms, especially the freedoms of association and expression.

The Moi era, however, has given this study its temporal positioning or time-frame. I have showed that it is during Moi's regime that the KANU government's legal monopoly of Kenyan politics was brought to an end in December 1991. However, it is also during this era that Kenya was made a *de jure* one party state with an all-powerful Presidency. During this period, Parliament lost most of its functions and became an arm of KANU and the executive's rubber-stamp; amending the constitution at the executive's whim to entrench the KANU government's hold on power. The limited political space that existed during Kenyatta's era was now effectively circumscribed and political views criminalised. I have also showed how the early years of the 90's saw a world-wide hue and cry for democratic governance and for the end of one-party and military states. This coincided with an unprecedented show of daring by a number of prominent Kenyan political activists, and others in positions of leadership, in their criticism of Moi's regime. The demands by donor countries for political transparency and accountability and their eventual

linking of development aid to the satisfaction of these conditionalities finally forced the KANU government to introduce multi-party politics in Kenya.

8.2 Two Ideological Positions on the Need for Multi-Party Democracy

In this study, I have taken ideology to refer to *the* social and political consciousness, or system of ideas, connected to and expressive of the interests of a particular social group or class, *which* has a capacity to inspire concrete attitudes and provide orientations for action. I have demonstrated how the political beliefs of the first socio-political group, KANU-government politicians and their supporters, led to the establishment of an authoritarian and undemocratic one-party state in Kenya. As illustrated below, the political ideology of the second group, the Opposition politicians and their supporters, challenged KANU's hegemony. Their concerted actions led to the repeal of the one-party legislation and the establishment of a multi-party political system in Kenya.

By analysing the developments that led to the end of KANU's monopoly of power in Kenya, I have argued that the debate about multi-partyism was waged from two different ideological positions. The major issue was whether or not multi-partyism as opposed to a single-party system was the desirable political system for Kenya. The first ideological position argued that the status quo was democratic enough and should be maintained. Those who supported this position are the KANU government and its supporters who argued that a multi-party system was unsuitable and therefore undesirable in Kenya. Politicians in this group insisted that multi-partyism by its very nature, was a recipe for ethnic tensions and chaos mainly because Kenyans were not yet cohesive enough for such a system. They saw a multi-party system as a luxury that had to wait until Kenya was more 'cohesive'. They made reference to the early multi-party period that involved KANU and the KADU, highlighting the fact that both parties relied on tribal alliances, which polarised the country.

KANU also argued that the concept of multi-partyism was not indigenous to Africa and that Kenyans would face problems if they absorbed wholesale fashionable political prescriptions without adapting them to local realities. It was said that the traditional African approach to government was through consensus and participation, as opposed to the competition of a multi-party system. It was also argued that the one-party tradition in Africa arose out of the experiences of colonialism and as such, ruling parties were not merely factions but nationalist movements representing the interests and aspirations of entire nations. KANU accused the advocates of multi-partyism of being 'puppets of colonialists' who were being used by Western countries to dismember African countries, including Kenya, along ethnic lines.

The second ideological position argued that the status quo was undemocratic and begged for change. The main aim of those who agitated for political change was the introduction of a more accommodating and democratic political system. It was their opinion that the KANU government's performance had shown that a single-party system worked against democratic ideals. They argued that there was lack of openness and accountability in the one-party system. They protested that KANU was using tribalism as an excuse to entrench itself undemocratically. For them tribalism is neither created by a multi-party system nor cured simply by maintaining a single-party system. They pointed out, as a matter of fact, that tribalism existed even under the one-party KANU government and it is not therefore bred by the kind of political system that a country adopts.

Among the decisions for which the advocates of multi-party politics slated KANU included the adoption, even in the wake of strong criticism, of the election system of queue-voting. The single-party system had led to the rigging of elections, especially of the 1988 General Elections; frequent expulsions from the party; the constitutional amendments making Kenya a *de jure* one-party state; and, removal of the security of tenure of the

Attorney-General, Comptroller and Auditor General and of High Court judges. The conclusion taken by this ideological group was based on their conviction that the one-party arrangement had stifled political debate in the country and undermined the democratic process. The advocates of change argued, therefore, that a multi-party system would allow freedom of expression, which, they insisted, KANU had denied Kenyans by victimising those who held views different from their own.

8.3 Factors that Affected Press Performance before the Political Change

Government Control and Political Pressures

The historical analyses of party politics and of the daily press that I have given in this study support the need for a multi-party democratic system in Kenya and therefore support the second ideological position given above. These historical analyses were made in order to investigate another proposition. That in the politico-cultural environment that obtained during KANU's hegemony, the freedom of the media to report and comment on the political process in a way that was construed as openly challenging the legitimacy of the powers that be, would be curtailed both directly and indirectly. A situation would then obtain where there was overt censorship and/or self-censorship.

Before investigating how KANU's hegemony affected the performance of the daily press before the political change, I have briefly reviewed the performance of Kenya's broadcast media. I have established that the Kenyan broadcast media was so completely controlled that, for all intents and purposes, it was a publicity extension of the ruling KANU government. Access to radio and television for a diversity of political opinions and views was hamstrung by a monolithic and authoritarian grip of the ruling KANU-government. This in effect meant that it is the daily press that could be accessible to alternative or Opposition news and comments.

The proposition given above, about the impact of KANU's hegemony on press performance, was supported with reference to the daily press. From the historical analysis that I presented in Chapter Three, it can be argued that political interference was a major, if not the most important, influence on the performance of the press in Kenya. This influence manifested itself in various ways, most of it indirectly. Oversensitive to the way they are perceived by the public eye; most Kenyan politicians would go to a great length to avoid negative portrayal in the press. One source of political interference emanated from political patronage of editors by politicians, and the other, arguably the most potent, was in the form of government interference. Government departments are major sources of revenue in the form of advertisement placed in the daily press. The threat or decision by the KANU government to withdraw this source of revenue most clearly made media organisations 'behave', meaning succumb to government pressure, as exemplified by the case of Ng'weno and Stellascope Ltd. I have given examples in Chapter Three that demonstrate how this type of pressure saw the sacking of prominent and able editors of the daily press. Even though this was usually an *ex post facto* interference, it served as a reminder to editors and other journalists of the treacherous nature of their profession. It was common also that editors were rounded up by the police, roughed up and/or threatened on the instigation of politicians and over-enthusiastic functionaries in the KANU establishment.

Ownership Considerations

Though not having the overriding determination, there is no doubt that ownership has had important implications for the control and performance of the Kenyan daily press. The findings of this study support the conclusion by Gallagher's (1982) that power and control are differentially located in society and that communication organisations and professionals operate within a complex of constraints. Ownership is one such powerful constraint. The daily press was frequently criticised by KANU politicians. In most of the press-bashing by politicians and government functionaries that I have given

above, foreign ownership was blamed for the perceived 'dysfunctional' performance of the daily press.

The 'absentee ownership', it was argued, works against the interests of Kenya because it dictates the propagation of foreign ideologies and interferes with the freedom of local editors in their employment. KANU politicians saw this as 'the greatest obstacle to freedom of the press in Kenya'. Editors, most of them Kenyans, always hit back at these allegations while at the same time asserting that they do not take orders from their employers in their editorial work; thereby dismissing the existence of owner-interference. Ironically, I have given above a number of cases where editors were relieved of their duties following disagreement with owners or employers. At such times, the editors regrettably acknowledged the existence of, and strongly attacked owner-interference. Another strong argument against foreign ownership by the KANU government has been that the main interest of the press organisation so owned is to make profit. This profit-motive was, and still is, seen as taking precedence over the national interest.

