

# **UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

## **INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

### **ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN CONFLICT: A CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT 2012 -2019**

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Master of Arts in Diplomacy at the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies  
(IDIS), University of Nairobi.**

**OCTOBER 2020**

**DECLARATION**

This research project is my original work and has not been presented before to any university for academic award.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research project is dedicated with love and gratitude to my Mother, my lovely sister and Friends.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I thank God for enabling me to complete my studies. I am particularly grateful and immensely indebted to my supervisor Dr. Patrick Maluki, who read each sentence in this project report, tirelessly critiqued my work progressively and gave me innovative suggestions to improve my project. If not for his significant guidance, it would have been difficult to complete this project. Thank you Sir I'm greatly humbled by your support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	6
1.3 Research Questions	7
1.4 Research Objectives	7
1.5 Literature Review	7
1.6 Theoretical literature	8
1.6.1 Social Responsibility Theory	8
1.6.2 Agenda Setting Theory	9
1.7 Empirical Literature Review	10
1.7.1 Role played by media in South Sudan Conflict.	10
1.7.2 Impact of media on South Sudan conflict.	12
1.7.3 The link between media and conflict in South Sudan.	17
1.8 Gaps in the Literature	19
1.9 Justification of the Study	20
1.9.1 Academic Justification	20
1.10.2 Policy Justification	20
1.10.3 General public justification	21
1.11 Research Hypotheses	21

1.12 Theoretical Framework	21
1.13 Research Methodology	22
1.13.1 Research Design	22
1.13.2 Study Location	23
1.13.3 Target Population	23
1.13.4 Study Sample	23
1.13.5 Data Sources and Data Collection Methods	25
1.13.6 Data Analysis	26
1.13.7 Ethical Considerations	26
1.14 Chapter Outline	26
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT</b>	<b>28</b>
2.0 Introduction	28
2.1 Role played by Media in reporting Violence and Armed Clashes	28
2.2 Role of Media in reporting the ensuing Humanitarian Crisis	30
2.3 Role of Media in the signing of the Peace Agreement	33
2.4 Conclusion	37
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>LINK BETWEEN MEDIA AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN</b>	<b>38</b>
3.0 Introduction	38
3.1 The advent of Local Media and its link to the Conflict	39
3.2 The link between the International Media and the Conflict	42
3.3 The National Broadcaster and the Conflict	42
3.4 Government Efforts to curtail Private Media Outlets and Journalists	44
3.5 Conclusion	47

<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT</b>	<b>49</b>
4.0 Introduction	49
4.1 Impact of Media during the Conflict	49
4.2 Impact of Media in Conflict Resolution in South Sudan (post-conflict media)	53
4.3 Conclusion	55
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>58</b>
5.0 Introduction	58
5.1 Summary of the findings	58
5.1.1 Role played by media in South Sudan conflict	58
5.1.2 The Link between media and conflict in south Sudan	59
5.1.3 The impact of media on South Sudan conflict	60
5.2 Conclusion	60
5.3 Recommendations	62
5.4 Areas for Further Research	62
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	<b>73</b>

## ABSTRACT

With key focus on assessment of the role of media in conflict, a case of South Sudan, this study sought to examine the role played by media in South Sudan conflict, examine the link between media, conflict in south Sudan and investigate the impact of media on South Sudan conflict. The gravity of the conflict attracted the attention of both the local and international media coverage. News coverage by many media outlets mostly documented the atrocities that were taking place all over the country. Events were aired of rebel forces engaging in battle, families being attacked and massacred, and the mass burial of victims. Media reporting was however not only restricted to the coverage of atrocities but also actively involved the reporting of the ongoing peace talks and the several attempts made at attracting leaders to the negotiation table. Accusations however have been made by observers that the way the media covered events of the conflict played a critical role in fanning the conflict as well as in helping extinguish it. It is these accusations against the media that therefore informs the basis of this research thus giving impetus to the study; Assessment of the role of media in conflict. A case of the South Sudan conflict. . The study relied on social responsibility theory as the analytical tool of the study. The study has found that when South Sudan was drawn into a protracted violent conflict in late 2013, the need for information regarding the conflict automatically attracted media attention not only at the local level, but at international level. Different mediums were utilized in reporting and circulating news pertaining to the conflict. Several newsworthy events took place during the conflict and attracted the coverage media. The newsworthy events included the eruption of violence and armed clashes, the emergence of a humanitarian crisis, and the holding of negotiations leading to the signing of peace agreements. The study has found that there is a lot of impartiality and imbalance in reporting conflict news, whereby it's challenging to present news from a balanced point of view when challenging the authorities. This is evidenced by threats by the government of South Sudan to arrest or kill journalists reporting for the opposition. Lack of media freedom is a gateway to misinformation, and the public is likely to form judgments based on unverifiable facts. In South Sudan, the media has greatly been used as a vehicle for violence and conflict. It should be noted that the media alone does not cause conflict actively, but its interaction with other forces can spark a conflict. Media practitioners on old media channels such as the radio, TVs, and newspapers reported the conflict on partisan lines. Those working for the government presented the news in favor of the government while accusing the opposition media of misinforming the public. The media was also noted to have facilitated the use of hate speech and inflammatory language by both of the warring forces in online and offline forums to target communities and individuals based on their political views, perceived beliefs, and their ethnicity. Through the various means of communication, that is, social media exchanges, images, SMS messages, threatening letters, and cartoons, hate speech and inflammatory language was sometimes marked with rhetoric bordering on xenophobia which fuelled a climate of fear, mistrust, and violence among the ethnic groups.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.0 Introduction

Media has been one of the key trigger and propagator of violent conflict across the world for quite a long period. Media chooses what to broadcast and what not to broadcast to the public. This has made some conflicts to acquire global attention through vibrant exposure on the media while others have failed to receive significant attention due to media negligence. Many of African conflicts where millions have died such as the wars in Congo since 1997, Rwanda genocide, Sierra Leone Conflict as well as conflict on the two Sudan's have passed almost without any significant notice on the international radar. This study, therefore investigates the role played by media in violent conflict with case study of South Sudan. This chapter covers background to the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, hypotheses and methodology of the study.

