The Role of Media in Conflict Management: The Case of Electoral Conflicts in Kenya

Col (Rtd) Zachary K Chebii[1]

Abstract

The role played by media in conflicts has been an issue of discussion all over the world. Although media influence has increased tremendously in the last decade, researchers are yet to agree on the degree and magnitude of its influence in conflicts. The context analysis of Kenya election coverage and post election conflict of 2007/08 revealed that media has a 'double-edge' role in electoral conflict situation i.e. conflict escalation and de-escalation roles. The conflict escalation role is more prevalent with vernacular (local) media stations while the conflict de-escalation role is predominant with nationwide mainstream stations. This affirmed the study conceptualized framework developed from libertarian theory and social responsibility theory of media reporting. In addition, people's response to conflict coverage is persuaded by their age, gender and social status as human variables. Therefore, to mitigate conflict reporting misrepresentation, specifically in weak democratic states, a common approach to conflict reporting should be designed and adhered to. More importantly, there need to be stringent regulations and control of vernacular (local) FM stations which are prone to manipulation by political elite. This should be coupled with training of journalists on conflict reporting and development of a standard conflict reporting procedure. Lastly, media houses should be discouraged from running parallel tallying centres, a mandate reserved for legitimate electoral body.

Keywords: Media reporting, post-election, conflict, security

Introduction

The successive evolution in communication technology has significantly altered the conduct of conflicts, warfare and conflict resolution in the world today. Compared to people of earlier ages, people around the world today know much more and much sooner about major developments in international relations (Gilboa, 2002).

---
[1] Kisii University, Department of Social Sciences, P. O. Bok 573 Kabarnet, Kenya.
Email: zkchebii@yahoo.com

Similarly, there is millions of global news networks that broadcast live from all corners of the world, and via the internet, providing immediate access to unfolding events and under certain conditions, influencing the way those events develop and end. As a result, this has prompted a general feeling that media coverage, especially television, has had an increased influence on conflict management since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Jakosben, 2000). Over the past few decades, awareness has increased with regard to the role local civilian population play in armed conflict. They are no longer considered to be a passive factor, but instead their needs and perceptions have explicit influence upon the success of a mission. Triggered by rapid technological change in the media, information no longer simply describes on-scene developments, but increasingly shapes the dynamics by influencing perceptions, opinions and loyalties (Jakosben, 2000; Galtung, 2004). This has made information to be an important means of warfare used by governments, military and leaders in all ages everywhere for propaganda or disinformation purposes or for great potential to promote peace building (Galtung, 2004).

The policies of the military and the attitudes of the press and the public towards media coverage of wars were influenced enormously by the experiences of the Vietnam War. The power of media influence in conflict was witnessed in the Vietnam War during the US involvement in the war due to the significant growth in information technology posed by discovery of television (Praeger,1994). As remarked by Colonel Harry G. Summers – a battalion and corps operations officer in the Vietnam War; *"…..there is a tendency to blame our problems with public support on the media …. it was this horror, not the reporting, that so influenced the American people,"* (Kull, 1995). Thus the military realized after the Vietnam experience that to be able to wage war it would have to control the media, particularly the television media, so that the horrible images of war would not make it back to the home-front.

The African continent has suffered numerous armed conflicts, some of which have been blamed on mass media. The societal conflicts in Africa have often played out against the backdrop of deep poverty, illiteracy, and weak systems of governance undermined by unfavourable terms of trade, indebtedness and administrative failures (Zartman, 1995). It could be argued that a combination of resource competition, culture, political, socio-economic and mode of life variables underlie most of election related conflicts in Africa. Factors such as culture, politics, external intervention, socio-economic, and dysfunctional governance would also explain the inter-state conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia that occurred in 1998 (Jhazbhay, 2008). In addition, countries such as Rwanda, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Liberia and Kenya (which forms the interest of the study), have also experienced ethnic conflicts whose impact extend beyond the borders. The most recent role of media in conflict escalation is the Arab spring in North Africa and the Middle East. This uprising saw the overthrow of Libyan, Tunisian, Egyptian and Yemeni governments through mass action engineered by social media.

Other governments such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia faced serious challenges leading to change in governance. As can be witnessed, these conflicts have taken place in countries undergoing major political changes towards democratization. In such countries, the right to credible information and freedom of expression are essential in ensuring accountable and transparent governance, constructive communication, decreased perceptions of threat and creating more stable and sustainable political structures (Rugumanu, 2002).

In Kenya, the hand of media in electoral conflicts cannot be assumed. Kenyan media scene is highly robust, competitive and free compared to most African countries. This, according to libertarian theory[2] of media reporting can hardly be exploited for selfish gain by state and individuals who strive to protect their images in the society and remain politically impartial at all times. Therefore, media in such an environment should encourage a competitive political system that should promote democracy, peace and stability. However, this was not the case as the hotly contested 2007 general election in Kenya resulted in an election violence never witnessed in Kenyan history. This discrepancy prompted the need to establish what role media could have played or failed to play based on libertarian and social responsibility theories.

Previous research

In order to objectively understand the nature and the role of media in peace and conflict management, it is important to understand the various ways through which media influence conflict and conflict management. Why? Newbold (1995) points out that majority of scholars and researchers have concentrated on the role of media in economic, social and political issues affecting states with little attention given to conflicts. Furthermore, media impact on conflict management is an emerging area that has been under studied due to lack of multidisciplinary models and concepts that would view media's role from peace and conflict realm.

The general statistic overview of armed political conflicts[3] provides a basic understanding of the situation today in terms of destruction, loss of human lives and suffering. Several scholars have insisted on the fact that globalization has led to important qualitative changes in the purposes and dynamics of violent conflict. Some, such as Kaldor (2001) argue that it is the revolution in information technology during the 1980's and 1990's that has led to a particular type of globalization, which in turn, has led to the need for a redefinition of what we think of as media and conflict.

---

[2] Libertarian theory of media reporting
[3] See Conflict Data Project (CDP) - a data collection project on organized crimes and armed conflict, Uppsala University, Sweden

Even though the media can give us the intensity of the violence, where they are fought, why, how and who does the fighting, the biggest problem of media influence on people which ultimately determines conflict direction has not been determined.