The nagging concern about the relationship between ownership and the press's political performance was at the heart of the suggestions by KANU politicians that the ruling party found its own press. They strongly believed that because the two major daily newspapers at the time, *The Standard* and *The Nation*, were foreign-owned, foreign influence would perpetually support the press in their criticism and belittlement of the ruling-party politicians. A press founded by the party, because it is indigenous and because it would be answerable to the party, would be the answer to the politicians' press-publicity problems. However, it is for similar reasons that there was concern by government critics that a party press would end up being a mere propaganda machine. It was feared that it would hurt 'freedom of the press' should the ruling-party press monopolise advertisement and news from the government. It is this realisation that made Ng'weno, an indigenous newspaper publisher,

opine that a foreign-owned press, though not the best answer to the country's interests, would be preferred by readers to the ruling-party press.

The above reservations led me to the following proposition. Assuming that a private and foreign-owned press does not serve Kenya's national interest, and that a party press runs the risk of being overly biased in the interest of the ruling-party, then a *private indigenous press* would be the desirable alternative that would provide objective, non-partisan Kenya-friendly news and views. I have demonstrated that Ng'weno's experience proves that this is not necessarily or practically true. He was subjected to the constraints and vicissitudes of both the market and the political climate in ways similar to those experienced by the private foreign-owned press. His experiences show that even a private indigenous press is susceptible both, to strong political interference exerted on owners and publishers and to owner influence exerted on journalists. It is these experiences that made Ng'weno loathe the KANU government's interference in the freedom of the press.

The ruling party's own daily, *Kenya Times*, has been beset with problems not unlike those that faced the private commercial daily newspapers. The party found it imperative to solicit the financial and organisational assistance of none other than Robert Maxwell to save the paper from imminent collapse. In doing this foreign interest became a factor even in the ruling party's press. The relationship between the ruling party and the government was to prove consequential for the paper's professional and financial position. Public servants found their way into the paper's employment bringing with them a bureaucratic ethos in management. The experience of *Kenya Times* has proved that it is extremely difficult for the local media to be sustainable without foreign investment even when they have preferential treatment from an incumbent ruling party. It also shows that the dynamics of ruling party ownership easily and directly compromises the freedom of the press so owned.

8.4 Media Performance and Normative Media Analysis

Another reason behind the historical analysis was that it would be a variable or backdrop against which to analyse the performance of the daily press during the period when the dominance of the undemocratic political culture had been legally brought to an end. For this part of the study, my proposition was that a change, or the process of changing, to a more open political process that entails the lifting of some central constraints inherent in a less democratic political process, should in turn be reflected in the performance of the press. This I hypothesised to mean that the press would now execute its functions more freely, reporting and carrying commentaries that would have been considered taboo before. It is in this light that this part of the study is a “media performance assessment” study. I have provided in this study an assessment of media provision, conceptualised as news reports and editorials, which covered the change to a multi-party political system in Kenya.

I have argued that a media performance analysis or assessment should be grounded in normative and historical perspectives. This would facilitate a systematic evaluation of what the media are doing according to some normative criteria of achievement. It is my belief that critical normative analysis can be used to uncover power structures, relations of subjugation and systems of oppression. The first aim, for me therefore, was to develop as comprehensive a framework of normative principle as possible, consistent both with the historical record of social concerns with public communication in Africa generally and Kenya in particular. I have developed this framework in Chapter Two on theoretical perspectives. I began the chapter by looking at the *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm. I have argued that in spite of its weaknesses, Siebert et al.'s typology is important for, modified to accommodate the criticisms levelled against it, it provides a good starting point for the development of arguments for normative media analysis

as a prescriptive and analytical tool. On its own, however, it is inadequate for the purposes of this study.

I have showed that McQuail (1987) took the *Four Theories* further by suggesting six normative theories, including development media theory. In this study, I have dwelt on the latter mainly because of the great extent to which it has been embraced in African perspectives both in practice and in theory. The major reason for this theory is given by McQuail (1987) as the general inapplicability of the *Four Theories* and the great attention on matters to do with Third World communication. He argues that the special conditions, values and aspirations of developing countries call for a particular normative orientation for the press prescribing roles that will serve their development goals. A major weakness and concern in this theory, however, is that the development support role is given overriding importance to the extent that its achievement is seen to justify the abridgement of other human and institutional rights and freedoms, especially press freedom.

8.5 Reasons for a Democratic and Participant Press in African Countries

The critical examination that I have given of the literature on the performance of the media in post-independent Africa supports the above concerns to do with the abridgement of human rights and freedoms. I have showed how it was widely argued that in the face of the enormous problems facing many African and other developing countries, it was necessary to abridge civil and political rights in order to accelerate development. What was implied by this position was that human and other democratic rights had to come secondary to the imperatives of economic development because the two could not be pursued simultaneously. Therefore, it was collective development and not individual rights and freedoms that needed to be emphasised. Some of the features of collective development were seen to be national identity and national unity. It was argued that during this initial period of growth, stability and unity had to be

sought, criticism minimised and the public faith in government institutions and policies had to be encouraged. I have argued that the result of this can only be seen to have been enforced or imposed consensus in the name of national development. This was clearly at variance with the more enlightened view of development that sees free and active participation as an essential ingredient.

It can be said further that in the propagation of this undemocratic political culture, an active political press has been eschewed for the perceived risk that opposing views and dissent may be irresponsible and calculated to undermine stability. It has been felt for a long time that opposition elements and a critical press may take advantage of the illiteracy of the masses and exploit their ignorance to destabilise the State. An argument is made to the effect that since political institutions in developing countries are fragile and any criticism of the government may be interpreted as a challenge to its legitimacy, the media should refrain from scrutinising the affairs of the government too closely. It is clear that, African political leaders have found the control and subservience of the press, as well as other media, to be necessary to their exercise of political power. The media in most African countries have been tightly controlled for the fear that they would propagate views and promote interests that were at variance with those defined by the national leadership.

The above arguments and their normative implications have been used to justify the adopting of an authoritarian system of political governance, and the concomitant abuse of various human rights and freedoms in general and the freedom of expression in particular. As Ansah (1988:9) put it: 'the virtual monopolisation of the mass media has been explained in terms of the need to ensure that people are not distracted by 'false propaganda', and that 'all media resources will be harnessed and directed towards national development.' I have demonstrated that it is for the above reasons that there has been a call from African media scholars, Opposition politicians and the civil society, for a democratic and participant press in African countries. What is being

emphasised now is the import of freedom of expression and discussion as a means of reaching the best strategies, alternatives and results for and in development.

Popular and grassroots participation for socio-economic development has now been suggested with an increasing emphasis on freedom of political expression to stimulate constructive debate and to enable the press to act as a check and watch-dog on abuse of power and violation of human rights. There is perceived now the need to develop and nurture democratic ideals as human development objectives. The role of the media in a developing country should now be seen in the context of participation, meaning the critical examination, evaluation and report of the relevance, enactment and impact of development. In this regard, social and political criticism and public debate are not, and should not be seen as, necessarily disruptive. An argument has been made in this theoretical orientation for the consideration of socio-economic development and democratisation as two sides of the same coin of human development. In prescribing such a role for the African media as suggested here, or engaging in a critique to see whether such a role has been played, I have turned to the theory of the public sphere.