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Shaheen argues that media has frequently played a vital role in today's conflict. Media can either choose to play an active part in conflict thereby having a responsibility for spread of violence. On other cases the media has distanced itself from conflict hence contributing to conflict resolution and alleviation of conflict.<sup>1</sup> On addition Dixon observes that the role taken by media on any given conflict depends on a complex set of factors not limited to the relationship the media has to actors in the conflict and the independence the media might have to the power holder of its society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hifza Shaheen, (2017). "*Media and the Level of Conflict*", Published by oxford press on January 10<sup>th</sup> 2017. P-10.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Dixon (2005). "*The role of social media in conflict*" Conceptual Framework. Killing civilians in modern armed conflict, global crime. Published by journal of democracy on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2005. P-35.

Castell posits that the involvement of social media in conflict is not just a post-cold war phenomenon since Nazis and Soviet Union used media platforms to develop a hegemonic climate in which favored them to exercise their power and governance. However policy makers have been slow to understand the role of media in shaping modern conflict or how, with proper utilization, it can help generate the conditions for peace.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, Coleman argues that the genocide in Rwanda and the wars in the Balkans that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia have led to much debate about the powers and responsibilities of the international community, as well as triggered serious rifts inside the United Nations, making the effective work of that organization more difficult. In both of these conflicts the media played a pernicious role directly inciting genocide in case of some Rwandan media such as was the case with Radio Mille Collines. The media in Yugoslavia also acted as a virulent nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

Thompson observes that the local media in former Yugoslavia played a key role on forging violent conflict on group of people who had for many years lived together peacefully. In particular, Thompson asserts that media was one of the key enabler on destruction of former Yugoslavia. He views it as a terrifying example of how society can disintegrate, how fear can be exploited by the power of a media in the hands of those unscrupulous enough to yield it as a weapon.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand Becky puts it that in Yugoslavia, the local media in specific played an important role in preparing the ground for the war, by enormously ensuring the public opinion was mobilized behind

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<sup>3</sup> Blackwell Castells (2009). *“Constructions of Violent Conflict in Public disclosure; Conceptual framework for content disclosure analytic perspective”*. Infocore Working paper retrieved from the annals of the American academy of political and social science. Published by Yale University Press. PP, 79-82.

<sup>4</sup> Becker Coleman (2004). *“Assymetrical War, Symetrical Intentions”* Mass killing of civilians in modern armed conflict. Published on March 2014 by University of Missouri Press. P-41.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Thompson (2009). *“Journalism in a time of hate media, The media and Yugoslavian conflict”*. A critique of social media. Published by Cambridge Journal of Politics. Pp, 7-9.

the different participants. The media campaign between rival media outlets prefigured the war itself.<sup>6</sup>

Mohammed states that the coverage of western media on the so called black hawk down brought a turning point on Americans military interventions in Africa. For Mohammed, the Americans had the right of intervention since after the cold war, U.S was the only hegemonic power with strong capability to control and influence the world, however the broadcast of media about the U.S soldiers being killed and drag along the Mogadishu streets led to a public outcry in U.S which made U.S troops to get withdrawn from Somalia just within six months of operation in 1993.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Johnson views that the failure of U.S mission in Somalia made U.S to be cautious on intervening in African conflicts hence this had a dire implication on Rwanda genocide where intervention happened long after the worst had already happened.<sup>8</sup>

Anyango observes that media plays a critical on post-election related conflict, for instance in Kenya during and after the general election of 2007, Kenyan local media played an important on propagating the spread of hate speech through the tribal media organizations which on other cases helped in manipulating the conflict turning it from election related conflict to tribal clashes with

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<sup>6</sup> Becky Manuel (2012), *“Networks of outrage and hope; Social movement in internet age”* Networked digital media in everyday live. New York Palgrave Macmillan. Vol. 10, United States Institute for Peace Studies and World politics. P-22.

<sup>7</sup> Ali Mohammed (2017), *“Black Hawk Down: The Somali battle that changed U.S policy in Africa and its implications on African conflict intervention”*. BBC Stories by peoples who were there, published by BBC NEWS on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Johnson (2001), *“The impacts of media images broadcast and change of U.S policy on intervention on African crisis”*. The institute of diplomatic and political studies, Cambridge. Published by Cambridge University Press on 24<sup>th</sup> may 2001. PP, 13-14.

other hidden motives. The 2007/8 post-election violence led to death of more than 1,100 civilians.<sup>9</sup> Mesich observes that one of the main issues which still continue to be underrated is the role of media in South Sudan conflict. In particular the weak media in South Sudan has to a large extent fueled the conflict. South Sudanese media organization faces strict regulations on what to report and what not to report, lack of training and resources, lack of freedom of information and limited legal protection. All this has created a weak media culture which lacks significant news coverage thereby allowing belligerent groups who commit massacres to continue without them being held accountable for their crimes against humanity. For Mesich, to improve the situation of South Sudan, the media must be strengthened to promote transparency and accountability of the warring groups.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand Makhoi argues that to avoid the spread of rumors and improve communication between the warring tribes in South Sudan, there must be availability of reliable information, wide coverage by media and unbiased reporting.<sup>11</sup>

Luege argues that the South Sudan diaspora community in Germany has repeatedly described how hate speech and rumors from abroad when shared with relatives or friends in South Sudan fuel large scale violence. The recipient of the unsubstantiated information gives a lot of credibility to the information simply because people who live in South Sudan believe that anything coming from the diaspora is true since diaspora has more access to information.<sup>12</sup> Paterson and Andresen

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<sup>9</sup> Sharon Anyango (2017), *"The role of Media in Promoting Peace During Elections In Africa. Lessons from Kenya"* The southern voices Network for Peace building, Wilson Center Africa program. Research Paper Number 17. Published by Wilson Center press on May 2017. P-3.

<sup>10</sup> Alyssa Mesich (2014), "The role of Media in South Sudanese Conflict". Sudan Tribune. Article Published by Journal of the school of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. P-21.

<sup>11</sup> Serah Makhoi (2019), *"The disadvantages of lack of Freedom of press in South Sudan Conflict: South Sudan's independent Media under Pressure"*. Published by top stories Africa group. Volume number 32, 2020 Deutsche welle. P-43.

