Southern Sudan referendum 2011:
Monitoring of media coverage

Sudan Media and Elections Consortium
16 December 2010 – 10 April 2011

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SMEC
Sudan Media and Elections Consortium

UNDP Sudan

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Foreword

The Sudan Media and Elections Consortium (SMEC) was established in January 2010 to implement a project on media and elections in Sudan. Following the successful completion and reporting on the media coverage of the April 2010 elections, the SMEC was once more contracted to undertake a number of media related activities in relation to the Southern Sudan Referendum of January 2011. Monitoring media coverage of politics and referendum was one of the two components of the project in parallel with a training and mentoring programme for journalists and media houses.

This final report is a consolidated version of all the reports issued in the course of the monitoring period. It presents the main monitoring findings of the media's coverage of the referendum campaign, the campaign moratorium day, the voting week and the post-referendum phase from 26 January to 10 April 2011.

During the period 16 December 2010 – 10 April 2011, the SMEC carried out a media monitoring exercise on referendum and political coverage, agenda setting, offensive speech as well as media developments. The methodology included both quantitative and qualitative techniques aimed at ensuring an

Media monitor at work during Southern Sudan independence referendum vote.
Photo: Brigitte Sins/IMS

exhaustive observation of the media's performance and working conditions. The monitoring took place in two joint media monitoring units, one located in Khartoum, the other in Juba. On a daily basis, the SMEC monitored three TV stations during prime time, six radio channels during peak times and fifteen newspapers[1]. The media included in the sample were selected according to a number of criteria, including territorial reach, estimated audience numbers and circulation.

All selected media were monitored according to a standard methodology of content analysis used in a number of elections since 1997. International organisations and civic society groups adopted and tested it in a number of countries. The methodology aimed at assessing:

· whether the voting options Unity and Secession were professionally, fairly and impartially covered;
· whether the two advocating fronts of the referendum were equally and fairly covered;
· whether the referendum was covered in a neutral or partial manner;
· whether political actors received equal and balanced coverage by the monitored media outlets both in terms of space/time and tone;
· whether the agenda of the media reflected issues and themes relevant to the referendum fairly.

The information collected through quantitative and qualitative monitoring and the observation of media developments included:

· The coverage and geographical distribution of referendum news;
· The volume of referendum related news vis-à-vis other type of news coverage;
· The sources (actors: male, female, representatives of religion and tribes, parties, referendum administration) involved in the communication concerning the referendum;
· The access to the media held by different parties and advocacy fronts;
· The balance in the coverage for the two referendum voting options;
· The type of language used to cover the referendum and issues of public interest;
· Freedom of the press and media landscape;
· Legal framework for media coverage of referendum and legal developments.

1. The sample included:
a. Khartoum Unit
    Press: Ajras Alhurria, Akir Lahza, Alyaam, Eltayer, Al-Sudani, Akbar Alyoum, Al-Sahafa, Al-Rai Alaam and Al-Intibaha
    Audio-visual: Omdurman Radio, Peace Radio, Sudan TV and Blue Nile TV
b. Juba Unit
    Press: The Citizen, Sudan Tribune, Sudan Vision, Khartoum Monitor, The Democrat and Juba Post
    Audio-visual: South Sudan Radio (SSR), Miraya Radio, Bakhita Radio, Voice of People Radio (VoP) and South Sudan Radio (SSTV).

Executive summary

The referendum campaign and the voting period

On 9 January 2011, South Sudan held a referendum to decide whether Southern Sudan should remain united with the North or rather a new independent state should be created. This referendum represented a crucial point for the democratic development of the country whereby South Sudanese citizens were called to express their will on the future of their region. In this context, election authorities, political parties, civil society, advocacy groups as well as national media played a key role in informing voters on the alternative options available and ensuring a peaceful and conducive environment for a genuinely free and informed choice.

The legal framework for referendum coverage – as defined by the Southern Sudan Referendum Act (SSRA) and its implementing rules and regulations – aimed at creating a level playing field for the opposing fronts representing Unity and Secession to enable voters to make an informed choice. It established a system of free advertising in state-owned media for advocates of both options and referendum debates organised by the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission (SSRC). Nevertheless, a number of factors hampered adequate implementation of this framework including its late adoption, the unclear rules for the allocation of free airtime and space, and the deficient communication of the rules to the relevant stakeholders, namely parties and advocacy groups. The SSRA also established a plan for voter education and information that was successfully planned and implemented by the relevant authorities. All media houses acknowledged the transparency, openness and approachability of the SSRC, the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) and polling staff.

Although media coverage of the referendum was extensive, most of the media houses did not have a consistent and coordinated reporting plan. Professional standards for coverage were often flawed as there was a general absence of perspective on how to follow up news and developments. Journalists – mainly in the print media – often tended to mix news and opinions and the presence of analysis or editorial of non-partisan nature was extremely reduced, many reporters being politicised or affiliated with the ruling powers. Access to alternative views and opinions was limited and supporters of the majority fronts – Unity in the North and Secession in the South – dominated the coverage of the media targeting the respective region. The main challenges hampering referendum coverage concerned the lack of technical equipment, insufficient reporting skills, and the unwillingness of people to openly discuss the subject of referendum for fear of being perceived as partial to one of the minority fronts.

No widespread episodes of harassment were reported during the referendum campaign period; although in the North, a few cases of undue detentions and closures raised concerns in relation to freedom of the press and their ability to freely cover referendum-related issues.

During the three weeks prior to the referendum, the media monitored ensured regular and intensive coverage of the referendum and other political issues in a variety of programmes and formats. The volume of referendum-related communication varied according to each specific media sector – radio, television and the press – as well as the audiences of each media outlet. In

this regard, media addressing the Southern public focused the largest part of their coverage on the referendum, while the volume of the coverage for the referendum in Northern outlets was more limited. The media ensured a comprehensive, regular and wide visibility of the administrative referendum bodies and their work. In the South, extensive voter education campaigns were launched. They were organised both by administrative referendum bodies and by media houses themselves. Messages included explanations of how and when to vote, eligibility criteria, and invitations to disadvantaged groups such as women, encouraging them to vote. Representatives of the SSRC, the SSRB as well as institutional bodies were often interviewed and they had the possibility to inform citizens about arrangements for the ballot.

In line with a long-term trend already observed during the April 2010 elections, the editorial lines of each channel showed a clear political polarisation based on their respective geographical reach. The access provided to the two opposing fronts representing Unity and Secession was uneven, as one-sided reporting prevailed in all media. TV and radio stations targeting Arabic-speaking audiences tended to give both parties and advocacy groups of the Unity front the largest visibility. Similarly, the media addressing the South generally gave the Secession front most of their airtime and space. The result was that no campaigns or discussions on the consequences of the two options got any visibility. The press showed a more plural vocation by giving the Unity

Media monitors at work.
Photo: Brigitte Sins/IMS

and Secession advocates more equal coverage than did audio-visual media. However, newspapers in the North often covered the Separation front in a negative way, while Southern press did the same for the Unity front.

The two main political parties, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and their respective positions regarding the referendum, dominated the public discourse and media coverage. This feature was common in both audio-visual and print media although the press presented a slightly more diverse range of actors and views. In both geographical areas, other political parties received limited attention compared to the two main ruling forces.

Cover photo: People line up to vote. Photo: Brigitte Sins/IMS

Explicit episodes of journalistic bias towards one of the two referendum fronts were sporadic; however, a number of cases of "embedded partiality" were observed. Many media houses tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options. In addition to this, the choice of several experts hosted in television and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum front. The kind of questions journalists asked often indicated the propensity to direct the answer in a certain direction – in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

The media generally acted as agents of pacification during the referendum by addressing constant messages against violence and for a peaceful voting period. No systematic episodes of offensive language were observed on radio and television. Politicians and advocacy groups did not generally resort to inflammatory language or offensive styles of debating. In Southern newspapers, episodes were principally related to calls for violence and messages of discrimination against North Sudanese citizens. Political parties and media houses themselves were often the main source of the offensive language, while the targets were mainly advocacy groups for Unity and Separation and other politicians.

The post-referendum period

In the months following the referendum, many journalists expressed their concern that political control over the media might become tighter and that lawsuits might restrain the media's free expression in future. In fact, after the referendum, several cases of arbitrary detentions and harassments were reported in the North, particularly throughout and in the aftermath of the demonstrations at the end of January against the Government. During the protests several journalists were detained and the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) carried out arrests and closures of media houses that covered the dissent against the ruling forces. Newspapers were the main target of this repression both in Khartoum and in the States.

In a similar way, the press freedom of Southern media is being challenged. In spite of the official statements by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the Ministry of Information on the need to create a viable, accountable and modern media system for Southern Sudan, several episodes of harassment were observed in the post-ballot period. While Southern media have so far enjoyed greater levels of freedom of expression than Northern media

houses, there is a growing apprehension that such freedom may be seriously curtailed by the limits imposed by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) in the past few months. In this respect, the adoption of a credible and shared legal framework ensuring freedom of the press as well as responsible exercise of the journalistic profession is a precondition to ensure the development of a media sector able to serve the interests of South Sudanese's citizens and their right to be correctly informed.

Following the referendum and post-referendum, period, the overall level of referendum coverage declined, although its journalistic relevance differed in Northern and Southern outlets, with the latter still devoting large parts of their reporting to referendum-related matters.

Media houses broadly covered the result of the referendum on all administrative levels: local, states, South and national. No complaints or doubts about the fairness of the referendum were reported and news coverage paid widespread attention to the positive assessment of the referendum process on behalf of the various international and national observers. The media also ensured constant information regarding all the activities and press conferences of administrative election bodies. Media targeting Southern audiences showed a higher level of referendum-related coverage than media addressing the Northern public which instead focused on a broader array of issues, amongst which domestic politics and social and legal developments were the most prominent.

The polarisation of the coverage between the NCP and the SPLM continued and increased further, particularly in audio-visual media. This dominance was a common feature in the editorial lines of both media markets where small parties and the opposition had very few opportunities to access the airwaves and put their message across. In line with what was observed during the referendum campaign, parties' visibility was correlated with the geographical targets of each outlet: media addressing Northern audiences devoted the most coverage to the NCP, while the media based in the South or addressing the Southern public allotted almost all of their airtime and space to the SPLM.

The tone of media reporting was generally either neutral or positive in all outlets monitored. Manifest cases of explicit partiality were more evident in Southern media houses, while Northern outlets tended to adopt more unspoken approaches to portray in a positive manner the ruling party. These included a selective use of news, issues and opinion-makers and the constant use of misleading images or headlines.

1 Media and the 2011 Referendum

1.1 Sudan media sector: an overview of the main issues and challenges

The Sudan media landscape is characterised by a number of media houses. In the North, the entire audio-visual sector – both radio and television – is state-controlled and has a de facto monopoly of news production, while in the South diversity of ownership is developing for radio stations and television channels. Radio is regarded as the main information channel for Sudanese citizens, being the medium with the widest accessibility. In the South, the press plays a smaller role due to high illiteracy rates as well as problems in the distribution system within rural areas.

In the North, the media operate in a political environment strictly limiting freedom of expression[2]. Despite the fact that the national Press Law guarantees access to information for journalists, their freedom is constrained in practice by the authorities. In North Sudan, journalists are reported to be subject to personal attacks such as expulsions, detention, beatings and the confiscation of work equipment. Legal actions against journalists and the media include law suits, fines and imprisonment. Although Pre-publication (PP) censorship was formally lifted in 2010, pre-publication censorship is still practiced on a more reduced scale and more discreetly.

The media sector in the South is relatively young, as it started developing only after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Many media houses grew quickly but most of them have not yet managed to achieve full sustainability. During 2010, a few new outlets were established or re-established including the newspapers The Democrat and the Sudan Tribune. After April 2010 elections, new audio-visual media were created too, such as Ebony TV, Voice of the People Radio, and the newspaper Pioneer. On 5 January 2011, the first edition of the Juba-printed version of the Citizen was issued[3] and on 3 January 2011, the first issue of the new newspaper The Independent was published. Although the media based in Southern Sudan do not experience the PP censorship in the same way as in the North, they do not feel entirely free to express their views or cover certain issues for fear of interventions on behalf of the security forces.

1.2 Media background

1.2.1 Northern media

i. The referendum period[4]
Northern media houses devoted a large part of their staff to cover the referendum, although media attention was not exclusively focused on the polling, but rather on a broader variety of issues related to North-South relations.

Many media outlets had no consistent and comprehensive coverage plan. Some of them had daily meetings on how to cover the referendum. A minority of the media had more wide-ranging plans that included the coverage of the main polling stations, the work of referendum management bodies, advocacy fronts' campaign activities, popular reactions to the polling and statements of national and international stakeholders. As a rule, individual

2 *See SMEC Final Report, November 2010.*
3 *The Citizen, whose distribution and editorial line target the South, was printed in Khartoum till then.*
4 *This section is based on the answers to a questionnaire elaborated by SMEC and distributed to mentors and related media houses in the North.*

journalists covered the main polling stations and the Southern Sudan Referendum Commission's (SSRC[5]) press conferences in an often uncoordinated manner and with a general absence of perspective on how to follow up news and developments. Access to alternative views and opinions was not considered a basic journalistic standard to be applied. According to journalists, the main challenges hampering a more professional coverage of the referendum were the lack of technical equipment and skills as well as the unwillingness of Northern citizens to openly discuss the subject for fear of being perceived as pro Secession.

The referendum was covered in a variety of programmes, including news, talk shows and reports from the streets. Arabic-language media ensured overwhelming coverage to the front supporting Unity. Reporters – mainly in the print media – often tended to mix news and opinions. The presence of analysis or editorial of non-partisan nature was extremely reduced, many reporters being politicised or affiliated with the ruling power. The production of voter education stories was limited as only material produced by the referendum management bodies was published or aired and almost no other civic society or in-house initiatives were adopted.

All media houses acknowledged the transparency, openness and approachability of the SSRC and the polling staff. The accreditation process for journalists was generally well managed and referendum authorities showed a very cooperative behaviour with media professionals wishing to cover the ballot. However, most media houses were not aware of the referendum debates organised by the SSRC and when informed, they were not interested as the referendum campaign started in November and the debates were perceived as redundant.

