

# Role of media in peace building



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History has shown that the media can incite people toward violence. Hitler used the media to create an entire worldview of hatred for Jews, homosexuals, and other minority groups. Rwanda's radio RTLM urged listeners to pick up machetes and take to the streets to kill what they called 'the cockroaches.' Broadcasters in the Balkans polarized local communities to the point where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances. The media's impact on the escalation of conflict is more widely recognized than the media's impact on peace-building. Yet it is not uncommon to hear experts pronounce that the media's impact on peace-building must be significant given its powerful impact on conflict. However, this simple relationship must not be taken for granted and should be critically examined in order to most effectively use the media for conflict prevention and peace-building (Wolfsfeld, 2004, p. 15)

In the last six decades, the influence of the media in the global arena has increasingly been recognized, especially its power to either exacerbate or contain potential conflicts. Indeed it is worth noting that among the defendants during the Nuremberg trials which were constituted by the allied forces following the defeat of the Germany and her allies immediately after the second world war was one Julius Streicher who although never held any official position within the Nazi party hierarchy, was considered to be among the top individuals who bore the greatest responsibility for the holocaust that killed more than six million Jews (Source). For close to twenty five years, Streicher had "educated" the Germany people in hatred and incited them to the persecution and the extermination of the Jewish race. The propaganda which Streicher carried for close to twenty five years was chiefly done

through the medium of his newspaper as the editor of the “ Der Stuermer” and later several other provincial journals (Source).

As early as the 17th century, Edmund Burke had coined the term the fourth estate, to demonstrate the growing power of the media in periods when power and influence was concentrated in hands of only three classes of society (Source). Although it is still debatable as who was the first to use the word, Burke is said to have remarked that “ there were estates in Parliament, but in the reporters gallery yonder, there sat the fourth estate more important than four than they all”. He was making reference to the traditional three estates of Parliament: The Lords spiritual, the Lords temporal and the Commons (Source).

In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet. Many people are today fully dependent on the information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and their daily activities like work, entertainment, healthcare, education, personal relationships, traveling are greatly controlled by what they read, hear and see. New communications technologies such as mobile/video phones and laptop computers are allowing journalists to gather and disseminate information with ease from many parts of the world. The digitization of the news industry, which has led to a compression of time and space, means we see news images of demonstrations, riots or coups within minutes of these occurring in the streets.

These images not only inform global audiences, but may instigate further campaigns of violence at home. Commercial realities of news gathering have also affected the reporting of conflicts. The higher cost of news gathering in remote regions, coupled with the geopolitical and economic priorities of the West, mean that conflicts occurring at close proximity to the metropolitan centers receive coverage at the expense of those occurring further away in less developed regions of the world. A study of conflict reporting in the world's major news outlets in 2000 shows that the Israel Palestine conflict was by far the most covered – five times greater than the next most covered conflict (Hawkins, 2002) . Virgil Hawkins, the researcher who conducted the study, notes:

“ By contrast, conflict in Africa, which has been, in the post-Cold-War world, is responsible for up to 90 percent of the world's total war dead suffered an almost complete media blackout. Coverage of the massive war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which caused in excess of one million deaths in the year 2000, was almost insignificant (p. 231).

With the international news agenda controlled by the world's major media giants, it has become crucial to develop and strengthen media at the local level to maintain diversity of opinion. As media in many developing nations, such as Kenya, move away from state control towards private enterprise, it is essential for local media to find their own voice and professional codes. A well developed media system with professionally trained journalists usually benefits both global and local audiences and provides a vital link to the outside world during conflict situations. The media is a double-edged sword. It can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of

intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment; but there is another aspect to the media, “...it can be an instrument of conflict resolution, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. It is the kind of media that enables a society to make well-informed choices, which is the precursor of democratic governance. It is a media that reduces conflict and fosters human security” (Source). Today, in every part of the world reliable, accurate and objective media, whether be it mainstream, alternative or traditional/non-conventional, can both help to prevent and resolve conflict through the automatic functions of responsibly disseminating information, furthering awareness and knowledge, promoting participatory and transparent governance, and addressing perceived grievances. In the same vein, inadvertently or overtly propagandistic media may equally fuel tensions and exacerbate conflicts, which in extreme cases like in Rwanda may directly result in genocide (source).