<sup>12</sup> Timo Lauge (2017) *"How Social Media is Feeding Violence in South Sudan"*. The state of digital and social media in 2017. Published by peace tech lab in 2017. P-3.

posits that even though media law and establishment of media authority was passed by South Sudan government on 2014, the media groups still faces serious challenges which include persecution, forced flee out of the country, forced censorship and extra judicial killing. In addition, the two scholars assert that South Sudan media has a lot of red alerts especially when it comes to reporting of South Sudan conflict. For instance a lot of journalist left the country in 2014, 2015 and 2016 after having reported or broadcasted matters concerning South Sudan conflict.<sup>13</sup>

Jok observes that much of the social media broadcasts and reporting are partisan either in support of South Sudan conflict or the opposition depending on which side the media organizations pay their loyalty. As a result of this Jok argues that media has lost its objectivity of reporting thereby interfering with media role as an important tool for democracy, Impartiality and accountability. In extension Jok also advances that South Sudan local media groups are affiliated to either of the warring parties hence they are only on the business of mobilization for conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Conversely, Madut conducted a study and found that in response to South Sudan government crackdown on media which resulted to closure of main two English publications, the media has resulted to other means of disseminating information through use of internet, phones and other technologies. This has made most South Sudanese citizens to get the information about the war via a word of mouth, phone calls, social media or a radio. This means that the information reaches to the people through both a second or a third party hence creating a huge room for rumor mongering, omission or commission of information, fabricated information and reporting without

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<sup>13</sup> Jobs Paterson & Mark S. Andresen (2017), “*South Sudan’s independence media under pressure: Media on the of conflict in Africa*”. Published Relief Web by Sudds Institute on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015. P-2.

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Jok (2015), “Role of Media in war and Peace in South Sudan” Peace keeping and Peacebuilding. Oxford press publishers, U.K. Pp, 16-19.

media ethics hence this has downplayed the efforts for conflict reconstruction, healing and reconciliation.<sup>15</sup>

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Political tensions amongst South Sudanese senior leaders escalated and erupted into violence in 2013. The dispute that brought about the crisis was influenced by pre-existing political and ethnic grievances. Vice President Riek Machar was accused by President Salva Kiir of plotting a coup to topple his government. Existing tensions between them sparked armed clashes in the capital, Juba and extended far beyond. Many civilians died in the ensuing violence, hundreds of others were displaced, and properties destroyed. The gravity of the conflict attracted the attention of both the local and international media coverage. News coverage by many media outlets mostly documented the atrocities that were taking place all over the country. Events were aired of rebel forces engaging in battle, families being attacked and massacred, and the mass burial of victims. Media reporting was however not only restricted to the coverage of atrocities but also actively involved the reporting of the ongoing peace talks and the several attempts made at attracting leaders to the negotiation table. Accusations however have been made by observers that the way the media covered events of the conflict played a critical role in fanning the conflict as well as in helping extinguish it. It is these accusations against the media that therefore informs the basis of this research thus giving impetus to the study; Assessment of the role of media in conflict. A case of the South Sudan conflict

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<sup>15</sup> John Madut (2019), “*Managing Misinformation to Build Peace in South Sudan*” The political power of social media in conflict, the public sphere, conflict and social media linkage. Published by Encyclopedia of Social and political science on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2019. P-27.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. What is the role of media in South Sudan conflict?
- ii. What is the impact of media on South Sudan Conflict?
- iii. What is the link between media and conflict in South Sudan?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

#### **General Objective**

The overall objective of the study is to investigate the role of media in conflict. A case of South Sudan. 2012 - 2019.

#### **Specific Objectives are to:**

- i. Examine the role played by media in South Sudan conflict.
- ii. Examine the link between media and conflict in south Sudan.
- iii. Investigate the impact of media on South Sudan conflict.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

This study reviews both theoretical and empirical literature. Theoretical literature is important because it has been used to examine the key debates on issue of media and conflict. Empirical literature is still equally important for this study since it has been used to help identify the key knowledge gaps on this study. This section covers two widely researched areas related to this study. Firstly, the researcher reviewed studies that have a global and regional focus on the issue of media and conflict. This is in order to provide a global and regional perspective on existing nexus between media and violent conflict on global scale. The study then narrowed down to the

research to South Sudan and examine the role, impact and the link between media and South Sudan violent conflict.

## **1.6 Theoretical literature**

This section reviewed theories relevant to the study.

### **1.6.1 Social Responsibility Theory**

The social responsibility theory was developed in 1947 by United States commission on freedom of press. The commission provided that the press should be comprehensive, truthful and intelligent while enjoying freedom of press. In the event of conflict, social responsibility theory calls for media to first prioritize on public interest. Middleton argues that the key focus of social responsibility theory is that all warring parties should be given an impartial representation so that the audience has enough information to make its choice.<sup>16</sup> Equally, Mcquail puts forward that social responsibility theory asserts that media must be responsible to the people by not broadcasting any information that could lead to conflict or any social disruption. In addition, Mcquail views that social responsibility theory calls for media to exercise restraint on news headlines and also not use strong words on reporting in order to avoid provoking the warring groups.<sup>17</sup>

Plathotam puts it that social responsibility theory also calls media channels like newspapers and radio stations to provide flat forms on which the parties in conflict can exchange credible

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<sup>16</sup> Mark Radoli (2009), "Press freedom and media role in conflict and peace-building , case of post 2007 election violence". Doctoral dissertation, school of global studies, University of Gothenburg. Bitsteam press publishers. P-25.

<sup>17</sup> David Mcquail (2006), "*On Medicalization of War: social responsibility in Media*". Center for international media ethics CIME. Oxford. Published by Oxford university press. College Quarterly 8 (3). PP, 41-43.



information in order to avoid misperception and misunderstanding that could lead to protracted conflict.<sup>18</sup> This theory is relevant to the study since it advocates for media freedom and prevents media from putting forth sensitive and manipulative information that can lead to violent conflict as the case with South Sudan local media groups.

