Peace Journalism as a Media Education Paradigm for East Africa

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Peace Journalism as a Media Education Paradigm for East Africa

by Levi Obonyo and Mark Fackler[1],

"Peace journalism" is the approach to the practice of the trade with an underlying philosophy to bring about the reduction of violence, especially when tensions flare between ethnicities, to moderate the politically stifling impasse, and to promote dialogue between antagonists where embedded suspicion threatens to disrupt already fragile communities. Advocates of "peace journalism" (hereafter PJ) have been particularly enthusiastic about this movement's potential in developing democracies where the franchise is sullied by widespread perceptions of corruption, vote rigging, and distrust between traditional cultural and language groups. This study is set in a social context in which everyone claims to want peace, media leaders want to participate in peace-keeping work, and few believe the cultural and political trajectory leads toward peace at all. It is the coming conflict that most foresee and fear.

In East Africa, Nilotes, Cushites, Bantus, Indians and Westerners were tucked within common national boundaries by European powers in 1886. The region, a geographically rich swath of earth, has bloodied its soil with periodic violence, destruction, and brutality:

[1] *With much appreciated help of Mitchell Terpstra, and Emmanuel Okaalet*.

South Africa with apartheid, Rwanda in 1994, Burundi thereafter, Sudan since the 1980s, Eastern Congo since the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko, Uganda from 1971 and onward in the north, Ethiopia in the 1980s and 90s, Zanzibar in its quest to secede from Tanzania, and Somalia seemingly forever. Kenya "burned" in late 2007 and early 2008.[1]

This study seeks to make a case for PJ training and practice in East Africa, but uses the Kenyan environment as a case study and a backdrop for the unique case that it represents. That violence engulfed Kenya following the 2007 elections now requires little belaboring. What, however, was a surprise was that this happened in Kenya, for long considered a model emerging economy in the region with assumed sufficient structures to withstand such a jolt. But the center could not hold when the jolt came. Our study considers the influence of media on pre- and post-election violence (hereafter PEV) in Kenya in the last quarter of 2007 and the first quarter of 2008, the potential of PJ and the current training regime in the region. The study seeks to understand what role media played in promoting peace or inflaming violence that left more than 1,133 persons dead and 350,000 internally displaced (Waki, p. 345, 351). After a brief review of the development of the press in Kenya, we lay out the tensions that led to this unprecedented civil disruption, then review media performance during December-January through a content analysis of three newspapers, *Daily Nation, Standard,* and *People.* We follow with a summary of 25 long interviews with media and civic leaders conducted in Nairobi in July 2009. [2] We then look at the current training regime in the region and its possible deficiencies. Finally, we attempt to lay theoretical groundwork for a theory of the press based on ubuntu, an indigenous philosophy of the human person and community. Parallels between ubuntu as a basis for media performance and PJ will conclude this study.

This research was conducted in an atmosphere of continuing distrust between the political sides in Kenya in July 2009, midway the five-year cycle of national elections. An agreement between the contending parties (Party of National Unity, hereafter PNU and Orange Democratic Movement, hereafter ODM) in February, 2008, ended the burning, looting, and killing but did little to settle the underlying causes of PEV. Nor has Kenya's national leadership made progress toward an enduring democratic process. Nearly every interview was clear on this point: the next scheduled election in 2012 will be worse if substantial progress is not made to restore social trust. The situation in other East African sister states is not any different. Rwanda and Burundi have a tenuous peace holding. So is Uganda, a peace that gives way to occasional flare up of violence that in the recent has led to a couple of deaths on the streets. National institutions in these countries should deliberately make steps towards inculcating a culture of peace. It is toward that end that this essay explores the frameworks within which journalism could make a contribution the end to which conclusions are offered. History will tell the story. A decade from now we will know whether war between Kenya and Somalia, stoked by unemployed youth enticed into rag-tag militias by the offer of the one prize their own economies cannot provide – bags of money, will redraw northern borders (as some suggest); whether the Lord's Resistance Army will migrate from eastern Congo to Kenya (as some predict), its corps of brutalized fighters strengthened by Kenyan "street boys" exported to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 1990s; or whether the Luo, Kalenjin, Kikuyu and Kamba leadership will send a once growing GNP into freefall (as many anticipate). Time will also tell, on the contrary, whether a determined and culturally renovated free press will help citizens achieve such a

fair and open process that the nation's fractious constituencies and its wealthy and feckless leadership will emerge from the next national transition with confidence and hope.

Media backdrop

While we make generalizations for EA the bulk of this study has been done in Kenya. The underlying assumptions that inform this generalization is based on the cultural, political and economic similarities that attend these five sister states. Politically, Kenya Uganda and Tanzania do not only share common borders but common colonial history, cultural ethnic groups found within these countries and are now increasingly drawn together under the emerging East African Common market. The optimists visualize a common future when all these countries will form a political federation.

The media in the region has had a near similar developmental trajectory. Mwesige and Kalinaki (2007) posit that media were part of the anti-colonialism movement, but later became central pillars in the emergence of the near authoritarian regimes in the region. In the post colonial East Africa colonial legislation did not change drastically to reflect the region's new realities of independence, or may be for the media there were no new realities after all. In some cases media became embedded in the ruling structures, in other cases they struggled to straddle the middle ground of detachment from the ruling elite with varying degrees of success. In what has been dubbed East Africa's second liberation, particularly in Kenya, the media became part of the civil society movement that championed change. Rwanda provides an interesting case study where media, in the mid 1990s, was considered an active player in closing the political space and contributing to its recent dark past. With respect to the freedom of the press Rwanda still features as the dark

horse cited by the global media watchdogs for stifling free expression. Other countries at various times fall on this list of course even if with varying degree of ratings.