No widespread episodes of harassment were reported during the referendum campaign period, although a few cases raised concerns in relation to the freedom of the press and journalists' ability to freely cover referendum related issues.

The National Media Council in Khartoum issued a decree suspending the publication of one newspaper, the Khartoum Monitor, for two days (22 and 23 December 2010). According to the Media Council, the newspaper issued several articles containing alleged episodes of incitement to Secession of the South from the North. The Khartoum Monitor administration decided to resume publication only on 2 of January 2011. According to the editor in chief of the Khartoum Monitor, there was no justification for the measures undertaken by the Media Council. Another newspaper, the Sudan Tribune, was suspended by security services for two days with no formal charges.
In addition, in Khartoum North, security services arrested a BBC reporter with BBC crew covering the referendum during the polling period although no formal charges were brought against them. The team was detained for an hour, interrogated and then released. During voting, the newspaper Barout, based in the Red Sea State, was seized after they published an article on 9 January discussing the possible spread of self-determination demands in underdeveloped Sudanese states after the South's Secession. The editor-in-chief, who wrote the article, was detained and charged with eight offences, including obstruction of the constitutional order, agitation and other violations of the Press and Publications Act and Sudanese Criminal Law.

ii The post-referendum period

Many journalists expressed concern that after the referendum, political control over the media may become tighter and that law suits may restrain the media's freedom of speech further on. As a matter of fact, the media in the North are often politicised and regarded as an extension of the ruling forces.
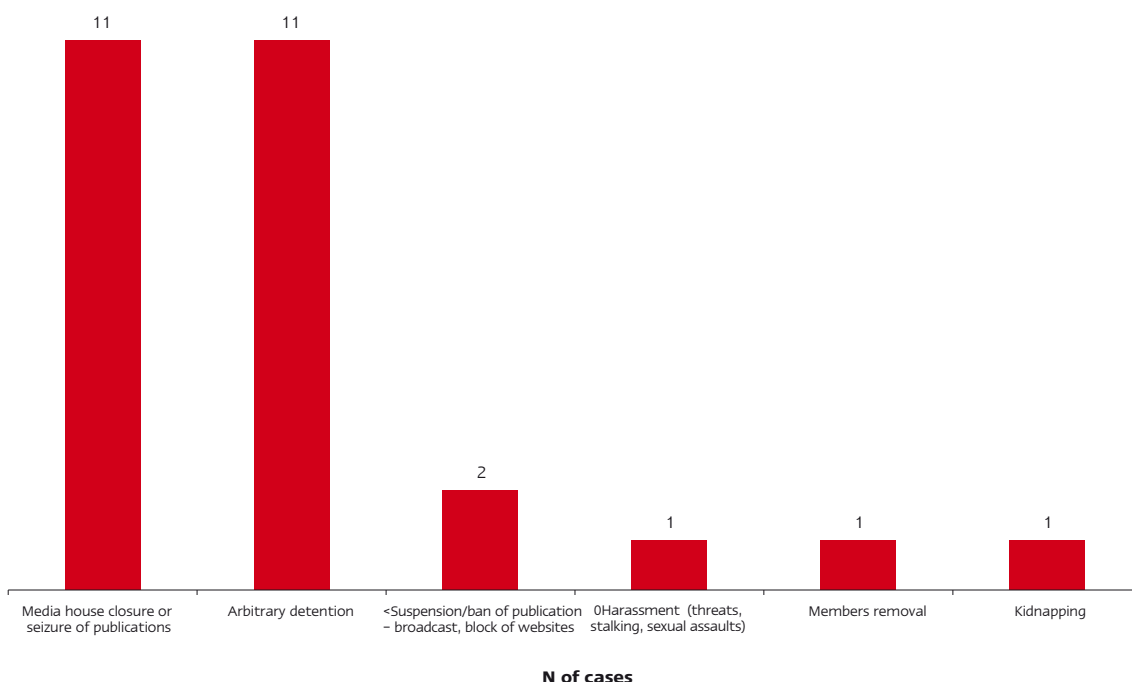
5   The SSRC, along with its operational arm the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB), was the body in charge of organising the 2011 referendum.

Authorities exercise a strict control over their coverage and journalists are aware of "red lines" that cannot be overcome when reporting.
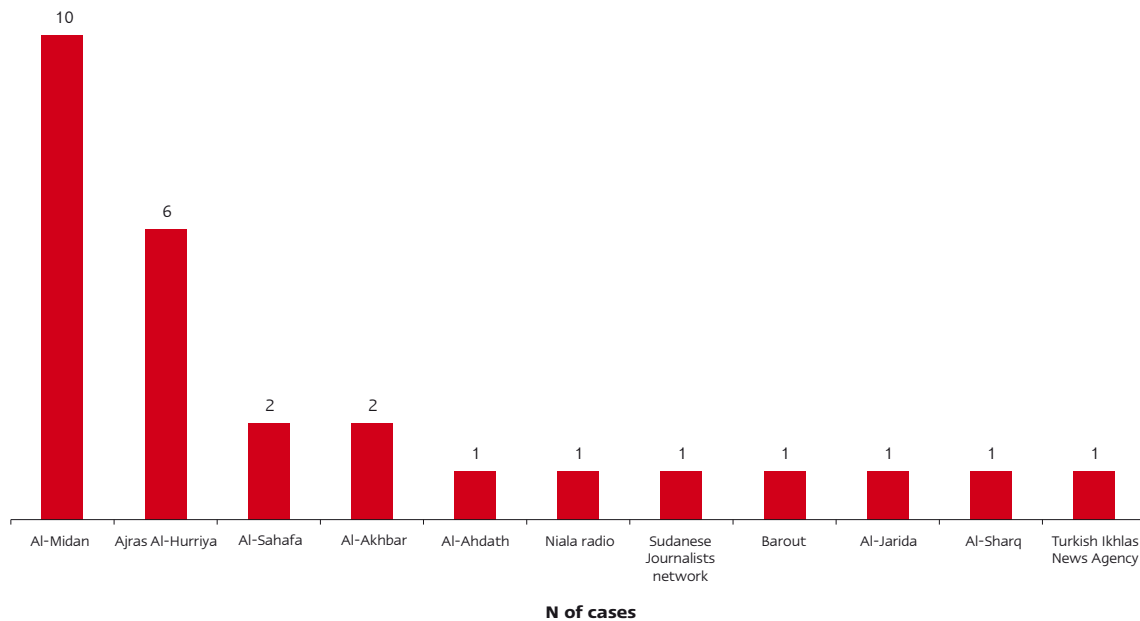
Although the average level of professionalism is relatively high compared to the South, basic standards of ethics and journalistic norms remain unutilised due to a mix of self-censorship and external political control over contents. Media staff are aware that more training is needed in terms of management, news production, coverage of events, writing skills, political analysis, layout and editing. Much of the information published in the press is copied from the internet, making it problematic to identify actual sources and authors. Other obstacles to journalistic work are related to financial constraints, the lack of a viable advertising market allowing media houses to become fully sustainable, political pressures as well as the high politicisation of many media houses.

After the referendum, several cases of arbitrary detentions and harassments were reported, particularly throughout and in the aftermath of the demonstrations at the end of January against the Government .During the protests, several journalist were detained and the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS) carried out arrests and closures of media houses that covered the dissent against the ruling forces. Newspapers were the target of this repression both in Khartoum and in the States. A number of journalists were taken into custody when covering January's protests and the media houses were closed. The police prevented the members of the Sudanese Journalists Network from protesting in front of the National Press Council to demand the release of Al-Midan newspaper editors and seven journalists were arrested.
In April, the publications of Ajras Al-Hurrya and Almidan were suspended by the NISS and the staff of the newspapers Al-Jarida and Ajras Al-Hurrya were detained or harassed.

Chart 1: Episodes of violations of freedom of the press in the North (30 January – 10 April)

N of cases

**Chart 2: Newspapers: victims of harassment in the North
(30 January – 10 April)**

10	Al-Midan	
6	Ajras Al-Hurriya	
2	Al-Sahafa	
2	Al-Akhbar	
1	Al-Ahdath	
1	Niala radio	
1	Sudanese Journalists network	
1	Barout	
1	Al-Jarida	
1	Al-Sharq	
1	Turkish Ikhlas News Agency	

N of cases

1.2.2 Southern media

i. The referendum period[6]

During the referendum campaign period, Southern media houses extensively covered referendum related issues, including voter registration, civic and voter education, rallies, as well as the views of common people and civil society organisations on the popular consultation.

Editorial boards often did not have a clear coverage plan for the referendum, particularly in the regions. This problem was attributed to a number of factors, including: the lack of qualified reporters and the consequent problem of understaffed media teams, financial constraints, logistical and infrastructural obstacles such as poor communication structures, lack of equipment and power shortages. Weak management skills on the editors' side may have also represented an additional element undermining the development of a wide-ranging reporting plan. Other obstacles hindering comprehensive and timely coverage of the referendum were: inadequate coordination among reporters, lack of in-house transportation for journalists and crews, widespread lack of reporting experience and the limited availability of English speaking journalists. Logistical problems also hampered the coverage of referendum events taking place outside Juba.

The main formats adopted to report on different referendum issues were news, call-in programmes and talk shows. For many media outlets, the main focuses of the coverage were top politicians advocating for one of the two options and voters' opinions on this matter. Other journalists tried to lend a voice to the concerns of disadvantaged groups – namely women and voters with disabilities – as well as civic society groups.

Several media houses admitted that their coverage of the Unity and Separation options was not equitable and most of the reporting was devoted to Secession only. They pointed out that this lack of balance was the outcome

6   *This section is based on the answers to a questionnaire elaborated by SMEC and distributed to mentors and related media houses in the South. A meeting between SMEC representatives, SMEC mentors and the news editors of a number of media houses was also organised to discuss key aspects of the referendum coverage. Media involved included both print and audio-visual media.*

of a number of factors, including the fact that voices and groups supporting Unity were extremely limited in number and they showed unwillingness to express their views for fear of retaliation by advocates of Separation[7]. The reluctance to speak out publicly in favour of the Unity option increased as the voting period approached. Partial exceptions to this trend were call-in programmes where viewers, often South Sudanese residing abroad, called to declare their support to Unity.

During the referendum, journalists sometimes openly declared their support for Secession while reporting. Also, the media felt that they had to carefully phrase questions during interviews on the two options particularly to common people in order to avoid being perceived as supporters of Unity[8]. Some of the journalists interviewed stated that in Khartoum, security forces prevented them from reporting in the streets and their equipment was confiscated. Media houses, with the exception of Radio Miraya, adopted no guidelines on fair and balanced referendum reporting.

Voter education and information was widely circulated – either as free or paid advertising – through the media, with spots produced by national associations, election management bodies and international agencies. Women were one of the main targets of these messages. Many media houses also devoted a number of targeted programmes and articles to inform voters on the overall process, including ballot procedures, days and times for voting, eligibility to vote and Go-out-and-vote campaigns. Many journalists acknowledged that the voter education produced in-house – such as call-in programmes and songs – was not neutral but rather it conveyed a clear message supporting Separation. In addition, politicians presented as guests in talk shows tended to advocate for Secession, even when discussing non-partisan issues related to referendum.

All media houses acknowledged the positive role referendum administrative bodies played – the SSRC, the Southern Sudan Referendum Bureau (SSRB) and the polling centres staff – in providing journalists with timely information on the referendum process and in managing a transparent communication flow to the public. However, most of the reporters mentioned that they were not properly informed about the referendum debates organised by the SSRC; as a consequence, they were not aware of them or they did not attend the event[9].

ii. The post-referendum period
Media houses' outlook for the post-referendum phase concerned three main areas:

1) The need to increase the local professional capacity by long term mentorship activities, rather than short-term trainings;
2) The necessity to improve the technical and equipment capacity, the organisational skills and the working conditions for the media staff including reporters' financial agreements;
3) The risk that public officials, governmental bodies and security forces may assume a tighter control over the media with a consequent loss of freedom for the press and loss of access to information. As a matter of fact, many interlocutors stressed that so far the media have not been particularly critical of the ruling forces due to the specific context of the post-CPA arrangements and the expectations for the referendum. After the separation, the media may become more antagonistic towards ruling forces in a context where incumbent government is not used to being criticised or questioned. The possible introductions of the pending Media Bills were generally not perceived as decisive measures to protect the freedom of the media and there were serious doubts about their effective implementation and enforcements.

7 Many journalists reported that even when they manage to interview supporters of Unity they were then asked not to quote their sources and to keep the conversation off the record.

8 A journalist declared: 'Separation people would perceive a question such as 'Why do you support secession?' as an insulting statement opposing Southern Sudan independence.

9 An exception was the radio station Voice of Kajo Keji, where SSRC organised a few debates and both Unity and Separation advocates were given the chance to express their views, although voices in favour of Unity were a minority.

A number of media professionals raised serious concerns about the possibility of the media to freely operate in the aftermath of referendum. As a matter of fact, in spite of the official statements by the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and the Ministry of Information on the need to create a viable, accountable and modern media system for Southern Sudan, several episodes of harassment were observed in the post-ballot period. While Southern media have so far enjoyed wider levels of freedom of expression than Northern houses, there is a growing apprehension that such freedom may be seriously curtailed by the limits imposed by the GoSS in the past few months.

In March, Bakhita Radio received a visit from a security officer after the referendum warning that *'They should not get into politics'* according to reports by their staff. Following this episode, security forces returned to the premises of Bakhita, closed them, and stopped the broadcasting for about an hour without any explanation.

When the referendum was over, the English-language Khartoum Monitor experienced various challenges to their ability to freely operate. According to editor-in-chief, Alfred Taban, there was a financial form of censorship as taxes increased considerably. In addition, the paper has been facing staff 'problems' since the Northern staff does not want to move to the South as planned by the newspaper management.

On 20 February, the premises of the Juba-based newspaper The Citizen were attacked by armed men in plain clothes waving pistols and shouting threats. According to editor-in-chief, Nhial Bol, these were security officials. He suspected that this incursion was the reaction to his commentary criticising the Southern Sudanese police for inadequate protection of civilians in the semi-autonomous region. The GoSS Information Minister Barnaba Marial Benjamin, labelled the episode an 'isolated incident'. However, in March, security forces arrested Mr. Bol in Juba, for the same reason. He was detained on numerous occasions, as were other journalists in the region.