The majority of violent conflicts are asymmetric in character, and most of these take place within state borders. What is important to point out particularly in relation to the role of the media is winning the "hearts and minds" of the people. Because a state is almost always militarily superior, non-state actors are more dependent on psychological warfare, which entails influencing the attitudes and perceptions of a population for example through the media (Price & Thomson, 2002). Therefore, the media dimension has become increasingly important and it is no coincidence that media assistance emerged, and has been increasing in importance, since the end of the Cold War.

The media has a very complex role to play that, unfortunately, is often taken for granted by political decision-makers and the military. Statements claiming the media's impressive effects are often heard from decision-makers. Political practitioners, and even researchers, most often assume the effect of news media in political conflicts. An example of the extent is reflected in a 1995 survey, in which 64% of American military officers still believed that media had the prime responsibility for ruining the war effort in Vietnam (Taylor, 1997). In light of this, it is surprising, and perhaps even alarming, that relatively little in terms of research and resources has been allocated to improve the understanding of the media's role in armed conflicts and democratizing states *(ibid).*

Another aspect that has important consequences for media in violent conflict pertains to the recent surge in democratization. It began before the end of the Cold War, but since then a "fourth wave" of democratization has began (Ottaway, 1997). Democratizing states are involved in a complex process of re-adaptation of traditional political structures and attempting to incorporate democratic institutions and norms. Incorporating an editorially and economically independent, responsible and pluralistic media is essential to democratization. Political change often stimulates hope and provides unique opportunities for different, and often previously marginalized groups in society to influence political dynamics while on the other hand, those who control power may find it difficult or inconceivable to let go (Ottaway, 1997). In such a situation, media could play an invisible role of dividing the groups in society in terms of social status. For instance, most conflicts in Africa are as a result of the struggle for power e.g. in Rwanda, Congo, Sierra Leone, etc. The discrimination of the marginalized, ruled by the political elite, could provide a suitable ground for media to create and further both conflict facilitating and triggering factors by use of 'oppositional metaphors' ('us' vs 'them'), (Dijk, 1997). However, this indirect influence of media on conflict has not been properly brought out.

The media in conflict-ridden countries often play a significant role in creating and furthering both facilitating factors and triggering factors linked to internal and external issues or threats facing the nation. According to Terzis & Melone (2002), media can create divisions by not reflecting pluralism in the social and political structures. This could be achieved by contributing to the creation of an informed critical citizenry within a country by acting as a mouthpiece for ethnic power circles. Thus, she concluded that a deliberate distortion of news coverage for particular interests easily exacerbates the tension between opposed factions and becomes a major trigger of violent conflicts.

Amongst the forms of mass media, television has been considered to be the most important source of news for the public, and possibly, the most powerful influence on public opinion itself. In 1950, only 9 percent of homes owned a television in America and by 1966 the figure rose to 93 percent, (Bonior, Champlin, & Kolly, 1984). Coupled with this revolution was the Vietnam War, in which American military intervened to restore peace. Since no military restriction was established, journalists could follow the military into combat and report their observations without formal restriction. Thus, as journalists saw more grisly combat, they presented the public with more graphic images and, for the first time, interviewed soldiers expressed their frustration with the progress of the war, which were contrary to official progress reports by the state. By the fall of 1967, 90 percent of the evening news was devoted to the war and roughly 50 million people watched television news each night and read newspapers (Bonior, et al, 1984). The result was a reduced support for the US foreign intervention policy by the public and Congress which demonstrated the compelling power of the media in shaping attitudes and influencing decisions.

The other most influential acts of media during the war was the decision of Life Magazine to fill one edition of its magazine with photographs of 242 US soldiers killed in Vietnam in a one week of fighting (Hallin, 1986). It was this type of reporting that encouraged General William Westmoreland, commander of the US troops in Vietnam, to accuse the mass media of helping to bring about a National Liberation Front victory.

The 1990's humanitarian intervention in Somalia, led by the US, was the result of media influence, but since it was reactive rather than proactive, it was not well conceived, making it extremely vulnerable. The media, of course, offers few suggestions, merely the cry of 'do something!' As Sir Michael Howard noted *"television brings a crisis closer to governors but provides no new means to resolve it."* (Gowing, 1994). This intervention was influenced by the CNN effect, which argues that the media drives Western conflict management by forcing Western governments to intervene militarily in humanitarian crises against their will (Jakosben, 2000).

Media influence

History has shown that media can incite people towards violence. Hitler used the media to create hatred for Jews (Vladimir & Schirch, 2007). Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, masterminded the most effective effort of mass persuasion, heavily relying on propaganda messages in motion pictures and radio broadcasting (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999). In the 1992-5 Balkan conflict, electronic and print media helped promote ethnic conflict and hatred leading to violence. While the explicit broadcast of hate messages was rare, the cumulative impact of biased coverage fuelled the hatred over a long period polarizing local communities to the point where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances (Buric, 2000; Sadkovich, 1998).

In the past four years, the African continent experienced several political uprisings in Arab countries. Some of these uprisings were claimed to be engineered and subsequently escalated by media. Using the Libyan civil war as a case study, Viggo (2011) explored the media's role in modern conflicts. Emphasizing on the media's shortcomings in its reporting and analysis of the conflict, he highlighted the double standards that the media gave by drawing parallels between the wars in Iraq and Libya in an effort to illustrate the errors repeatedly carried out by mass media. Eventually, Viggo concluded with reference to Muammar Qaddafi's capture and subsequent killing on October 20, 2011, "….*the power of media in conflict cannot be assumed….. speed and technology with which images of the event recorded on cell phones were transmitted around the world via social media platforms, and widely disseminated even before Qaddafi's death was confirmed …..*

During the 2010 general elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the media landscape was rife with partisan polemic and misinformation from opposing sides and incitements to violence, while members of the media themselves were frequent targets of violence and intimidation (Media Foundation for West Africa, 2011). During the post-election crisis that followed after the announcement of the presidential results, the print media and public television were used by both presidential candidates Laurent Gbagbo and Allassane Ouattara as a tool for propaganda and a means for mobilizing their electorate against their opponents (Electoral Reform International Services, 2011). The media occupied a central role in the post-election crisis and the descent into civil war that saw the displacement of more than 1 million people, the effective termination of many government services in parts of the country and further economic decline *(ibid).*

Apart from the negative roles of media, several cases have also linked media to the promotion of peace and reconciliation. For example, in Northern Uganda where the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) has camped for decades, media has been used to create the common good for the people to promote peace. Struges (2007) found that Mega FM has promoted peace in Northern Uganda with positive effects since 2002.