The Ugandan press, two decades ago, was a case study of liberal media progressiveness. Not so anymore. Then, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni rose to power on a wave of populism and popular public discontent with the previous initial dictatorship and later lackluster regime in Kampala. Any change in Uganda then was a breath of fresh air following years of Idi Amin's buffoonery and brutality, and the subsequent mismanagement of the Uganda state. But Ugandan press did not start that way. Prior to independence it had had a lively press playing a crucial role in the struggle for independence. Then came independence and such stars of the earlier years such as *Uganda Express, Munnansi, Munno,* and *Emmambya Esaze* dimmed. When Amin came to power, he erased any pretenses to lively journalism. Although there appeared efforts to revive a lively press after the end of Amin's rule it was only an effort that was put off by the oversight of Paul Mwanga at the helm of the ministry of internal security. Under Mwanga the government banned several newspapers including *The Citizen*, *The Economy* and *Ngabo*. It is in this context that the impact on the media of Museveni's ascent to power has to be understood. In the early days of the Museveni regime media, whether print or electronic, competed in all manner including irreverence. But those who held caution at this new found environment has, overtime, been proven right. As Mwesige and Kalinaki (2007, p. 99) chronicle the structures that inhibit progressiveness were still intact: the laws were the same, the political class in spite of the new found democratic credentials was chipped off the old wood, journalists were still poorly remunerated and trained and most media houses

were not economically sustainable. On the eventide of the third decade of Museveni's rule things may not be as bad as they were under Idi Amin, but the slide down the hill is evident.

Kenya's media scene may be one of the more lively ones in East Africa. Today the roster of Kenya's lively media is impressive: one major regional newspaper, several smaller regional newspapers, five national newspapers, and the alternative press reporting most scandals and sex escapades; five and counting national television stations; two radio stations broadcasting internationally, one broadcasting within the region, at least two broadcasting nationally and nearly fifty others reaching sections of the country; at least two community based radio broadcasts broadcasting from Nairobi (see Maina, 2006, pp 29-30; 38; 41). These media are staffed by some of the finest trained journalists in Africa, and from a design and presentation point of view, the Kenyan media is fairly competitive.

The journey of Kenya's media to this stage started over a century ago with a little known newspaper, *Taveta Chronicle*, followed by a host of other commercial publications. But the tag of longevity belongs to the *Standard* founded in 1902 (Scotton, 1972). Between the founding of the *Standard* and national independence in 1963, Kenya witnessed many media some owned by the church, others by pioneer African nationalists. But the media that dominate Kenya's scene today have a more recent history dating back to independence. Their history is the history of the nation.

In Bourgault's (1995, p. 4; cf Kitchen, 1956; Abuoga & Mutere, 1988; Passin, 1963) survey of *Mass Media in Sub-Sahara Africa*, she observed that electronic media in countries with a British colonial legacy followed the BBC model. Kenya newspaper design and

editorial content, too, mirror the best in Britain, and if American influence is evident in recent TV programming, the dominant accent on-air remains British.

Since independence in 1963, the media, particularly print, has been dynamic, given periods of repression. The dynamism has been evident in staffing, media-government relationships, or the predisposition of media to national issues. While the *Nation* in 1960 started out primarily targeting the African community, the *Standard,* which developed as a White settler paper, held the policy of championing mainly the interests of the Settlers. It took the *Standard* ten years after independence to have an African hold the position of a senior reporter (Ochieng, 1992). *The Nation* knew better. In post-independence Kenya, media staffing has taken ethnic tones, a fact that informed media dynamics in 2008 PEV (Rambaud, 2008).

Threats to media freedom have not always come from the government. Often Kenyan journalists have been accused of corruption, compromising standards either for commercial gain or due to ethnic loyalty. The near 40 million population comprises 43 tribes, but only a few of these communities are represented in newsrooms. Their representation almost mirrors the mosaic of national leadership often reflecting a journalism that has been more ethnically biased than influenced by professional and ethical standards (Opiyo, 1995). But in spite of all Kenyan media have produced some of Africa's finest journalists, such as Hillary Ngweno and Philip Ochieng.

Several factors have influenced the growth of Kenyan media, primarily the national political structure. Mazrui (2007) provides a taxonomy of African leadership: mobilizer, reconciler, housekeeper, patriarch, disciplinarian, technocrat, warrior, and sage, among

others. To use Mazrui's taxonomy, Kenyans have tended to venerate the state's chief executive, which on the downside has created opportunity for dictatorial tendencies and legal impunity. Colonialism has been replaced increasingly by leadership that looks like patriarchy. In this environment, media has tended to suffer suppression. State House aside, the legislative environment has not been helpful either. Throughout Africa electronic media have been little more than the microphone of the leader, an extension of the president's pulpit. It was not until the late 1980s in the heat of civic discontent that the government relented and started freeing the airwaves, permitting frequencies and broadcast licenses to the system's private and corporate entrepreneurs.

If print media has witnessed turbulent relations with the state, the electronic media has had, on the other hand, a different type of relationship. The first broadcasting house in Kenya, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, was founded in 1927 under British administrative control and primarily to serve the settler community. Later on, to cater for the black population, colonial administrators founded several vernacular stations scattered across the country. Though established to serve the native population, these stations offered little more than British visions of life in Africa. At independence, the new government recognized the importance of broadcasting and assumed monopoly control over KBC. That monopoly remained in place until 1989.