### **1.6.2 Agenda Setting Theory**

On media, agenda setting is the process of selecting what topics to tell about. For instance, if media broadcasts a lot of scary stories about terrorism, it may cause the general population to worry a lot about terrorism while ignoring some other issues which are more important. Through this the media turns its agenda to public agenda. According to Shaw agenda setting theory provides that media has capability of transforming its agenda into a public agenda. When media repeatedly focuses certain event such as conflict, it has ability to transform that event or conflict into an issue by attracting attention of the public.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, Radoli argues that if media gives a lot of importance on any event, that event eventually becomes a major event. This is often successful when media gets people to talk about an issue such as human rights, conflict or something else depending on the agenda of media.<sup>20</sup>

Bernard notes that before the gulf war the Cable News Network (CCN) massively propagated the U.S foreign policy agenda to an extent that everyone believed Americans were right to use military action against Iraq. The theory of agenda setting is relevant to the study since in South Sudan

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<sup>18</sup> George Plathotam (2008), *“Truth Integrity and social responsibility of media: Going beyond blood dripping stories on Northern East India”*. Paper presented on North East India and its transnational neighborhood, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. P-22.

<sup>19</sup> Havva Shaw (2012), *“Why do some conflicts get more media coverage than others? , New Internationalist and media war coverage”*. Retrieved from journal of peace research. 45(3). P-17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, P-36.

different media groups are affiliated to the warring parties hence they are only on the business of mobilization for conflict by setting the agenda on what to report.

## **1.7 Empirical Literature Review**

Empirical literature review is anchored on the three objectives of the study which includes; examining the role played by media in South Sudan conflict, investigation of the impact of media on South Sudan conflict and lastly to examine the link between media and conflict in south Sudan.

### **1.7.1 Role played by media in South Sudan Conflict.**

More than sixty different ethnic groups divided into separate tribes due to geography call South Sudan their home. The country has witnessed a long standing history of conflict among the ethnic groups, which intensified further in 2013 during its recent civil war. The conflict and the resulting destruction of property and the displacement of people made severely worse the humanitarian needs of the country. The war disrupted local markets, trade routes, grazing patterns and farming cycles. Many of the displaced citizens lost their homes and livelihoods when they fled to safety. In an assessment of the underlying causes that led to the conflict in South Sudan, the African Union Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan (AUCISS) attributed the conflict that started in 2013 to shortcomings in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 and the implementation. The commission noted that talks involved in ending north-south Sudan violence focused so much in ending the conflict and overlooked structural and democratic transformation of South Sudan after independence.

Numerous investigations into the conflict of South Sudan have determined that the media had a role to play in the conflict of South Sudan. Access to the media in the country has mostly been

limited to those living in urban areas and a few people in small towns and rural areas. The most common formal medium for news in South Sudan has been the radio, followed by the South Sudan television, and then newspapers. For a long time, the use of the internet was not widespread in the country partly due to low literacy levels but access increased over time thanks to increased ownership of mobile phones and an improvement in cellular network infrastructure and coverage. For a long time, FM radio stations were a convenient form of media to reach the masses since they also did broadcast to the locals in small towns and rural areas in their native dialects.

When conflict broke out in the country in 2013, News coverage by many media outlets mostly documented the atrocities that were taking place in the major towns of Juba, Wau, Aweil, Malakal, Bor, among other areas. Stories were aired of rebel forces engaging in battle, families attacked and massacred, and the mass burial of victims. The media coverage of the conflict was able to air to the world civilian killings that were taking place during the conflict and the gross human rights violations that was taking place during the conflict. International media outlets also gave the world a glimpse of the dire humanitarian situation in the country. Over the reporting period, the media documented how forces loyal to the government and the opposition broke the implementation of ARCSS (Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan) which had been signed a year earlier in Ethiopia under the supervision of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The media reported how the spread of the war from Juba to other parts of the country expanded the conflict's nature. Escalation of violence between armed opposition groups and those of the government was highlighted as to how it was brutal in parts of Bahr el-Ghazal region and the greater Equatoria region. Communities were further polarized by intense violence along ethnic lines. The opposition party, Sudan People Liberation Army (SPLA) split, causing a shift in

alliances among local commanders and rebel leaders. This resulted in a wider fragmentation of the opposition and defections of high-profile members of the cabinet, army, and the judiciary. The media reported widely how defectors accused the opposition and government officials of pursuing agendas driven by ethnic interests and personal ambitions. Grievances by the local communities during the conflict were also aired in the media. Local communities accused the army widely of looting, extrajudicial killings, and predatory attacks on perceived supporters of the opposition. In October of 2015, president Kiir issued a decree dividing the country's ten states to twenty eight. This action appeared to have sparked local tensions with most locals contending that the introduced boundaries altered ethnic balance and exacerbated competition for resources like land.

The media also not only reported on a life of displacement, starvation, disease, and malnutrition but was also actively involved in reporting the ongoing peace talks and the several attempts made at attracting leaders to the negotiation table. Entities such as the UN, diplomatic missions, NGOs, independent publications, conflicting parties, and ordinary citizens also utilised the media as a platform to discuss peace and conflict related issues. Intense pressure put on President Salva Kiir and his former vice president Riek Machar, partly with the help of both the local and international media made the two leaders in 2018 to meet in Khartoum for the first time in over two years for peace talks. The meeting ended with signing of a new peace deal that called for cease-fires and the sharing of government positions.

### **1.7.2 Impact of media on South Sudan conflict.**

The media has been noted to have had both a positive and negative impact on the conflict in South Sudan and was therefore a double edged sword in the conflict. The media in all its forms played a serious role in fanning the conflict in as much as it was a medium assisting in peace-building.

While the coverage and reporting of the humanitarian crises, violence, and peace processes was done with an aim of keeping the public informed, the warring parties utilised various media in different ways to put across their agenda.

The armed opposition was noted to have used the media as a channel for spreading war messages, recruitment of its fighters, and collection of resources. UNICEF estimates that close to 16000 children were recruited as fighters and were mostly aligned to the opposition. The opposition is also reported to have opportunistically utilised social media to draw resistance against the government to further heighten ethnic tensions among the communities. U.N agencies reports that in 2013, after an incident that occurred in Juba resulting in the death of many Nuer people, the opposition manipulated the incident through the use of social media to widen an existing rift with the government along sectarian line. The end result was a large number of the Nuer people having little or no political agenda getting drawn into the armed struggle to offer resistance against the government. The opposition is reported to have further exploited the incident and utilised social media to spread false messages of an imminent genocide, exaggerated the number of deaths from the previous attacks, and perpetrated propaganda of the government's existing long term plan of exterminating people from the Nuer community.