## **1. 1 Background of the Study**

To argue that media does make a difference means rejecting the view that media are no more than mirrors of something else -consumer choices; elite interests, or reality itself (as in the positivist assertions by some journalists that they simply report ‘ the way it is’). It is a commonplace to suggest that media provide their audiences with a ‘ map’ of the social and political world beyond their own immediate experience. From this observation about contemporary complex society, flow other notions of media power: agenda setting (media capacity to focus public attention on some events and issues, and away from others); the spiral of silence (the withering of issues and

perspectives ignored by media); priming (media ability to influence citizens' criteria of political evaluation); cultivation (the gradual adoption of beliefs about the social world that correspond to television's selective picture of the world), framing, and the 'ideological effect' (the production of meaning in the service of domination) (Hackett & Carroll, 2006, p. 30-31).

A less frequently considered but equally pertinent dimension of media influence is their relationship with anti-war movements. Within reasonably democratic states, and in the absence of elite discord, such movements may be the most important buffer within civil society against war. The movement/media relationship is asymmetrical: movements need media (to mobilize support, validate their political existence, and attract new supporters) far more than vice versa (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993). Media play contradictory but important roles at every stage of their trajectory; their emergence, organizational self-maintenance, and success; when political and foreign policy elites are united around a war policy, dominant media are likely to trivialize or demonize anti-war dissent (Gitlin 1980; Hackett 1991). In the context specifically of war, some scholars see an intensification of media agenda-setting with the advent of real-time, 24-hour, globally distributed television news -most iconically Bernard Shaw's and Peter Arnett's reporting for Cable News Network (CNN) from Baghdad during the 1991 Gulf War. The so-called "CNN effect" allegedly highlights political uncertainty and incompetence, accelerates the pace at which politicians must respond to crises, and creates expectations and emotions that may force governments, against their initial inclinations, to intervene (or

disengage) in conflict situations. The American “humanitarian” intervention in Somalia is often cited as an example (Spencer, 2005, p. 24-38).

According to Arnold (2005), the mass media contributed immensely to the propagation of US foreign policy agenda, couching imperial military actions in terms of humanitarian interventions’ undertaken to promote global freedom and democracy. This gave the US foreign policy the media attention cycle as there was competition among worldwide television and radio networks such as BBC, CNN, FOX TV and Channel 4 as who gets the right information first. This therefore, created huge demand for Western media even in non-western countries.

In Africa, several efforts have been made to use the mass media to promote peace. For example, Radio for Peace-Building Africa (RFPA) is a program founded in 2003 by the international non-profit organization Search for Common Ground. The following are the countries in which RFPA is operated: Burundi, Central African Republic, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. Working on the assumption that radio is the most accessible form of mass communication in Africa, RFPA trains journalists in peace-building, conflict resolution, and acting on commonalities. As stated in their achievements, 2010, RFPA has more than 3, 000 members representing 100 countries, across Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. They have carried out over 90 workshops and trained local radio station personnel (Radio for Peace-Building Africa, 2011).

If the media have played an important role in breeding violence, it seems reasonable to examine the prospects of the reverse perspective-positive

media contributions to ending violence and peace building in Kenya as a whole. Furthermore, if the media are usually found to support forces that lead to violent conflict, it can also be said that the media have the power to influence the activities that promote peace in the society. While media have been prominent contributors to every post-Cold War conflict (Prince and Thompson, 2002, Allen and Seaton, 1999), their role in post conflict peace-building and social development has not been apparent. Elsewhere however, recently there have been enough proves to accept the idea regarding the use of role that the media have played in peace-building. For instance, in Bosnia, Burundi, Cambodia, Croatia, Israel/Palestine, Macedonia, and Rwanda there are documented positive accomplishment of initiated projects of post-conflict recovery through the role of the media (McGoldrick, 2006).