The station has encouraged LRA members to come out of the bush, joined radio phone-in talk shows and hold discussions with government and civil society representatives, a good step in peace building. Likewise, Open Broadcast Network (OBN), a media network established in Bosnia two decades ago, is one of the most ambitious and earliest intentional media attempts to reduce violent conflict. To this day, it remains the only television network established to promote peace and reconciliation. This followed the initial assessments of the Bosnian conflict that propaganda, through ethnic television stations, was instrumental in spreading messages of hate that incited and fuelled the conflict (Sadkovich, 1998).

Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a US based NGO dealing with conflict resolution, launched Studio Ijambo in 1995 at the height of ethnic and political violence in Burundi and neighbouring Rwanda. The studio was established with the intention of promoting reconciliation, understanding and foster nonviolent conflict resolution (SFCG, 2004). Since its inception, Studio Ijambo has had a significant positive impact in mitigating conflict through high-quality radio programs that promoted reconciliation, dialogue, and collaboration, in addition to its credible, unbiased programming which included news, special features, round-table discussions, telephone call-ins, music, and highly popular soap-opera series (Slachmuijlder & Nkurunziza, 1972).

Theoretical reviews and conceptual and framework

The study focused on libertarian theory and social responsibility theory to develop the conceptual framework. Media under the liberal systems of government, such as that of the U.S. have their critical roles and functions embodied in these countries' constitutions or fundamental laws. Primarily, the media is free from government controls and acts as a watchdog against government excesses besides basic functions of informing and entertaining. This emphasizes that a free and responsible media guards against government abuses of power through factual reporting, promotion of open debate, representation of diverse views and protection of individual rights (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1972).

Therefore, libertarian theory advocates for media to be self regulating in observance of strict code of ethics and professionalism. It too emphasizes for legitimate media freedom where the government has no or little control over the media. Under this condition, the government machinery cannot influence the direction or editorial powers to report on skewed messages in its favour. In addition, the media practitioners have the freedom to operate within the legal framework and objective reporting thus discouraging conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence.

On the other hand, social responsibility theory takes the position that the media needs to assume both moral and legal responsibilities for all that they publish for the general good of society (Siebert et al, 1972). This theory creates a platform to make media reporting truthful, accurate and objective at all times. Credibility is the foundation of this theory, and to be credible, media practitioners try as much as possible to be socially responsible, transparent, fair and balanced in reporting while respecting the dignity, privacy and rights of all (Schudson, 2001). The social responsibility theory obligates media to highlight injustices within the community and enlighten people on their rights and privileges. However, the predicament with this theory is that as people become more enlightened, the more they push for their rights through whatever means available, including use of violence. Thus, the implication of this theory is far reaching in influencing people to unite and rise against injustices *(ibid).*

The input of these two theories developed the conceptual framework. With the analysis of two variables; media reporting as independent variable and conflict management as dependent variable, the conceptual framework thus developed is as shown in figure 1. According to the conceptual framework, media coverage is assumed to be greatly influenced by either subjective or objective reporting which determines the nature of coverage. Subjective reporting would involve sorting, analyzing and probably manipulation of reports to suit particular interests, while objective reporting involves facts, accurate and responsible reports based on professionalism. All these are seen to take place within the media environment which represents the independent variable. However, their influential effect on individuals is based on factors such as gender, age, social status religion and residence. These human factors represent the intervening variable, which determine the strength of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The ultimate cause of conflict is the dependent variable. It assumes two outcomes i.e. escalation or de-escalation as may be influenced by the media reports. This media effect on conflict is what the study intended to establish.
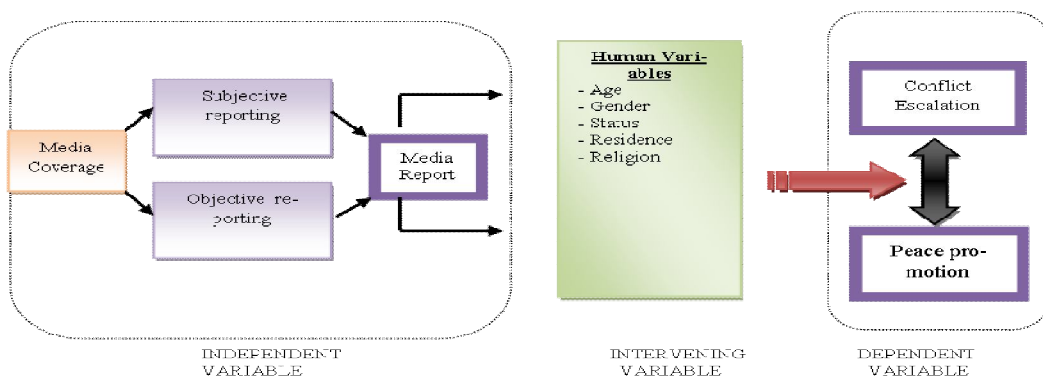
Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya. The county was viewed as the epicentre of 2007/08 Post Election Violence (PEV) in the former Rift Valley Province (KNCHR, 2008). The study, population comprised residents of Uasin Gishu County, media practitioners and security professionals. Stratified sampling method was used to select three administrative Divisions in the County as sample units based on the intensity of violence. Both primary and secondary data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaires and interview guides. Content data analysis of secondary material was done for their relevance, strength and weakness as regards the study questions. A critical qualitative analysis, using Pearson correlations, of the nature and extent to which media generally affect conflicts was established in evaluating the role of media in Kenya during the 2007/08 PEV.