8.6 The Theory of the Public Sphere

I have showed that the theory of the public sphere was developed by Habermas (1989), in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. This was later widely criticised as I have detailed in Chapter Two. However, I agree with Garnham (1992: 360) that criticism of Habermas's model of the public sphere are all cogent and serve as a necessary basis for the development and refinement of Habermas's original approach. However, they do not detract from the continuing virtues of the central thrust of that approach. It is now pertinent to argue that the concept of the public sphere and the principles it embodies represent an Ideal Type against which we can judge existing social

arrangements, and which we can attempt to embody in concrete institutions in the light of the reigning historical circumstances.

It is important to understand that the public sphere can only be realised today on an altered basis as a rational reorganisation of social and political power under the mutual control of rival organisations committed to the public sphere in their internal structure as well as in their relations with the state and each other. We should therefore be concerned with Habermas's model of the public sphere not so much as a paradigm for analysing historical change, but more as 'a normative category for political critique'. According to Curran (1991b: 83), Habermas's work, '... offers nevertheless a powerful and arresting vision of the role of the media in a democratic society, and in this sense its historical status is irrelevant.'

I would like to concur with Dahlgren (1991: 2), that in its more ambitious guise, the public sphere should be understood as an *analytical category*, a conceptual device which, while pointing to a specific social phenomenon can also aid us in analysing and researching the phenomenon. As an analytical category, the political public sphere consists of a dynamic nexus, which links a variety of actors, factors and contexts together in a cohesive theoretical framework. It is this configurational quality, with its emphasis on institutional and discursive contingencies which gives the concept its analytical power. I also concur with Curran (1991b: 83) that within this public sphere, people collectively determine through the process of rational argument the way in which they want to see society develop, and this shapes in turn the conduct of government policy. The media facilitates this process by providing an arena of public debate, and by reconstructing private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion.

8.7 The African and Kenyan Press as a Political Public Sphere

From all the above theoretical discussions, I would like to propose that the media of any African country, including Kenya, should play two significant roles in order to actively facilitate and participate in the democratic process. Firstly, the African and Kenyan media should be a political public sphere accessible to all contending political players, groups and interests whose objective is the deliberation of common public issues or affairs and the framing and influencing of public policy especially as they affect the country's developmental objectives. The African and Kenyan media should also seek to redress the imbalance of power in society by broadening access to the public domain in these societies where the elite have privileged access to it. Secondly, it should be an active, involved player or participant in such deliberations. This should be in a way prescribed by Curran (1991a) in the tradition of a radical democratic theory, very much akin to the Fourth Estate role. The African and Kenyan media should facilitate the functioning of representative organisations, but also expose their internal operations to public scrutiny and the play of public opinion. They should therefore expose wrongdoing, correct, or help the correction of injustice, subject to critical scrutiny the exercise of power in all its manifestations.

For it to fulfil these functions, the African and Kenya media as a public sphere should be free, to a significant degree, from political and economic constraints and pressures from the State and from organised and vested economic and other interests. Some of these pressures can easily be effected when the media are owned by the State, political party or by private capital. In the case of public ownership by the state, the media should be organised and run in a way that greatly minimises political interference. In the case of other modes of ownership, the media system should be organised so that most interested parties have access to at least some medium of public communication, and

particularly in the publicly recognised main medium. In Kenya, and most of Africa, it is the radio that can justifiably claim to be the effective and publicly recognised main medium.

8.8 Political Change and the Performance of the Kenyan Daily Press

Having established above the extent to which the undemocratic political culture constrained the political performance of the media in Kenya, the change to multi-party politics provided the reason for the empirical stage of this study. As indicated above, in this stage I put to the test the hypothesis that the political change would result in the performance of the daily press as a political public sphere. Firstly, that there would be more news stories related to the political change, and secondly, that the dailies would accord the contending political groups fairly equitable access to their pages. This would be in relation to the debate about whether multi-party politics was necessary in Kenya. I have argued for the use in this study of the concept of ideology to refer to the ideas and positions of the two political groups that were contending for the introduction of multi-party democracy and for the consideration of these two groups as social groups. In this regard, I have argued that it is necessary to take political/ideological considerations as a relatively autonomous source of determination of media content. I have also established a case for considering political struggle as meaning ideological struggle in the realms of politics and governance.

This stage of the study has been comparative in at least two ways. In the first, I have investigated how the ruling party newspaper, *Kenya Times*, compared with a private one, the *Nation*, in covering the same political issues and the two contending social groups. I have considered the comparison between the two types of newspaper ownership to be significant because of the historical discussion in Kenya about press ownership. The discussion has centred on the question: What is the most desirable form of ownership, foreign or

indigenous, that will serve the country's national interests. In the second, I have investigated how the press coverage of the political transition before the constitutional change compared with the coverage after. The temporal comparison was concerned with the influence of the change in the political culture on the performance of the daily press.

Another dimension to the question of ownership is the problem of private ownership versus political party-ownership of the press. It was argued in some circles that a ruling party newspaper would of necessity give access only to party propaganda and monopolise news from the State thereby defeating press freedom. This argument implies that private ownership of the press is to be preferred to party ownership. If one considers also the above-mentioned preference for indigenous as opposed to foreign-owned press, the preferred press, it would seem, would be indigenous and privately owned. This study has aimed at finding out whether these propositions are valid. These issues to do with ownership status have already been dealt with in the analysis above of the history of the daily press. I have again dealt with them here mainly to see if the political change impacted on their relevance. The ownership question is so important for the reason that African, including Kenyan, politicians have always argued that private and foreign media ownership influences the press to work against national interests.

In the empirical stage of this study, the question of publicity has also been very important. I have argued that politicians are perennially preoccupied with *publicity*, being mainly concerned with whether the media publicity that they are accorded is *negative or positive*. The struggle for publicity on the part of political actors can be likened to a battle. I have demonstrated that in Kenya, the struggle for party-political change was in its seminal stage heavily dependent on, and waged through the media. Opposition politicians depended on the media to legitimise their agitation for change whilst the KANU government, through the media, resisted this by trying to ensure that the

Opposition was not accorded any media publicity or/and that they were on the average accorded mostly negative media publicity.

The implication of the above arguments is that the preference and search for *positive publicity* by contending politicians gives birth to a litany of struggles. The struggles for access to the news media, for legitimacy in the news, for control of access to and performance of the news media, among other things. I have argued that Opposition politicians in Kenya were in the main seeking after political power and recognition. They could achieve this only by being legitimate players in the political arena. Before the 1992 constitutional change, this legitimacy was denied them because opposition party-politics was proscribed. It can be argued, therefore, that the seminal stage of their fight for legitimacy was carried out through press publicity. This is important because in the realms of politics, publicity may crucially enhance the salience of issues. Publicity can determine and transform the priority accorded an issue in a positive or negative direction. What is important to note is that frequent and intense coverage of some issue or group and the intermittent coverage or neglect of others helps to shape public agendas.

8.9 The Kenyan Daily Press as a Political Public Sphere

The findings and discussion of the content analysis that I have given in Chapter Six clearly show that the two daily newspapers played an important role in the whole process of the political change. The dailies reported the activities of both political groups and by doing so, not only informed the public but also, provided the only forum in which the contending parties were able to communicate and exchange ideas and opinions. This is very important since, apart from the daily press, there was no other public forum accessible to both political groups. It can be said therefore that the pages of the daily newspapers provided the arena in which the political battle was fought.