On 31 March, Southern Sudanese forces confiscated 2,500 copies of the bi-weekly Juba Post because of an article reporting that the militia leader General Athor planned to attack Juba before Southern Sudan's independence in July. According to Southern Sudanese security forces, the paper was repeatedly warned to stop the publication of the story. The confiscation raised the concerns of a number of international and national organisations. The Committee to Protect Journalists stated: *"We are alarmed that the authorities in Juba are already resorting to censorship. This does not bode well for press freedom in what will become Africa's newest state. We urge the authorities to respect international norms of freedom of expression and allow the press to do its work without interference."*[10] The GoSS Minister of Information defended the measure on the grounds that freedom of the media is subject to limits of ethics and responsibility and the article was a clear call for war. A similar position was adopted by the GoSS Ministry for Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development.

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10   *Source: Sudan Votes.*

2 The legal framework of the media

2.1 Referendum coverage

The legal reference for the organisation and management of the referendum was the Southern Sudan Referendum Act (SSRA) which includes a number of articles providing broad instructions for the media during the campaign period. The SSRA guarantees freedom of expression in the media under article 45.3. Article 45.4 of the SSRA Act provides for a referendum media programme to inform voters on referendum procedures. According to Article 45.2 and 47.1, the SSRC and the Government shall provide and guarantee equal opportunities and just treatment in the State-owned media for both the options available to voters. The SSRA also provides that the campaign stops 24 hours before the vote and no advocacy activities shall take place over the voting days.

While the campaign period officially commenced on 7 November 2010, Media Campaign Rules and Regulations (MCRR) were passed by the SSRC only in the beginning of December. The MCCR established a media committee supervising the media during the referendum and which was provided with a broad jurisdiction which included: organising voter education, monitoring media balance and accuracy, dealing with complaints against media unfairness, organising referendum debates as well as ensuring compliance with the election moratorium period starting on 8 January and lasting the whole seven day long voting period. The MMCR intended to establish a legal framework to ensure equal opportunities for both referendum fronts and to enable a comprehensive campaign of voter education. However, some provisions are not clearly formulated leaving potential room for misinterpretations and undue interference in the editorial freedom of private media. In addition, a number of factors hampered adequate implementation of the MCRR including their late adoption, unclear rules for the allocation of free advertising and deficient communication of the rules to the relevant stakeholders, namely parties and advocacy groups. The main parties did not register to obtain free airtime and overall, the free airtime benefits were not fully exploited by advocacy groups. No official list of registered advocacy groups was publicly available, leaving the media unaware of the system and the rules in place for free access. In addition, no investigation, adjudication and enforcement mechanism was available to address media-related complaints and appeals.

Following the mandate established in the Southern Sudan Referendum Act and the MCRR, the SSRC organised a round of referendum debates between 29 December and 6 January to be held both in Khartoum and Juba. Out of the five planned debates, only two of them took place, one in Khartoum and the other in Juba due to organisational problems and some of the invited guests' inability to participate.

No media house adopted internal guidelines for referendum coverage with the exception of Miraya Radio that introduced a detailed Charter of professional standards.

2.2 Post-referendum legal developments

The adoption of a credible and shared legal framework ensuring freedom of the press as well as responsible exercise of the journalistic profession is a pre-condition to ensure the development of a media system able to serve the interests of South Sudanese's citizens and their right to be correctly informed. This need seems even more compelling vis-à-vis the recursive episodes of harassment experienced by media staff in South Sudan over the months following the referendum. As of April 2011, the draft Media Bills are still not approved thus depriving South Sudan of a legal framework to regulate and protect the audio-visual sector and the press.

In 2007, new media bills for Southern Sudan were developed by a consortium of national and international organisations, including the Association for Media Development in Southern Sudan (AMDISS) formed by representatives of the media sector. The bills were developed to meet the implementation principles enshrined in the CPA and to reform the existing national legislation. The reform is based on a three-tiered regulatory frame: the Right to Information Bill, the Southern Sudan Broadcasting Corporation Bill, and the Independent Media Authority Bill.

The proposed media bills aim to promote a free and independent media sector able to ensure pluralism and diversity and also seeking to ensure the right to participate freely at community, national and global levels in the expression and exchange of knowledge and information. The bills are based on the principles expressed in international human rights instruments, such as – inter alia: media protection from censorship or government interference, no undue restrictions on freedom of expression, the right of journalists to protect their sources of information, no government license requirement to practice journalism, allocation of broadcast frequencies in an equitable way by independent broadcasting regulators and the transformation of government broadcasters into a genuine public broadcasting service. After amendments and different phases of discussions, in 2010, the AMDISS engaged with Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) to have the Media Bills passed before the referendum would take place in January 2011.

One of the three Media Bills, the Right to Information Bill, was given priority in December 2010. A draft was completed to serve as a provisional order by Presidential Decree. The provisional order for the Right to Information could not be signed by the president as it would include punitive measures and therefore had to pass Parliamentary approval. Since the Media Bills were officially withdrawn in 2009, they might have faced the same kind of reserves within the parliament. Currently the Bills are deposited at the Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Development and they are still pending.

On 24 February 2011 in a meeting held in Juba with the AMDISS and media practitioners, the GOSS Vice President Riek Machar, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of Information Joyce Kwaje, and the Minister of Information Marial Benjamin stated that the Media Bills would be endorsed before July 2011, the official day for South Sudan's independence.
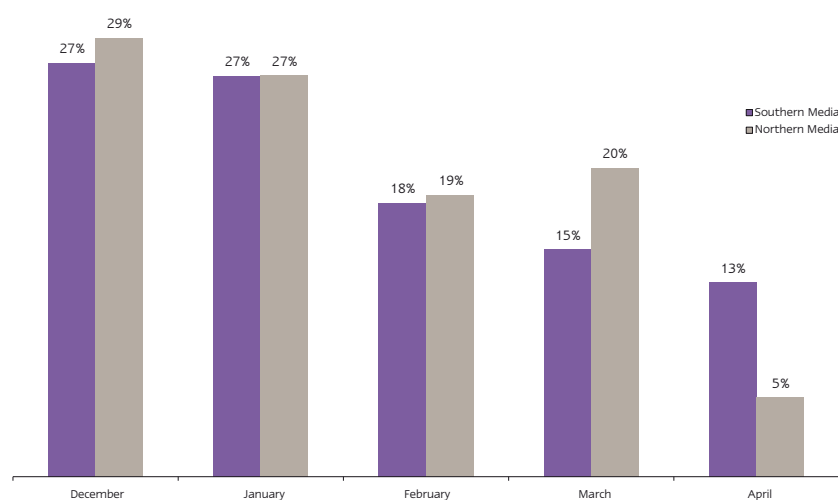
3 Monitoring media coverage: main findings and conclusions

3.1 Main trends and conclusions (16 December 2010 – 10 April 2011)

During the overall monitoring period, the volume of political communication[11] was extensive and broad, although it tended to naturally decrease after the polling and the declaration of results.

Chart 3: Volume of referendum and other political communication on radio and television (all programmes)
Base: 854726 seconds

The channels devoting the broadest attention to politics were television stations (South Sudan Radio, Sudan TV and Blue Nile), while among radio channels, Omdurman and South Sudan Radio were the outlets providing the most extensive coverage for political parties and advocacy groups[12].

Table 1: Volume of coverage of politics and referendum by channel (all programmes)

MEDIA SECTOR	CHANNEL	TOTAL
Radio	Omdurman Radio	15%
	SSR	11%
	Radio Bakhita	6%
	Radio Miraya	6%
	SRS	4%
	VoP	4%
	Peace Service	4%

11 *Political communication refers to any segments of communication involving the coverage of politicians, members of central and local legislative assemblies, parties, representatives of central and local governments, referendum advocacy groups. It includes both referendum-related coverage and any other forms of politics-related reporting.*

12 *Advocacy groups were organisations and individuals other than parties that supported one of the two referendum options (official referendum fronts, religious figures, popular characters, armed groups, civic society organisations, etc.). Both advocacy groups and political parties were classified on the basis of their official position towards referendum as well as the specific position they expressed when covered.*

TV	SSTV	21%
	Sudan TV	19%
	Blue Nile	11%
TOTAL		100%
Base in absolute values (seconds)		854726

The topics discussed or associated with parties and advocacy groups differed in the two regions: referendum was the main issue in Southern media[13] with more than 60 per cent of the overall time, while Northern media[14] devoted their coverage to a broader array of themes which included the referendum, internal political affairs, social and legal developments, economics and foreign policy.

Table 2: Political issues on radio and television (all programmes)[15]

TOPIC	SOUTHERN MEDIA	NORTHERN MEDIA	TOTAL
Referendum issues	67,7%	42,7%	55,7%
Domestic Politics	9,5%	24,4%	16,6%
Social and Legal Development	7,9%	15,3%	11,5%
Economy and Labour	4,7%	8,4%	6,5%
Foreign Policy	3,5%	7,4%	5,4%
Crime and Violence	4,4%	0,1%	2,3%
Science and Health	2,2%	1,7%	1,9%
TOTAL	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Base in absolute values (seconds)	444987	409739	854726

The distribution of airtime among parties and advocacy groups in editorial programmes[16] showed a manifest differentiation of editorial lines based on target audiences of each media house: channels broadcasting for the Southern public or based in the South devoted the widest coverage to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) that received 90 per cent of the total time. On the contrary, Northern houses ensured the widest visibility to the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) with 76 per cent of the overall coverage. No relevant access or visibility was provided to alternative political forces, thus confirming the hegemony in the public sphere of the two main parties within the respective regions.

13 These include: SSTV, SSR, Radio Miraya, Radio Bakhita, VoP, and SRS.

14 These include: Sudan TV, Blue Nile, Omdurman Radio, and Peace Service Radio.

15 Political issues are the themes associated to the coverage of politicians, parties and advocacy groups.

16 Editorial programmes include all shows that are under the direct editorial control of the media house. These are: talk shows, current affairs, political debates, interviews and live broadcast of press conferences.

Chart 4: Allocation of airtime to parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on television and radio[17]
Base: 662188 cm²
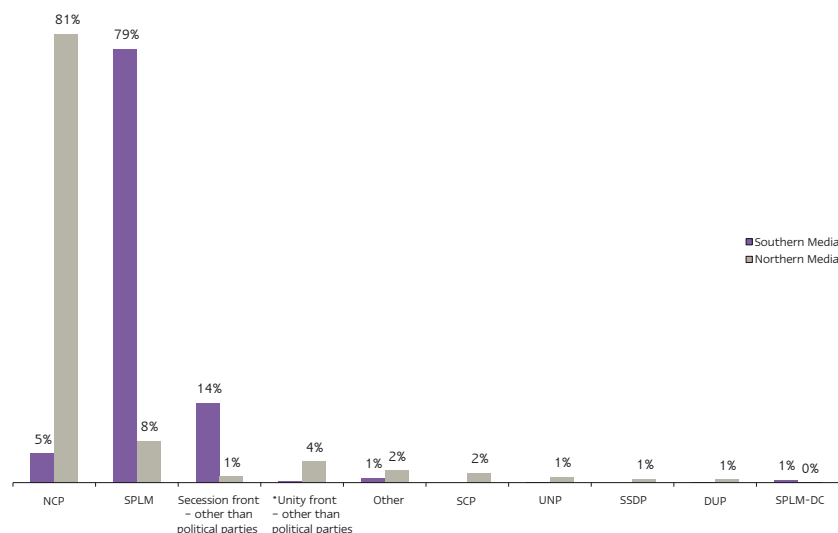
The coverage of the different categories of political actors confirmed not only the public dominance of the two main parties, but also the centrality of the executive bodies in the media – namely the Presidency and the Government as well as the Local Administrations – both in the South and the North. As a matter of fact, legislative bodies' representatives had very limited visibility and this may represent a reflection of their marginal role in the actual political sphere.

Table 3: Allocation of space to institutional roles in news and editorial programmes by channel

POSITION	SOUTHERN MEDIA	NORTHERN MEDIA	TOTAL
National Government	4%	66%	38%
GoSS Government	46%	4%	23%
Governorates and local government	26%	15%	20%
Party	16%	12%	14%
GoSS Parliament	7%	1%	4%
National Parliament	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Base in absolute values (seconds)	272435	333268	605703

17 *The category Other includes all parties with less than 1 per cent coverage: DUPO, PCP, UNPM, BCP, Independent, UP-C, SANU, JNA, NUP, UDF, UPRD, SAP, URRP, USDF, UDSF, MBO, FWP, ADP, UDP, NJP, USAP, SA, ILP, PFDR, ABP, SBP, Other, ANCP, TAP, SSDF, EPJD, MP, PFJP, NASP, NDA, SLFOP, JPO, SFLP, WANUP, LDP, NNDP, BPC, AA.*

The tone of the coverage was generally neutral on radio and television, although Southern media tended to adopt a more openly partisan coverage – both positive and negative – than Northern media. However, most Northern media showed an implicit bias by mixing opinion and facts, resorting to selective coverage of news and experts, and publishing of misleading headlines and photos.

Chart 5: Tone of coverage of parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio and television
*Base: 662188 seconds*
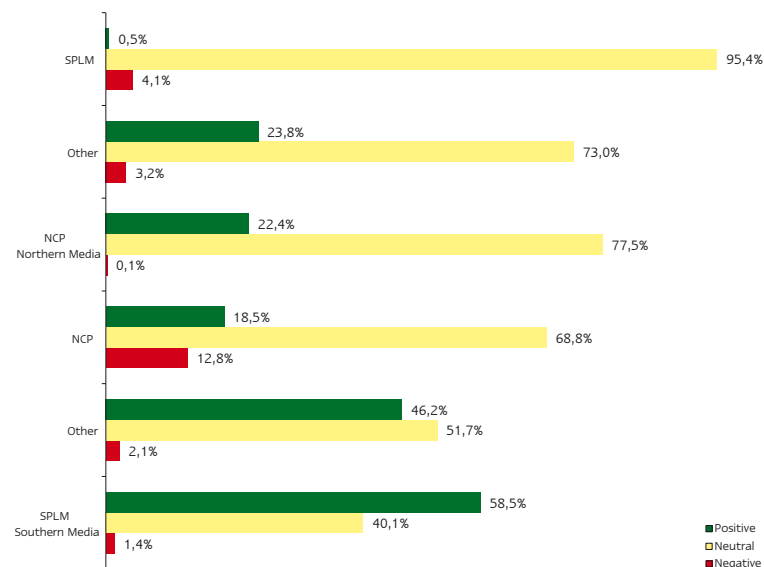
The press also covered the referendum and politics in an extensive manner both during the campaign and the post-voting period, although the volume of political communication varied in the North and the South over the different months. Northern outlets[18] devoted the largest coverage to politics during December and February, while Southern houses[19] kept a stable level of attention with a peak in February when final referendum results were announced.