Findings and Discussion

Main source of political information

The main purpose of the study was to analyze the role of media in conflict management. This culminated to the crafting of three specific objectives. The first specific objective was aimed at establishing the media accessibility level and the types of media that cover the study area. Respondents were asked to state the time (hours) they spent on media, their main source of information and their favourite station or print media. Findings reveal that 66.8% of respondents listened to radio as their main source of political information, 4.6% read newspapers, 23.5% watched television and 5.2% used internet as their main source of political information.

This indicates that the most common sources of political information are Radio and Television. In addition, KASS FM (a local vernacular FM station) was the most preferred radio station with 27.1%, Citizen TV was the preferred Television channel with 25.9% and Standard Newspaper was the preferred paper with 4.6%. This means that most of the respondents listened to vernacular FM stations and watched Citizen Television. The results of Pearson Correlation between time/hours spent on media, main source of information and favourite station/print media revealed little or no significant variation in hours spent on media and main source of information. However, there was a slight significant variation amongst favourite media and electronic prints, indicating variation of political reporting amongst news reported by media houses.

Furthermore, the finding revealed a positive and statistically significant correlation between hours spent on media and source of information at 95% level of confidence, a negative and statistically significant correlation between source of information and favourite station at the 95% level of confidence, and no statistically significant correlation between source of information and hours spent on media at the 0.05 significance level (see Table 1). Therefore, there appeared to be a weak positive and significant relationship between time spent on media, favourite station/print media, and source of information, which could be interpreted as respondents spent more time listening to their preferred stations to gain information. Besides, results from interviews with both security specialists and media practitioners revealed that vernacular FM stations are popular amongst the rural populace and television has greater influence on listeners because they relay real time pictures.

Table 1: Correlation (Time spent on media, main source of information and favourite media)

Factors of analysis	Hours	Source of information	Favourite station/print
Hours	-	0.092	0.161(**)
Source of information	0.092	-	0.174(**)
Favourite station/print	0.161(**)	0.174(**)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study finding reveals that radio is the main source of disseminating conflict information in Kenya. This is due to their ability to reach even the most remote corners of the state, inexpensive broadcasting and cheap to acquire as compared to other mass media, thus eliminating the barrier of illiteracy to spreading news, information or propaganda. With an exceptionally high illiteracy rate, especially in rural areas, respondents' attitudes are influenced by the radio broadcasts appealing to them on the basis of their ethnic identities. These findings collaborate with the findings of the study by Forges (1999).

Forges (1999) study titled *'Call to Genocide'* which showed that a large number of Rwandans could not read or write and as a result, radio was an important means by which both the government and the rebels delivered their messages to the population. In addition, Bonior et al (1984) findings on the role of media in Vietnam War shows that roughly 50 million in the US watched television news each night and read newspapers on Vietnam War. These findings are contrary to Kenyan situation where preferred media is radio. This can be explained by the fact that radios are cheaper and portable compared to televisions. Equally, batteries, which are used to power radios, are readily available in shops and are relatively cheap and affordable compared to electricity and solar power which are expensive.

The role of media in Kenya

Specific objective two was designed to establish the extent to which media could have escalated and/or de-escalated violence during the 2007/2008 PEV in the study area. In order to respond to this, respondents were asked whether media could have played a role during 2007/08 PEV and the role it played in relation to the PEV. 82.6% of respondents agreed that media played a role while 17.4% declined. Furthermore, 30.2% of respondents agreed that media escalated the conflict, 16.2% said that media de-escalated the conflict, 39.6% agreed that media performed both roles and 14% said that media did not perform any role.

These findings reveal that more than 80% of respondents agreed that media indeed played a role, with conflict escalation role (69.8% of respondents) outweighing de-escalation role (30.2% of respondents). These findings fully agreed with media practitioners and security specialists' views of media roles during 2007 PEV, which they subjectively put at 70% and 30% for conflict escalation and conflict de-escalation respectively.

Given these findings, media plays a pivotal influence in conflict escalation. Ideally, with its professional objectives of accuracy, impartiality and public responsibility as required by libertarian theory, media should be a contributor to peace building. However, these findings proved the contrary that during the 2007/08 PEV, the media played a negative role of conflict escalation. As argued by Wolfsfeld (2001), media sensationalizes conflict with simplistic reporting which reinforces stereotypes that reinforce elite consensus, and reflects its own environment of shared or isolated context.

In comparison to other studies, the findings are in line with the findings of Dallaire (2007) in analysis of *Media Dichotomy, Case of Rwanda,* that the local media, particularly RTLM were literary used as a weapon to incite the killings of Tutsi. Conversely, the study by International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) on role of media affirms that media can not only help to defuse conflicts, but is also uniquely positioned to encourage coexistence and co-operation between people of different origins. This was not the case with the Kenyan media during 2007 PEV, according to these research findings. Additionally, practicing objective, fact-based reporting that avoids stereotypes or stirring up rumours, individual journalists and the media as a whole have a tremendous potential to contribute to understanding and bridge-building as confirmed by Dallaire (2007).

These findings that media played a role in conflict escalation negates the postulation of social responsibility theory of media reporting, which requires that media needs to assume both moral and legal responsibilities for all that they publish for the general good of the society without causing any harm. This escalation role caused conflict which led to destruction of properties and loss of lives. Even though the social responsibility theory requires mass media to highlight injustices within the community and enlighten people on their rights and privileges, the predicament is that as people become more enlightened, the push for their rights through whatever means available, could lead to conflict as witnessed during the 2007 general elections.

