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ANC media policy
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Jeremy: Now the Media in South Africa is and i quote politically and ideologically out of sync with the society in which it operates according to the ANC. New party president Jacob Zuma says there are a few of any mainstream media outlets that articulate a progressive left perspective. He also says the overall orientation of the South African media is politically conservative. Mr Zuma went on to say the outcome of the 52nd National Conference in Polokwane is the recent example of the media yet again becoming a victim of it's own propaganda and manipulation.

Now it's against that back top on Media SA this morning that we examine the ANC's media policy in the first of our media conferences for 2008. The initiative is in association with the Open Society Foundation and also the Media Monitoring Project.

With me for the first half hour of the programme at least is the newly appointed chairperson of the communications committee of the ANC, Dr Pallo Jordan along with William Bird who is director of the Media Monitoring project and Jane Duncan who is the executive director of the Freedom of Expression Institute.

To the three of you good morning welcome. Dr. Jordan let me start with you, politically and ideologically out of sync with the society in which it operates. What did Mr. Zuma mean?

Dr. Jordan: Well i suspect what he means is that the ANC has been elected to lead this country as government with increased majority since 1994 yet there isn't a single newspaper in this country, which reflect the views of that section of the electorates who have voted the ANC into office. At the last elections, the ANC scores between 70-75% support from the electorates, which is reflected in the dominance of parliament, over the provinces and over the many cities.

Now that 70-75% of the electorate who voted for the ANC, their views don't find reflection in any single media outlet in this country. That is very odd in a democracy. If you take that the [02:05] parliamentary democracy like Britain, if you pick up the Daily Telegraph or the Daily Mail, you will more or less find the reflection of the views of a section of the British electorate, supporters of the British party etc.

If you picked up the Daily Mirror, you will then again find views reflective of a section of the British electorate, those who support the Labour Party. Then you'll

find some newspapers that are sort of in between. Now we have the odd situation where something like almost 2/3 almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of our electorate vote for a political party yet it's views don't find reflection in a single newspaper. Now that i would say is odd.

Jeremy: Now is that ignorance as far as the media is concerned or is there a conspiracy behind this as far as the party is concerned?

Dr. Jordan: No, there is no conspiracy, it has to do with the economics of newspaper publishing and it has to do with some resistances of some elements amongst the newspaper owners to the ANC finding that sort of voice. I'll give you an example, before we went to the first democratic elections, Madiba, Thabo Mbeki, myself, we had dinner with [03:15] and Madiba wanted to talk to [03:20] because at that time Anglo American had extraordinary influence over newspaper ownership in the country. And he said, look we would like to negotiate with you about to perhaps purchase one of your papers. [03:33] after dinner handed over the [03:36] to [03:39] and he said that they don't sell newspapers to political parties.

One of the reasons we did what we did in the 60's and the 70's was to avoid that. He omitted to mention that he had sold [03:56] to IFP. Subsequent to that [04:01] Mbeki who is president Mbeki's younger brother made a bid to buy the Mail and Guardian. There was a lot of resistance to that and i remember the editorial to the Mail and Guardian to the effect that from the heart of the ruling party, an attempt was made to buy this paper. We are not going to go that way we'll soon sell it to someone else. And of course in the end they sold it to a Zimbabwean.

There has been recently news of another consortium, which involves [04:34] and others who are making a bid to buy the Sunday Times. And the response of the Sunday Times editorial was extremely hostile and there were all sorts of charactering of this consortiums, Mbeki supporters trying to buy the media etc. Now we are not saying that the Sunday Times should become the mouth piece of the ANC, but if the economics' of newspaper ownership is that you get together as a company and make a bid to buy something, your political opinion should be neither here or there, it should be, can you afford it, do you have the money, you have the cheque, can you buy it? But there was resistance because these people were known to be associated with the ANC. Now i say this is odd behaviour, wouldn't you?

Jeremy: Now let me bring the other two panel members into the discussion. Jane Duncan from the Freedom of Expression Institute, media diversity does remain a problem in this country?

Jane: It definitely does and personally i feel quite conflicted about the ANC's media policy because on the one hand there are aspects of the ANC's media policy that are highly progressive. I think that the ANC media policy has based itself on progressive media theory called critically political column of the media.

Which says that the mainstream media, the commercial media simply can't be understood as holding a neutral objective mirror up to society.