Also, over the past seven years, RFPA promoted peace in its areas of operation through levels of collaboration that it established between the government, media (TV stations and news papers) and civil society, increased the ability of radio stations to identify the underlying causes of war and conflict, increased the public's access to policy information, and used media to foster communication between policy makers and the civil society within that state, among other achievement (Radio for PeaceBuilding Africa: Achievements, 2012).

## **1. 2 Problem Statement**

Literature on conflict and peace-building reveals a dismal focus on the role of the media in peace processes. Existing theory only tends to portray the media as essential in reporting and generating discourses on conflicts (Wolfsfeld, 2004; Watson, 2006; Bratic, 2006). Scholars of the post-election



phenomenon in Kenya quickly conclude that, the crisis was a deeply rooted political and ethnic problem. Yet, the role of the media in the conflict, as well as its ability to mediate peace is not adequately tackled. In the East African region, Kenyan media like that in Rwanda has been scrutinized at the level of international law as a perpetrator of political violence. The post-2007 crisis serves as a good case to exemplify the process from conflict to peace-building.

First, it illustrates the double role of the media as a constructive and destructive agent, and provides a link between media freedom and human rights. Secondly, this research explores challenges of media freedom within fragile democracies, where politics, poverty and ethnic differences can influence the media agenda. While the use of “ hate speech” in the media is not discounted, this project will not focus on the subject as a whole, but draw examples to examine arguments. This thesis does not discuss ethnicity as a theory, but rather uses the term ethnic violence, a theme applied to describe political and ethnic tensions in Kenya (Hagg & Kagwanja, 2007). The concept of ethnic violence has also been characterised as an element of civil or “ degenerate wars” by several authors in recent years (Hanssen, 2000; Shaw, 2003; Kaldor, 2006).

In recent times the effect of the mass media in shaping and forming the view of people especially the radio due to its accessibility, affordability and availability as compared to TV and computers (social networks e. g. Face book, Twitter, and YouTube) has contributed immensely to the development of a country. In the area of sport the mass media is promoting all kinds of sports especially football through constant publicity. As an emerging buoyant

economic industry, the various media houses have established front desk for sports. Besides, they also have sports journalist who monitor, research and analyze sports related issues in the world, Africa and Kenya in particular. This has brought sports to the limelight of the media and given it a place in the media cycle.

Inferring to the above and many achievements and contributions of the mass media in Kenya, it can be concluded that the mass media actually do assist in social improvements and building the ideals of the society. By systematically monitoring the performance of state institutions and reporting progress activities of the government, by guiding and dispensing of socialization, and by entertaining its audiences through interesting programmes. Against this background, many media houses have capacity building programmes to enhance public participation through phoning-in sessions. These programmes are also inspired by the need to improve and deepen governance and democracy. Notwithstanding, none or little concern has been given to programmes that are geared towards peace-building. It is for this reason that the researcher seeks to find out the role of the mass media in peace-building in Kenya.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this research will be to explore the role the media has played in peace building among selected media houses in Kenya.

The specific objectives of the research will be:

To examine the activities of the media in peace-building.

To find out whether the media has been successfully used to promote peace in Kenya.

To assess the effects of the media on peace-building.

To establish the measures that government, stakeholders and media houses have put in place towards peace-building.

To make recommendations towards the use of the media in promoting and enhancing peace-building in Kenya.

## **1. 4 Research Questions**

The following questions will serve as research questions to guide this research.

What are the activities of the media in peace-building?

How has the media been successfully used to promote peace in Kenya?.

What are the effects of the media on peace-building?