18 These include: Ajras Alhurria, Akir lahza, Alyaam, Eltayer, Al-Sudani, Akbar Alyoum, Al-Sahafa, Al-Rai Alaam, and Al-Intibaha.
19 These include: The Citizen, Khartoum Monitor, Sudan Tribune, Sudan Vision, Juba Post, and The Democrat.

Chart 6: Volume of referendum and other political communication in the press (all formats)
Base: 2441242 cm²
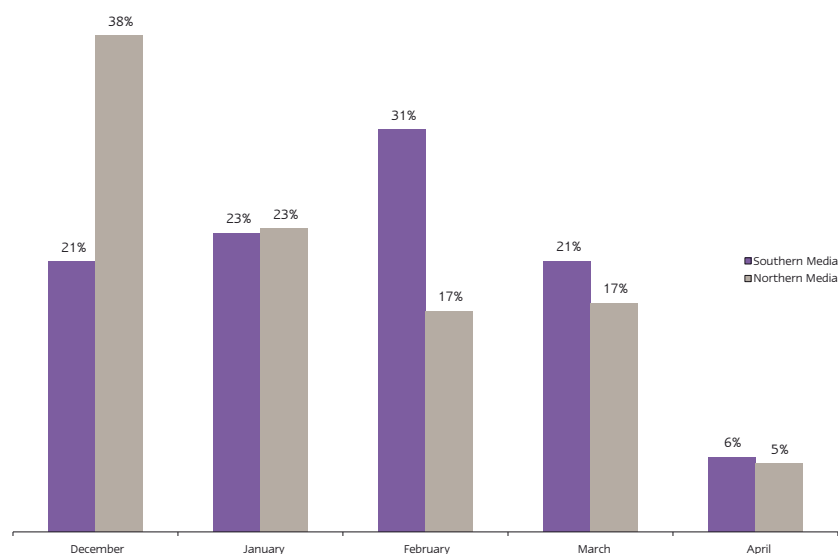
The newspapers showing the highest volume of politics and referendum coverage were Arabic-language, particularly Akbar Alyoum, Al-Sahafa, Al-Sudani, Al-Intibaha, Ajras Alhurria and Akir Lahza. However, their reporting was mainly focused on issues regarding domestic politics rather than the referendum.

Table 4: Volume of coverage of politics and referendum by newspaper (all formats)

PAPER	TOTAL
Akbar Alyoum	12%
Al-Sahafa	10%
Al-sudani	9%
Al-Intibaha	9%
Ajras Alhurria	8%
Akir lahza	8%
Al-Rai alaam	7%
Eltayer	7%
The Citizen	6%
Sudan Vision	5%
Khartoum Monitor	5%
Alyaam	5%
Sudan Tribune	5%
Juba Post	3%
The Democrat	2%
TOTAL	100%
Base in absolute values (cm²)	2441242

As a matter of fact, the issues related to the referendum were central both in the North and in the South but consistently with what was observed in relation to audio-visual media, the attention differed in the two geographical markets: Southern media devoted most of their coverage to referendum-related issues while Northern media also reported on other themes.

Table 5: Political issues in the press (all formats)

TOPIC	SOUTHERN MEDIA	NORTHERN MEDIA	TOTAL
Referendum issues	65.7%	50.9%	54.7%
Domestic Politics	16.1%	35.1%	30.2%
Social and Legal Development	5.6%	4.1%	4.5%
Foreign Policy	2.8%	4.2%	3.8%
Economy and Labour	4.1%	3.5%	3.6%
Crime and Violence	4.4%	1.5%	2.3%
Science and Health	1.4%	0.7%	0.9%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Base in absolute values (seconds)	623253	1817989	2441242

The polarisation of the editorial coverage[20] between the NCP and the SPLM was present in the press too, although newspaper showed a higher level of pluralism by allotting some coverage to other parties, particularly in Northern media outlets where the Umma National Party (UNP) received 7 per cent of the overall space devoted to politics.

Chart 7: Allocation of space for parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage in the press[21]
Base 1907559 cm²
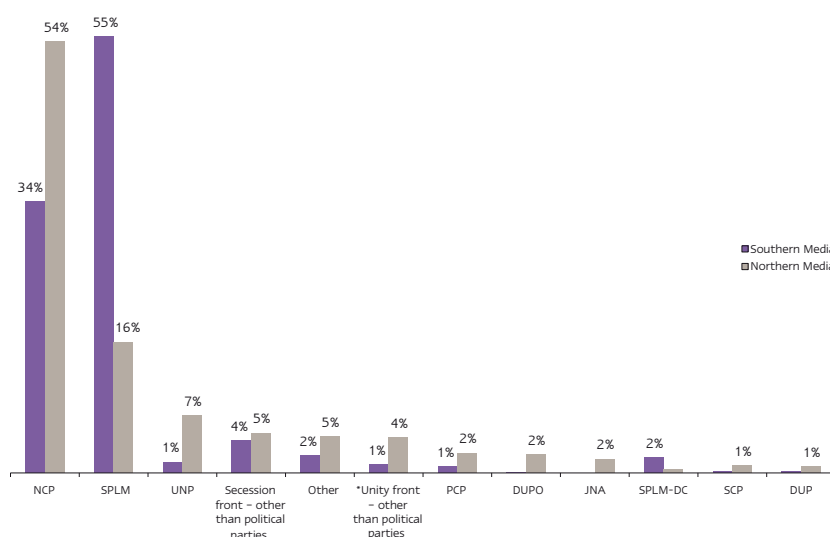
20 Editorial coverage includes all articles that are under the direct editorial control of the media house and that are other than news reporting. These are: editorials, analysis, interviews, polls, cartoons.

21 The category Other includes all parties with less than 1 per cent coverage: PFJP, BCP, URRP, UPRD, NJP, IMP, NUP, Boycott front – other than political parties, AA, SSUDF, ILP, SAP, JPFP, Other, USDF, NDA, ABP, ANCP, SLM, SA, UNPM, SSDF, Independent, UDF, UDP, DUSP, NSP, UDUP, MBO, SUNP, NASP, SSDP, EPJD, FWP, UDSF, UP-C, SANU, USAP, UFP, NUDP, EDP, NRP, SBP, RCP, ADP, NDUF, SNLP, LDP, SConP, NNDP, NDFP, MSUP, FotS, USSP, SLFOP, SDESCP, PFDR, SDCMP, WANUP, ANCF, SUFP, USNP, JPO, NFDM, SFNP, SNFO, TAP, MSOP, SNFGUP, SDPCES, NDP, SFLP, NPAP, UPopF, PSJP, NPP.

The allocation of space among the different categories of political actors showed an evident prominence of parties – namely the NCP and the SPLM – as the main focus of media coverage both in the North and in the South. The Sudanese Government and the GoSS executive were also central in reporting while legislative bodies enjoyed of very limited attention.

Table 6: Allocation of space to institutional roles in news and editorial coverage

POSITION	SOUTHERN MEDIA	NORTHERN MEDIA	TOTAL
Party	29%	39%	37%
National Government	24%	38%	35%
Governorates and local government	13%	15%	14%
GoSS Government	34%	6%	13%
National Parliament	0%	1%	1%
GoSS Parliament	0%	0%	0%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%
Base in absolute values (seconds)	415335	1329396	1744731

The tone of the coverage was generally neutral on radio and television, with Southern media tending to adopt a more openly partisan coverage – both positive and negative – than did Northern media.

Chart 8: Tone of the coverage for parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage in the press
Base: 1907559 cm²
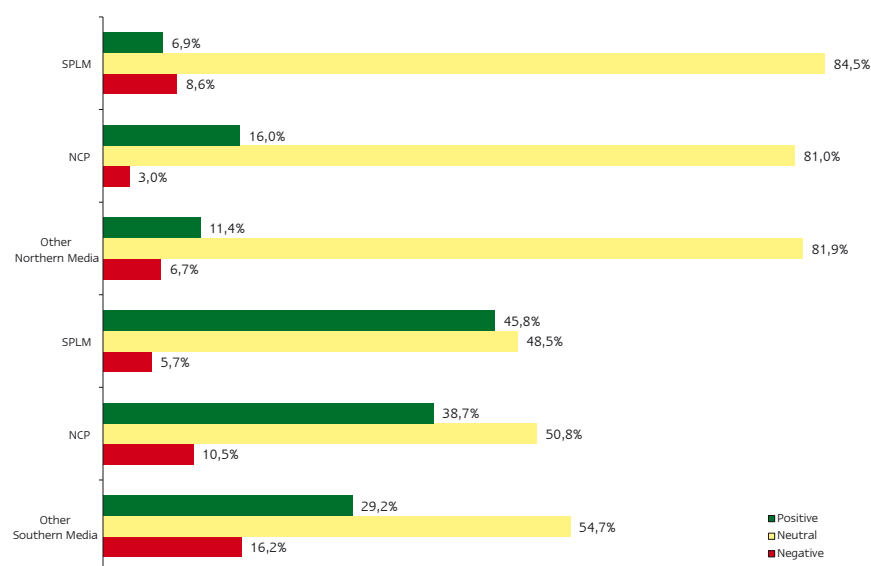
3.2 The referendum campaign (16 December 2010 – 7 January 2011)

During the three weeks prior to voting, the media ensured regular and intensive coverage of referendum and other political issues. The volume of referendum-related communication differed according to each specific media sector – radio, television and the press – as well as the audiences of each media outlet. In this regard, media addressing the Southern public focused the largest part of their reporting on the referendum, while in Northern outlets, the volume of the referendum coverage was more subdued.

Referendum-related issues were covered in a variety of programme formats and the media ensured a comprehensive, regular and wide visibility to advocacy groups as well as to referendum administration bodies and their work. In the South, extensive voter education campaigns were launched in the media; they were organised both by the referendum administrative bodies and by the media houses themselves. Messages included explanations of how and when to vote, eligibility criteria, encouragement to vote for disadvantaged groups – namely women. Representatives of the SSRC, the SSRB as well as institutional bodies were often interviewed and they had the possibility to inform citizens about arrangements for the ballot.

In line with a long-term trend already observed during the April 2010 elections, the editorial lines of each channel showed a clear polarisation based on their respective geographical reach. The access provided to the two opposing fronts for Unity and Secession was uneven as one-sided reporting prevailed in all media. TV and radio stations targeting Arabic-speaking audiences tended to give the Unity front – both parties and advocacy groups – the largest visibility; similarly, the media addressing the South generally gave the Secession front most of their airtime with the result that no Unity campaign or discussions on the consequences of both options obtained any visibility. The press showed a more plural vocation by covering the Unity and Secession advocates with greater balance than did audio-visual media; however, newspapers in the North often covered the Separation front in a negative way, while Southern press did the same with the Unity front.

The two ruling parties, the NCP and the SPLM, and their respective positions regarding the referendum dominated the public discourse and media coverage. This feature was common in both audio-visual and print media although the press presented a slightly more diverse range of actors and views. In both geographical areas, other political parties received very limited attention compared to the two main ruling parties.

Explicit episodes of journalistic bias for one of the two referendum fronts were sporadic; however, a number of cases of "embedded partiality" were observed. Many media houses tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options; in addition the choice of several experts hosted in television and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum choices. The kind of questions the journalists asked often indicated the propensity to shape the answer towards a given direction, in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

The media generally acted as agents of pacification during the referendum by issuing constant messages against violence and for a peaceful voting period. No systematic episodes of offensive language were observed on radio and television. Politicians and advocacy groups did not generally resort to inflammatory language or offensive styles of debating and only a few cases were

observed. These episodes involved attacks of defamatory nature against the SPLM on behalf of representatives of the NCP. In addition, before prime time news, SSTV regularly broadcast a video song whose lyrics were particularly harsh and provocative towards Northern citizens. In the press, a number of episodes of inflammatory language were observed mainly involving cases of defamation, particularly in the Northern press. In Southern newspapers episodes were principally related to calls for violence and messages of discrimination against North Sudanese citizens. Political parties and media houses themselves were often the main source of the offensive speech while the targets were mainly advocacy groups for Unity or Separation and other politicians.

During the referendum silence period beginning on 8 January and continuing over the seven days voting phase, most of the media did not respect the provisions prohibiting the coverage of referendum campaign activities and advocacy fronts. A number of violations were observed across the different media sectors, particularly in the press, although the access provided was mainly devoted to comments and discussions on the likely outcome of the ballot as well as its consequences. As a matter of fact, most of the reporting concentrated on Secession as the natural result of the popular consultation and the related political reactions of the main stakeholders. However, a number of Southern Sudanese outlets aired explicit calls to support Separation on behalf of both politicians and other advocacy groups; referendum songs supporting Secession were also broadcast during the silence period.

3.2.1 General media offer

During the 23 days preceding the voting days, political communication was dominated by the referendum although the three different media sectors being monitored – radio, television and the press – showed different levels of attention for this topic.

The overall volume of the coverage for this topic amounted to 78 per cent of the total reporting devoted to politics on television and radio, although its journalistic relevance was different in Northern and Southern outlets. As a matter of fact, audio-visual media targeting Southern audiences showed a higher level of referendum-related coverage than did media addressing the Northern public: the former allotted the referendum an average of 95 per cent of the total coverage devoted to politics, while the latter gave to this theme 60 per cent.