Media and hate speech

Findings on whether media could have encouraged hate speech during the 2007 general election showed that 61.3% of respondents agreed and 38.7% declined. The extent to which media promoted hate speech reveals that 52.8% of respondents agreed that media greatly encouraged hate speech during 2007/08 PEV, 20.7% agreed to a small extent and 26.6% agreed that media did not encourage hate speech. Therefore, media encouraged hate speech to a large extent during 2007/08 PEV. Additionally, Pearson correlation between media role in encouraging hate speech and the extent to which it contributed to 2007/08 PEV reveal a strong and positive correlation of 0.518 statistically significant at 95% level of confidence. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Hate Speech and 2007/08 PEV

Factors of concern	Media and hate speech	Extent to which media promoted hate speech during 2007/08 PEV
Media and hate speech	-	0.586(**)
Extent to which media promoted hate speech during 2007/08 PEV	0.586(**)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This finding shows that media was used to spread hate speech. In comparison to findings on favourite media, it can be deduced that during the conflict period, FM radio stations broadcasting in ethnic languages urged their listeners to support positions taken by politicians from their ethnic communities. Specifically, a respondent claimed, *"media used news briefs that negatively reflected some communities to promote hatred[4]."* In comparison, media practitioners and security specialists supported the finding that media encouraged hate speech to a large extent due to the fact that, according to a security specialist, most political parties in Kenya are tribal or regional oriented, thus listeners believe and follow what their leaders say.

---

[4] For how media promoted hate speech see Kenya National Commission of Human Right report: From Ballot to Bullets (2008)

According to one media practitioner, hate speech can make recipients to feel that they are targeted and thus gang up to defend themselves, which results in conflicts. In addition, hate speech is also encouraged through news headlines. Interview findings further revealed that most newspapers and radio stations used vivid key remarks by politicians and opinion leaders to construct their news headlines, sometimes with reference to past emotive events, selective reporting and common prejudicial stereotypes about other communities.

Media and propaganda

Finding on whether media promoted or provided a platform for propaganda during the 2007 general election showed that 71% of respondents said 'Yes' and 29% said 'No'. The extent to which media promoted hate speech revealed that 49.8% of respondents agreed that media promoted propaganda during 2007/08 PEV to a large extent, 36.8% agreed to some extent and 14.2% agreed that media did not promote propaganda. Thus, media fairly promoted political propaganda during 2007/08 PEV. Moreover, Pearson correlation between media promotion of political propaganda and the extent to which it contributed to 2007/08 PEV revealed a positive but weak correlation of 0.386 and statistically significant at 95% level of confidence. (See Table 3).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Media Propaganda and 2007/08 PEV

Factor of analysis	Media manipulation by politician/opinion leaders	Extent to which it led to 20007/08 PEV
Media manipulation by politician/opinion leaders	-	0.386(**)
Extent to which it led to 2007/08 PEV	0.386(**)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 95% level (2-tailed).

From the interview results, there are conflicting views. Security specialists believe that media encouraged or promoted controlled propaganda while media practitioners denied so and argued that they objectively reported what leaders said, and this fact could have caused conflicts. In support of his view, a media practitioner upholds that care is exercised in first publication to ensure validity and reliability of information before it is aired to avoid propaganda. Conversely, a security specialist argued that there could be factual accuracy in a single story that could not be substituted for the total truth. He stated that; *"…factual accuracy can be misleading and thus can be used to promote political propaganda".*

To deter this, one media practitioner says that news coverage and editors should seek alternative voices to a story and confirmation from relevant authorities before broadcasts. These findings corroborate with the findings of Chretien, Spurk, & Christopher (1995) and KNCHR (2008) report on Kenya PEV.

Media running parallel tallying centres

Finding on whether media could be allowed to run parallel tallying centres during general election showed that 42.7% of respondents agreed and 57.3% declined. The extent to which media erred in running parallel tallying centres contributed to 2007/08 PEV revealed that 71.9% of respondents agreed that media erred in running parallel tallying centres to a large extent contributing to 2007/08 PEV. Thus, media erred in running parallel tallying centres contributed to 2007/08 PEV to a large extent. Furthermore, Pearson correlation between media erred in running parallel tallying centres and the extent it contributed to 2007/08 PEV revealed a positive and strong correlation of 0.69 statistically significant at 95% level of confidence. Similar sentiment is held by a respondent who claimed, *"….media wrongfully played the role of ECK by carrying out parallel vote tallying…."*

Besides this, the security specialists and media practitioners agreed that media running parallel tallying centres contributed to 2007/08 PEV to a large extent. The media practitioners espoused that before and during the election period, different media outlets and opinion pollsters released unverified results. These findings are supported by Howard (2003) who stated that most media reports initially seemed not accurate, balanced and fair in disseminating election results. In addition, BBC (2008) also reported that media houses were unprofessional in the manner they handled the release of election results. They released varying, piecemeal and speculative results that caused anxiety and confusion among already anxious voters across the country. This spurred the perception that the election was rigged fuelling the post-election violence.

Media Cover-up/withholding conflict information

The finding showed that 66.5% of respondents agreed that media covered-up or withheld information relating to conflict during the general election while 33.5% declined. The extent to which withholding information contributed to 2007/08 PEV revealed that 56% of respondents agreed that media withholding of vital information about conflict contributed to 2007/08 PEV to a large extent while less than 30% of respondents agreed to a small extent. The correlation between withholding of information and PEV revealed a positive but weak correlation of 0.34 statistically significant at 95% level of confidence as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation between withholding information and 2007/08 PEV

Factor of analysis	Media withholding conflict information	Extent to it contributed to 2007/08 PEV,
Media withholding conflict information	-	0.341(**)
Extent to it contributed to 2007/08 PEV,	0.341(**)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 95% level (2-tailed).

These findings are also upheld by respondents' views. A respondent viewed withholding information as *"giving wrong information concerning vote tallying"* while another vividly put it as *"reporting wrong information to people",* which they believe to have contributed to/or escalated conflict. On the other hand, one security specialist believes that media did not really withhold information, but gave reports that suited their listeners and political affiliations. This he termed as *'constructed reporting',* which could be viewed as distorted information. Media practitioners also supported this, though they argued that words and phrases may have different connotations among different groups in terms of age, gender and status, which could result in distortion or withholding of information. In addition, news editing and editors' comments could give skewed and misleading reports if they are personal and partial, thus leading to conflicts. One security specialist affirmed that unverified information should not be aired due to danger of speculating violence. This could instil fear, cause real violence and destabilize law and order. However, the media practitioners assured that measures to verify the validity of news such as confirmation of news reports through actualities, video footage, narrations and confirmation from relevant authorities are practiced to deter distortion of information.