But 1989 was also the beginning of the collapse of the authoritarian state. Many television and radio stations emerged. Two privately owned national channels NTV owned by the Nation Group and KTN owned by the Standard Group, began to compete for viewers with KBC. These have been joined by Citizen TV and K24. NTV is owned by a publicly

traded company but the controlling shareholder is the Paris based leader of the Ishmael religious community, the Agha Khan. Its broadcasts have adopted the same tradition as that of its parent company, the Nation group. Now it has spread both its electronic and print wings to Uganda, Tanzania and to Rwanda. KTN is the oldest private TV station in Kenya but who appears to be somewhat stunting compared to the growth of its more recently launched competition. Initially it was owned by the ruling party apparatchiks, but when KANU (Kenya African National Union) was dislodged from power, ownership changed hands and remains one of Nairobi's badly kept secrets. But it is believed that the current owners closely identify with the current administration. Citizen TV is owned by a Nairobi based entrepreneur S.K. Macharia who also owns at least 13 other stations broadcasting in leading vernacular languages and Kiswahili. K24 is Kenya's 24 hour news channel initially owned by Regional Media which then owned a vernacular station called Kameme FM, broadcasting in the central province and in the dominant Kikuyu language. But that ownership has since changed hands to a new company believed to be associated with Kenya's current Finance Minister and a scion of the family of Kenya's founding father. This company now also owns STV, an entertainment only network, and *The People*, a struggling daily previously owned by a central Kenya politician. The minister is also believed to be a potential presidential candidate in the 2012 elections. K24 is closely associated with KBC. There are other TV stations which broadcast nationally but have a limited following and are of little consequence in political debate.

The majority of Kenya's population as is true for elsewhere in Africa, is still rural. Given the terrain, the broadcasts reach only major urban centers. Given the cost of owning and running a TV receiver, it is still largely a medium for the urban middle class. Rural

viewing tends to be community based. For the mass of the rural poor, the dominant media is still radio. According to Maina (2006) while only about 37 per cent of Kenyans access TV, radio stations collectively reach 96 per cent of the population.

Tanzania is another EA country that has had a fairly free media. Although the Freedom House rating for the Tanzanian media is partly free, the nation does not have a volatile history of actively banning the press as is the case with other EA countries. But Tanzania, just like primarily Rwanda and Burundi have had state controlled newspapers. In the case of Tanzania that state of affairs changed in 1992 when multi party politics were established. Most of the largest circulating newspapers are state owned including *The Daily News*, *Kipanga* and *Uhuru*. There is now an active independent media probably the leading independent publisher being Reginald Mengi. With more than 350 newspapers registered with the government Tanzania gives the impression of an active media environment. However only about 15 per cent of these registered papers are actively published.

While the remaining countries of EA have had instances of turmoil and political instability Tanzania has had the more peaceful political transition since independence. It may very well be that the unifying dominance of a single language, Kiswahili, may have had something to do with it. Most of the Tanzanian media are published in Kiswahili, the language spoken throughout the country. This too could have contributed to the peaceful coexistence in Tanzania.

Radio is by far the most popular media in Tanzania. As in the case of Kenya the government owned station, Radio Tanzania, has the widest reach and is the more popular one. But there are other private radio stations. By 2006 there were more than 50 stations

on air most of them broadcasting in Kiswahili. Like their counterparts in other parts of EA these stations are largely entertainment oriented, mostly staffed by comedians whose forte is common social talk. Tanzania was late in launching television broadcasts and yet was the first to launch color TV in 1972 in Zanzibar. The country has however witnessed an impressive growth in television broadcast with over 15 television stations being on air. Few of them broadcast nationally. Majority however relay international TV content particularly CNN, BBC and other global networks. The IPP media group owned by Mengi has critical presence not just in print media but electronic media as well including on Television and radio.

Rwanda is a country rising from the ashes of 1994 genocide. Like Tanzania, Rwanda too has a unifying language, Kinyarwanda, which somehow has not helped bring the two dominant ethnic communities in that country together. However, today many issues, and particularly those that relate to media, tend to be viewed through the prism of genocide. Students of media in Rwanda tend to agree that the media, in the lead up to 1994, either simply watched as the genocide raged or played an active role in encouraging the mayhem. Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines, a private radio station that was launched in 1993 by supporters of the then President Juvenal Habyarimana is accused of declaring the launch of the "final war to exterminate the cockroaches" and listing the people to be killed including providing the addresses of such people (Mwesige & Kalinaki, 2007, p. 106). The militia who went around Rwanda killing people has been shown in pictures holding radio receivers to their ears as they hunted for their victims. Since then at least three individuals associated with radio stations management have been convicted at the UN Rwanda

Tribunal in Arusha of being pillars in the genocide campaign. Thompson (2007) has notted that the

> …news media were both implicated in and devastated by the genocide. Forty nine media professionals were murdered and others jailed after the fact, accused of inciting or participating in the killing. Rwanda's media sector has been striving to emerge from the trauma ever since. Because of the devastation wrought by the genocide, newsrooms in Rwanda are populated for the most part by young journalists with little or no professional training.

The subsequent media legal framework in the post genocide Rwanda has been informed by this past. Today Kigali keeps a short leash on all media in Rwanda. Broadcasts are dominated by government stations owned by Office Rwandais D'Information which also own the national television station and publishes two newspapers one in French and the other in Kinyarwanda. While there are other papers circulating in the country they survive in a fairly difficult environment with at least one of the papers publishing out of Uganda. Rwanda reports cases of journalists being harassed by the state including a case where a journalist working for a paper not known to associate with the government was assaulted by unknown assailants. Overall however, the quality of journalism in Rwanda does not compare with that of its other East African neighbors. It does not exhibit the vibrancy in Kenya, Uganda or Tanzaia. It mirrors the situation in its sister state Burundi that equally shows little media diversity. It is instructive that although members of the East African Community, Rwanda and Burundi do mirror each other much more closely than the other three East African community states.

Journalism training in EA

The first Sunday after the violent elections in 2007 in Kenya will mark a unique day in the nation's media history. All newspapers carried the same headline: "Save our beloved country" which appealed for return to peace in a nation that only seven days previously had been engulfed in violence. At 6:00 pm the same day, in a 60 minute program the electronic media switched to similar broadcast appealing for peace through an hour long prayer, patriotic poetry and solemn music that implored the nation to return to its senses and restore peace. The cut throat competition characteristic of the Kenyan media took backstage. That act has been derided by international correspondents working from Nairobi and some journalism scholars who question media's business in appealing for peace. The criticism position is informed by an age old tradition in the craft: reporter's detachment from the events they cover. The concept of detachment, however, usually comes under close scrutiny. Is it really possible for a journalist engaged in covering an event to be detached from it? It is the question of the possibility of a reporter observing a Mozambican mother give birth atop a tree as floods rage beneath her, and not develop emotional engagement with the mother. It is the question of watching a packed church, as was the case in Kenya, razing to the ground and not be outraged. Objectivity is a cardinal principle of journalism by which reporters are not to show their preference in a story.