What measures has the government, stakeholders and media houses put in place towards peace-building?

## **1. 5 Rationale for the Study**

The media is a double-edged sword. It can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment. But there is another aspect to the media. It can be an instrument of conflict resolution, when the information it presents is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. It is the kind

of media that enables a society to make well-informed choices, which is the precursor of democratic governance. It is a media that reduces conflict and fosters human security. Today, in every part of the world, reliable, accurate and objective media, whether mainstream, alternative or non-conventional, can both help to prevent and resolve conflict through the automatic functions of responsibly disseminating information, furthering awareness and knowledge, promoting participatory and transparent governance, and addressing perceived grievances. In the same vein, inadvertently or overtly propagandistic media may equally fuel tensions and exacerbate conflicts. This study aims at establishing the role of media in peace-building in Kenya.

## **1. 6 Assumptions of the Study**

This study will be guided by the following assumptions:

The media houses in Kenya have adopted acceptable practices in relation to peace-building reporting in their operations.

The target audience from the population that will be selected will give a fair representation of the whole population under study.

## **1. 7 Limitation of the Study**

Unexpected negative response from respondents due to the fact that they will be unwilling to give out sensitive organizational information. This will be delimited through counter-checking on secondary literature as well as desk-reviews.

## **1. 8 Definition of Key Terms**

Capacity Building

Capacity development is the process whereby individuals, groups, and organisations enhance their abilities to mobilize and use resources in order to achieve their objectives on a sustainable basis. Efforts to strengthen abilities of individuals, groups, and organisations can comprise a combination of (i) human skills development; (ii) changes in organisations and networks; and (iii) changes in governance/institutional context (ADB, 2004). Capacity building is a complex notion – it involves individual and organisational learning which builds social capital and trust, develops knowledge, skills and attitudes and when successful creates an organisational culture which enables organisations to set objectives, achieve results, solve problems and create adaptive procedures which enable it to survive in the long term

### Ethnic violence

In this study the term ethnic violence will be defined as a theme applied to describe political and ethnic tensions in Kenya (Hagg & Kagwanja, 2007).

### Media

“ The media” refers to “ several mediums or channels used in an organized fashion to communicate information to groups of people, as a service to the public” (Howard, 2002). In regard to this thesis, media is mainstream or independent (press, radio, television) in general.

### Peace Journalism

According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices of what stories to report, and how to report

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them which create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict. Peace Journalism entails:

Uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting

Provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism – the ethics of journalistic intervention

Builds an awareness of non-violence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting” (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005 p. 5).

### Peace Building

The Carnegie Endowment’s Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict (1997) defined peace-building as “ structural prevention” which consists of the strategies to address the root causes of deadly conflict. Likewise, the Joint Utstein study of peace-building concludes that “ peace-building attempts to encourage the development of the structural conditions, attitudes, and modes of political behavior that may permit peaceful, stable and ultimately prosperous social and economic development.” It states that there are four main headings related to peace-building: to provide security, to establish the socioeconomic foundations of long-term peace, to establish the political framework of long-term peace, and to generate reconciliation, a healing of the wounds of war and justice (Smith, 2003).

These terms will be adopted in this study based but not limited to the above definitions.

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## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The Kenyan Media: An Overview**

Kenya has a plural, sophisticated and robust mass media and communication sector that serve the various competing political, social, economic, cultural and technological needs of diverse interest groups. The sector has grown rapidly in the past 15 years because of a combination of factors including political and economic liberalization; and Kenya's strategic location as a regional and international economic and communication hub. Before 1992, the media scene was small, urban based and less independent owing to repressive media laws and regulation. Today, the media especially radio and television, reaches all urban centers and almost all rural communities. The broadcasting sub-sector is diverse, dynamic and competitive with substantial reach. There are about 14 TV and 113 radio stations in Kenya (Steadman Group, 2008). Radio is the number one source of information reaching almost 90 percent of the entire population followed by television reaching about 40 percent and newspapers (30 percent). There are about 7.5 million radio sets (1.9 million in urban and 5.6 in rural areas) and 3.2 million TV sets in Kenya (1.4 million in urban and 1.8 in rural areas) in the country. There are about 16.7 radio listeners across the country with 12.4 million in rural and 4.4 million in towns (Steadman Group, 2008).