In the news reports, political issues were not covered directly. I have demonstrated that the issues that were pertinent to the democratic-political change were covered through the events that were being reported. Each daily newspaper underscored what it considered important by the events it chose to highlight. My analysis has demonstrated that the political change affected the press performance in some important ways. The magnitude of the impact is appreciated more if we first remember that prior to November 1991, the KANU-government successfully put pressure on the daily press so that they gave the Opposition a news blackout. This was necessitated by the propensity of the 'independent' press to give the Opposition publicity and by *Kenya Times'* scathing criticisms, under Ochieng, of the performance of KANU politicians.

Kenya Times was very critical of the performance of KANU politicians before the legislation of the multi-party system. This has led me to conclude that, before the change, party ownership did not seem to make *Kenya Times* a subservient daily. But then again, much of this criticism was attributed to the person and style of Philip Ochieng, its editor at the time. One implication that can be drawn from this is that for the press in Kenya to operate like a public sphere, there is need for journalists who are both able and courageous. Its criticism of KANU politicians notwithstanding, *Kenya Times* recorded very little change, if any, in its stance towards the central political issues related to the political change. In short, it was throughout opposed to the introduction of multi-party politics. This performance by *Kenya Times* clearly implies that the pages of a ruling-party newspaper cannot be expected to be accessible to contending parties and other critical groups on an equitable basis. The *Nation*, however, can be said to be the daily that was significantly affected by the political change. Whilst the performance of both dailies support my hypothesis that the political change would enable them to carry more party-political news, the *Nation's* coverage increased slightly more than that of *Kenya Times*.

Publicity and Ownership Considerations

When one compares the two dailies on the basis of ownership status, one finds out that this study's basic propositions are not supported by the facts. Beginning in November, both the *Nation* and *Kenya Times* were critical of KANU politicians' poor performance, even though the latter opposed multi-party politics. As a result of the KANU-government's pressure, both increased coverage of KANU and decreased that of the Opposition between November and December. It is this political change that brought out the major differences between the performances of the two dailies. The fears that ownership affected the performance of the daily press were not confirmed during the period before the political change. This confirms my argument that so long as KANU's hegemony was not challenged, the press was allowed some room to criticise its performance. One can conclude, therefore, that because of the political change that ended KANU's hegemony, ownership-status became important.

Instead of increasing its coverage of KANU and decreasing its coverage of the Opposition, as hypothesised in Chapter Five above, *Kenya Times* did the reverse between December and February. Its coverage of KANU decreased while its coverage of the Opposition increased. However, with regard to the nature of publicity accorded the political groups, the hypothesis above was supported. *Kenya Times* gave KANU more positive publicity while it gave the Opposition more negative publicity. In fact, the increase in the coverage of the Opposition and the decrease in that of KANU comprised mainly of negative publicity. This confirms my argument that an increase in press coverage does not imply an increase in positive or favourable publicity. The important finding here is that *Kenya Times* stopped carrying negative stories about KANU and positive stories about the Opposition. It actually increased dramatically the percentage of negative stories about the Opposition. This leads me to conclude that because in the nascent elite political culture, the ruling party's legitimacy and hold on power is being threatened; the daily press that it owns

will be completely biased in its favour. The implication of this is that in a competitive party political climate such as the one that Kenya had just adopted, a party-owned newspaper cannot play the role of the public sphere.

In the *Nation*, although the coverage of the Opposition increased as hypothesised, that of KANU did not. With regard to the nature of the publicity accorded, the *Nation* gave KANU more negative than positive publicity throughout, with the proportion of this decreasing with time. This clearly supports my hypothesis in this regard. Between December 1991 and February 1992, the *Nation's* positive coverage of the Opposition changed only slightly. However, its negative coverage of the Opposition increased substantially so that in February it gave the Opposition a fairly balanced proportion of positive and negative coverage. This finding contradicts my hypothesis that a more democratic political culture would result in the *Nation* giving the Opposition more positive coverage. It actually demonstrates that the *Nation* was not just out to support the Opposition by according it positive publicity but was probably supportive of the political change in general. It is my conclusion, therefore, that the *Nation* was more accessible and more balanced in its performance. This shows that without some of the political pressures and legal constraints such as existed before the political change, the *Nation* had significantly more freedom now to play the role of a political public sphere.

The Daily Press and Party Legitimacy

The findings show that *Kenya Times* was heavily biased in favour of giving KANU more space in which to fight for its legitimacy whilst giving little space for the Opposition's criticism of the ruling party. The more interesting statistical finding is that for the period before the change, this newspaper carried four stories whereby KANU was reacting to the Opposition for each story whereby the Opposition was criticising KANU; thus, there was a ratio of four to one in favour of KANU defending itself. For the period after change, there were three news items of KANU reacting to the Opposition for each item of the Opposition

criticising KANU; thus, there was a ratio of three to one in favour of KANU. This shows that *Kenya Times* maintained its preference for stories whereby KANU was fending off Opposition criticism and thus defending the legitimacy that was now being challenged by the Opposition. In this respect, the political change had no major observable effects on *Kenya Times'* stance vis-à-vis the legitimacy it accorded the two political groups. It openly supported the undemocratic one-party system and strongly opposed the more democratic multi-party system. The party newspaper proved itself incapable of any semblance of fairness in its performance.

The proportion of the news items in the *Nation* whereby the Opposition criticised KANU increased by a whole 19 per cent while that of KANU defending itself increased by 10 per cent. These increases are an important change because they progressed until in February 1991, the *Nation* gave both political groups nearly equal chance to fight for their legitimacy. This finding does not support my hypothesis that a more democratic culture would result in the private foreign-owned *Nation* carrying more stories in which the Opposition criticises KANU and less of KANU defending itself. The *Nation*, therefore, became the daily newspaper that to a great extent enabled the Opposition to establish itself in the public sphere while at the same time questioning KANU's legitimacy. This may be the change that prompted KANU politicians to claim that the *Nation* was biased in favour of the Opposition. The performance by the *Nation* implies that it is the private-owned daily newspaper, free from party allegiance and direct political pressure and control, which can be expected to play the public sphere role.

The findings of the content analysis have some implications for the constitution of the press as a public sphere. It is evident that in a competitive party political system, the ruling party press will be biased in favour of the party. This means that in order to promote equity of access and freedom of the press, party ownership should be strongly discouraged. Foreign and private ownership of

the daily press, though not the ideal arrangement, seems to better serve the interests of democratic communication. The implication of this is that the private daily press, both local and foreign, needs to be vigilant and committed in supporting and safeguarding the hard-earned multi-party democracy. This it should do partly by allowing a diversity of news and views in its news pages.

8.10 The Kenyan Daily Press as a Participant in the Public Sphere

The Case of *Kenya Times*

Chapter Seven has also clearly demonstrated that the political change that ushered in multi-party politics in Kenya seems to have had a great effect on the performance of the two daily newspapers. It impacted on who and what they could comment on, and on the way they commented on the political issues pertinent to the desirability of multi-party politics. *Kenya Times* waged an ideological war against the Opposition. Poor economic performance, vassalage to imperialist and neo-colonial powers, failure to perform satisfactorily when in public office, disrespect for the law, anarchy, tribalism etc., were all rhetorically blamed on Opposition politicians. All these things, which are depicted as threatening the people's deeply cherished national values, were used rhetorically to undermine the necessity and legitimacy of the Opposition, and by extension, of the multi-party political system.