Another case in point implicating the opposition in fabrication of news was the distribution of an image all over social media portraying a dead Ugandan soldier to have been reportedly killed in the town of Bor by government forces yet his actual place of death was Somalia. Another photo that was widely used to fabricate facts was that of past killings done by the Lord Resistance Army in Congo being passed across as those that had taken place in Juba. Little evidence existed at the

time to support the claims made by the oppositions, yet the media, especially social media was still utilised to disseminate the false messages resulting in violence spreading fast and intensifying across the country.

The government on the other hand utilised media to counter messages by the opposition either by debunking the opposition's rhetoric's or by threatening perpetrators of violence. The government was widely accused of utilising the state owned radio and television in preserving its image and portraying the opposition in bad light. It also heavily condemned media coverage of the opposition and its activities. Media outlets were further outlawed from accommodating the activities of the rebelling opposition. The minister for information at one point made it a violation of national security policies and a criminal offence for the media to interview rebel leaders and to that effect banned certain publications. The minister for information argued that provisions of both local and international law gave him the power to do so. Many in the media fraternity saw it otherwise. Indeed international human rights law provides that incitement to violence and hatred can justify a country to impose restrictions on the freedom of expression but the measures put forward by South Sudan government often fell short of complying with the set international standards of necessity, legality, and proportionality. The authorities increasingly harassed journalists during the conflict and created a hostile media environment. Journalists were threatened in relation to stories they aired or articles they produced. Most threats were made in person or through phone calls. In August of 2016 for example, the National Security Service (NSS) accused two journalists based in the State of Western Equatoria of promoting the interests of western governments. The journalists were forced to flee the country after receiving warning of an imminent arrest. In April of 2017, the NSS reportedly arrested and questioned a media worker in relation to stories the

reporter's media house had covered about the conflict and displacement of people across the country. In May 2017, a journalist from a state in the Greater Equatoria region received credible intelligence of his imminent arrest by prison officials after reportedly circulating articles on the poor detention conditions in the country's prison facilities. The journalist was forced to go into hiding. Similarly, in June the same year, another journalist received verbal threats allegedly from a local official in Lakes region because he had published articles about the involvement of officials in the area on their involvement in human rights violation.

These are some actions by the government that in turn produced a toxic environment for the media and in turn initiated a propaganda war by the opposition. The propaganda wars reached new heights when the warring parties started engaging in the taking and retaking of small towns surrounding the state capital. The war escalated with each side of the warring partings aiming to humiliate the other through the media.

On a number of occasions, U.N. human rights agencies have asserted that the atrocities committed against civilians by both the opposition and government forces during the conflict constituted crimes against humanity.

The media was also noted to have facilitated the use of hate speech and inflammatory language by both of the warring forces in online and offline forums to target communities and individuals based on their political views, perceived beliefs, and their ethnicity. Through the various means of communication, that is, social media exchanges, images, SMS messages, threatening letters, and

cartoons, hate speech and inflammatory language was sometimes marked with rhetoric bordering on xenophobia which fuelled a climate of fear, mistrust, and violence among the ethnic groups.

The media was also used as a vehicle for building peace by various independent entities existing in South Sudan. Many entities like diplomatic missions, NGOs and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) utilised the media as a channel for managing the country's relationship with the international community. The government of South Sudan however viewed UNMISS as meddling in the country's internal affairs and taking sides with the opposition. This was after UNMISS raised concerns on the government's use of national media to foster violence. The government also accused UNMISS of supplying weapons to Lake State to arm the rebels in Bentiu and used the national television widely to air frustration against UNMISS despite its clarification that what was being delivered were critical supplies needed by the African Union contingent of peace keepers.

Over time during the conflict, questions emerged regarding the quality, ethics, balance and objectivity as regards to the use of media during the conflict by both the warring factions. Social media for example made it very easy for anyone to fabricate News and information during the conflict thus facilitating subjective reporting that precariously divided the country into sectarian lines. For example, posts made on pro-opposition social media handles were often found to contain unverified news reports that mostly turned out to be false. The posts frequently contained false reports on captured towns, number of government facilities and equipment destroyed, and number military troops killed. All these false postings was geared towards creating a false perception that the opposition was winning the conflict and in turn attract it more sympathisers and rebels. Such



use of social media was found to be a key driver in creating rifts among online users, as supporters of both warring parties sought to fiercely discredit the other.

In late 2016, UNMISS was alarmed by the sudden rise in hate speech and ethnically-driven rhetoric mostly through the media especially social media. This was seen as contributing to the polarization of communities and intensifying violence along ethnic lines. Social media platforms such as blogs, Facebook or Twitter, were determined as the tools for spreading derogatory messages. Curtailing this sudden rise in inflammatory messages also proved difficult because perpetrators rampantly used pseudonym accounts in online communication which is believed to have emboldened the users.

### **1.7.3 The link between media and conflict in South Sudan.**

In many conflicts around the world, the media has been both a medium for the dissemination of messages of peace and at the same time a catalyst in fuelling conflicts. Decades of conflict in South Sudan has left its communication infrastructure in a bad state. Accurate coverage of news in the country has been difficult for many media outlets thus creating an opportunity for warring parties to escape accountability for the atrocities they commit. The government has continuously conducted media crack down through harassment of journalists, adoption of draconian media legislations, application of restrictions, and in turn resulted in the country having weak media institutions.

Many journalists report that restrictions and harassment from the government has forced many of them into self-censorship and can only report on matters considered non-controversial. Many have had to employ precautionary measures when writing newspaper articles and they can only assign

their articles attributes like “Staff Writer” or the name of their media house to safeguard reporters from state reprisals. Such tactics have contributed in the country having weak media institutions and has aided in fanning conflicts because warring factions are not held accountable for their actions.

Political, social, economic, and logistical obstacles also continue to pose significant challenges in news reporting and therefore only leaving radio as the most viable medium of reaching the masses because of its relatively inexpensive cost of operation. In South Sudan, radio is therefore the most common media, with more than thirty radio stations competing for listeners in the country. Every state now has a radio station and more than a quarter of the population have a regular access to a radio. Radio stations that are popular with the citizens include Radio Miraya, South Sudan Radio, Radio Liberty, Eye Radio, Bakhita Radio, BBC World Service, Capital Fm, and many more. The popularity of radio across the country has made it be regarded as the most suitable way to target a large portion of the population and is an easy medium of overcoming the challenges brought about by low literacy rates.