Interesting developments in the broadcasting sector include the proliferation of FM stations broadcasting in over 21 ethnic languages out of 42 (CCK, 2008). The FM stations broadcasting in ethnic languages command about 30 percent of the market share today. Unfortunately, low professionalism characterizes most of these FM stations because they employ untrained and

less experienced journalists. Satellite broadcasting is also thriving particularly among the upper and middle class in urban areas (Howard, 2008). Although the print media has a history of relative independence, it remains an urban phenomenon in Kenya. Kenya has 5 daily newspapers and over 10 weekly newspapers. The dominant newspapers are the Standard with a daily circulation of 80, 000 -110, 000; and Nation newspapers with a circulation of 100, 000 – 120, 000 (Mbeke & Mshindi, 2008). The new media is also catching up in Kenya which boasts of 17. 6 million mobile phone owners and 3. 2 million internet users. There are over 1000 active blogs in Kenya. Safaricom, Kenya’s number one mobile operator commands 70 percent of the market share and has over 16 million subscribers.

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), the oldest and only public broadcaster, has the largest network of TV and radio stations across the country. KBC radio service, broadcasting in over 21 ethnic languages, is the only network in Kenya with the capacity to reach all audiences across the country. It also operates KBC TV. Royal Media Services, owned by media magnate S. K. Macharia, is the second largest media house in Kenya. It operates Citizen TV which has a national reach and several radio stations broadcasting in ethnic languages including Kikuyu (Inooro), Luo (Ramogi), Kamba (Musyi), Luhya (Mulembe) among others The Nation Media Group (NMG) is the largest media network in Kenya with interests in newspapers, magazines, TV and radio. It operates the Daily Nation, Sunday Nation, the Business Daily, the East African newspapers as well as the Tourist Guide, the Business Directory among other magazines (BBC Media Monitoring, 2007). NMG runs the NTV and QTV as well as Easy FM and QFM radio stations both



with a national reach. NMG is listed on the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) with the Aga Khan as the key shareholder.

The Standard Group (SG) owns the KTN Network, Kenya's first private TV station (1989) and the East African Standard Newspapers, the oldest newspapers having started in 1902. The SG is listed on the NSE with Baraza Limited, a company closely associated with the former President Daniel arap Moi and his close aide Joshua Kulei as the key shareholders. The people media group owns the People Daily several ethnic radio stations. It is associated with the Kenyatta family having bought it from Kenneth Matiba and the radio component from Rose Kimotho. Patrick Quarcoco owns Kiss FM and several other FM station together Kiss TV and the Nairobi Star, a daily newspaper. Industrialist Chris Kirubi owns Capital Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) that runs CBC TV and Capital FM. Other media include STV formerly owned by professional journalist Hilary Ngweno. Kenya also has a strong faith-based broadcasting media including Hope FM, Radio Waumini owned by the Catholic Church; and Family TV and radio FM owned by Leo Slingerland.

A number of international news agencies and organizations operate from Nairobi, Kenya. These include the BBC, VOA, Duetsche Welle, Radio France, Radio China, Al Jazeera and CNN. While the press covers mainly politics and economic issues, the broadcasting stations in Kenya are characterized by heavy music and light entertainment programming laced with interactive talk shows on politics and current affairs. Kenyans have continuously voted the media as the most trusted and influential institution even as they continue to express their reservations over other government institutions like the legislature and the executive. According to BBC, the Kenyan media is <https://assignbuster.com/role-of-media-in-peace-building/>

one of the most respected, thriving, sophisticated and innovative in Africa. Compared to other African countries, Kenya has in the recent past enjoyed a robust economic growth which in turn has supported one of the most dynamic advertising markets on the continent and a population which consumes news and information voraciously.

