Celebrating twenty years of democracy in South Africa: a violent political rhetoric which is tearing the country apart

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Abstract

Elections only serve as a technical transition for democracy because of the notion of õstatenessö"that includes political stability, government effectiveness, etc. The current pre-elections period in South Africa attests to its democratic values. However, the last year and half has witnessed public grievance and anger because of the governmentøs poor service-delivery, widespread unemployment, etc. This hostile setting poses serious threats to the African National Congress (ANC) because of its failure to realize the gravity of the situation. In this context, new media convergence has only introduced new centres of power and new elites in the democratic õnewö" South Africa that tend to deploy popular cultural forms in election campaigns. On May 7, the national South African elections is scheduled to take place. It is indeed, another test to the South African democracy. However, Historically, South African media have not provided a common space of shared public communication. Media have been used to reproduce notions of separate and distinct populations, with their own separate cultures, belonging in separate geographical areas (hegemony of race, class, language and gender). Consequently, South African citizens have starkly unequal capacities to express their cultural and political preferences through individualized, commodified forms of media provision.

Over the last decades, stabilized patterns of national regulation of media and communications involved a reorientation of the discourses linking media and citizenship.These approaches expanded choices of media commodities available to citizens as consumers (Barnett, 2004). But social progress and embracing diversity is not technologically determined, but rather reciprocates to the capacity of social actors for mobilization, organization, and self-representation (Scott & Street 2000). Freedom of public debate about sensitive issues is dependent on the sorts of politics that have been going on around the media in South Africa.
In this historic moment, it is very crucial to conduct research on the ways media spaces are being used for political interaction and information consumption, by scrutinizing the potential democratic values in South Africa with the actual performance after almost twenty years since the first elections.