The popular use of radio in the country therefore makes it a key medium for sending messages of war and peace in times of conflict. Radio’s ability to reach the masses has even compelled humanitarian agencies offering aid in the region to exploit them. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), for example, in collaboration with Free Voice South Sudan unveiled the radio program ‘Hiwar al Shabab,’ which offers the youth opportunities to discuss the main drivers of conflict amongst communities. The program has received positive reviews from very many listeners and have highlighted its potential to build long lasting peace in the country. Radio and

the media in general has now also become a medium that can be used to mobilize humanitarian, peacekeeping and diplomatic resources and initiate an international response to end emerging conflicts. Thanks to the media, humanitarian response received by South Sudan during the conflict is considered to be amongst the most expensive in the world. Funding by the U.S to South Sudan, for example, on development, humanitarian, reconstruction, peacekeeping, and security sector support has exceeded over \$11 billion dollars since the conflict erupted in 2013. This represents one of the largest foreign aid investment made globally by the U.S in the past decade. The U.S State Department also requested additional funds in foreign aid to South Sudan in order to be able to mitigate conflict, promote reforms, foster recovery and stability, and deliver to the country essential education and health services.

Addressing constraints such ongoing hostilities, access challenges for humanitarian agencies has also become easy through media mobilisation. For example, international diplomatic push with the assistance of the media, led to additional U.N. peacekeepers being deployed to Juba during the conflict. The additional troops were drawn from African countries and constituted the Regional Protection Force (RPF). It was mandated to provide security in the capital and create conditions more conducive to foster stabilization of the country.

### **1.8 Gaps in the Literature**

A wide gap exists among the rural and urban population of South Sudan in terms of their access to the media. Rural communities' access to the media is extremely low and limited compared to the urban residents. No data or studies are available to indicate how conflict managed to erupt spontaneously all over the country with the existing gap and the role the media played in fanning or extinguishing the conflict that was witnessed all over the country starting in 2013.

## **1.9 Justification of the Study**

There are three broad justifications proposed by these study which include: policy, academic and to the general public.

### **1.9.1 Academic Justification**

At the academic level, the study contribution is twofold: firstly, while this study agrees with the efforts made so far by other researchers on some of the related issues regarding the issue of media and conflict, this research is relevant as it will assist in academic studies and further advance the work of previous scholars on the research. Secondly, the study also proposed areas for future research in the discourse of media and conflict. Additionally, the literature review demonstrates scarcity on understanding of the nexus between media and conflict. . Therefore this study seeks to contribute to filling this gap.

### **1.10.2 Policy Justification**

Policy makers have been slow to understand the importance of media in shaping modern conflict or how, with proper support, it can help create conditions for peace. This study provided in-depth knowledge to policy makers on matters of media and conflict. Lastly, the policy significance of this study purely rests on the application of the findings of the study. The findings of this study laid a foundation over which decision makers base their policy formulation, coordination as well as implementation.

### **1.10.3 General public justification**

If the findings of this study would be considered by policy makers in policy making on matters concerned with media and conflict, then this will eventually lead to safer society. This so because the study has critically examined the role of media in South Sudan conflict and give

recommendations on how to use media to create platforms for peace in event of violent conflict instead of letting the media to propagate of violent conflict.

### **1.11 Research Hypotheses**

The hypotheses provides empirically testable variable which offered guide to the data collected in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Therefore the data to be collected involved the following hypotheses:

H1: Media plays a huge role in South Sudan violent conflict.

H2: Media has an impact on South Sudan violent Conflict.

H3: There is a link between media and conflict in South Sudan.

### **1.12 Theoretical Framework**

This part examines the main theory which was used to guide the study by helping to explain the role of media on conflict. This study was guided by social responsibility theory. The social responsibility theory was developed in 1947 by United States commission on freedom of press. The commission provided that the press should be comprehensive, truthful and intelligent while enjoying freedom of press. In the event of conflict, social responsibility theory calls for media to first prioritize on public interest. Middleton argues that the key focus of social responsibility theory is that all warring parties should be given an impartial representation so that the audience has enough information to make its choice.<sup>21</sup> Equally, Mcquail puts forward that social responsibility

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Radoli (2009), "Press freedom and media role in conflict and peace-building , case of post 2007 election violence". Doctoral dissertation, school of global studies, University of Gothenburg. Bitsteam press publishers. P-25.

theory asserts that media must be responsible to the people by not broadcasting any information that could lead to conflict or any social disruption.

Plathotam puts it that social responsibility theory also calls media channels like newspapers and radio stations to provide flat forms on which the parties in conflict can exchange credible information in order to avoid misperception and misunderstanding that could lead to protracted conflict.<sup>22</sup> This theory is relevant to the study since it advocates for media freedom and prevents media from putting forth sensitive and manipulative information that can lead to violent conflict as the case with South Sudan local media groups.

### **1.13 Research Methodology**

This part covers the methodology that was used in carrying out this study. Data sources and data collection methods, research design, research site, and data analysis are also discussed. Secondary and primary data was both used in this study. The secondary data was sourced mainly from library where variety of books, journals, newspapers and magazines were also utilized. Primary data was sourced from sampled population by use of questionnaires and interviews.

#### **1.13.1 Research Design**

Research design refers to an arrangement of conditions or collections or the set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the research problem. This study adopted mixed method research design in order to allow the researcher gather information, summarize, present and interpret data for the purpose of clarification. The mixed

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<sup>22</sup> George Plathotam (2008), *“Truth Integrity and social responsibility of media: Going beyond blood dripping stories on Northern East India”*. Paper presented on North East India and its transnational neighborhood, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati. P-22.

method or rather use of both qualitative and quantitative methods ensured total representations of experiences or associations. Furthermore mixed method approach ensured trustworthiness of inferences gained and at the same time promotes diversity of opinions for the same experiences.

### **1.13.2 Study Location**

Research site was South Sudan which is at east central of Africa. As per the census conducted in 2018, the country has a population of 10,975,927 people. South Sudan youngest country in Africa since it gained its independence from Sudan in the year 2011. The country has experienced civil war since 2013 until February 2020 when the leaders of warring groups (Salva Kiir and Riek Machar) agreed to form a coalition government.