But often change towards monopolistic control in a way that attends to reflect privileged worldview of [06:03] and i think South African media could be largely characterised as reflecting what we could call a 50% society. Where the first 50% who participate in the mainstream economy have unparalleled, unprecedented access to media, there has been massive diversification of the media for that first 50%.

I think the three media groups that tend to dominate the mainstream; specifically the print media in South Africa have done a tremendous job in delivering diversity to that first 50%. But the second 50% of South Africa, i think remain largely marginalised by mainstream media precisely because of the kind of commercial concerns that Dr. Jordan is pointing about. And i think that it is not simply the ANC's voice and ANC's worldviews that is marginalised in terms of that social division if you like within the media. It is also other groups who tend to reflect on and give a voice to the concerns of the poor in this country.

Jeremy: William Bird how do you bring the other 50% on board?

William: I think i tend to agree with Jane and there are many aspects of ANC's media policy that are particularly progressive and do have some quite good suggestions as to how you can do that. I think suggesting that the NBDA can play a greater role in diversity of voices particularly to those groups that are and have previously been marginalised is i think is a very good and positive thing.

I think one of the reasons there are some concerns about some of these particular elements of this policy is that on some level they seem to do more than just bring diversity and on another level they are quite clearly are pushing a particular political agenda.

Jeremy: What are you principal concerns William?

William: Which you have to say is reasonable; i mean it is a political party so you would expect them to push their political agenda, if they didn't I'd be quite worried. I think some of the concerns around some of the issues that are built into the media policy; i think some of them have been discussed before. Things about this media tribunal i think that is a concern.

I think we need a lot more clarity around the position in relation to the SABC because there seems to be a bit of ambiguity in the way the SABC is treated and referred to. On one level is seen that the SABC is meant to be fulfilling its public broadcaster role which all of us in this studio would certainly support and endorse.

And on the other level, and i have spoken about the SABC is there to help serve the function of helping to progress the national democratic revolution which is not something necessarily that is out of [08:30] with the public service mandate parse, but it is certainly something that is pushing a particular agenda, which is

the ANC's agenda. And on that level that's when we need to be starting to say there are some concerns about these issues.

Jeremy: Ok you've opened up about two avenues, the SABC and the media Tribunal. Dr Palo lets go to the media tribunal first. Explain to us what the party thinking behind that and what the current status is.

Dr Jordan: Well i would have thought [08:52] that we have [08:54] like the broadcasting complaints commission [08:57] for the print media. If where we are now put something on the air which people find liable as objectful etc, they have recourse, the Broadcast Complaints Commission. For the print media the say go to the press ombudsman.

But the press ombudsman first requires you to surrender some of your constitutional rights like your right to recourse through the courts of law. You have to surrender that first before they listen to you, if you won't surrender that they won't listen to you. That's a bit absurd sort of situation. Now what is being suggested is just as in the sphere of broadcasting, there should be independent tribunals that you can go to and ask them to take up the issue.

Jeremy: Are you suggesting that self-regulation in that sphere has failed?

Dr Jordan: Well if self regulation didn't require you to compromise your constitutional rights, I'd be a lot more comfortable with it.

Jeremy: What powers and authorities will this media tribunal have should it come into being?

Dr. Jordan: Well what powers and authorities does your independent Broadcasting complaints commission have. They have powers exceeding that i should imagine.

Jeremy: So where would this then leave the press council or the press ombudsman if the media tribunal came into being?

Dr. Jordan: Well i am sure for example if discussions were entered into and the press ombudsman revised it's view about peoples constitutional rights and accommodation could be found it could be very easily become that tribunal itself. But where it requires you to surrender your constitutional rights to recourse to the law of courts, i think that is going too far.

Jeremy: Is this tribunal Dr Jordan going to be a reality in your opinion? I understand that the party is busy assessing the pros and cons right now?

Dr Jordan: All these things i'm sure that people would like to see coming to being but politics it is not possible and you have to always negotiate your ways

through these shores. At the end of the day, what might emerge might be nothing like what people imagined in the beginning. As i said, i'm sure it is conceivable if the press ombudsman says fine you can come to us and if you win, you can still sue. People would agree with that and not go any further.

Jeremy: Jane Duncan, i'm sensing that you are not a fan of this proposed media tribunal.