One rhetorical method by which *Kenya Times* expressed its opposition to multi-party democracy was in the way it portrayed the Opposition politicians; depicting them in a negative light. It portrayed them as tribalists that were motivated by ethnic considerations. It argued that this was proof that multi-party politics engenders tribal affiliations. The position of *Kenya Times* about multi-party democracy has been gauged also from the rhetorical arguments and illustrations it used to defend KANU, mostly against accusations from the Opposition. It gave KANU undeserved credit for accepting to allow the re-introduction of multi-party politics, thereby projecting it as a champion of

democratic ideals. For this reason *Kenya Times* argued that there was no need for a multi-party system in Kenya.

Kenya Times further expressed its aversion to the democratic change by arguing that it was a foreign initiative with an imperial and neo-colonial influence. It argued that, because democracy is itself elusive, Kenya should be allowed to chart her own version. The thrust of this line of argument is that the foreign initiated change to multi-party democracy was undesirable and Kenyans would be better served by their own "single-party democracy". *Kenya Times* also argued against multi-party democracy giving economic reasons. It portrayed the agitation for change as a ploy by the West to divert attention from the undemocratic nature of the World economic order. It argued further that democracy at home should be seen as dependent on a democratic economic relationship between the rich North and the poor South. For *Kenya Times*, democracy in Kenya is meaningless and a waste of time if it does not address the local economic problems by democratising the World economic order.

It is evident from the analysis that the picture given by *Kenya Times* about the Opposition was a misrepresentation of the issues that were being debated. This misrepresentation was used rhetorically to redefine the political agenda in order to argue against the necessity for democratic change. The implication of *Kenya Times'* performance is that it cannot be expected to be a rational player in the public sphere. Firstly, because it has not supported the need for and the legitimacy of the much sought-for and hard-earned democratic dispensation in Kenya. Secondly, because instead of debating issues, it has rather decided to focus on abusing personalities and name-calling, to the extent of propagating falsehoods as if they were facts. Thirdly, because it has showed a poor regard for the public generally and public opinion in particular. These are two indispensable ingredients of a democratic dispensation. The implication of all this is that a party press cannot serve the democratic interests of Kenya. It can

only be regarded as a publicity and propaganda organ of the ruling party. In a country where the public broadcast media is controlled by the government, party ownership of a daily press does not augur well for the role of the press as a public sphere.

The Case of the *Nation*

I have demonstrated that the effect brought about by the political change was more remarkable in the *Nation*. In November 1991, this daily played it safe, not giving significant criticism of KANU's performance but merely criticising both political groups for trading blanket accusations against each other. It is arguable that the *Nation* gave its support to KANU. As a matter of fact, it argued that the party was capable of the kind of the debate that could withstand Opposition criticism and advised the party to do just that, arguing that as a result, the Opposition would die a natural death. With the change to multi-party politics, the newspaper, at first arguing that the issue is not KANU or multi-partyism, came out to criticise the performance of the KANU government. With time, especially in January and February 1992, the *Nation* clearly showed that KANU and multi-partyism were now the issues.

After the political change that ushered in multi-party politics, the KANU government was now portrayed in the *Nation* as being rigid, authoritarian, undemocratic, corrupt, and incapable of change on its own. The KANU parliament was depicted as a house where leaders who were 'force-fed' on the people went to sleep and make fun of matters of life and death. The *Nation* argued that a multi-party system was made necessary, not because of foreign interference, but because of KANU's illegitimacy and its violation of fundamental human rights. It accused KANU of fanning tribal violence in order to lend credence to its arguments against multi-party politics. For the *Nation*, all this not only called for change, it made it imperative. The newspaper argued that in principle democratic values could be upheld even under a single-party system but that the performance of the KANU government had

proved that this is much more difficult than it would be under a multi-party system.

Unlike *Kenya Times*, who blamed the Opposition for the same, the *Nation* argued that it is the KANU government that was the cause of Kenya's political and economic problems. This new found freedom to take the ruling party to task got its strongest expression when the daily criticised President Moi for claiming that the composition of the emerging Opposition was tribal. It can be argued that the political change enabled the *Nation* to be more supportive of this change and that its attitude towards the KANU government's performance became increasingly negative. However, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the *Nation* was pro-Opposition. What is most manifest is the increased tendency by this daily newspaper to accuse the KANU government of the same things as those levelled against it by the Opposition. It can also be argued that in an attempt to give a more balanced picture of the situation, when criticising the Opposition for a particular offence, the daily would give examples to show that the KANU government too committed similar if not more serious offences.

Another issue about which the two dailies differed was whether or not the turning up of large crowds during Opposition-organised political rallies was a sign of popular grass roots support for multi-party politics or for the Opposition for that matter. Showing very clearly that it was against the political change, *Kenya Times* portrayed this phenomenon as inconsequential; the crowd comprised of idlers who were not schooled in the laws of the land to appreciate and participate in a democratic political process. The *Nation*, however, endorsed multi-party politics by portraying the crowd as an expression of the popular demand and support for democratic change. Whilst the attitude of *Kenya Times* towards the ordinary Kenyan was negative and spiteful, the *Nation* hailed him/her as the hero of the struggle for multi-party democracy in Kenya.

In the case of the *Nation*, therefore, the hypothesis I gave was not supported for the period before the political change. At this time, instead of supporting the ideological position that multi-partyism was desirable, this daily supported the status quo, only recommending that KANU should transform itself. I have showed, however, that after the change the hypothesis was strongly supported with the *Nation* supporting both the political change and the demands and views of the Opposition. The implication of this performance is that private ownership, or freedom from government ownership, does not foster press freedom if the political culture is autocratic. However, in a more democratic dispensation, freedom from government and party-ownership enables the daily press to be an active watch-dog. This implies that with the advent of multi-party politics in Kenya, the private owned newspapers could now begin to participate in, and play the role of, the political public sphere. What is required now is for the public broadcast media to be freed from ruling-party influences and control. The running of the electronic media should be restructured so that Kenyans, the majority of whom can only be reached by these media, can listen to contending political and other views.

KENYA Times

The Voice of the People

Multi-party rule not panacea for Africa

The most disturbing thing about the current crusade for change in African countries is that it is largely engineered from outside the continent. This is no doubt what prompted OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim to send out the appeal that African countries be given a chance to evolve democratic systems based on their history and experience.

Dr Salim, who is on a Kenyan visit, said on Monday that donor nations should not use economic aid to blackmail African countries into adopting unrealistic political structures something he said did not augur well for the independence of these nations.

A number of donor nations are now demanding that African countries must immediately adopt multi-party politics, because, according to these people in the West, democracy starts and ends with pluralism, preferably the US, Swedish or British way.

But while we agree with these sponsors of the multi-party crusade on the need for change in certain areas, we feel that Dr Salim is indeed speaking for many Africans when he says that the multi-party system is not a panacea for Africa's problems.

The solutions that are prescribed from thousands of kilometres away do not adequately address the local problems. It is obvious that all the countries on this continent are not homogeneous. Each should, therefore, be allowed to find its own synthesis that will be suited to its needs.