### **1.13.3 Target Population**

The target population for this study was South Sudanese people with a specific focus to the following groups: South Sudan refugees in Kenya, South Sudan Journalists, South Sudan people in diaspora (Kenya) and scholars.

### **1.13.4 Study Sample**

According to 2018 census, South Sudan has a population of 10,975,927 people. Conducting a research study by administering questionnaire and interview on this entire population is highly impossible, costly, tedious exercise and time consuming, hence these necessitates adoption of a study sample.

For the purpose of this study the number of respondents was determined using this formula adopted from Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) when population is more than, 10,000.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$d^2$$

Where:+

n = the desired sample size

z = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level

p = proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured.

$$q = 1 - p$$

d = level of statistical significance set

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{(1.96)^2 (.50) (.50)}{(0.5)^2} \\ &= 384^{23} \end{aligned}$$

The study sample is represented by the following table.

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<sup>23</sup> Mugenda and Mugenda. (1999), *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches In Research*". Published by Research Gate, on July 2017. P-12.



**Table 1.1 Research Population and Sampling Technique**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Sampling technique</b>
South Sudan Refugees in Kenya.	324	Random sampling
South Sudan Journalists	30	Simple Random
Scholars	10	Purposive sampling
Red Cross (South Sudan Officials).	20	Random
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>384</b>	

**Source: Researcher, 2020.**

The sample comprised of the four categories highlighted on table 1.1 above. Sampling for each category applied different sampling techniques as indicated on the table above.

### **1.13. 5 Data Sources and Data Collection Methods**

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered through open-ended questionnaire and interview guides, while secondary data entailed academic books, journals, periodicals, reports and internet sources. Print media and publications of key nongovernmental organizations were also considered.

### **Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Methods**

Reliability denotes the degree to which the instruments of research have yielded consistent research outcomes following trials repetition.<sup>24</sup> The dependability of data collection tools was improved in this study by the piloting of the questionnaires on the control population which is not part of the sample selected for the main study. The pilot questionnaires were subsequently analysed

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<sup>24</sup> Mugenda, O. "O and Mugenda (1999) Research Method-Quantitative and Qualitative approaches Nairobi." (2013).

using Cronbach's reliability coefficient in SPSS, 21.0. A 0.7 alpha value and above, which according to Mugenda, is suitable and considered to arrive at group inferences with greater accurate percentages.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.13.6 Data Analysis**

Data collected from the field was analyzed by use of qualitative methods. The data was further analyzed into themes related to the research questions. The responses in the questionnaire were coded, tabulated and processed by use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

### **1.13.7 Ethical Considerations**

The study gave due diligence and maintenance of confidentiality of records and identities of participants. The study also sought acquisition of relevant research license. Therefore, the research was guided by existing legislations on the conduct of research in Kenya. Additionally, the study adhered to academic honest and objectivity by acknowledging the authors, sources of all materials and references which were cited throughout the study, honestly this was done to the best knowledge of the researcher.

## **1.14 Chapter Outline**

**Chapter one:** introduces the topic and gives the background to it. It also sets a broad context of research study, statement of the problem, justification, theoretical framework, literature review, hypothesis, and methodology of the study.

**Chapter two:** This chapter was anchored on objective one of the study which is to examine the role played by media in South Sudan conflict.

**Chapter three:** This chapter endeavored to examine the link between media and conflict in South Sudan.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

**Chapter four:** This chapter focused on objective two of the study and dwelled on investigating the impact of media on South Sudan conflict.

**Chapter Five:** this chapter covered the Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

When South Sudan was drawn into a protracted violent conflict in late 2013, the need for information regarding the conflict automatically attracted media attention. Different mediums were utilised in reporting and circulating news pertaining to the conflict. Several newsworthy events took place during the conflict and attracted the coverage of both the local and international media. The newsworthy events included the eruption of violence and armed clashes, the emergence of a humanitarian crisis, and the holding of negotiations leading to the signing of peace agreements.

#### **2.1 Role played by Media in reporting Violence and Armed Clashes**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, violent clashes erupted in South Sudan's capital Juba. On the following successive days the clashes quickly spread across the states of Unity, Jonglei, Upper Nile, Warrap, Central and Eastern Equatoria states. The rapidly increasing intensity of the conflict not only captured the attention of local media but also international media. Media coverage of the conflict was able to air to the world civilian killings that was taking place during the clashes, gross human rights violations and the displacement of thousands that was taking place during the conflict. The media reported how the spread of the war from Juba to other parts of the country expanded the conflict's nature. Escalation of violence between armed opposition groups and those of the government was highlighted as to how it was brutal in parts of Bahr el-Ghazal region and the greater Equatoria state region. Heart-wrenching stories and reports filled the media on the human toll violence and brutality was having on civilians. Stories and reports were presented of people burnt in hospitals and places of worship, mass burials, raped women, extrajudicial killings,

massacres, torture and many more. Accusations were also rife towards the government of illegal detentions, suppression of critics and the restriction of media freedom.<sup>26</sup> The situation in the country was made even worse by a severe famine outbreak that was also taking course during the conflict.

The period between December 2013 and April 2014 witnessed the heaviest fighting and highest number of casualties. Reports indicated that the fighting that broke out in Juba within the Presidential Guard evolved into violence that first spread in Juba's neighbourhoods of Gudele, New Site, Eden, Munuki, Mangaten, Mia Saba, and Jebel. Security forces and members of the presidential guard from the Dinka tribe targeted Nuer civilians and soldiers. They carried out house to house searches, killing Nuer civilians and soldiers in and near their homes.<sup>27</sup> Despite wide media reports and coverage of the events, international and regional response was slow leading to unchecked spread of violence and human rights violations. Targeted attacks, murder, kidnapping, burning of homes and gender based violence continued to be widespread without any intervention. Tension and fears of impending attacks was also rife in far flung regions that had not yet witnessed violence. The media framed the situation variously as violence, conflict or chaos but progressively as the conflict intensified, the media adopted a more desperate style, describing the conflict as self-destruction, bloodletting or massacre.<sup>28</sup> Martell points out that it this style of reporting by the media that may have assisted in prompting international intervention on the conflict. The author also points out that the common usage of such nouns in the media may have also had the potential of

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<sup>26</sup> Canadian Department of Justice (2014). *Armed Conflicts Report –South Sudan*.