Jane: Not necessarily and i think it is quite felicitous to compare what goes on in the broadcasting media and what goes on in the print media. Because the broadcast media is regulated because the frequency spectrum is a fine art resource and as a result it has to be regulated in the public interest. So the kind of structure that Dr Jordan is suggesting is perfectly understandable for the broadcast media but i think one can't hardly describe the print media as a fine art resources. We know that there are structural barriers to entry but certainly not in the same ways that they are in the broadcast media.

So i don't think it takes us forward to compare the content regulatory system in the broadcast media with the print media. But having said that i actually think that the suggestion of the media tribunal marks a shift to the right in ANC's policy. I think if we look at critical political economy theory internationally, there are suggestions that are made of how to deal with the problem of media consolidation that i don't think the ANC is really entertaining at the moment.

Jeremy: Dr Jordan, this is a step to try and harness the print media under the party's control because in many cases the party is [] by the print media in recent years.

Dr Jordan: The [12:47] of politics we've survived it since 1912 and it might have bruised the ANC, given us a couple of lumps on the head but we've survived it and we are stronger than we've ever been before. So we are not afraid of criticism, it is an absurd suggestion to say that the ANC is afraid of criticism. We've been through hell if you think about it.

Jane: I've got two questions, which i'd like Dr Jordan to respond to, to help us understand where the ANC is coming from with it's media policy. Can you give concrete examples that the ANC is concerned about whether the self-regulatory system in relation to the print media has failed. So [] judgement of the press ombudsman that the ANC feels in spite of the press ombudsman applying it's mind to these cases violates the rights of people.

Jeremy: Lets pick up on that one first.

Dr Jordan: i can't point to any particular incident. What i' concerned with is this requirement that you surrender your constitutional rights. Surely if for example i went out to the streets and slandered you, you have recourse to the law courts for damages. So why should that not apply to a journalist who writes something

about you? What the media ombudsman says is that i'll listen to you provided you give up that right.

Now why should that happen? I think that is unconstitutional because what they are saying is that if Tom, Dick and Harry slanders you, you can go to the law courts, if one of us slanders you cannot go to the law courts, you can only go as far as here. Now the damage done to your person, to your reputation is going to be addressed in a small little paragraph in the newspaper.

Jane: My second question to the ANC is on what i was saying earlier, there are methods of dealing with media concentration and media commercialisation that have been tested and applied internationally that the ANC doesn't seem to be considering at the moment in their media policy. So for instance, limitation of ownership of newspapers, some countries for instance have implemented what they call the 30% room where no newspaper group can own more than 30% of total circulation.

Some countries have limitations on foreign ownership for instance. Why is it that the ANC doesn't seem to be considering these things that other countries often feel are necessary in order to achieve media freedom, if we understand diversity as an instance of media freedom. Because it seems like it is too easy to content controls, it is the easy way of dealing with this particular problem but i think at the end of the day it is not going to get us anywhere, it could lead in the decline of the very standards in the main stream media that the ANC is decrying.

Dr Jordan: [15:38] the issue of foreign ownership, i could here screams and shouts immediately from the independent groups and from the mail and guardian [15:49] getting into all sorts of messy problems there.

Jeremy: But shouldn't we be focusing on that one now?

Dr Jordan: it could be something that we need to focus on but the issue is not content control. This is that sort of a prescriptive that is seen as a prescriptive institution that is going to tell it's editors what to print and what not to print. What it is intended for, in the instance your person, your integrity etc are violated you have recourse.

Jeremy: William Bird how do you see this? Is it an issue of content control?

William: The thing that is interesting to me is that the argument that Dr Jordan is making is in fact contained in the ANC media policy. In fact the basis of the policy is based very much on the violations of peoples rights to dignity and privacy. Which i think is a very valuable comment because it is something that we've been particularly concerned with and i think certainly as an approach, i think the idea of introducing a new body that instead of working with a body that has been there, has been in existence, that has recently gone through a substantial reorganisation, that has a press council that has a different appeals procedure to it seems a little bit short sighted. But i also if the real concern is to

avoid the violation of peoples rights to privacy and dignity, surely what we should be looking at is working with media to prevent these occurrences rather than dealing with them post [17:16]

Jeremy: That is a very idealistic approach though?

William: Well i think it is and it isn't. I think some of the things that we are speaking about if we are talking about the violation of dignity and privacy for example one of the areas that the current press code isn't in line with the law in South Africa is in relation to identifying children in the media through their HIV status. So it would be a good idea to revise the press code to make sure that it is inline with the law as it stands in South Africa.