As of now, without empirical study, it may not be possible to estimate the impact of that Sunday's reporting, and the hour long concert in the media on Kenya's then quest for peace. It is an open question whether that hour and that day changed the course of the nation. There are media students who believe passionately that on that occasion media rose to the nation's service, and behaved responsively in advocating for peace. But there are also those on the other side of the divide that, as already mentioned above, believe that Kenyan media at that time subscribed to a misconceived notion of peace and adopted a partisan position betraying the ideals of journalism. At

the core of these questions is one debate that has characterized media studies over the years: what is the effect of the media on its audience?

The debate over media effects is a long standing one going back nearly seventy years in the history of media theory beginning with the bullet theory. The magic or hypodermic needle theory assumed that media had direct, immediate and powerful effect on their audience with the capability to bring about social change. The media, according to Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudent (1944/1968), uniformly shot or injected audiences with appropriate messages that had effect on the choices they made at elections. It is not only the bullet theory that assumed a powerful effect model. Other understandings of media effect such as agenda setting, spiral of silence, diffusion of innovation, cultivation and other social change theories suggest that media have an impact on their audience. While scholarship provides an empirical support to the powerful effect model, popular culture is equally inundated with anecdotal discourse that tends to agree with this position.

However, the maximum effects school is tempered by other intervening schools of scholarship observing that audiences do not automatically succumb to the power of media messages. This thinking led to the concept of the obstinate audience. The obstinate audience, studies determined, were not as passive as they had been perceived to be, and did not automatically succumb to the media content. In seeking to explain this contrary thinking scholarship evolved the two step flow theory of communication that analyzed how messages were transmitted from the media outlet to the audience but through the opinion leaders. In spite of the introduction of the opinion leader in this model it still supports, even if only to a lesser extent, the notion of a strong or powerful media. However the perception that the media are not powerful, are mediated by opinion leaders is one that is consistently contested through the promotion of advertising which is the lifeline of the media industry. Both advertisers and media managers believe in the power of the media to influence the behavior of the purchasing audience in making choices.

It is against this backdrop that the debate respecting the role of media in conflict situations should be explored. The question is not whether media have effect, but what effect, and the extent of those effects, and whether the study attributes maximum or only limited effects to the industry. This is borne in the scholarship and models of mass media. Lazarsfeld's model, who says what, through what channel, and with what effect already anticipated the effects of the mass media. Charles Wright (1986) in his seminal study outlining the role of mass media in society from a functional point of view not only hypothesized such roles as entertainment, correlation, surveillance among others, but also considered the dysfunctional role of the mass media. Thus the question is not simply whether mass media have functions, but also dysfunctions, and the challenge then is to explore not only the extent of those functions but also of the dysfunctions and, in our case, within the African media context.

There is a growing body of scholarship suggesting that mass media have an impact on conflict situations (see Hanitzsch (2007) appraisal). The issue that these studies raise is the extent of the impact . They divide conflict into various phases and argue that the impact of the media is influenced by the stage of the conflict. Three phases of conflict are identified: the low intensity stage or pre atrocity stage, the atrocity stage, and the post atrocity stage. The impact of the media does vary at the various stages of conflict development. At the low intensity stage media have limited effect. The coverage has impact as the conflict intensity heightens, and again limited impact after the period of intensity of conflict.

Obviously there are characteristics of media that make the variance of the impact at these stages so to be. The very nature of news values conspire to make coverage vary. Journalism scholars converge towards the consensus that an event's newsworthiness is influenced by many factors including proximity, magnitude of the conflict, nobility, bizarreness, and bloodiness among others. At low intensity stage news values are typically missing and such events would in any case go

unreported. This characteristic is evident not only during the low intensity stage but also in the post intensity period. If media do not intensely focus on events at these various stages then obviously the impact of the media would be limited. On average, by the time the conflict reaches high intensity, the intervention if any would be too late anyway.

Critical then to media's interventionist role is a reappraisal of the very values of news stories as they have evolved over the years of the history of western journalism. Traber (1985) had attempted to do just that. In the manual *Reporting Africa*, Traber and his colleagues argued that western news values were not in consonance with the realities of Africa. In Africa, the majority of the population is in the rural, the concrete relational orientation of the African suggest a different approach of breaking news, the continent's infrastructural spread dictated that priorities of the African media would be different, as a result, they posited a different framework of news for Africa. This framework required identification of alternative news sources, alternative framework of time and other related frameworks that make the events relevant to the needs and worldview of the African. Because such a model has not been extensively explored in Africa nearly two decades after it was proposed it would be premature to speculate on its potential. But there are variances of this that emerging, for example, the interest in civic journalism.

Why has African journalist not explored these alternative frameworks? The answer appears simple enough. African journalists are trained in the West, or are trained by professors who were themselves trained in the West. They have been trained on Western technology with a Western value system that incorporates Western models. Internalizing the Western model comes easy to them. The African media houses are mostly African in name. The structures are premised on Western value system of profit motif. Kenya's Nation Media Group's recent golden jubilee celebrations were a case in point. The celebrations were more a statement of the media house' aspirations rather than a celebration of 50 years of journalism. The guest list was a case study of

who is who in Africa's socio political scene rather than in the African media. It is true that there were continental media players in attendance but they were dwarfed by the bigger continental names.