Chart 9: Volume of referendum and other political communication on radio and television (all programmes)
*Base: 425588 seconds*
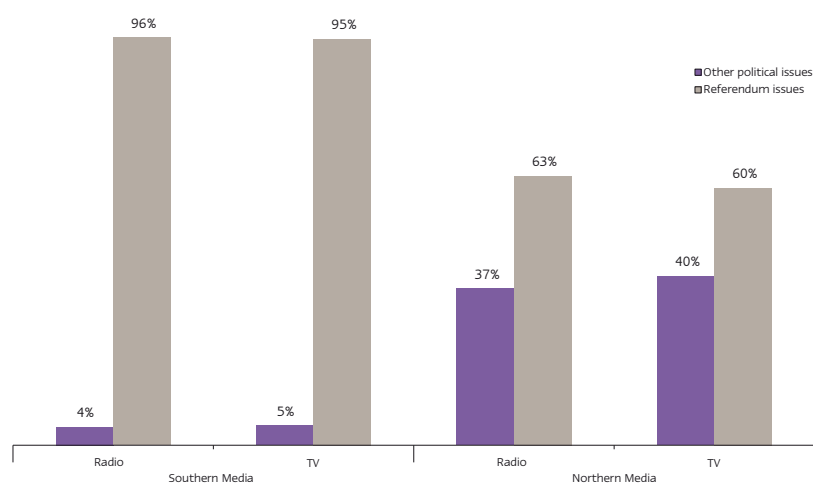
In a similar trend the press devoted most of its coverage to the referendum, although the overall attention to this topic was less than the audio-visual sector (average of 67 per cent of the total space devoted to politics over the monitoring period). Consistently with what was observed for television and radio, the space provided to referendum-related coverage was higher in the newspapers targeting the South than what was the case in the outlets addressing the Northern public: the former allotted referendum an average of 84 per cent of the total coverage devoted to politics, while the latter 63 per cent.

Chart 10: Volume of referendum and other political communication in the press (all formats)
*Base: 1248402 cm²*
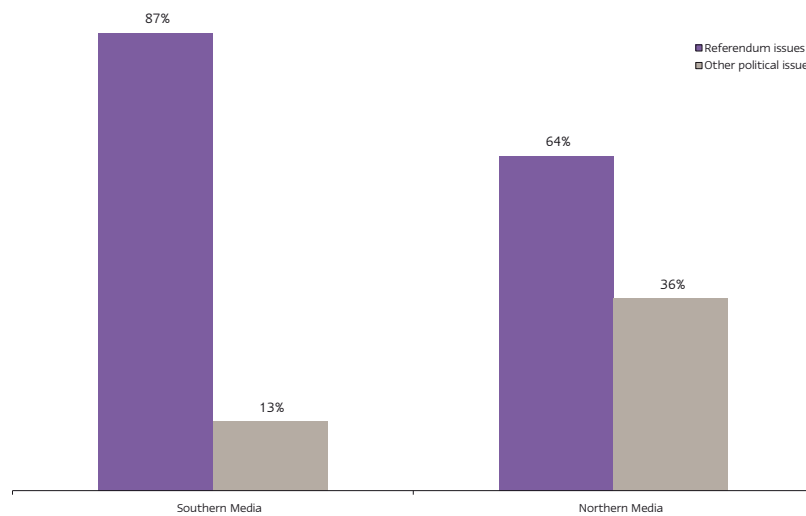
The referendum was covered in a variety of programme formats with news and editorial programmes being the main channel for informing voters, both in North and South media markets. In the South, paid referendum advertising for advocacy purposes, referendum songs, and voter education represented a relevant mean of communication (28 per cent of the overall referendum coverage) while in the North, coverage was mainly concentrated in news and current affairs shows.

Several channels broadcast voter education and referendum news in local languages so to ensure voters better access to information. Media provided large visibility not only to voter education but also to different referendum administrative bodies and their work, the preparation of polling stations, arrangements for voting days, the distribution of ballot papers and the criteria for eligibility to vote.

Chart 11: Formats for referendum coverage on radio and television (all programmes)[22]
*Base: 331415 seconds*
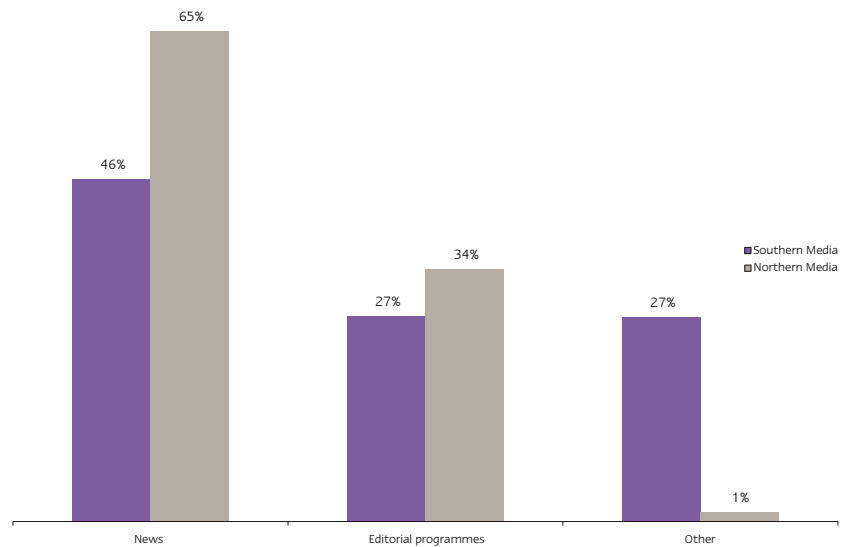
The press covered the referendum in a variety of forms; news and editorial coverage were the main formats for referendum-related reporting, for both Northern and Southern newspapers, although they published different themes and discussions of the ballot. As a matter of fact, Southern outlets mainly used news coverage to report about the referendum, while the Northern press largely resorted to other formats, including editorials and interviews with the main stakeholders.

The presence of voter education and information as well as free and paid advertising was more limited in the press than on audio-visual media; this was the likely outcome of the fact that advocacy fronts and bodies organising voter education perceived the print media as less relevant in terms of penetration and reach.

Chart 12: Formats for referendum coverage in the press (all formats)[23]
Base: 837706 cm²
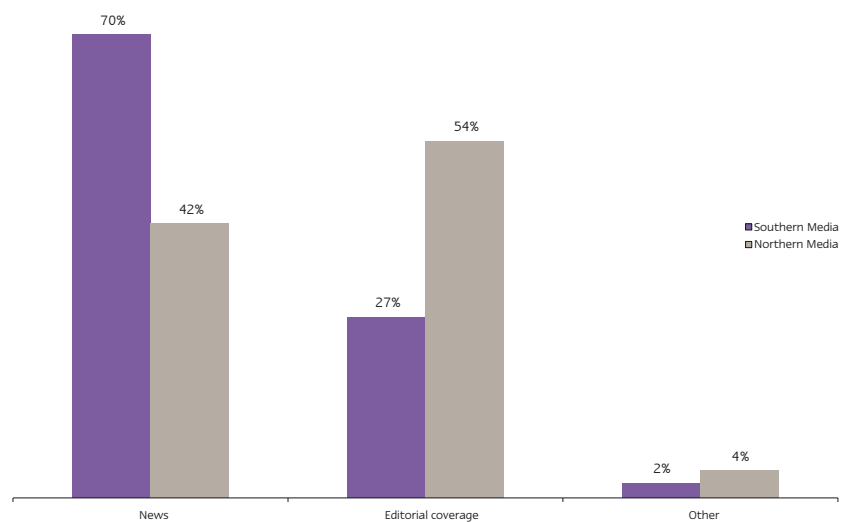
22 *The category Other includes genres like: songs, paid advertising, announcements, free advertising, and voter education.*

23 *The category Other includes formats like: voter education, paid and free advertising, sports and leisure.*

3.2.2 Coverage of the two referendum voting options on television and radio

Radio and televisions devoted to referendum advocacy groups large part of their reporting although one-sided coverage prevailed in all media. As a matter of fact, the allocation of airtime for the Unity and Secession fronts was unevenly distributed in the North and in the South, with Separation dominating Southern Sudan media and Unity monopolising Northern outlets' coverage.

On Southern radios, the Secession front received 91 per cent while in Northern radios the Unity front was allotted 81 per cent. South Sudan Television devoted 96 per cent of their coverage to Secession groups, while the Northern Sudan TV stations allocated 81 per cent to Unity. The two channels showing the most plural coverage – even if still unbalance – were Peace Service Radio and Sudan Television that devoted respectively 39 per cent and 24 per cent to Secession advocates.

Chart 13: Allocation of airtime to advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio
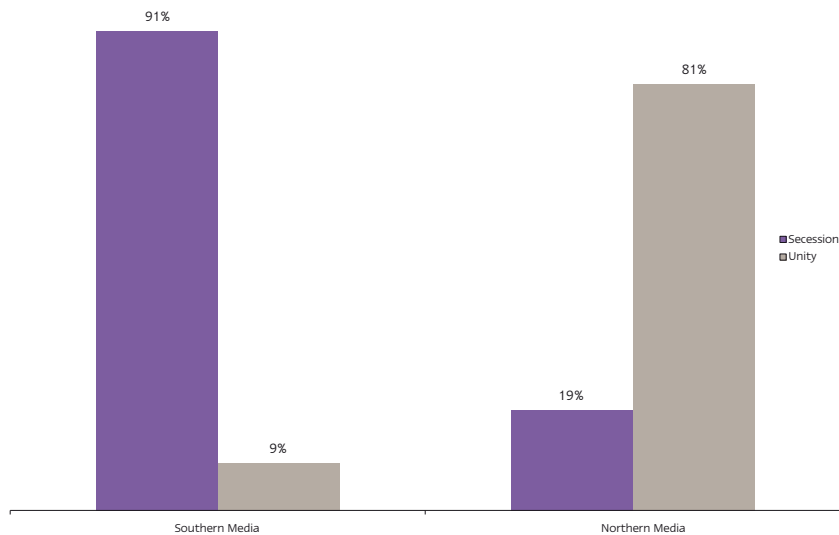
Base: 93829 seconds

Chart 14: Allocation of airtime between advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on television
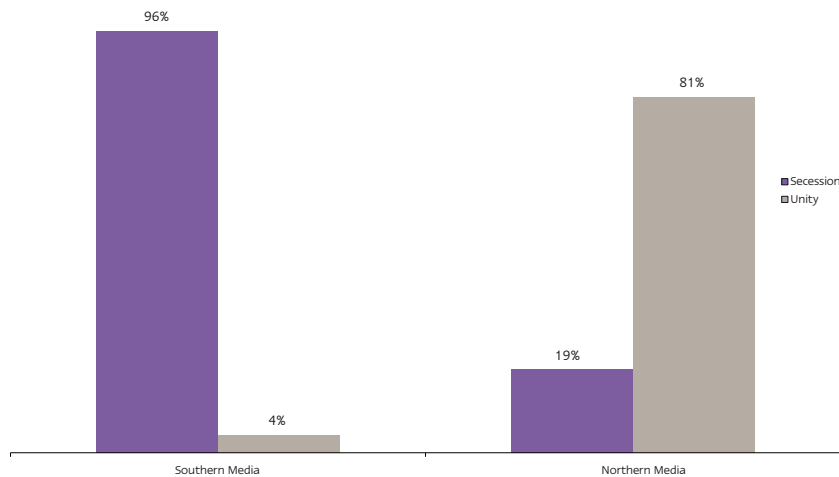
Base: 119785 seconds

Table 7: Allocation of airtime between advocacy fronts in news and editorial programmes by channel

MEDIA SECTOR	CHANNEL	SECESSION	UNITY	TOTAL
Radio	Omdurman Radio	18%	82%	100%
	Peace Service	39%	61%	100%
	Radio Bakhita	93%	7%	100%
	Radio Miraya	93%	7%	100%
	SRS	82%	18%	100%
	SSR	87%	13%	100%
	VoP	94%	6%	100%
TV	Blue Nile	11%	89%	100%
	SSTV	96%	4%	100%
	Sudan TV	24%	76%	100%
TOTAL		61%	39%	100%
Base in absolute values (seconds)		130452	83162	213614

The tone of the coverage was generally neutral in all outlets monitored, a clear indication of the conciliatory role played by the media during the referendum and reflecting the constant messages launched against violence and for a peaceful voting period. Positive tones characterised the coverage of Unity in the North and Secession in the South, while negative reporting was extremely limited targeting the Unity front in the South (8 per cent of their overall coverage) and Separation groups in the North (18 per cent).

In spite of this general absence of explicit episodes of journalistic bias, many media houses tended to mix news and opinions when presenting one of the two referendum options; in addition the choice of several experts hosted in television and radio programmes revealed the tendency to ensure visibility to only one side of the referendum front. The kind of questions journalists asked often indicated the propensity to shape the answer towards a given direction, in the North in favour of Unity and in the South in favour of Secession.

No systematic episodes of offensive language were observed during referendum campaign. Politicians and advocacy groups did not generally resort to inflammatory language or offensive styles of debating and only two cases were observed, one in the North and one in the South. Both episodes involved attacks of defamatory nature against the SPLM on behalf of representatives of the NCP. In addition, before prime time news, SSTV regularly broadcast a video song whose lyrics were particularly harsh and provocative. The song displays images of Dr. John Garang with his lieutenants in the bush war, a clip of an armed war tank in front line action, a clip of soldiers armed with AK47s and rocket propelled garnets in bush war action, as well as a clip of militias armed with AK47s in a jubilant mood. In addition, the lyrics carry explicit calls for violence against Northerners[24].