Jeremy: Dr Jordan shouldn't you be engaging more as William Bird suggested with the press ombudsman, with the press council, with the newspapers before you start looking at the media tribunal?

Dr Jordan: Surely the ANC will be doing that, it will be engaging with media and it has always engaged with the media in any case.

Jeremy: Jane Duncan are you satisfied with that?

Jane: I'm satisfied with the idea that there needs to be more engagement on this particular issue because i think there needs to every deep debate that we need to have about how to deal with i think very key issues that the ANC has raised to actually ensure that media freedom is enjoyed by all South Africans. I think that it's raised issues of considerable public importance particularly in the media concentration issue. But what i detect is what one could call a pocketed strategy in terms of how to deal with this particular issue and that's where i think the debate should lie.

Jeremy: Dr Jordan, a [18:35] of strategy. Have you thought through this one clearly?

Dr Jordan: Let me confess that i was not much involved in the grafting of the media policy.

Jeremy: But the [18:46] communication policy now sits on your desk, doesn't it?

Dr Jordan: It is sitting on my desk right but many of the ideas that people had about the media tribunal i hadn't thought through. I might have been valid criticism. There was a feeling i think amongst delegates in Polokwane on peoples privacy, peoples dignity that has been trampled on by print media and other media but i suppose the print media was seen as the worst culprits which is why

there is [] sort of thing. But as you can see, it wasn't an immediate reaction. People did think through the issues.

Jeremy: But we aren't any more or any less robust surely than media in other parts of the world.

Dr Jordan: There are many other parts of the world that would give an arm and a leg to have the press freedom that we have in this country.

Jeremy: Point taken, Jane Duncan in terms of measuring the robustness of the media in this country, surely we are not overly hostile, are we?

Jane: No, i don't think so and i think it is a little bit difficult to understand where the ANC is coming from in arguing that the mainstream media are generally hostile towards the ANC. If one looked at the 2004 elections, many newspapers in the editorial columns actually came out in support of the ANC. And i think one area in which the mainstream media has been particularly supportive of the ANC is in relation to economic policy. In fact i think to the point of being problematic.

There is a very interesting study that was done recently of articles on privatisation between 2000 and 2004. In fact that study found that the mainstream media tended to support privatisation to the point of limiting alternative approaches, anti privatisation views for instance. But i think just in terms of the consolidation of the question, i don't think that the independence of newsrooms has eroded to the point where like in other countries that we have extreme consolidation of the media.

In the States for instance or even in Australia we've had a media Murdock instructing his newsrooms to support the invasion of Iraq. We don't see that level of [] of independence of newsrooms by proprietors or even managers. I think there is a relevant autonomy still that journalist enjoy within newsrooms from owners and managers.

Jeremy: Pallo Jordan how much of this is driven by the prevailing political climate? This is from the All Africa.com website analysing the ANC media policy and the possible emergence of the media tribunal. Some observers believe it is the beginning of a merciless revenge against the media by the ANC for it's impartial reporting on Jacob Zuma. Is that true?

Dr Jordan: I wish the world were as simple as that.

Jeremy: You reject that [21:33]

William bird?

William: No i don't think it is as simple as that. I mean as we've been discussing the ANC's policy around these things, it is unlikely that they would have developed this policy as a response to the way that Jacob Zuma has been reported in the media.

Jeremy: The party was crying foul over the media reporting in some instances of Jacob Zuma?

William: But here's is the thing that i find interesting about that and Jane hinted at is that, when you look at the media during election period which arguably is the most important and fundamentally important period of a media's reporting precisely because it is going to inform peoples fundamental democratic choice to vote. When you look at the media coverage during that period and i'm talking about print and broadcast, the media covers were fair, overwhelming so.

This is our own monitoring, the independent monitoring of it, it is found to be overwhelmingly fair. So it is not as though there was an abundance of unfair coverage of these things. And if you look at the reporting of the rape trial etc, there were some things that i think if anything the reporting disfavoured gender and gender activists and how their issues were being reported.

Jeremy: Jane Duncan the [22:40] the notion of a camp down of the media by the ANC because the media was guilty of impartial reporting of Jacob Zuma. To what extent is that driving the ANC media policy? Is that too simplistic to connect those dots?