Our friends and foes in the West should realise that Africa has never been static. When the imperialists arrived in Africa in the last century, they imposed a new system which largely served its interests. This was greatly modified when African countries achieved independence about three decades ago. Some of the countries flirted with communism while others embraced pluralism. So when some of the proponents of the multi-party system now argue that Africa is now ripe for democracy, they give the false impression that everything remained static until the West started calling for multi-party rule on the continent.

We agree with Dr Salim's contention that Africa has always been ripe for change and that what is now needed is the creation of a political environment where the rule of law is respected and the people's rights protected. That is possible under a single party, the country that poses such a system should not be censured and denied aid.

But as we have said time and again, we would not like to see Africans slaughter one another in the name of single or multi-party systems. This is why we in Kenya agree with President Moi that whatever changes we make, such changes should be pursued through an orderly and peaceful manner.

It is against this background that we laud the ruling party, Kanu's Parliamentary Group for endorsing the option of multi-party politics in Kenya in future. And we agree with our Members of Parliament's suggestion that the initiative should be from within and not as a result of external pressure. That is the only way we can be sure of maintaining some form of independence in this world where the rich nations now wish to dictate

DAILY NATION

Nairobi, Tuesday, November 19, 1991

Another tack may be the way to go

There was no way that last Saturday's Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) meeting would have taken place. Past experience - specifically last year's saba saba tragedy and a similarly abortive rally scheduled for last October 8 - should have convinced all and sundry thus.

If it would have saved Nairobi residents the uncomfortable experience of living with appalling fear, it would have pre-empted the chaos witnessed in the city limited though that was, and it would have spared those injured the pain of such injuries.

As it was, the FORD members stuck to their guns up to the last minute and, equally, the Government reaffirmed its determination to use all the means at its disposal to stop the meeting from taking place. This being the case, Saturday's unhappy events in Nairobi were inevitable.

Regrettably, this is not an instance when it can be said that all is well that ended well, or that justification can be calculated on the equation of the end legitimising the means. The FORD members have sworn to carry forward the momentum of what they see as a righteous struggle, the Government has, for its part, closed out any possibility of entertaining the demands of the FORD. In other words, each has chosen to stick to their positions regardless of the possible consequences.

We believe that both positions are unfortunate, not only because they depict an intransigence that can only be counter-productive, but because both positions are blind to the fact that flexibility is an almost defining principle of politics. Dogmatism merely entrenches diverse opinions and shuts out the possibility of compromises and accommodation.

It is not entirely correct for the FORD and other critics to dismiss the Government wholesale as an illegitimate entity that lacks the public mandate and hence the moral authority to give instructions that wananchi should voluntarily respond to. There is a lot that is wrong within the system, but the system itself is not illegitimate.

The blanket condemnation of the system - whether out of frustration that no-one in the system seems to be listening, or because the FORD members actually believe that the entire kit and caboodle is rotten - is unacceptable precisely because it is blind to those aspects and practices of the system that are right.

Not everyone in the Judiciary, the Executive and the Cabinet is corrupt. Not every Member of Parliament was rigged in. If individuals in these institutions are corrupt, timid or unable to articulate what is wrong, it is not necessarily a function of the system. They are there to change it. To that extent, therefore, we do not agree with FORD's lopsided analysis of the problems confronting this country.

But by the same token, there is nothing particularly beneficial in the way the authority has reacted to the FORD situation. Condemning, abusing and locking them up may be an effective option in the short term, but its long-term implications are, we believe, more relevant. By persecuting them for what has been touted as championing a worthy cause, the Government ends up canonising and making heroes out of individuals whose only claim to fame - at least some of them - is that they can answer back to authority.

This is not to dismiss the movement *in toto*, because, like Mr John Keny, trying to imagine that there is no opposition of any sort in this country is to try to wish away a bad reality. That is as impracticable as it is worthless. A problem like the one presented by the FORD has to be met head-on.

If it is a matter of addressing worrying issues like the endemic corruption, lethargy in the civil service and general inefficiency in the system, all the Government needs to do is activate the many checks and balances which exist within the structure. This is purely an administrative matter which, unfortunately, has been defined in political terms. Politically, what the Government should be doing about the FORD is to address each and every point it has raised and logically counter it. Let the FORD tell wananchi what strategies it has to address the critical problems of unemployment, economic decline and provision of goods and services to the people at affordable prices. That, ultimately, should be the test of any authority or Government which wants the full mandate of the people. Meanwhile, the Government must itself be seen to be working towards sealing any gaps that exist in its edifice.

We believe the Government can successfully defuse this otherwise explosive situation, not by clamping down on it and throttling it, but by letting it steam itself out. Talk, debate, argue and convince. That should be the way to proceed at this time of uncertainty, hostility and reform.



Unity now crucial for peace and stability

THE unanimity with which the Kanu Delegates Conference yesterday endorsed the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Kenya is further proof that the ruling party is not opposed to change but determined to maintain peace and unity. The Kanu Parliamentary Group, the Governing Council and the delegates have continued to meet regularly in the past few years to chart out the course our country should follow.

And true to his form, it was President Moi who yesterday proposed the amendment of Section 2(A) of the Constitution which prohibited the registration of other parties in the country. made the Kenya African National Union (Kanu) the sole political party.

The President and the Kanu delegates have, by allowing the reintroduction of multi-partyism in Kenya, shown that the ruling party is only interested in the destiny of our country and would like to see peace and tranquillity prevail.

And to further demonstrate that national unity is what is paramount, President Moi has advised those who have been clamouring for multi-party rule to form only national parties as tribal ones will not be registered.

But Kenyans had better watch out for the tendency of the multi-party system to breed groupings that only champion tribal or other narrow interests at the expense of national unity. Examples abound in Africa of how the multi-party system has been abused and Kenyans should learn from these.

In the meantime, as we wait for Attorney-General Amos Wako to draft a Bill for the amendment of Section 2(A) for debate by Parliament as instructed by Kanu, we hope that Government critics at home and abroad will now appreciate Kanu's commitment to peaceful change and drop their confrontational stance.

Those donor countries which had pegged aid to the introduction of pluralism in Kenya, should see Kanu's move yesterday as further proof of its willingness to listen to the views of all Kenyans, including its avowed critics. The openness with which this and other issues have been discussed in the recent past is in fact a demonstration of democracy.

As we go into the multi-party phase in the development of our political system, we would like to appeal to Kenyans to participate more actively in the political process in the country.

In the past, a large number of people, who deliberately refused to exercise their right to vote, have been known to go around complaining later about how this or that Member of Parliament was only elected by a small section of the voters in a constituency. One vote can make a difference in an election and that is why we feel every eligible Kenyan should vote.

All we can do now is hope the noise that we have heard so much in the recent past from Government critics will die down as the multi-party system is put into place. And as those who have been agitating for many parties register theirs, we insist that they realise that national stability and prosperity are paramount.



Kenyans do not need these foreign meddlers

EITHER British Labour MP Peter Hain is naive or the British Parliament is gullible.

The Kenyan-born opposition leader says he intends to table a motion in Parliament on January 13 asking Her Majesty's government to freeze all aid to Kenya. After visiting Kenya and talking to a number of people in the Kanu Government and in the opposition, he concluded that President Moi wanted to catch the opposition unawares. His solution, therefore, is that all aid to Kenya should be frozen until several measures are implemented to guarantee that the impending multi-party elections are free and fair.