The results of these findings on media withholding of vital information corresponds to the findings by Okumu (1997). In his study on the *Root of Conflicts in Northern Uganda,* the findings reveal that inadequate media coverage of LRA grievances has been blamed for the conflict in Northern Uganda. He further noted that for the past 18 years the war between Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and Lord Resistance Army (LRA) has not been covered adequately. In further support, Thompson A.(2007) criticized the international media for failing to adequately cover the emerging conflict situation in Rwanda which resulted in lack of prompt intervention by the international community. Indeed, he argues that a more comprehensive and objective reporting about the Rwandan conflict could have averted the 1994 genocide.

Media influence on human variables towards conflict

The specific objective three was intended to assess the influence media has on selected human factors towards conflict. Five human variables were identified for analysis i.e. age, gender, status, religion and residence factor. These factors were rated on a scale of 1-6 clustered to three levels as Low (1 and 2), Medium (3 and 4) and High (5 and 6).

Findings on age factor shows that 29% of respondents held that media has low influence as regards their age, 22.3% medium influence and 48.7% high. However, cross-tabulation analysis between age factor influence on age distribution reveals that youths are more influenced (18-35yrs – 47.1% and 36-45yrs – 64.2%). Similarly, cross-tab between age factor and gender reveals males (53%) are more influenced by media than their female (40.9%) counterparts. These findings on age factor influence can be attributed to youth unemployment.[5] The Kenyan youths are products of a society that is characterized by inequalities and lack of opportunities for social advancement, in addition to social exclusion and limited access to basic social amenities. In support of these findings, the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence (CIPEV) established that there was an estimated two million unemployed youth. While universities in Kenya produce about 40,000 graduates every year, only 150,000 informal jobs have been created since 2003 (GoK, 2008). This report also supports the cross-tabulation analysis between respondents' education level and age factor, which revealed that majority of those influenced were secondary and college graduates.

Gender is an important element of any social-cultural analysis of conflict. The cross-tabulation analysis between media influence and gender reveals that male is the more influenced gender, as it accounts for 27.7% and 53.1% of medium influence and high influence respectively. This might be attributed to cultural dynamics that influence the relationship between male and female in society. Women are marginalized in political and economic processes although they are the majority (GoK, 2008). This marginalization has exposed them less to participation in national issues, politics and other developments. Therefore, media reports on important national issues might not significantly influence females as much as their male counterparts. Therefore, these fundamental differences between male and female on media influence could be attributed to this fact.

Findings on status factor shows that 40.2% of respondents said low influence, 19.2% medium influence and 40.6% high influence. Cross-tabulation analysis between status and age factor reveals low amongst age 18-35 years (44.4%) and age 36-45 years (45.2%). In the contrary, a high influence is experienced for age 45-55 years (54.3%) and a medium influence for above 55 years (36%).

---

[5] See National Commission of Human Right report: From Ballot to Bullets (2008)

This finding reveals that status factor influence elderly people more than the youth. This can be attributed to the fact that most of respondents are rural based and were exposed to same political, economic, social and cultural setup.

The findings shows that 50.6% of respondents agreed that media has low influence on people based on their residence, 15.2% medium influence and 34.1% high influence, thus low media influence. This also supports respondents' response to residence factor showing low influence (50.6%). This might be attributed to varied demographic characteristics between respondents, specifically age and gender, thus fact expressed in status factor.

The correlation between the study human factors (see Table 5) reveals that there existed a relatively strong positive correlation of 0.499 between age factor and gender factor and a weak positive correlation of 0.155 between residence factor and religious factor, all statistically significant at 95% level of confidence. Likewise, there also exists a very weak negative correlation of -0.011 between age factor and status factor, correlation of – 0.346 between age factor and resident factor and correlation of -0.135 between age factor and religious factor, all significant at 95% level of confidence. However, other correlations (status factor and gender; status factor and age) were not significant.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation amongst Human Factors

Factor of analysis	Age factor	Gender factor	Status factor	Resident factor	Religion factor
Age factor	-	0.499(**)	-0.011	-0.346(**)	-0.135(*)
Gender factor	0.499(**)	-	0.041	-0.470(**)	-0.028
Status factor	-0.011	0.041	-	-0.063	-0.115(*)
Resident factor	-0.346(**)	-0.470(**)	-0.063	-	0.155(**)
Religion factor	-0.135(*)	-0.028	-0.115(*)	0.155(**)	-

** Correlation is significant at the 95% level (2-tailed).

These findings reveal that media reporting on conflict positively influence listeners based on their age and gender. Similarly, interviews with the media practitioners and the security specialists revealed the same. They both agreed that media could influence people based on age, gender and religious variables to a large extent. More specifically, the media practitioners upheld that *'…. words and phrases may have different implications among different groups in terms of age, gender and status …'* and thus media influence listeners based on those variables.

These findings corroborates Heiber (2001) findings, which shows that mass media effects to the audience depend on various factors such as social class, ethnicity, social context, age, sex, personality, marital status, nationality, and political party affiliation. These findings further reveal that there is no significant relationship in conflict reporting influence between religious and residence factors. This might be due to the homogeneity of respondents in terms of religion and residence.[6] However in a divergent situation with heterogeneous religions, conflict report could exhibit a significant influence based on religion.

Conclusions and further study

Based on the findings the study concludes that the most common sources of information in the study area are Radio and Television with KASS FM being the most preferred radio station, Citizen TV the preferred Television channel and Standard Newspaper the preferred newspaper. This could be argued that most residents of upcountry listen to vernacular FM stations and watch mainstream nationwide Television for conflict information. Furthermore, there was little or no significant variation in hours spent on media as majority of residents spent between 30mins to 3 hours on media per day. However, there is a slight significant variation amongst favourite media/prints, thus there seems to be slight variation amongst news reports by various media houses.