Jane: It might well be too simplistic to connect those dots but what i am concerned about given that Jacob Zuma has become the president of the ANC is what one could call the rise of conservative nationalism within the ANC. I think the ANC generally has had a progressive take on the national question and i think that if we are going to take the move to the situation where there is greater attempt to control content that is considered to be indecent or immoral or anti patriotic, then i think that we are going to be going backwards in terms of a progressive vision for the media. And certainly it is of concern that Jacob Zuma is attempting to go after a number of media that have reported quite critically on him throughout his rape trial, i think is [23:47] for media freedom.

Jeremy: Ok Dr Pallo Jordan, [23:48] conservative nationalism Jane Duncan says, yet Jacob Zuma says the overall orientation of South African media is politically conservative.

Dr Jordan: And on the other had most of the media says that the people who voted for Zuma coalition left. We are all entitled to our own opinions; it is one of the things we fought for many years. I don't think there is a substantial body of opinion in the ANC that is concerned about things that we spoke about like indecency. Peoples concern is mainly in the realm of the violation of privacy, dignity etc. Are there people who are personally conservative in certain matters in the ANC? I'm sure there are but i don't think you could characterise what happened in Polokwane victory as conservative nationalism.

Jane: I think if we look for instances at the [24:47] publication amendment bill, that to me is a sign of a shift towards conservative nationalism in terms of governance discourse around media. I think for instance there is an attempt to

control sexually explicit material for instance to make the [25:03] publication board arbiter in deciding what gets published and what doesn't get published, certainly to me marks a shift towards using reality as a basis of publication control. And that really went out for the publication act of 1974. So i think that there is no place for that in the progressive media just sensation.

But i think, at the heart, a lot of the ANC's discontent with the media certainly the way i read it at the moment, is the Sunday Times reporting on the health minister. I think this has given rise to a lot of negative feelings within the ANC towards the media. And frankly i don't think that the Sunday Times was driven by commercial considerations by reporting on the health minister the way that they did. I think it would have reported on the health minister whether there were health considerations or not, whether it was trying to drive up it's profits or not.

And just to sharpen the point, at the time when the controversy was unfolding in the Sunday Times, there was another controversy unfolding in the United States where George Clooney was involved in a motorbike accident and he was hospitalised. And only over forty medical staff of the hospital where he was hospitalised attempted to flog his medical records to the mainstream media. Personally i can't see what public interests lay in medical staff behaving in that kind of manner.

Perhaps it was a public interest but i certainly can't see it and i think that that's a perfect example of commercial considerations, tabloid considerations if you like overtaking the public interest role of the media. But i don't think the Sunday Times use of the health ministers medical records in this particular case is anywhere near the example that i just cited. I think the public interest in the Sunday Times is reporting on the health minister remained whether there were commercial considerations or not.

Jeremy: Quick reply from you Dr Jordan.

Dr Jordan: My view is that medical records are confidential and [27:04] for example testified in court about your medical condition. So i think it is stretching our press freedom to argue that you have the right to publish someone's medical records because "it is in the public's interest". I'm not certain what public interest [] by that.

Jeremy: All right we'll introduce a fourth voice into our discussion in just a moment in conversation with the regional director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

Our media conference this morning, we are looking at the media policy. I am going to introduce you to two more guests now. First of all we have on the line Katira Kandji who is the regional director of the Media Institute of Southern Africa as our conversation continues this morning. Katira a good morning to you and welcome, you've been listening for the past ten minutes or so. What do you make of this discussion so far?

Katira: I've listened to the debate and i think it is a quite interesting debate. I should just say from the onset, i think the ANC is the ruling party and have the right to suggest a political direction. But i think as they do that, they should look

at the incognisance of the regional trend and look at their policy document or resolution regularly when they are calling for the tribunal. For me this goes against the [00:55] commitment that affects, which infact is signed by the South African government, i think it should have qualified in a certain protocol which is clearly calling for the enhancement of media freedom. If you look at that protocol, the governments in the region should encourage and support the media in their attempts of self-regulation.

That's what we are saying and we are also calling for government to assist the media in coming up with good code of ethics so that they can boost professionalism and boost the confidence of the public in the media. With all these happening and the trends in the regions where government [01:31] are revising their policies. In Namibia, they are revising their policy and while they are doing that, the South African government, which affects all of us in the region, is the government, the country where we look up to.

Coming up with a policy direction that goes against this kind of commitment. I think for me that is a bit worrying and i think they should take the cognisance of what are their commitments, what are successes in the regions, what are the patterns of policy direction in the regions. Than just coming up with some policy direction that to some extent it is going to be [02:04] to media goals, development and promotion of media freedom in the region.