The newsroom structure through which news is processed is an elaborate mechanism that forms a cog within which the individual is only but a spike. This structure has a systemic weakness providing little wiggle room for individual journalists. Beginning from the point of training a potential journalist is drilled on the values and ethos of the system. It is only to the extent that the individual conforms to the laid down frame that the individual will be admissible to the practice. Once they get into the industry the process of conformation continues through which the enculturation that began in training institutions is grounded. Some of the agencies of doing this include newsroom colleagues, the environment, the traditions passed on and so on. By the time a journalist becomes established in the system the process of grounding is already complete with the new entrant becoming the embodiment of the institution itself. Journalists will then tend to see reality in the same way and conform to the typical way of framing reality. This is the impediment that suggesting a new way of doing things runs counters to. A paradigm than runs counter to this tradition would then be dismissed.

There is, however, a strong case to be made for peace journalism model and especially in a region such as EA. Research in international conflict suggest that since such data began to be kept there has been, on average, an increase peaking, last year, at 365 conflicts (Heidelberg, 2009). It means that in the previous year a conflict of varying intensity was breaking out every day. According to the Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research sub Sahara Africa ranked second as the most conflict prone region of the world. Their study places the northern part of the continent, the white Africa, in a different category, but it is probable that if Arab Africa was categorized with the rest of the continent, then this region would be the most conflict prone in the entire world.

How does East Africa feature in these statistics? Certainly, not very well in peace terms. There are multiple conflicts of varying intensity unfolding in Uganda, DRC is still unsettled, Rwanda is only beginning to settle easy with the unsettled question of what happens to Rwanda after President Paul Kagame. In Kenya the violence that characterized post elections has not been conclusively addressed. To Kenya's north in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somali there is continuing conflict, only Tanzania in the region shows surface calm. The potential of this conflict escalating is certainly high. Elections are set to take place in many of these countries. There is increasing limited resources in these countries, itself a source of conflict. The limited resources include natural ones including land, water, grass and mineral deposits. According to the Heidelberg institute the causes of conflict in order of their frequency are: systems and ideology, resources, power, regional predominance, territory, secession, autonomy, international power and others. The challenge in the continent, and which other parts of the world may not be facing, is the consideration of power itself as a resource. Across the continent the distribution of national resources too often favor those in power. As such leadership position is not so much the question of occupying an office to serve the public, but rather a strategic position to influence the distribution of resources in favor of the leader's preferences. This leads to economic inequality. This is, certainly, a region prone to conflict. It is this that raises the question of what role the media either plays in contributing to the conflict as it is or can contribute in reducing the conflict. An empirical response to that question would be necessary but there is as of yet limited scholarship in that direction.

Do African peculiarities then demand that reporting Africa observe a different approach to journalism, particularly in light of the framework advanced by Traber and his colleagues? Certainly. But why have journalists not done so? There are several arguments against peace journalism. On top of the list is the notion that it is not the business of the media to champion peace (Loyn, 2007). Students who study media are of that opinion since professionalism requires detachment and objectivity. This notion of objectivity is the second impediment. The news processing structure,

with its myriad gatekeepers and massive wheels have a specific model of considering newsworthiness of an event. In this model peace related events only make it to press when the conflict has already reached atrocity stage, and the conflict is already bloody. At this stage the conflict provides appropriate pictures and feed. It is not possible to change this paradigm without attacking the heart of it – the news manufacturing model which must be transformed. The transformation of the machine must be at its core – at the stage where its values are formed, at the entry level, and with the hope that at some appropriate time a critical mass will emerge. It is this critical mass that will wield the power to transform the institution.

Training institutions in East Africa can be categorized into three along the lines of their incorporation and longevity. In the first category are state institutions, in the case of Kenya, established by separate Acts of parliament. Among these institutions include the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Egerton University and Moi University. Nearly every one of these universities has a department of mass media or media training. The second category are institutions founded under one but the same Act of parliament. In the case of Kenya these are the private universities. Again, nearly all these universities have departments of mass media studies. In the third category are the mid level training institutions, some with questionable credibility. The training programs in these institutions range from certificate level to PhD. The training in these institutions is standard: training using western textbooks, faculty trained by Western scholars and even more importantly, curriculum and models developed in the West. In one sense training institutions in Africa are invariably extensions of trainings in the West. None of these curricula incorporates peace.

Five years ago, the World Journalism Educational Congress developed a model curriculum of journalism a variation of which UNESCO published. This model curriculum divides training into skills oriented courses and general courses then proposes content based courses that inform the

field journalists specialize in. This broadly is the kind of curriculum adopted by the more progress programs in East Africa. Conflict sensitive journalism, or peace journalism should target the craft area where the students' value systems and assumptions are formed. This would transform the framework that journalists apply in their news formulation. At the moment there is no institution in EA that has a curriculum that incorporates this.

Universities have recognized the commercial importance for training in peace and conflict resolution and increasingly courses or minor and even major areas of studies are developing in this critical area. Some of these courses and programs are found at Daystar University, the University of Nairobi, and at Makerere University among others. But these are not fully fledged peace journalism studies. There are only about a handful of universities in the world that have programs in peace journalism. In some of these universities there is a provision for students who have registered in journalism programs to take minor areas of study in peace and conflict fields. But there is still a weakness with this approach. While the peace and conflict provide the theory and content, it does not provide an integrated whole to enable students understand how to frame the reporting process. This can be done at the first level of the WJEC paradigm.

Some (Loyn, 2007) have argued that what is needed is not peace journalism but good journalism. Good journalism is informed by the values held by the journalist. Among these values include neutrality, which is not necessarily detachment but a balanced engagement with both sides of an issue; a sound ethical framework, and observance of all other values of news. These scholars argue that too often journalism is simply bad journalism in the sense that it does not ask the critical question and seek to provide relevant answers.