The study also concludes that media greatly played conflict escalation roles during the 2007 general election and subsequent 2007/08 PEV. Some of the roles included; encouraging hate speeches to greater extent; running parallel tallying centres to a large extent; withholding of vital information about conflict to a small extent; misrepresentation of information to a great extent; incitement to a large extent; partisan or taking political sides to a very great extent.

The study concludes that media significantly influenced people based on age factor; highly influence people based on gender factor; high influence on people based on religious factor; moderately influence people based on status factor and low influence on people based on residence factor. Finally, the study findings confirmed that media significantly influenced people's perceptions and actions towards the 2007/08 PEV. Therefore, based on this fact, the researcher concludes that media generally influence people's perceptions and actions towards violent conflict.

A research of this nature cannot be exhaustive in covering the area of investigation. Despite the success of this study, many issues still remain unresolved while others also evolved during the study.

---

[6] See Kenya National Bureaur of Statistics, 2009

The paradigm shift in communication has led to the growth of social media. The study suggests research to be undertaken in areas of social media (internet and mobile telephony) and conflict management.

Acknowledgement

I appreciate the valuable feedback I received when presenting this article at Kenyatta University. I am particularly grateful to Dr. L. Ngari and Dr. M. Sirera of Kenyatta University for their supervision and academic guidance in the cause of my research. Special thanks go to Martin O. Okode of Egerton University, my research assistant, whose valuable support enabled me successfully complete this paper.

References

Abdi, F., & Deane, S. (2008). *History and Sociology of Genocide: Analysis and Case Studies.* New Heaven: Yale University Press.

Amisi, B. (1997). Conflict in the Rift Valley and Western Kenya:. *USAID Conference on Conflict Resolution in the Greater Horn of Africa.* Nairobi: Sage Publisher.

Barley, K. (1987). *Methods of social science research* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press.

BBC. (2008). The Kenya Elections and their Aftermath: The Role of the Media and Communication. *Policy Briefing* (No. 1).

Betz, M. (2004). Radio as a Peace Builder - A case Study of Radio Okapi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *The Great Lakers Research Journal , Vol 1.*

Bonior, D., Champlin, S., & Kolly, T. (1984). *The vietnam Veteran - A History of Neglect.* New York: Preager.

Buric, A. (2000). Media, War and peace in Bosnia. In E. David (Ed.), *Regional Media in Conflict* (p. pp 64). London: Institute for War and Peace Reporting.

Chretien, S., Spurk, L., & Christopher, J. (1995). *Media and Peacebuilding, Concepts, Actors and Challenges.* KOFF: SwissPeace.

Cole, E. (1998). *The Encyclopedia of Propaganda* (Vol. I). New York: M. E. Sharp.

Comminication Commission of Kenya. (2008). *Media Regulatory Framework in Kenya.* Nairobi: CCK.

Croswell, N. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* (3rd, Ed.) London: Sage.

Dijk, V. (1997). The Tamil Panic in the Press. In *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press* (pp. 215-254). Erlbaum, New Jersey: Hillsdale.

Electoral Reform International Services. (2011). *Broadcasting a peaceful future.* London.: 6 Chancel Street Press.

Eriksson, M., Sollenberg, M., & Wallensteel, P. (2002). *States in Armed Conflict 1946-2001.* Uppsala University, Dept of Peace and Conflict Research. Uppsala.

Galtung, J. (2004). *Violence, war and their Impact.* Retrieved January 8th, 2012, from Forum for intercultural philosophy: http://them.polylog.org/5/fgj-en.htm

Gilboa, E. (2002). *Media and Conflict: Framing Issues, Making policies, sshaping opinions.* NY, Ardsley: Transitional Publishers Inc.

GoK. (2008). *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV).* Nairobi: GoK Printers.

GoK. (2008). *Report of the Commission of inquiry into post-election violence in Kenya.* Nairobi: Government Printers.

Gowing, N. (1994). Real-Time Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions? *US Security - Working Paper 94-1 .*

Graber, D. A. (2002). *Media Power in Politics.* (2nd, Ed.) New Delhi: Macmillan.

Gray, D. E. (2009). *Doing Reseach in the Real World.* (2nd, Ed.) London: SAGE Publications.

Guthrie, G. (2010). *Basic Research Methods.* New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications.

Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam.* London: University of California press .

Heiber, A. (2001). *Elections campaigns, balance and the mass media.* World Bank, Workshop Report, Washington.

Howard, R. (2003). *The Power of the media: A handbook for peacebuilder.* Utrecht , Netherlands: European Centre for Conflict Prevention.

Ibrahim, D., & Jenner, J. (1997). Wajir community based conflict management. *USAID Conference on Conflict resolution in the Greater Horn of Africa.* Nairobi: USAID.

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. (2003, December 3). Summary judgement in the Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, Hassan Ngeze. Arusha, Tanzania: ICTR.

International Crisis Group. (2008). *Kenya in Crisis.* ICG Africa Report No. 137, Brussels.

Jakosben, P. (2000). Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real media impact on conflict management is invisible and indirect. *Journal of Peace Research , 37* (2), pp 131-143.

Jhazbhay, I. (2008). Somaliland's post-war reconstruction: Rubble to rebuilding. *International Journal Of African Renaissance Studies , Vol 3* (1), 59-93.

Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V. (1999). *Propaganda and persuasion* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Kaldor, S. (2001). *Canada and International Peacekeeping.* Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Kirschke, L. (1996). *Broadcasting genocide; censorship, propaganda, & state-sponsored violence in Rwanda 1990-1994.* London: SAGE.

KNBS. (2009). 2009 Population and Housing censures. *Republic of Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics , Vol 1.*

KNCHR. (2008). *Ballots to Bullets: Organized Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance.* Kenya National Commission of Human Right. Nairobi: HRW.

KNCHR. (2008b). *On the Brink of the Precipice: A Human Rights Account of the Kenya's Post Election Violence.* Kenya National Commission of Human Right. Nairobi: HRW.

Koni, D. (2012). *African media and conflict.* Retrieved Jan 18, 2013, from http://www.c-r.org/occ_papers/af_media/

Kothari, C. R. (2009). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (10th ed.). New Delthi: New Age International (P) Ltd.