Jeremy: Well Katira Kandji thank you for very much and stay on the line. Ferial Haffajee is the editor of Mail and Guardian is also joining our conversation this morning in fact it is a double whammy because you did the editors a little earlier so you are working hard. Thanks Ferial. You've obviously had a closer look at this ANC media policy; we've spent sometime debating this notion of the media tribunal. How do you see this?

Ferial: First of all Jeremy, i think with respect we've got the wrong guy in the studio today because Dr Pallo Jordan commitment to sculpting the world class commitment is unquestionable but within the ANC and the broader alliance i think there's a definite hardening of attitude and i don't think that the genesis of this proposal lies within at all in fact it comes from the hardened genesis within what used to be called the Zuma camp and also from the SACP which i would think is the brain behind this.

And i think the push for this is extremely large within the ANC and i think a figure we have to look at as discomfoting as it is, is the fact that a good 25-27% of the ANC has been the subject of critical media coverage because of one or other cases they've been involved with. And surely we have to count and see that as a factor.

Jeremy: So you think that there was a revenge motive here?

Ferial: I don't know if it is a revenge motive; i think it was a motive to get a more quite media onsite. It interesting for me that the very old that the ANC wanted at the SABC is under severe criticism by the new power block within the ANC.

Jeremy: Has self-regulation worked in this country?

Ferial: I don't think it's worked effectively until now. I think [03:48] will keep us on our feet like no other has done. I don't think the last office was very good and many of us within SANEF were very clear that the system needed to be more feisty, it needed to be more like the British system where the Press Commission really does keep the media on it's toes and is not shy about [04:08] them. I think that system of fines needs to be put into place in order to give physical or monetary [04:14] to the system. But like [04:16] it is the goal standard self-regulation. Any form of regulation just takes you on a slippery slip.

Jeremy: Do you think this media tribunal has a [04:47]

Ferial: I do, but i trust that was Dr Jordan and the position he has now been given. Perhaps there's a door open to negotiate once again because we've been trying to negotiate talk, lobby against it without a great deal of success. It went some ease at Polokwane.

Jeremy: If such a body comes into being, what are the media consequences in your opinion?

Ferial: The immediate consequence is massive confusion and i would like to know who would pack such a body. Would it be people disgruntled, would you see for example the SACP General Secretary Blade Nzimande who is on record believing that most of the media serve a liberal ideology and the country is best of without us and i think it would create confusion in the system and i think it will also hurt our country. Because our media freedom is very world class like you said, admirable media freedom is one thing that counts in our favour.

Jeremy: Lets bring sixth panel member into our discussion, Rodney Tiffen, Professor, Government and International Relations in the faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney. Professor good morning to you and welcome, give us an Australian example, how do you manage a sect of self-regulation in the media in your country?

Prof. Tiffen: Well Jeremy it is a mixture of things, i mean it self-regulation to a degree, probably co-regulation is better term because in an area like violence and [05:48] in children's TV is sort of more of an effort to arrive at industry codes in consultation with consumer and others as well as the government.

So we've never really had self-regulation in this country regarding broadcasting but in the media we've got self-regulation except in so far it affects laws like defamation and so fourth. And in the press area we've got as you may know, very much [06:16] in South Africa and the Murdock Press in particular dominates the ownership of Australian press.

Jeremy: Let's move the discussion with the permission of all of you from the print media and lets look at the role of the public broadcaster. William Bird it was

something that you raised a little bit earlier with us. Given that the SABC is the country's biggest media organisation within this broad of debate. How does the public broadcaster now play it's continually been labelled as the governments mouthpiece. There's also been concern expressed over the approval of the new SABC board. There's also talk i think from the ANC in terms of the media policy document, looking for 60% government funding of the SABC.

William: What it demonstrates is the clear ambiguity in the ANC policy document which leads i think to enormous confusion certainly on our part saying we are not quite sure what their plans are. And the ambiguity lies in the fact that in the one hand it has to be robust public service broadcaster and these are some of the reasons they are suggesting different funding methods which again i think an overwhelming majority of people i think say we need in terms of helping other broadcasters, there are certainly good arguments in suggesting a new funding method.