Performance of three newspapers during PEV

This study analyzed the content of three leading Nairobi dailies during the month prior to national elections and the month after. The analysis intended to track how each

daily newspaper reported PEV and whether any one of them showed credible interest in the principles of PJ. Those principles center on a "reinvigorated pursuit of objectivity" which honors all people as sources and citizens, situates events in context, and understands conflict as opportunity for public maturation.

The three dailies were *Nation, Standard*, and *People*. Started in 1958, the *Daily Nation* is now East Africa's most widely read newspaper with a daily circulation over 200,000 copies—three times that of the nearest competitor. The *Nation* is owned by Nation Media Group, which also owns and operates the weekly *The EastAfrican*, *The Business Daily*, Uganda's *Daily Monitor*, the Swahili *Taifa Leo*, the television station *NTV*, and the radio station *Easy FM.*

The *Standard,* founded in 1902, is Kenya's second most widely read newspaper with a circulation of 70,000. It is owned by The Standard Group, which also owns and operates the television station *KTN*.

Originally a weekly, the *People* has been a daily newspaper since 1998. Its circulation peaked around 2002 at 60,000. At the time of the study it was owned by veteran politician and businessman Kenneth Matiba. It runs a bold motto in each edition: Frank, Fair, and Fearless.

Leading up to the presidential election, the tenor of Kenyan political coverage was divisive. It wasn't until 4 January 2008 that a significant break occurred with the joint-headline "Save Our Beloved Country" appearing on the front page of the *Nation*, *Standard*, *People*, and three other Kenyan newspapers. Before this orchestrated call for unity, nearly all coverage was split into a two-party framework, pitting the PNU against ODM, instead of framing the coverage within the greater concern for national well-being. These headlines

were typical: “THE GIANT KILLERS” (1 December 2007); “Election Victory Talk” (12 December 2007); “BATTLE OF DIRTY TACTICS” (16 December 2007); “It’s attack mode in the eleventh hour” (23 December 2007); “STANDOFF” (30 December 2007). Such stories dichotomized the political race and later the ethnic conflict into an either/or reality: *either* you are for PNU and against ODM, *or* you are against PNU and for ODM. Coverage of this sort effectively erases middle ground. In addition, the diction favored in such headlines and stories is overtly militaristic, priming readers to accept an antagonistic relationship between supporters of their party and opponents. This conception of the political race and the ethnic conflict as a zero-sum game, in which every success for one side is inevitably a blow to the other, further diminishes the possibility of cooperation. One could, extending the militaristic diction, say that to be a mediator in such a context is to be in “no man’s land,” a vulnerable area between the two antagonistic poles. When compromise is framed as weakness or disloyalty, violent response becomes more attractive.

Newspapers’ coverage approached the parties as war camps. The divide between them was clear, and it was ethnic. Leading up to the election, the negative themes of “accusations,” “propaganda,” “poll rigging,” “bias,” “devious plots,” “intentional disenfranchisement,” “hate messages,” and “hate speech” were so recurrent that they aggravated the dividing line, creating a gulf of distrust and suspicion. Besides widening the social rift, the newspapers’ emphasis on mudslinging between the parties resulted in a de-emphasis on the real issues at stake. Instead of a focus on the core national issues, the focus was on the “meta-conflict” of the political elites arguing about so-and-so’s hypocritical stance on an issue. Given such a preoccupation with political elites, the *wananchi* (common

citizen) recede into the background. As told to us by Tom Maliti, AP correspondent, "The media failed to report politics beyond the frame of politics being a contest."

Another danger latent in the two-party framing of stories was the tendency to lapse into essentialism. Because each Kenyan journalist had to wrestle with political pressures and his/her own internalized biases from ethnic heritage and family ties, it was extremely difficult to keep a PNU-versus-ODM story from turning into an "us-versus-them" story. The further danger of the "us-versus-them" story is that the "them" inevitably becomes incriminated. "They" were portrayed as *de facto* the problem with no heed given to their circumstances. The *Standard* slipped into this often, with an anti-government stance evident by word choice and imbalanced sources.

In the midst of divisive "objective" news coverage of conflict, the most lucid, levelheaded voices rang forth from the editorials, at times calling for cross-ethnic cooperation, tolerance, compromise, forgiveness, and a sense of national unity.

Most of the shortcomings in newspapers coverage of conflict are patterns of omission. One major omission was historical context. Reporters certainly knew their context. An article from *People* (2 December 2007) approached a proper understanding of the nature of the post-election violence when it couched the early instances of the violence within a broader historical context:

> The clashes re-emerged last month invoking memories of past similar violence in Molo, Burnt Forest, and Kuresoi where hundreds of people lost their lives following upheavals largely attributed to political reasons owing to the fact that they occur every election year.

In every election year since 1992—including even incumbent Mwai Kibaki's landslide win in 2002—Kenya had witnessed some degree of election-related violence. To fail to connect these recurring bouts of violence is to ignore the common denominator that is their root cause. Thus, the danger in reporting conflict as an event detached from historical context is the likelihood of leading readers to accept a superficial and short-term resolution to that conflict.

However, not all coverage reported as if the conflict was amputated from historical trajectory. One article in *Nation* highlights the "land factor" and how grievances over property dating back to colonialism are playing a part in "election violence" (5 January 2008). Unfortunately again, though, the clearest voices of reason came through the editorials and not news reporting. During January, for example, a number of editorials appear in *Nation* that saw through the political surface of the conflict and suggested a number of more fundamental causes. *Nation*'s "Save Our Beloved Country" editorial hinted at Kenya's gaping economic disparity as in part prompting the chaos. One editorial suggested a sense of helplessness experienced in slums that drives slum-dwellers to riot (5 January 2008); another suggested that the "genesis of this bloodletting goes back a long way," citing unresolved grievances from the colonialist-, Kenyatta-, and Moi-eras (6 January 2008); still another, pulling ideas from the first two together, recognized that only a "comprehensive settlement that seeks to resolve many social, economic, and political issues, some going back to history," will end the conflict for good (8 January 2008). In their diversity of opinion and willingness to recall the past, these editorials more accurately reflected the complex nature of conflict than the amnesiac "objective" news pages.