24 *The title of the video song was "Yes for Separation, No for Unity" and is played by the South Sudanese singer John Junub. The most inflammatory verses say: "Southern Sudan Independence.......we doesn't need Northerners.....! Northerner Sudan Independence.....you don't need Southerners......! Yes for separation, no for Unity! Give them....! Show them...! Burn them....! Tell them......! We don't want Unity...........We are tired of the war, we don't need Sharia law, and we don't want unity ...... Southern Sudan makes them fire....! John Junub makes them fire.......! Give them fire!".*

Chart 15: Tone of the coverage of advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio and television
*Base: 213614 seconds*
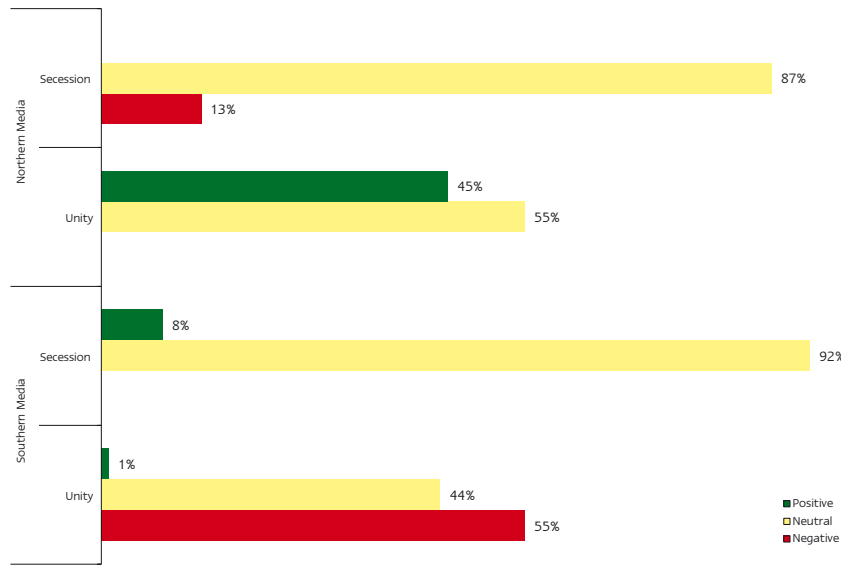
The distribution of airtime among parties and advocacy groups showed that a clear-cut polarisation based on target audiences existed in the audio-visual media: radio broadcasting from the South devoted the widest coverage to the Separation front and the SPLM (90 per cent of the total time), while Northern radios ensured the widest visibility to the NCP and the Unity advocates (76 per cent of the total time). On television, Northern channels reproduced the same coverage frame by devoting more than 68 per cent of their airtime to the ruling party and the Unity front; on the contrary Southern Sudan Television gave large visibility to the supporters of separation as well as the SPLM, gathering together 96 per cent of the total coverage.

Chart 16: Allocation of airtime to parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on radio[25]
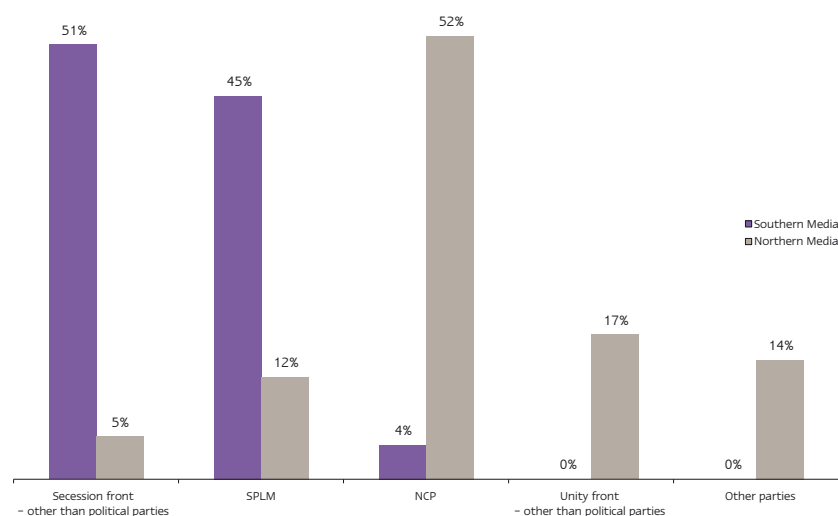*Base: 93829 seconds*
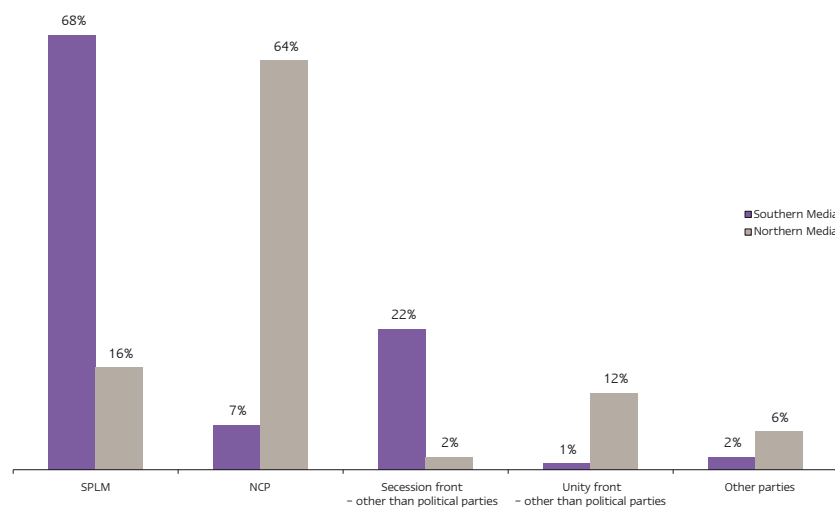
25 *The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2 per cent. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.*

Chart 17: Allocation of airtime to parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial programmes on television[26]
Base: 119785 seconds

The themes used to cover the two opposing advocacy fronts were generally similar in Northern and Southern media although the weight of individual topics differed: the Unity front was primarily associated with issues related to post-referendum institutional arrangements, the referendum campaign and the status of Abyei; the topics for the pro-Secession groups were mainly related to calls to vote for separation as a necessary condition for freedom, messages aimed at informing voters on how to cast their ballot and a "Go out and vote" campaign as well as themes related to referendum administration. The media communication strategies used to report on the two opposing fronts were different also in relation to the target audiences of each outlet: when covered by Southern media, the Unity supporters were linked to campaign events and discussions on Referendum postponement while Northern media focused their thematic coverage for the Separation front on post-referendum preparations.

3.2.3 Coverage of the two referendum voting options in the press

The coverage of the two opposing fronts for Unity and Secession was extensive and regular in the press, although the allocation of space between them showed clear quantitative differences on the basis of the geographical reach of each media house. In the North, newspapers ensured the largest exposure to the advocates of Unity (60 per cent of the overall press coverage), while in the South the two opposing advocacy groups received more balanced treatment. This result was essentially the outcome of President Bashir's visit to Juba catalysing Southern Sudan newspapers' coverage during the days before and after his trip.

26 The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2 per cent. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.

Chart 18: Allocation of space to advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage of the press[27]
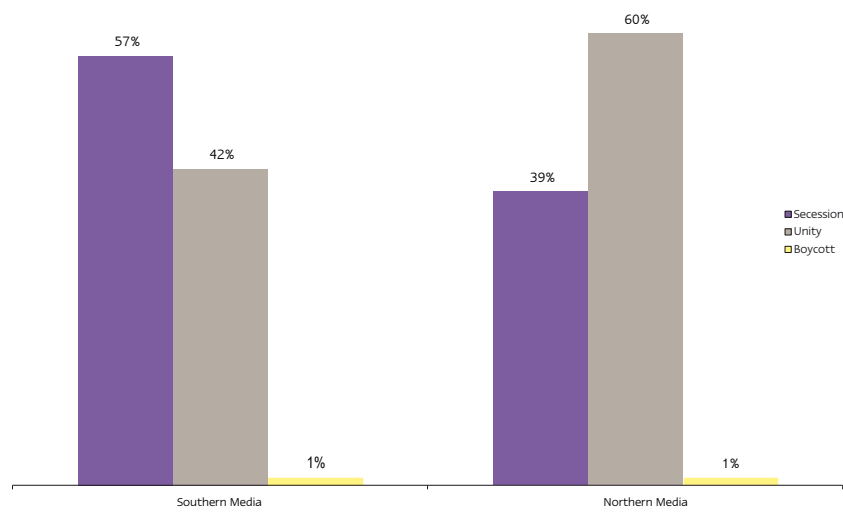
Base: 559287 cm[2]

Table 8: Allocation of space to advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage by newspaper

| NEWSPAPER	SECESSION	UNITY	BOYCOTT	TOTAL
Ajras Alhurria	48%	51%	0%	100%
Akbar Alyoum	31%	68%	2%	100%
Akir lahza	33%	66%	1%	100%
Al-Intibaha	56%	44%	0%	100%
Al-Rai alaam	26%	74%	0%	100%
Al-Sahafa	33%	66%	1%	100%
Al-sudani	35%	65%	1%	100%
Alyaam	36%	63%	2%	100%
Eltayer	47%	49%	4%	100%
Juba Post	79%	21%	0%	100%
Khartoum Monitor	61%	39%	0%	100%
Sudan Tribune	67%	33%	0%	100%
Sudan Vision	38%	62%	0%	100%
The Citizen	63%	37%	0%	100%
The Democrat	50%	49%	0%	100%
TOTAL	43%	56%	1%	100%
Base in absolute values (cm²)	239337	315398	4552	559287

When covering advocacy groups, the press generally used neutral tones (74 per cent average of the total referendum coverage), thus confirming the role played by the media acted as agents of pacification over the campaign period.

27   *The front for the boycott includes all those groups claiming the illegitimacy of the referendum on the basis of Islamic religion. These are: some representatives of Islamic religious authorities, the Islamic Liberation Party, common people and some civic society groups based in the North.*

Both in Northern and Southern media, negative coverage was mainly associated with groups supporting the boycott position that in any case received very limited visibility. The tenure of the journalistic treatment for the advocacy groups followed an editorial logic based on the target audiences of each media outlet: North Sudan newspapers used positive tones to report on the Unity front (19 per cent of the overall space allotted to this group in the North-based press), while the Secession front received 41 per cent positive coverage in the Southern press.

Chart 19: Tone of the coverage of advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage in the press

Base: 559287 cm^2
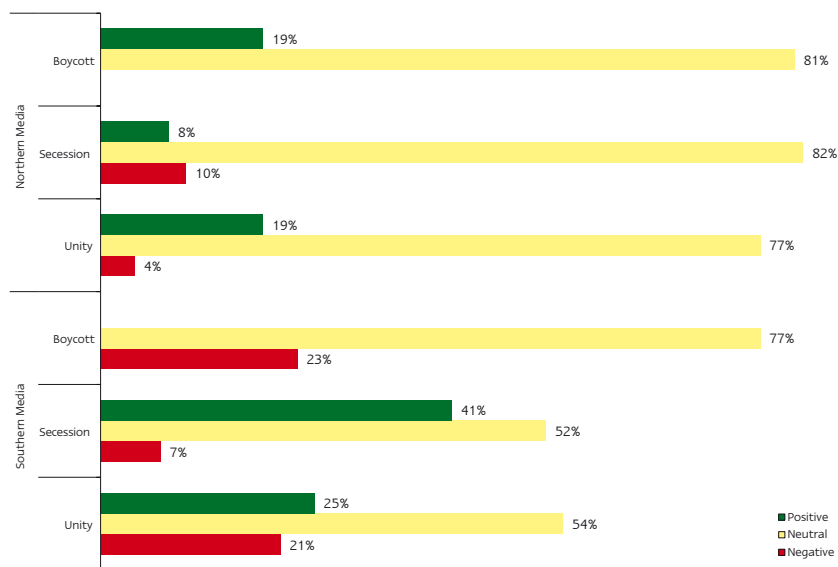
In spite of this general lack of critical coverage, a number of episodes of inflammatory language were observed (a total of 43 cases of which 28 were in Northern media houses): they mainly involved cases of defamation, particularly in the Northern press. In Southern newspapers, observed episodes were principally related to calls for violence and messages of discrimination against North Sudanese citizens. Political parties and media houses themselves were often the main source[28] of the offensive speech while the targets[29] were mainly advocacy groups for Unity and Separation and other politicians.

**Chart 20: Types of inflammatory language in the press**
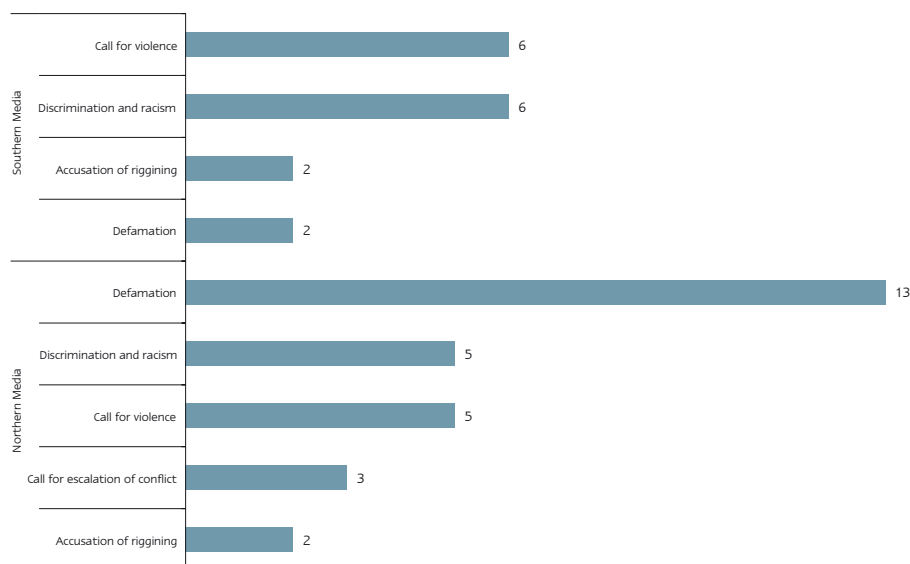
28 *The source is the person or group originating the inflammatory speech, as reported by the media.*

29 *The target is the individual or group against whom inflammatory speech is directed, as reported by the media.*

The allocation of coverage among parties and other advocacy groups showed a better balance than audio-visual media. The Northern press, while devoting the largest coverage to the NCP, provided some visibility to other actors, namely the SPLM and the two opposing advocacy fronts. Newspapers targeting Southern audiences gave the SPML and the Secession front the widest coverage but a relevant space was also provided to the NCP.