It is difficult to know who the Labour MP was talking to when he visited Kenya and whether he got the truth about the political events unfolding here as Kenya prepares for plural politics. He may have decided to accept bait, hook and sinker the one view being touted about that the Kanu Government would not play a fair game come election time. But that notwithstanding, Mr Hain must be naive to believe that his colleagues in Parliament, including those in government are gullible enough to buy his story and that they do not know the decisions that have been set in motion to ensure participation of all eligible Kenyans in free and fair multi-party elections.

They know that Kenya has instituted measures, among them the repeal of the contentious Section 2(a) of the Constitution and is in the process of registering properly constituted parties which present themselves for election. They also know that Mr Hain's motion has no basis and that it is vexatious and counter-productive in the long run.

While Mr Hain has the right to speak on issues he feels strongly about, we suspect he has a hidden agenda and partisan interest in Kenya.

As the Secretary-General of Kanu said, there is no record in Kenya that Mr Hain, who carried the mantle of anti-apartheid leader, opposed the type of apartheid that Kenyans were suffering before independence. He was spirited out of Kenya in the wake of the Mau Mau liberation struggle only to assume the anti-apartheid mantle in his adulthood.

Or it may be that Mr Hain is one of the neo-colonial types and imperialists who seek to influence every political decision taken by the sovereign states of Africa. The least Kenyans want is foreign meddlers at a time when they are trying to carry out political reforms and when the country is facing hard economic realities.

Much of the political turmoil and economic ruin being experienced in many African countries is a direct result of meddling by foreign forces, mainly for their own selfish interests.

Most African countries are keen to evolve democratic systems and institute structural adjustments, not only to meet conditions given by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but as part of their own effort to create healthy and viable economic structures for the welfare of their people. On her part, Kenya is in the process of liberalising the economy by privatising parastatal organisations by selling them to private investors as a measure to cut down on Government expenditure and revamping the organisations. The Government is also committed to relaxing import and other restrictions in order to attract foreign investments and create more jobs for Kenyans.

It is these measures which can breath new life in the Kenyan economy which would, in turn, support any government that may emerge after the elections and it is these measures and not politics per se that should be supported and not ignored as Mr Hain seems to have done conveniently.



This year, we must all rally for unity

TODAY the world welcomes 1992, with much hope and expectation, for the new year follows on the heels of a terrible one. For 1991 was the year of the Gulf War, the year when Somalis slaughtered each other because of clan differences, the year when many innocent Liberians were slaughtered because of a power struggle and many other incidents.

For us here in Kenya, 1991 was a difficult year both politically and economically. We must hope that this will be a better year, that our economy will improve so that the many thousands of unemployed young people can get jobs. After all we are a developing country and the economy must always be our top priority if we want to improve the quality of life everywhere in this country.

Indeed, this is going to be a most challenging year everywhere in Africa, for there is less economic aid coming from the richer nations even as Africa's problems continue to multiply. The developed countries of the North are buying less and less goods from the poor South.

Thus, as we step out on the road to multi-party politics in Kenya it is important that each one knows that the future, is not at all likely to be rosy, that the powerful West is never going to lift us out of our economic problems merely because we now have more than one political party.

The future depends on us Kenyans. We must remain united or perish under the evil of tribalism. We must rise beyond our individual craving for political power and act only in the greater interest of the nation we have worked so hard to keep together.

Obviously, politicking has its place in a democratic society such as the one we are trying to build, and many statements will be made by politicians aimed at defeating the opposition. Some politicians, we can be quite sure, are concerned about nothing more than seeing their relatives and individuals from their tribes rise to top positions in the Government and parastatals.

This, in fact, explains why some politicians are constantly speaking "on behalf of" their tribes. These are the kind of leaders Kenya must forget about. Any man or woman who trumpets what he believes is the tribal interest is not worthy of a seat in Parliament and must not be allowed to get there.

What Kenya needs in the future are men and women who never forget for a minute that there are millions of other people in this country who speak a different language.

Multi-party politics will present Kenya with a very special challenge and it is up to all the parties involved to ensure that the people's rights are not abused. Already there are numerous cases of individuals being harassed by supporters of some political organisations. This is shameful, for it goes to show that some of the Government's biggest critics have no respect for the right of each Kenyan to support the party of his or her choice.

There have also been criminal acts: individuals have been beaten up and Kanu offices burnt, not at all a good sign.

As we enter the new year, we hope that all those involved in politics — and let us not forget that some people have no interest in ballots and ballot boxes — will realise that they carry a great responsibility. They must realise that they can put this country on the path to destruction by encouraging violence and tribal hatred or on a course of peace by remaining clean in all they do.

Transparency and accountability will be demanded of all leaders, not just the individuals in the Government. Most of the leaders of yesterday who now find themselves without any of the much coveted stools are trying to sneak back into the limelight, hoping that their misdeeds will be forgotten in the charged atmosphere of multi-party politics.

Men who are known to have stolen from the public and others who have a stinking record as tribalists are trying to pass as the people who will lead Kenyans into the future. Unfortunately for these people, there are records of their wrong-doings and they will not see their dirty dreams come true, not if they are called to account.

Let us face the future with hope and unity and without thoughts of tribal affiliation, for unless we do this we shall pay for it dearly sooner or later. Democracy is supposed to improve our lot, to improve the quality of life in this nation. It must not be an excuse for thieves and politicians with nothing but messages of hatred to find their way back into public office.

Kenyans deserve better than that and in this year of challenges for the nation each one must work hard to help the country go forward with integrity. Each must play a part.

DAILY NATION

Nairobi, Wednesday, December 4, 1991

Issues on the way forward for Kenya

We take this early opportunity to congratulate the various pressure groups and organisations whose persistent clamour for a free, open and democratic society has, finally, forced the Kanu leadership to open the way for all Kenyans to participate fully in the political, social and economic affairs of their country.

History will record that this has not been achieved without loss of life and other forms of suffering by Kenyans who, by demanding that the inhibitive political system be loosened up, incurred the wrath of the Kanu Government.

We want to register the fact that this newspaper has always championed and supported the wish of the majority of Kenyans to enjoy greater freedoms. Just before independence, the Nation was the only newspaper to declare its support for Kanu. We did so because Kanu represented the aspirations of the majority of Kenyans.

It was courageous at that time for anyone, even the Nation, to publicly declare support for an African political party in the face of the brutal repression by the crumbling colonial government.

In the mid-1970s, the Nation was the only newspaper again which publicly opposed an attempt by the Change-the-Constitution Group to prevent the then Vice-President, and now President, Moi, from succeeding Mzee Kenyatta to power. That, too, was a bold action by the Nation.

Today, we say the time has come for all Kenyans to sit down together round a conference table to chart the future political course for Kenya.

That the Kanu we supported in 1960 is not the same Kanu we have been urging to change says volumes about what must be learnt by those either in the ruling party or in the opposition as the nation prepares to draw up a new Constitution and an institutional framework to build a new Kenya.

It is our considered opinion that neither Kanu nor multi-partism is the issue now. As we move forward, the political leadership must critically look into our now unpopular institutions. Kenyans do not expect, and must never again allow, the establishment of systems which could be manipulated by irresponsible leaders to harass the people, to loot the national treasury or to amass personal wealth.

Wananchi must never again be forced to run away from their houses because some political demagogue has whipped up tribal emotions to promote his own political ends. No Kenyan should opt to flee his country because his political views are not compatible with the mainstream political thinking.