The very phrases most used by media to refer to the events of violence and vandalism surrounding the 2007 election—"post-election violence," "post-election chaos," and "post-election conflict"—are misleading in their implication of a complete cause-and-effect relationship between the botched election and the conflict. If anything, the botched election was only a spark to a heap of kindling of historical frustrations.

THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

What Caused Post Election Violence?

The recurrent causal themes that emerged in the twenty-five long interviews gravitated around economic inequality, land disputes, the politicians, a culture of impunity, tribalism, and the media itself. However, because of their unique role in amplifying the other causes, the media will be dealt with separately, both in terms of inciting and pacifying the violence. Economic inequities had long historic roots and branched widely.

How Was Media Guilty of Incitement?

People hired to operate local language stations, or to "string" for newspapers (called correspondents) are not properly trained. Moreover, they are paid only for what is published or broadcasted, thus creating incentive for the spectacular story.

How Did Media Help Restore Peace?

Eventually the media also aided pacification, though from diverse motives. An initiative of Pamoja FM is a prominent example of broadcast media influence in calming the violence.

In Kibera in minutes...planning to attack the Kikambas….Pamoja FM radio…decided to call some of the Kikuyu elders, the Luo elders, the Kikamba elders to the studio to discuss the implications of the rumor that was going around, and they allowed the callers to call in, ask questions.

And don't even ask them questions…because you will ask stupid questions....Just give them a frequency, a microphone to address their peoples'...because journalists cannot command that kind of attention…but elders can....People listen to their elders….

A joint radio broadcast and joint newspaper headline also had significant impact, among other media events.

The best that I've ever seen of the media was that joint broadcast…given how powerful music is…the patriotic songs were helpful. The decision to spend an entire day talking about peace was very powerful….

The media…played its role… to bring down the tensions when media owners…resolved to give a common voice. Before, we were all doing it in our own, different, independent ways, bringing in music groups or whatever…bringing in people to talk about peace and the need to deal with this issue. It was really when media owners…resolved, 'Fine, let's find a common approach, common headlines, common DVDs being distributed to all media houses', that each media house in a collective way was able to help bring down the passions.

There was a parliament reporter…and somebody asked him…'Why did you guys all have the same headline... "Save Our Country"?' And he said, 'Let's be realistic….It's not that we're really concerned about that, because conflict sells…. The reason we did that is we realized…we couldn't do business with the dead…. '

The media finally stopped airing politicians…stopped inviting analysts, stopped talk shows for a while....Things changed a lot when NGOs came in and set up media programs that promoted peace….

Moreover, they refused to carry some content, e.g., the *Nation* refused to carry certain ads.

The Swedish Embassy called me and asked me to rally around and get the senior women editors of the papers. And…report the voices of women and the impact of this on ordinary people…use their pen before even the editors choose the stories....Get the message out that 'Enough is enough!' and get ordinary women to speak on how they have suffered and how peace was paramount....The impact was immense....And it was called the White Ribbon Peace Campaign....So this led the way for other women groups to rally....The interventionist movement….

Ubuntu and "peace journalism" in Kenya

Press theory in the West was born in revolutionary England. Weary of royalty's claimed privilege to define reality, indeed to control the conscience, liberalism cited the rational individual as history's center and telos (Siebert, 1956, p. 40). Able inherently to sort truth from error, as Milton claimed (1644, p. 719), the Enlightenment Self carried

responsibility to establish its proper moral vision through logic, wisdom, and experimentation. Media filled a moral need, not to mention market needs. When markets dominate, or information is politicized, or the individual is not free, what then?

On the media side, the common response is a call to reform. The press in the United States came under reform of a reluctant sort in the mid-1940s with the Commission on Freedom of the Press led by Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago. Commission sponsors clearly intended that the Commission's Final Report would underscore classical liberal values, saving the press from government interference and enabling the "watchdog function" and free-market competition among news providers. Instead, sponsors and public alike received a short book outlining the well-known Social Responsibility theory of media, a call for "full access to the day's intelligence" and a forum for clarifying the "goals and values of the society," among other recommendations (Leigh, 1947, pp. 27-28).

Kenyan media have their own loci of reform. The Media Council of Kenya published its Code of Professional Conduct in 2001 in shirt-pocket format for easy reference. Few journalists know the booklet, and fewer still carry it (Fackler, 2010). Nonetheless, Kenya presents a bright and profitable media climate. Several universities prepare graduates for work in the field. Freedoms impossible to exercise a decade ago are commonplace. Stories are told of the courageous few dissenters who resisted government intimidation and won respect as advocates of democratic reform.

We conclude that Kenya and most of sub-Sahara Africa has the advantage of a framework of theory and social practice unlike anything imagined by the Hutchins Commission or any other Western media reform effort.

African life is communal. John Mbiti's famous revision of DesCartes, "We are therefore I am," rings true from university seminars to village palaver (1969, p. 109). The "philosophy" called ubuntu arises not from classical texts but "religion, proverbs, oral tradition, ethics and morals" (Mbiti, p. 2.). The rational individual developed from Enlightenment categories required an information system capable of providing competitive advantage and early access to market news. That autonomous model of humanity and its communicational appetites are now under serious review in the West, which scrambles to locate alternative models.

In the communal South, ubuntu is part of the sinew of culture, often so close that to call in a "model" seems a superfluous abstraction. Clifford Christians (2004) has outlined the significance of ubuntu to professional journalism. He reconceptualized the task, mission, and social responsibility of media based on this social theory rising from African traditions without emulating European versions. Ubuntu permeates the "entire life of society" with "respect for the human in all humanity" (Magesa, 2002, p. 88). *Ubuntu* is summarized in the Xhosa proverb, ngumuntu ngabantu umutu, (a person is a person through other persons). DeGruchy calls ubuntu "essential for the recovery of democracy in Africa," suggesting that life in the village was once an inclusive palaver, a quest for consensus currently lost.