Chart 21: Allocation of airtime to parties and advocacy groups in news and editorial coverage in the press[30]
Base: 559287 seconds
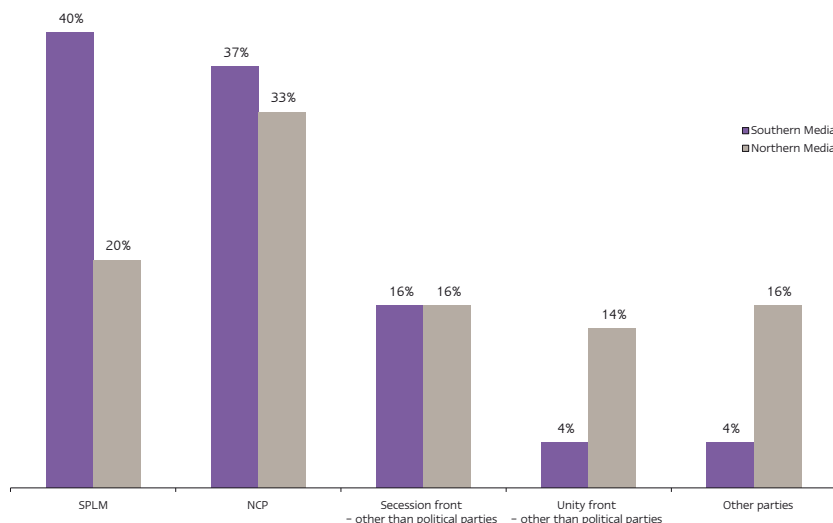
The themes used to cover the two opposing advocacy fronts were very similar in the Southern and Northern press: in both cases, the two prevailing themes were the institutional arrangements after the referendum results and the referendum campaign. The advocates of Secession were also associated to referendum administration and the discussions regarding the status of Abyei.

3.3 The referendum moratorium and days of voting (8 January – 15 January 2011)

During the referendum silence period beginning on 8 January and continuing over the seven days voting phase, most of the media did not respect the provisions prohibiting the coverage of referendum campaign activities and advocacy fronts. A number of violations were observed across the different media sectors, particularly in the press. Advocates of both fronts received wide coverage during this period although the access media provided was mainly devoted to comments and discussions on the likely outcome of the ballot as well as its consequences. As a matter of fact, most of the reporting concentrated on Secession as the natural result of the popular consultation and the related political reactions of the main stakeholders.

30 *The category Other parties includes parties with an overall coverage of less than 2 per cent. These are: SCP, SSDP, DUP, SPLM-DC, SANU, UNP, Independent, DUPO, UP-C, UDP, NJP, UNPM, USDF, URRP, FWP, UDF, PCP, JNA, and ANCP.*

Chart 22: Number of violations of the Election Moratorium and during the days of voting by media sector
Base: 2017 cases
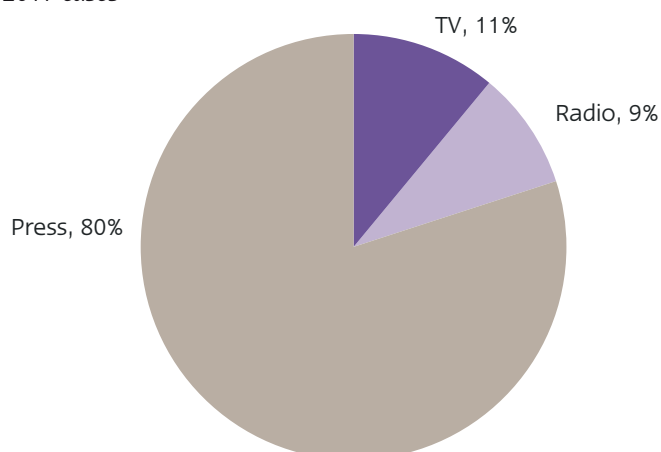
In this context, the media provided campaign opportunities for the advocates of Unity and Secession by emphasising their comments on the possible results and their opinions of the on-going ballot. The coverage provided to the two opposing fronts confirmed this trend and the advocates of Secession were ensured wide visibility by both Northern and Southern media outlets. In this regard, the media often acted as a mirror of an actual political situation rather than autonomously creating issues and events.

However, a number of Southern Sudan outlets aired explicit calls to support Separation on behalf of both politicians and other advocacy groups: referendum songs supporting Secession were also broadcast during the silence period. The press also showed a number of ideological biases by openly expressing their views on Unity and Secession. Both the National Government and the GoSS exploited their official position to campaign and advocate and promote Unity or Secession. Limited accuracy in news reports about voter turnout was observed with a frequent lack of consistency in the voting figures. Similarly, published opinion polls often had no information about their sample and margin of error.

The SSRC and their staff received wide punctual and inclusive coverage during this period thus allowing voters to be promptly informed on deadlines, figures and the activities of election administration during voting days. Similarly media coverage of voting process was comprehensive, with several field reports from various polling stations in the North, South and from abroad.

3.4 The post-referendum period (26 January – 10 April 2011)

3.4.1 General media offer
After the voting and the post-voting period, the overall level of referendum coverage sensibly declined, although its journalistic relevance differed in Northern and Southern outlets with the latter still devoting large parts of their reporting to referendum-related matters.

After the vote, media houses broadly covered the results announcement at all administrative levels: local, states, South and national. No complaints or doubts about the fairness of referendum were reported and news coverage paid large attention to the positive assessment of the referendum process on behalf of the various international and national observers. The media also ensured constant information regarding all the activities and press

conferences of the SSRC including: results proclamation, the announcement of the end of the referendum process, the challenges faced by the referendum administration. Relevant space was also ensured to post-referendum discussions regarding boundaries delimitation, nationality and transitional period arrangements between North and South.

Audio-visual media targeting Southern audiences showed a higher level of referendum-related coverage than media addressing the Northern public with the former allotting referendum an average of 41 per cent of the total coverage devoted to politics, and the latter giving to this theme 24 per cent As a matter of fact, Arab-language media focused on a broader array of issues, among which domestic politics and social and legal developments were the most relevant.

Chart 23: Volume of referendum and other political communication on radio and television (all programmes)
*Base: 429138 seconds*
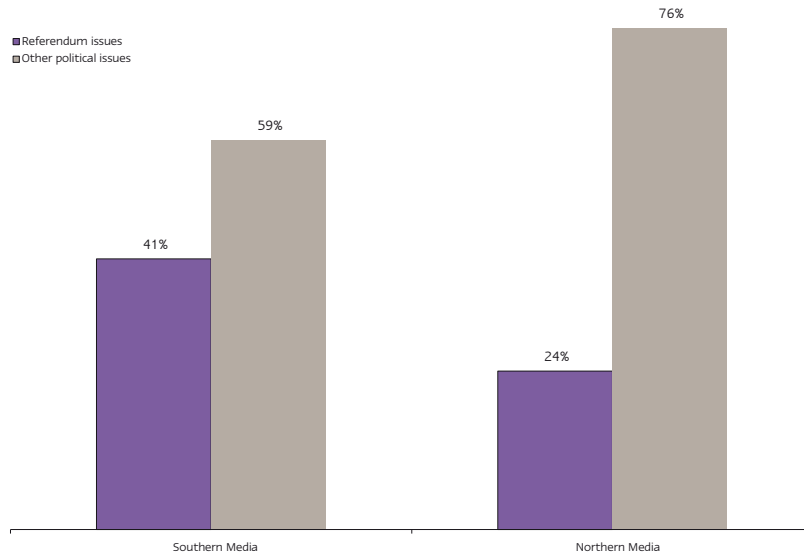
In a similar trend, the press progressively decreased the coverage of the referendum although in a less evident manner than audio-visual media. Consistently with what observed for television and radio, the space provided for referendum-related coverage was higher in the newspapers targeting the South than in the outlets addressing the Northern public: the former allotted referendum an average of 53 per cent of the total coverage devoted to politics, while the latter 35 per cent. Other relevant issues in the agenda of both media markets were domestic politics and economical development.

Chart 24: Volume of referendum and other political communication in the press (all formats)
Base: 1192328 cm²
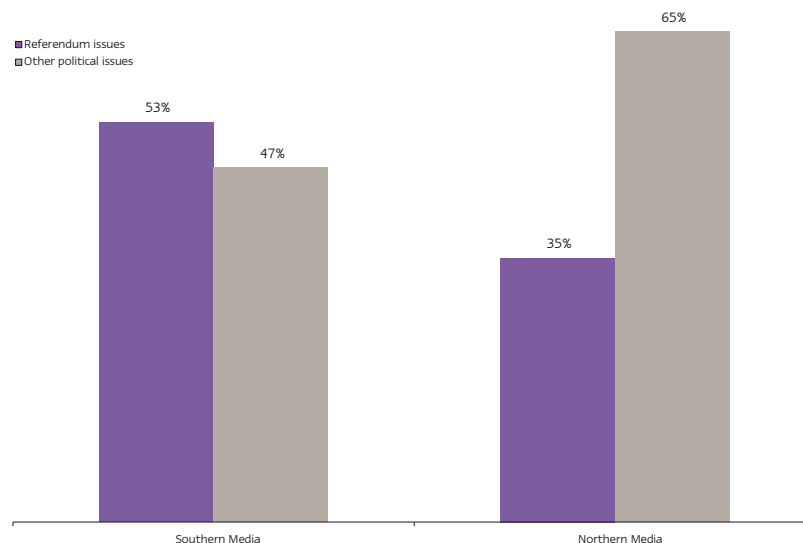
3.4.2 Post-referendum coverage on television and radio

The polarisation of the coverage between the NCP and the SPLM, which was the main feature of the coverage over the past year, increased further on in the period following referendum. This trend dominated the coverage of audio-visual media where the two main parties received more than 98 per cent of the overall news airtime. This dominance was a common feature in the editorial lines of both media markets where small parties and the opposition had very few opportunities to access the airwaves and to put their message across.

As during the referendum campaign, parties' visibility was correlated with the geographical targets of each media outlets: media addressing Northern audiences devoted the largest coverage to the NCP, while the media based in the South or addressing the Southern public allotted almost their entire airtime to the SPLM.

On Southern radio channels, the SPLM received 90 per cent of the overall political coverage, while the NCP (8 per cent and the SPLM-DC (1 per cent) were the only other political forces that received some very limited attention. On Northern radio stations, the NCP dominated the coverage with 89 per cent of the overall airtime: the SPLM was allotted 6 per cent while the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the UNP, the Beja Congress Party (BCP) and the Umma Party – Reform and Development (UPRD) were given 1 per cent coverage each.

Televisions displayed an even more evident dominance of the SPLM on SSTV (98 per cent of the overall reporting) and the NCP on Sudan Television and Blue Nile (respectively 92 per cent and 96 per cent. The only parties Northern televisions covered were the UNP and the Democratic Unionist Party – Original (DUPO) with 1 per cent airtime each.

Furthermore, as South Kordofan elections approached, the two main parties – the NCP and the SPLM – tended to exploit their institutional positions within local administration to gain additional visibility and to campaign for heir incumbents candidates.

Chart 25: Allocation of airtime to parties in radio newscasts[31]
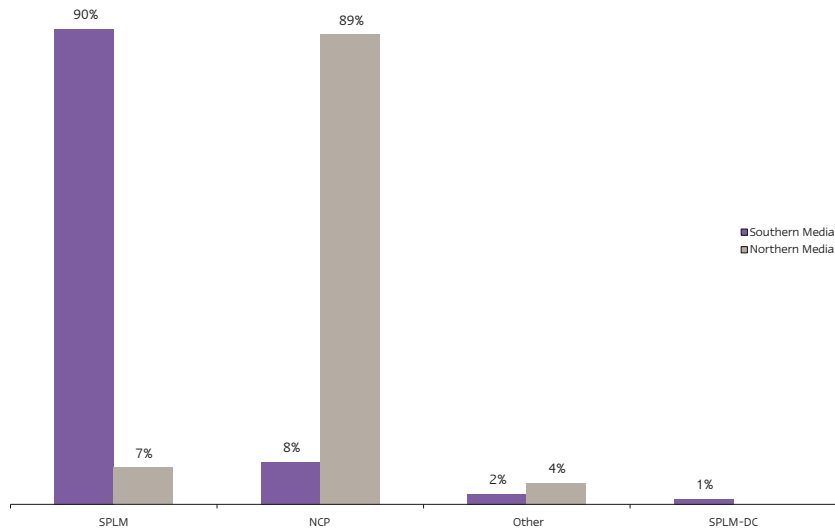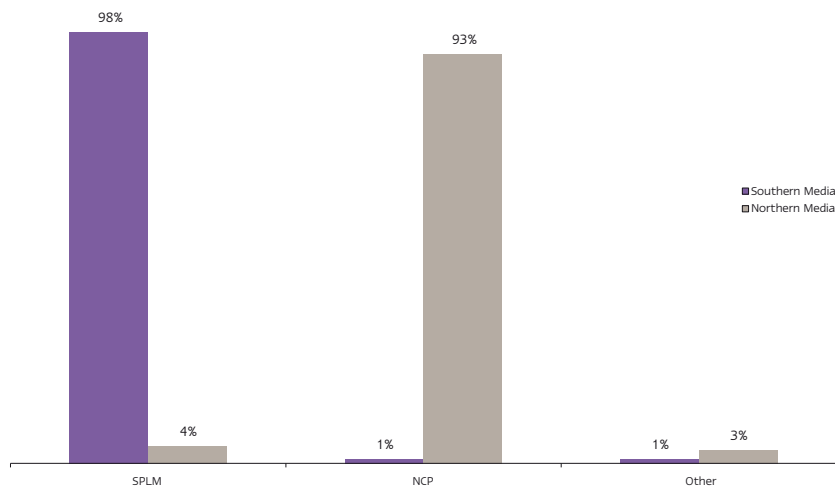*Base: 187716 seconds*

Chart 26: Allocation of airtime to parties in television newscasts[32]
Base: 154480 seconds

31 The category Other includes parties and referendum groups with less than 1 per cent coverage: DUP, UNP, BCP, NUP, UPRD, UDF, Unity front − other than political parties, Independent, PCP, ADP, Secession front − other than political parties, FWP, USAP, DUPO, Other, SCP, UNPM, SSDF, UDSF, NDA, NNDP, MP, JNA, UP-C, SFLP, EPJD.