To safeguard the country against these and worse eventualities, we urge our leaders — in Government and in the still amorphous opposition — to consider the following agenda:

- Redraft the Constitution to ensure that the country's institutions are fully protected and the cancer of tribalism, which is very real, is effectively dealt with.

- Legislate, that in the future, before the agreed Constitution is amended, the issue is put to a national referendum and that the decision is carried by not less than a 75 per cent vote.

- To eliminate post-election complaints of rigging and other election procedure abuses, an independent electoral commission should be created by statute to handle all electoral issues.

- Similarly, to guarantee the highest standards of fairness, justice, efficiency and effectiveness in the Executive and Judicial arms of the Government, an independent Public Service Commission, Judicial Commission and other public employment agencies, must be integral parts of the new constitutional framework. Independent tender boards will be required to prevent corruption.

- The explosive matter of land ownership must be addressed comprehensively and here we suggest the trimming of the sweeping powers of the Commissioner of Lands or any other office. No one should have a free hand in the allocation of public land.

- One of the most vexatious issues in the run up to yesterday's watershed decision has been the perpetuity of the tenure of the President. We agree with the opinion that the President's term of office should be limited to two five-year terms, and that it should be subject to competitive elections each time. Similarly, the post of Vice-President should be voted for directly with each party being able to propose a candidate. It should be possible to impeach either or both holders of these offices.

Given the past experience with corruption and the way leaders have used it to amass wealth, it is desirable to require that leaders declare their wealth when assuming and leaving public office. These are just a few of the salient points which must be dealt with in the political reconstruction process. And as we try to manage this process, it is vital to remember that this is an opportunity for Kenyans to truly give Kenya the Kenya they want. There must not be another one soon.

DAILY NATION

Nairobi, Tuesday, December 31, 1991

Year to separate wheat from chaff

As we lay 1991 to rest today and prepare to welcome the New Year tomorrow, Kenyans would be wise to keep in mind that the two years are inextricably linked by an important idea - 1992 will hopefully see the fruition of seeds sown in 1991.

The momentous decision to allow the existence of more than one political party in Kenya was a welcome one, but also one that came not a moment too soon. After all, several other African countries had already successfully ended autocratic single-party rule. Most of these were in the French-speaking nations of West Africa, but an excellent example much closer to home was that of Zambia, where after months of sustained political pressure, President Frederick Chiluba's Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) swept former President Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) out of office in an electoral landslide.

Which way now for Kenya as we peer into the uncertain future? Will Kenyans - overwhelmed by the sudden political freedom - scramble to form more political parties than are practical or will they sensibly choose one vehicle that seems most likely to fulfil those aspirations they feel have been neglected by Kanu?

It is obvious where the first road leads. In a worst-case scenario, political parties would proliferate at such a rate that within no time, even the most ridiculous interest group would have some sort of "voice" seeking "representation" for it in Parliament. This could only result in a perception within the entrenched power structure, and most possibly in the military, that matters were running out of control and that a measure of order was called for. The military is already stirring things up in Togo and Congo.

The second road is much more hopeful. By suppressing their personal ambitions - an alien notion to most Kenyan politicians - opposition members could make room for a wide range of opinions within one political party that would articulate them clearly and in a manner to show that it was much more responsive to wananchi's needs than anyone else.

There will be, no doubt, efforts to create splinter groups and other attempts by *status quo* power brokers to throw the opposition into confusion. This can be achieved by stressing the differences between the opposition's various strands instead of emphasising what binds them together. This and other time-honoured divisive tactics are sure to be widely used as 1992 matures.

Fortunately, Kenyans are nobody's fools. Having no use at the best of times for the power game that is politics, they are politically aware and know which side their bread is buttered. Having come this far and achieved this much, they are hardly likely to be sidetracked by the kind of short-sighted chicanery and outright cheating so favoured by the entrenched power brokers.

Nineteen ninety-two is the year when Kenyans will have to look extremely closely at the choices in front of them before deciding for themselves which party is best placed to provide the greatest good for the greatest number.

Having been force-fed a single-party diet for so long, it is not surprising that Kenyans are eager for change. But they do not want change just for its own sake. They want to see to what extent their political leaders - entrenched or opposition - are capable of working for the popular good as opposed to working for their own welfare.

In this regard, then, 1992 is the year of reckoning, the one that will see the men separated from the boys, the wheat from the chaff.

DAILY NATION

Nairobi Monday, January 20, 1992

Restore faith in power of the vote

Building and safeguarding institutions which will safeguard the tradition of democratic government is a basic objective of multi-party political systems. But equally important, particularly in the context of Kenya, success of plural politics will be judged against the enthusiasm it generates in the people to participate in politics at the grassroots level.

Over the years, the misuse of power and office by some top Kanu officials has greatly undermined the confidence of wananchi and dampened their enthusiasm to participate in crucial democratic processes like voting at elections.

The feeling generally has been one of resigned frustration. Why should I vote if whatever I do will not make a difference? This was a direct result of the rampant rigging of elections at all levels. Other wananchi did not feel the necessity to vote because politics has, over the years, been reduced to glorification of individuals, a gateway to riches and as a whip to punish and intimidate "enemies". Somewhere along the way, politics was divorced from the concrete socio-economic issues it should address.

There is, therefore, an extremely urgent necessity to restore the confidence of people in politics. This has to be undertaken as a deliberate educational exercise, intended to remove from the people's minds the blinkered images about politics put there by politicians who should have known better, but did not care.

The National Council for Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has taken an important initiative in this regard. Last week, it launched a handbook, *Why You Should Vote*, meant to rekindle the interest of people to vote. It provides, in simple language, the different concepts of a multi-party political system, and most importantly, the election procedures and why it is critical that people vote.

But even as we note the immense importance of the NCCCK handbook, we realise that it might not reach all or a majority of the people it is supposed to get to. This is where political parties, pressure groups and individuals come in.

Through political rallies, seminars and other forums, the point must be made to the people that the ballot they hold makes a difference to having in Parliament a dunderhead who will not even know the Standing Orders after years in the House, or a person who understands and can articulate the problems facing his people, to them and other bodies which may be able to help.

The strategy is to make a straight pitch at people - exhort them to vote, or/and outline the issues that confront them in juxtaposition to the programmes of parties. The necessity for this cannot be over-emphasised.

In the excitement of political campaigns - the factor of many parties heightens the experience - it is all too easy to work the crowds by harping at the sins or weaknesses of the party. While this has been known to work generally, it is imperative that the parties overcome the temptation to cheapen the exercise of multi-partyism by concentrating more on the matters which will make or break the next government.

While FORD and others will, necessarily, campaign to discredit Moi's government, they must address issues like the unemployment time-bomb, food self-sufficiency, boosting the economy in face of severe structural adjustment programmes, the co-operative movement, regional co-operation, the education system, etc, etc.

While Kanu has every right to attempt to show the opposition - rightly or wrongly - as a motley of ill-suited, tainted, revenge-driven Kanu rejects, it must address these same issues from the point of view of whether it has any new concrete proposals to make to improve the situation. The same approach must be adopted by the Democratic Party, DEMO, and other groups which have chosen to educate the people on the power of the vote.

Ignorance and apathy has for a long time been used to keep the people out of the mainstream politics. The rehabilitation exercise must start now, and it is a challenge to the parties to do the needful.

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