In turn, this market has supported an explosion in media over recent years. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. While an independent media tradition in Kenya is a long one, it was only in 1992 that the media bloomed to become the thriving industry it is today. Until then, the suppression of media freedom by the then KANU government, a stagnant economy and the continued monopolization of the airwaves by the government's Voice of Kenya (now Kenya Broadcasting Corporation), meant that independent media outlets were few and confined mostly to elites. Over a period of 15 years, this increasingly assertive and self-confident media has played a substantial role in mediating relationships between citizens and state, in shaping the democratic dispensation in the country, and has transformed utterly how some of the most marginalized in society access information on issues that shape their lives. Kenyan citizens have become increasingly reliant on the media for such information, investing in it with greater credibility than almost any other source of information. For most of this period, the media has been seen nationally and internationally as a principal indicator of the democratic vitality of Kenya. Media has been at the forefront of moves to transform Kenya from one party state to multiparty democracy; it has gained a reputation for exposing corruption and acting as a vigorous

forum for public debate; it is seen as a guardian of the public interest against an overbearing state power.

## **2. 2 The Activities of the Media in Peace-Building**

While large scale or world war has been avoided, continual civil conflicts have not been avoided i. e., the conflicts in Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Somalia. At the same time, peaceful resolution of conflicts that have major potential for civil conflicts: the transitions in South Africa, in Central and Eastern Africa have been witnessed. Therefore, peaceful resolution of national-civil conflicts is in a great part a communication process. That is; a concept of communication that channels civil conflict away from open war in to what is called cultural negotiation (White, 1990, p. 22-23). The media can provide information directly to citizens regarding major events of importance for decision -making so that citizens can take action and influence the structure of decision-making. What is expected is a narrative reconstruction of events which reveals the source of the problem, the persons who are responsible and why, and what emerge finally as the solution. The media are the forum for the expression of public opinion and enable the public and public officials to chart the general public opinion regarding the state of public affairs. The mirroring of public opinion enables the public to know what people are expecting and whether representative governments are serving the public or not. A totalitarian state is one in which civil society is totally absorbed by the state, a state without a public opinion.

Boutros Boutros-Gali (1992) gave clarity and coherence to the concept of peace building when he defined it as

” Action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict and, rebuilding institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife (and tackling the deepest causes of) economic despair, social injustice and oppression”.

Inscribed in Willsher’s comment about his role as a journalist is an assumption about media influence which has also come to be known as ‘ the CNN effect’ -so called after the first Gulf War when the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said: “ We say we have 16 members in the Security Council: the 15 members plus CNN” (Boutros Ghali, 1995). The proposition is that today’s global media have grown so mighty as to be able to raise issues to the political agenda by their own efforts; issues which would otherwise hold little or no interest for the powers-that-be.

In summary, the influence of the media on society has attracted international agencies closely involved in peace-building since the early 1990’s (Ross, 2002). The media can contribute to peace, by engaging in credible reporting, representing balanced opinions in its editorial content, and opening up communication channels among parties in a conflict. It can also identify and articulate without bias the underlying interests of warring factions. By doing so, the media is capable of disseminating information that builds on the confidence of stakeholders in a conflict.

### **2. 2. 1 The CNN Effect**

The Harvard University Joan Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy has been instrumental in examining media effects. Steven Livingston,

a leading CNN Effect researcher and associate professor of communication and international affairs at The George Washington University, along with his colleagues at Harvard, identified three conceptual variations surrounding the CNN Effect: the notion that media serves as an agenda-setting agency, that the media serves as an impediment in some cases and that the media facilitates a more accelerated public policy process (1997). The CNN Effect by definition is the