32 The category Other includes parties and referendum groups with less than 1 per cent coverage: UNP, DUPO, DUP, SPLM-DC, USDF, UDSF, SA, ABP, URRP, BCP, TAP, FWP, EPJD, PFJP, ANCP, NASP, MP, PFDR, SFLP, WANUP.

Table 9: Allocation of airtime to parties in newscasts by channel

MEDIA SECTOR	CHANNEL	SPLM	NCP	OTHER	TOTAL
Radio	SSR	96%	3%	1%	100%
	Omdurman Radio	5%	91%	4%	100%
	Peace Service	8%	87%	5%	100%
	SRS	85%	13%	2%	100%
	Radio Bakhita	86%	7%	6%	100%
	VoP	82%	17%	1%	100%
	Radio Miraya	87%	10%	3%	100%
TV	SSTV	98%	1%	1%	100%
	Sudan TV	4%	92%	3%	100%
	Blue Nile	3%	96%	1%	100%
GRAND TOTAL		54%	44%	2%	100%
Basis in absolute values (seconds)		184252	149528	8416	342196

The tone of the media reporting was generally either neutral or positive in all outlets monitored, with the SPLM receiving the highest levels of positive coverage (59 per cent of their total airtime). Patent episodes of partiality were more evident in Southern media houses, while Northern outlets usually avoided explicit evaluations of political actors. Nonetheless, Arabic-language media tended to adopt more unspoken approaches to portray in a positive manner the ruling party. These included a selective use of news, issues and opinion-makers and the constant use of misleading images or headlines.

Chart 27: Tone of the coverage of parties and referendum groups in news casts on radio and television
*Base: 342196 seconds*
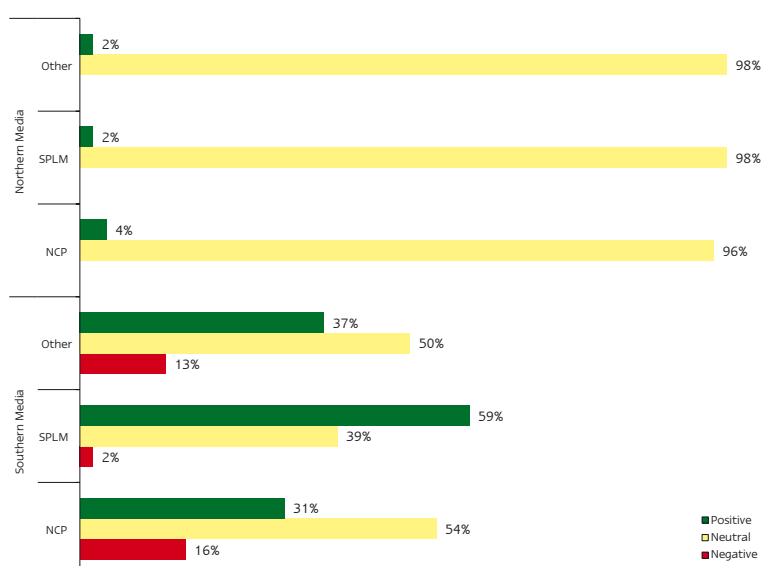
3.4.3 Referendum coverage in the press

The NCP and the SPLM dominated political coverage in the press, even if newspapers showed a broader pluralism than radio and television. As a matter of fact, overall, a wider range of parties were ensured some visibility in print media. However, the ruling parties were given an average aggregated space of more than 84 per cent of the total space devoted to politics. Clear-cut differences based on geographical targets of each media outlet emerged here too: newspapers based or addressing Northern Sudan audiences devoted the largest amount of space to the NCP (61 per cent) while media houses targeting the South devoted to the SPLM more than half of their coverage (63 per cent). Other parties receiving space in the Northern and Southern press, although in a limited manner, were the UNP (average 5 per cent), the Juba National Alliance (JNA – 2 per cent), the DUPO (2 per cent), the Popular Congress Party (PCP – 2 per cent); the SPLM-DC, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) and the DUP received 1 per cent each.

Chart 28: Allocation of airtime to parties in news coverage in the press[33]
Base: 962488 seconds
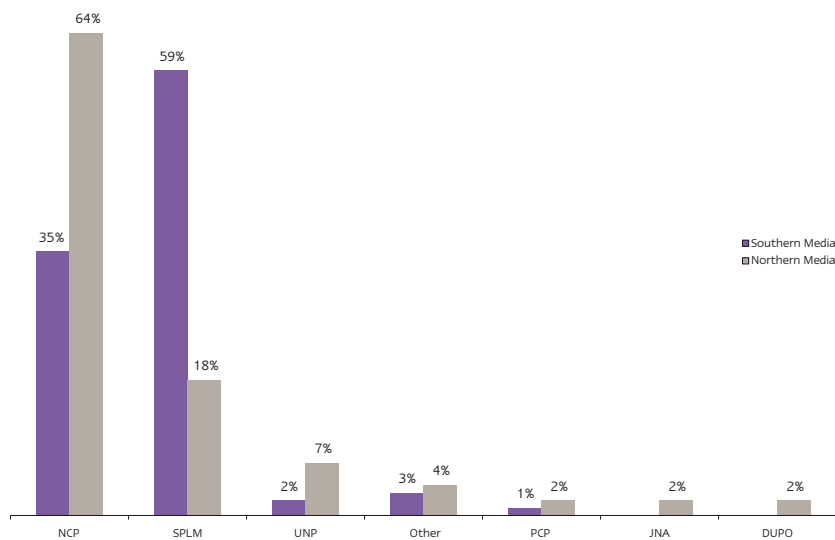
The newspapers that showed more plural editorial lines were Al-Sahafa (30 per cent coverage devoted to parties other that the NCP and the SPLM), Akbar Alyoum (20 per cent), Ajras Alhurria (31 per cent) and Alyaam (22 per cent).

33 *The category Other includes parties and referendum groups with less than 1 per cent coverage: UPRD, BCP, IMP, NJP, NDA, AA, Other, USDF, SA, ABP, Independent, NUP, UDF, UNPM, SSDF, URRP, JPFP, DUSP, MBO, UDSF, FWP, SLM, SSDP, EDP, UDUP, NSP, EPJD, PFJP, SANU, NDUF, SBP, UFP, Unity front – other than political parties, ADP, SConP, NRP, Secession front – other than political parties, USAP, LDP, ANCP, NUDP, NDFP, SDESCP, USSP, NNDP, SAP, SNLP, WANUP, UDP, NASP, RCP, SDCMP, UP-C, USNP, JPO, MSUP, SLFOP, SUNP, ILP, ANCF, TAP, MSOP, SNFGUP, SDPCES, NDP, SFLP, PFDR, SFNP, NPP.*
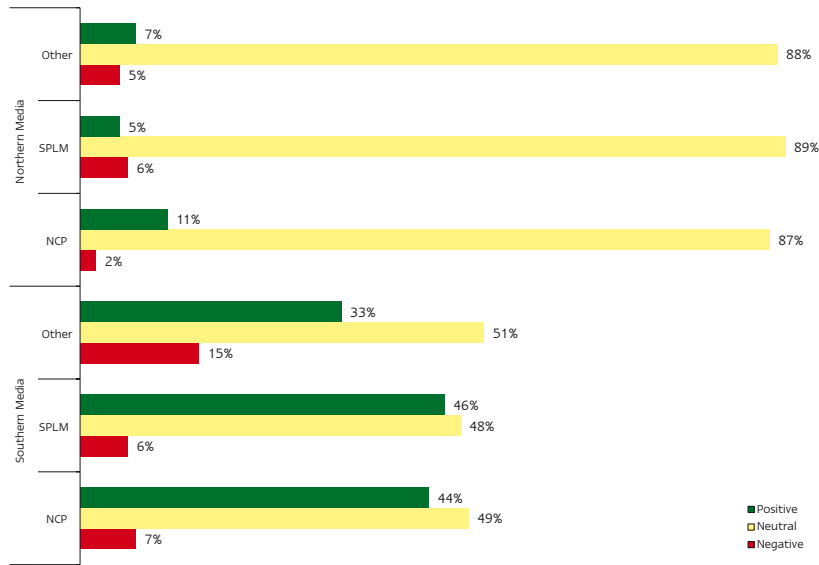
Table 10: Allocation of space to parties in editorial coverage by newspaper

NEWSPAPER	SPLM	NCP	OTHER	TOTAL
Akbar Alyoum	16%	64%	20%	100%
Al-Sahafa	16%	54%	30%	100%
Al-sudani	17%	62%	22%	100%
Akir lahza	12%	70%	18%	100%
The Citizen	80%	12%	8%	100%
Al-Intibaha	24%	61%	15%	100%
Khartoum Monitor	57%	36%	8%	100%
Sudan Vision	30%	65%	5%	100%
Al-Rai alaam	15%	77%	9%	100%
Ajras Alhurria	38%	31%	31%	100%
Sudan Tribune	70%	21%	8%	100%
Eltayer	18%	70%	13%	100%
Juba Post	87%	10%	3%	100%
Alyaam	31%	47%	22%	100%
The Democrat	49%	39%	12%	100%
TOTAL	33%	51%	16%	100%
Basis in absolute values (cm²)	313449	492497	156542	962488

Tones of the coverage were generally neutral and positive, with Southern media being inclined to use positive and negative styles of reporting. Northern press displayed more critical tones than Northern radio and television – particularly against the SPLM and opposition parties.

Chart 29: Tone of the coverage of parties in editorial coverage in the press

Base: 962488 cm^2

Northern Media

Other
- Positive: 7%
- Neutral: 88%
- Negative: 5%

SPLM
- Positive: 5%
- Neutral: 89%
- Negative: 6%

NCP
- Positive: 11%
- Neutral: 87%
- Negative: 2%

Southern Media

Other
- Positive: 33%
- Neutral: 51%
- Negative: 15%

SPLM
- Positive: 46%
- Neutral: 48%
- Negative: 6%

NCP
- Positive: 44%
- Neutral: 49%
- Negative: 7%

Legend:
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Annex 1 – List of abbreviations

ACRONYM	FULL NAME
AA	Ansar Alsona Party
ABC	Abyei Borders Commission
ADP	Awareness Democratic Party
AMDISS	Association for Media and Development in South Sudan
ANCP	African National Congress Party
AWG-MM	Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCP	Beja Congress Party
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party – Al Digair
DUPO	Democratic Unionist Party – Original
DUSP	Democratic United Salvation Party
EDG	Electoral Donors Group
EDP	Eastern Democratic Party
EPJD	Eastern Party – Justice and Development
FotS	Front of the South Party
FWP	Free Will Party
GOS	National Government of Sudan
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HDP	Hagiga Democratic Party
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILP	Islamic Liberation Party
IMP	Islamic Moderate Party
IMS	International Media Support
JAP	Juba Alliance Party
JMM	Joint Media Mechanism
JNA	Juba National Alliance
JSN	Journalists' Solidarity Network
LDP	Liberal Democrats Party
MBO	Muslim Brothers Organisation
MP	Movement Party
MSOP	Modern Sudan Organisation Party
MSUP	Maoyst Socialist Unionist Party
NASP	Nassiri Arab Socialists Party
NCP	National Council for Press and Publications
NCP	National Congress Party
NDA	National Democratic Alliance Party
NDFP	National Democratic Front Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
NDUF	National Democratic United Front
NEC	National Election Commission
NFDM	New Forces Democratic Movement
NIF	National Islamic Front
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Services
NJP	National Justice Party
NLP	National Liberation Party
NNDP	New National Democratic Party
NPA	Norwegian Peoples Aid
NPAP	National People's Alliance Party
NPC	National Press Council

NPP	National Popular Party
NRenP	National Renaissance Party
NRP	National Reform Party
NSP	New Sudan Party
NUDP	Nassiri Unionist Democratic Party
NUP	National Unionist Party
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PCongP	People's Congress Party
PCP	Popular Congress Party
PFDR	Peoples' Forces and Democratic Rights Party
PP	Pre Publication censorship
PSJP	Progress and Social Justice Party
RCP	Revolutionist Committees Party
SA	Sudan Ana Party
SANP	Sudan African National Party
SANU	Sudan African National Union
SAP	Sudan Alliance Party
SBP	Sudanese Baath Party
SConP	Sudanese Congress Party
SCP	Sudanese Communist Party
SDCMP	Sudanese Democratic Change Movement Party
SDPCES	Social Democratic Party Congress Eastern Sudan
SFLP	Sudanese Free Lions Party
SFNP	Sudanese Free National Party
SJN	Sudanese Journalists Network
SJU	Sudanese Journalist Union in Khartoum
SLFOP	Sudan Labour Forces Organisation Party
SMEC	Sudan Media and Elections Consortium
SNFGUP	South and North Funj General Union Party
SNFO	Sudanese National Front Organisation
SNLP	Sudanese National Labour Party
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLM-DC	DC – Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SRTC	Sudan Radio and Television Corporation
SSDF	Southern Sudan Democratic Forum
SSDP	Sudanese Socialist Democratic Party
SSoliDP	Sudanese Solidarity Democratic Party
SSOUJ	Southern Sudan Union of Journalists
SSR	South Sudan Radio
SSRA	South Sudan Referendum Act
SSRC	South Sudan Referendum Commission
SSRB	South Sudan Referendum Bureau
SSTV	South Sudan Television
SSUDF	South Sudan United Democratic Front
SUDIA	Sudanese Development Initiative
SUDPC	Sudanese United Democratic Party Congress
SUFP	Sudanese United Forces Party
SUNP	Sudanese United National Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UDP	United Democratic Party
UDSPF	Union of Democratic Socialist Party – Fatma
UDUP	United Democratic Unionist Party
UFP	Umma Federal Party
UJOSS	Union of Journalists of Southern Sudan
UNP	Umma National Party
UP-C	Umma Party – Collective
UPopF	United Popular Front
UPRD	Umma Party – Reform and Development

URRP	Umma Renewal and Reform Party
USAP	Union of the Sudanese African Parties
USDF	United Salvation Democratic Front
USNP	United Sudan National Party
USSP	United South Sudan Party
WANUP	Wadi Al-Neel Unionist Party
WBP	White Brigade Party