Kull, S. (1995). What the Public Knows That Washington Doesn't. *Foreign Policy* (No.101), pp 102-115.

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A Step by step guide for beginners* (3rd ed.). New Delhi: SAGE.

Masinde, L., & Cranford, P. (2003). *Underdevelopment in Kenya, the Political Economy of neo-colonialism 1964-1991.* London. : Sage.

Mbeke, P. (2009). *The role of media in conflict and peace building in Kenya.* Nairobi: InterNews Network.

Media Foundation for West Africa. (2011, April 18). *Ban on international media lifted by Ouattara government.* Retrieved March 18, 2013, from International Freedom of Expression Exchange: http://www.ifex.org/

Metzl, J. (1997). Information intervention: When switching channels isn't enough. *US Foreign Affairs , 76* (6), pp. 17-20.

MFAF . (2009, April). Media Focus on Africa Foundation Centre for Independent Research (CIR). *National Integration and Cohesion Report* .

Morgenthau, H., & Thompson, K. (1985). *Politics among nations.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

MRG. (2013). *Annual survey: Hate crime towards minorities and indigenous peoples in Africa.* Minority Rights Group International . London: Commercial Street Press.

Mugenda, M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2003). *Research Methods: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches.* Nairobi: African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) Press.

Mutua, A. N. (2001). *A study of Propaganda and the Press in Africa.* Retrieved JAN 8th, 2012, from http://www.geocities.com/a_mutua/propaganda.html#references

Newbold, J. (1995). *"Somalia." Enforcing Restraint: Collective Intervention in Internal Conflicts.* (L. F. Damrosch, Ed.) New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

Okumu, R. R. (1997). *The Effect of war and government policies in Northern Uganda from 1986.* UNDP. Gulu: (Unpublished Report).

Otieno, I. (2005). Mobile Telephony and Democratic Elections in Kenya: A case of 2002 Elections. *Reactivism Journal* .

Ottaway, R. S. (1997). Dateline Capital Hill: The New Majority's Foreign Policy. *US Foreign Policy No. 101 , Winter* (96), pp. 159-169.

Patton, Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods.* California: Newbury Park Publishers.

Praeger, N. (1994). Armed onflicts and Diplomatic Crises. *Politics and Public Policy , Working Paper 94* (1).

Price, M., & Thomson, S. (2002). *An Operational Framework for Media and Peacebuilding.* Retrieved March 12, 2013, from IMPACS: www.impacs.org

Rasmussen, S., & Erik, S. (2002). *Essentials of Social Research Methodology.* Southern Denmark: Odense University Press .

Reporters Without Borders. (2011). *Call to Avoid Media Vengeance by Civil War Victors.* Retrieved March 18, 2013, from http://www.rwb.org

Rugumanu, T. (2002). Studies in Reconstruction and capacity building in post conflict countries in Africa: some lesson of experience from Uganda and Harare. *Africa capacity building foundation , Vol IV.*

Ruto, K., Olaf, B., Ralf, V., & Wotzka, H.-P. (2003). Factors in Pastoral Conflict in North Rift of Northeastern Africa. *Aridity, Change, and Conflict in Africa .*

Sadkovich, J. (1998). *The U.S. media and Yugoslavia - 1991-1995.* CT: Westport.

Schudson, M. (2001). The Objectivity Norm in American Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism. *Journalism , Vol 2* (2), 149-170.

SFCG. (2004). *Middle East media.* Retrieved July 29th, 2014, from Search for Common Ground: http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/middleeast/middleeast_media.html

Shattuck, J. (1996). Human Rights and Humanitarian Crisis: Policy making and the Media. *Rotbergt & Weisse ,* 169-175.

Siebert, F., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1972). *Four theories of the press.* Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press Urbana.

Slachmuijlder, L., & Nkurunziza, N. (1972). *Radio Isanganiro and Studio Ijambo in Burundi.* Retrieved July 29, 2014, from http://www.xs4all.nl/~conflic1/Newsletter/Newsletter_6=1.pdf

Some, N. (2008). *'Citizenship and Ethnicity.* New York: Barber Press.

Spurk, M. (2002). *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya.* London: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1999). *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Struges, D. (2007). Third-Party Techniques for Preventing Conflict Escalation and Promoting Peaceful Settlement. *International Organization , No. 4: ,* 653-681.

Taylor, P. M. (1997). *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945* (1st ed.). (N. I. Series., Ed.) London: Routledge.

Terzis, G., & Melone, S. (2002). *Using the Media for Conflict Transformation, .* London: Pluto Press.

The Map of Uasin Gishu County. *http://mappers.kbo.co.ke/products.* Akare Mappers, Nairobi, Kenya.

Thompson, A. (2007). *The media and the Rwandan Genocide (Ed).* London: Pluto Press.

Thompson, M. (1977). *Forging war: the media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina.* U.K: University of Luton Press.

Thomson, O. (1997). *Mass persuasion in history.* New York: Crane-Russak & Company Press.

Times Magazine (2010). Arab spring: Triggers and consequences. *Times Magazine* (September Issue).

Twawezesha Report. (2008). Elections campaigns, balance and the mass media. *(May Issue)*. Washington: World Bank.

UNDP. (2008). The Mass Media and 2007 General Election in Kenya. *September issue.* Nairobi, Kenya: UNDP.

Viggo, M. (2011). *Forging Peace: Intervention, Human Rights and the Management of Media Space.* (P. M. Taylor, Ed.) Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Vladimir, B., & Schirch, L. (2007). Why and when to use media for conflict prevention and peace building. *European Centre for Conflict Prevention* (Issue No. 6).

Wairagu, A. (2003). Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Moments in. *American Political Science Review , Vol 91* (3).

Watson, D. J. (2008). *Livelihood Diversification opportunities for Pastoralists in Turkana Kenya.* ILRI Research Report (5), Nairobi.

Wolfsfeld, G. (2001). *The news media and peace processes : the Middle East and northern Ireland.* Washington.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press.

Zartman, W. (1995). The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments. *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics , Vol 1* (no.1), 8-18.