> This does not imply the denial of individuals or individual political rights. On the contrary, a respect for each person as an individual is essential….The emphasis is on human sociality, on inter-personal relations, on the need which each person has for others in order to be herself or himself. This is the root of African humanism (DeGruchy, 1995, p. 191).

Christians adds that ubuntu and communitarianism, its Western (rough) equivalent, revises for the West its Enlightenment priorities.

> Humans are dialogic agents within a language community. All moral matters involve the community. A self exists only within "webs of interlocution." …We talk…to discover a good reason for acting (Christians, p. 240).

If ubuntu is the basis for sustainable values, why is Africa "torn apart" by wars and conflict, putting eight million into refugee or displaced persons status? (Tarimo, p. 11). The "disintegration of value systems" cited by Tarimo and Manwelo is a denial that ubuntu is sustainable in the face of pervasive corruption, famine, or draught (p. 12). In our interviews, many worried that Kenya was doomed to repeat or increase pre- and post-election violence in the 2012 national elections.

> They [media owners and political party bosses] got absolutely nothing out of the experience. They live in a tribal cocoon. Media houses were divided by tribe. I know of one prominent Kikuyu media owner who actually participated in top-level PNU meetings at which vote-rigging was discussed. (from the interviews.)

PJ presents tensions between advocacy and objectivity (Lynch, 2005, p. 203). Kenyan media leaders strongly disagree whether PJ holds promise for Kenya. The current head of the Kenya Union of Journalists, David Matende, told a Media Council of Kenya forum that media "have no business dabbling in advocacy and campaigned for dialogue and peace" (Namwaya, 2009, p. 24). Many disagree based on experience of media peace-building efforts in Sri Lanka and Sudan, and Kenya itself. Chaacha Mwita, former group managing editor of The Standard Group, urges media to take up the peace cause, even prior

to anticipated violence and with strict impartiality on the divisive matter of tribal interests (p. 24).

Media professionals clearly prefer practices that support peace and dampen conflict, without sacrificing essential truth-telling. Toward that end, ubuntu becomes a sensitized concept and possible bridge to a more inclusive sense of the public sphere where the Other is neither feared nor oppressed, but considered a "gateway to new opportunity and unimagined beauty" (Kobia, 2003, p. 4). Kobia urges:

> The courage to hope means that we shall refuse to accept our current experience…as permanent. We must negate the negation imposed by history….Africans must be convinced that…a better, brighter future is possible….We must defeat the Afropessimism that strangles nascent initiatives for transforming our present situation (p. 5).

International Media Support (IMS) urges that media coverage of tribal or ethnic violence purposely avoid blame and accusation, or unnamed sources without explanation of why attribution was deleted. IMS manuals advise newsroom diversity and a newsroom culture that can identify hate speech, gender discrimination, and xenophobia (Howard, 2008, p. 13, 29).

Christians wants journalists animated by ubuntu-communitarianism to create interpretive accounts that reflect genuine features of a situation, rather than hurried conclusions of observer opinion.

> Given the moral dimension inscribed in the social order, interpreting its various configurations adequately means elaborating the moral component. …Eliminating the divisions among ourselves…opens the pathway to crossing barriers and to reconciliation across cultures (p. 251).

Our review of PEV shows that cliché, redundancy, and conscious ambiguity distracted media from careful, thick, or pro-peace analysis as tensions heightened in Kenya. If moral literacy is the media's privileged mission in ubuntu-communitarianism, Kenyan media failed.

Perhaps Blankenberg's call for "liberatory journalism" (1999, p. 60) with its strategy of "discussion leading to solutions" and empowerment of the "interactive self" (Christians, p. 249) can be joined to Africa-based mediation strategies such as "Deep Democracy" (described in Inside the No) to reconfigure public journalism from information provider to agent of social change.

Our panel of interviews point to "a cracked foundation" in social trust in Kenya. A "culture of impunity" tells its people that the powerful eat their cake (Dowden, p. 415), while the peasant makes no claims on the state ("what we lacked was a government that listened") and seeks his/her pitiful portion from the dry earth. Where media reach, they frequently project a culture of violence and competition. For land, commerce, and patronage, the race goes to the swift and the connected.

In October, 2009, Kofi Annan returned to Kenya for consultations with all parties involved in the peace process. His report was telling:

> Progress is being made…But the pace of reform must be accelerated. Kenyans are concerned that the window of opportunity to deliver reform is rapidly closing…[A] recurrence of the crisis and violence…is a serious risk if tangible reform is not achieved….This cannot take place without the right protections of the democratic space. (Annan, 2009)

The foremost protection of the public sphere is a free and responsible press. The democratic world has recognized this for nearly four centuries. We still work at it, worldwide. In Kenya, that work faces obstacles, not the least of which is a culture of fear and a loss of trust between neighbors. This study adds then, for Kenya at this time, for democracy at all times, the need for a press inclined toward peace, motivated by the old ubuntu of the village, alert to the "opportunity for a new start" (Mayor, p. 464).

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[1] A photo essay titled *Kenya Burning* was published in Nairobi in April 2008, and thereafter withdrawn from bookshops due to is graphic yet forcefully truthful images. It may be secured privately from the photographer cited in References.

[2] These media houses, agencies, and universities were represented in the interviews: Nation Media Group, Standard Publishing, Royal Media, Kenya Television Network, K24 (television), Kenya Broadcasting Network, Associated Press, Africa Women and Child Feature Service. Media Council of Kenya, National Council of Churches of Kenya, Catholic Peace and Justice Commission, Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa, Daystar University, Tangaza College (Catholic University of East Africa) , The Media Institute (Nairobi), and consultants in print, marketing, and visual communication.

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