I think we need clarity as to how that 60% funding is going to happen, where it's going to come from and how they are going to be funded. Because obviously if it's coming straight form government, it's going to be a raving disaster because you have to have a clear relationship as to where that funding is coming from because otherwise they'll run into a number of problems. The other ambiguity is that on the one hand they have to be there and disseminate a broad diversity of use and on the other, they must be there to forge the national democratic revolution, which isn't then something that is in line with the national broadcasting mandate, it's in line with the ANC mandate. And that i think we'll say is a big problem.

Jeremy: Dr. Jordan how do you see this playing out?

Dr Jordan: Well the issue of the funding of the public broadcaster i think has been with us since 1994 and we haven't been able to cut it. Now is it possible within the next so many years we'll be able to arrive at a position where 60% of the revenues of SABC come from the public press, might be desirable. Is it attainable, i think that is the question that arises and then if you are going to look at how we are going phase it in.

What i'd like to push off the table almost at absent is the notion that the funding from the public press necessarily implies control by the government or sub savings to government. I know people have their suspicions about this, perhaps because of our past experiences but i don't think it is necessarily the case. If you look at for instance the BBC model in Britain and i quote compared to the American model, it's dependent on advertising of the private sector, the BBC model depends on the public pass. [09:06] in terms of different types of media and BBC wins hands down all the time.

Jeremy: Jane Duncan in theory that's the rights idea, it is not necessarily the experience we've had in this country is it?

Jane: I don't necessarily think that the BBC model is the necessary model for [09:21] funding and also in terms of independence as well. I think that the BBC has been historically a product of an agreement between the BBC and government and there no express guarantees of independence that's actually written into that particular agreement. There is also obviously because Britain doesn't have a constitution, the constitutional guarantee of independence too.

In terms of funding, BBC is primarily funded through a licence fee and i don't think by increasing the licence fee in South Africa is the way to go. I think licence fee is a regressive form of taxation and we should rather look at taxing people progressively with those who earn more, pay more. It is also possible to run public funding through SARS because SARS as a collection agency is highly effective and does have the capacity to determine who should pay more and who should pay less.

But i think the drive towards achieving a greater public funding through the SABC is something that needs to be supported but also the independence of the SABC needs to be upgraded as well because i think that there are unacceptable levels of indirect control that the minister of communication has over the SABC board and i think that those forms of indirect controls need to be addressed min the new SABC after it's going to be debated in parliament later this year.

Jeremy: Rod Tiffen in Australia very quickly the relationship between the Australian government and the public broadcaster. How does that work?

Prof. Tiffen: Well for the past 11 years we had to hound government, that was conservative government, was [10:53] to the ABC and yet even at the end of the period the conservatives were moaning that they couldn't control the national broadcaster. I think the thing is though; it's a balance of forces in Australia. There are three commercial networks and three public service networks and it makes it harder for the government to control any one of them if you've got that sort of competition.

Jeremy: Ferial Haffajee the public broadcaster in any country surely is going to be a disputed territory, isn't it?

Ferial: Yes of course it is but i think that ours had, i'm not sure whether it still has the potential to lead the chain towards the African public broadcasting. It is such a vital form of media across the continent with the private sector media still very small and just serves the elite. And i think whatever we set in place should be the best practice. Of course i think then we have to start looking at specific examples of what's happened to the SABC in the past five years. I think it served the very best standards of public broadcasting.

Jeremy: As Dr Jordan rightfully points out is that funding does though remain a dilemma?

Ferial: I think that more funding from the public [11:59] is absolutely essential. Micro economic may count against that when we may not be raking the extra billions, which we have been over the past three years. There is the money available, it's the government structures that [12:10]

Jeremy: But the key phrase that you've al used at one point or the other is maintaining the arms length relationship.

Ferial: And that has proven to be very hard in the past three years.

Jeremy: Right we've got about a minute left in the programme and i would like to thank all of you for joining us today on a special edition of media at SAFm. Thanks to Dr Pallo Jordan who is among other things the Chairperson of the Communications Committee of the ANC. William Bird who helped put all of this together, thank you very much indeed, Director of the Media Monitoring Project. And also to Jane Duncan Executive Director of the Freedom of Expression Institute. My thanks as well to Rod Tiffen, who is with the University of Sydney. Professor of Government and International Relations at the faculty of Arts. And my thanks as well to Katira Kandji who is the Regional Director of Media Institute of Southern Africa.

I'm Jeremy Maggs thank you for listening; we'll do another one of this in the next couple of weeks.