<sup>27</sup> UNMISS/OHCHR (2017) *Report on human rights violation in South Sudan Conflict. Juba Massacres and the role played by peace keeping mission*.

<sup>28</sup> Martell, Paul (2016). *South Sudan is massacre and international community laxity*.

influencing the parties involved in the conflict to question their destiny in the crisis and reconsider their role.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas many local media stations had been shut down and were off air in the later part of 2014 after the government of South Sudan intensified restrictions against mainstream media reporting on the conflict, a number of international media stations were still reporting on the conflict both locally and outside the country. Most international media houses like *Aljazeera English* and *CNN* took advantage of social media and real-time internet press to bypass the ban on mainstream media coverage. It is also widely reported that many international media stations monitored social media to determine which regions violence was most intense.

## **2.2 Role of Media in reporting the ensuing Humanitarian Crisis**

South Sudan inevitably incurred humanitarian repercussions from the conflict that engulfed it. The media reported on a life of displacement, starvation, disease, and malnutrition. International media outlets also gave the world a glimpse of the dire humanitarian situation in the country. The consequences of the conflict was most devastating to civilians who lost their livelihoods, got displaced, injured or died. An estimated 80,000 to 90,000 are reported to have been injured and another 5000 killed during the conflict.<sup>30</sup> Up to 1.9 million got displaced and are believed to have sought refuge in neighboring countries. Stories and reports graced both the local and international media as to how the country's poor state of infrastructure including bridges and roads presented a

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<sup>29</sup> Martell, Paul (2016). South Sudan is at verge total conflict and no one helping.

<sup>30</sup> U.N. Human Rights Council (2016) *Assessment the role of United Nations in conflict, reconciliation, rehabilitation and post conflict reconstruction.*

significant challenge to local humanitarian agencies in accessing affected civilians, many of whom had no access to water, food, medicine, or shelter.

The ensuing humanitarian crisis widely covered and reported by the media prompted international donors to mobilize support for NGOs and UN agencies working in South Sudan to alleviate mass suffering. There was widespread reports in the media however that the international community was lacking in unity and decisiveness in calling for safe humanitarian access and protection of civilians.<sup>31</sup> The South Sudan situation presented frustrations and malaise among humanitarian actors. Wide spread perception spread by the media existed that the international community was weak and late in intervening and publicly condemning the atrocities that were being instigated by the warring factions.<sup>32</sup> Coverage by international media was very critical at the lack of calls for ceasefire by South Sudan neighbours and the failure to address the mass exodus of citizens from the country. Media coverage however appeared to be somewhat unbalanced and widespread suspicion existed that certain claims made by the media of human rights violations were in fact exaggeration and misinterpretation of the reality.<sup>33</sup>

When the war started in December 2013, the media projected that the UN and AU were going to intervene quickly. However, 20 months down the line, hostilities were still dragging on and highlighting the inability of the two major agencies to stop the conflict.<sup>34</sup> Certain donors however stepped in with remarkable generosity to help alleviate the situation. The United States for example

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<sup>31</sup> UN OCHA (2015) *Humanitarian Bulletin: South Sudan Bi-weekly Update*.

<sup>32</sup> U.N. Security Council (2015), *Interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206*, U.N. Document S/2015/656.

<sup>33</sup> Paula Cristina Roque and Remember Miamingi (2017) *Beyond ARCISS: New fault lines in South Sudan*: ISS East Africa.

<sup>34</sup> South Sudan Protection Cluster (2014) *Macro Analysis of Conflict in South Sudan*.

provided an estimated \$ 1.9 billion in humanitarian aid in response to the crisis. The U.S. non-emergency aid for the year 2015 was \$ 260 million, all channelled towards the mitigation of the conflict, delivery of education and health services, promotion of reforms, recovery and stability.<sup>35</sup> Apart from the humanitarian response, the U.S was a financial contributor and one of the key donors to UNMISS as it initiated efforts to mitigate the conflict.<sup>36</sup>

The high level of funding was reported to have been as a result of a number of influencing factors, including intense media coverage and the political subtext of the conflict. One of the major motivating factors of such donor behaviour was the fact that South Sudanese authorities had little to no say on the utility of the funds which was solely directed by local humanitarian agencies. Many critics in the media however felt that donors were not only driven by humanitarian needs but also political interests.<sup>37</sup>

Most humanitarian efforts during the peak of the conflict in 2013 and 2014 focused on evacuation of civilians to safer grounds and the provision of food, shelter, healthcare, sanitation, water, and psycho-social support.<sup>38</sup> Humanitarian space and access was however an issue with the South Sudanese authorities. UNMISS continuously negotiated prior notification with SPLA, so that organized convoys were not targeted by armed forces. The media also reported how humanitarian convoys were occasionally disrupted by gunmen engaging in heavy shelling and blockage of roads. A report by UNMISS indicates that 30 percent of organized convoys offering humanitarian assistance were cancelled because of problems owing to SPLA restricting their movement in the

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<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service (2016) *Report on the South Sudan Situation*.

<sup>36</sup> UNMISS (2016) *Conflict in South Sudan: A Human Rights Report*.

<sup>37</sup> Humanitarian Outcomes (2016) *Aid staff and Security, Report*.

<sup>38</sup> UN OCHA (2016) *South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan*.



country.<sup>39</sup> Cases existed of harassment, violence towards aid workers, theft, looting, and interference with humanitarian assets. The mandate and size of the peacekeeping troops also had to be modified several times because the government of South Sudan had conditioned peacekeeping operations in the country.<sup>40</sup> Coping mechanisms developed by the UN during the earlier conflicts experienced in South Sudan enabled UNMISS to respond effectively to the crisis with basic needs such as food, medicine and shelter. Media organisations also mounted well publicised campaigns through their networks to mobilise for assistance to those affected.

Following a ceasefire agreement in 2018, the media reported humanitarian agencies shifting their focus to re-settlement of displaced civilians, many of whom had returned back to the country despite the still evidently fragile situation in the country. Return programmes highlighted in the media included provision of basic materials needed for shelter, psychosocial support, and the provision of water, health care, and sanitation. Implementing agencies were however criticised by some in the media for being too materialistic and supply driven, and that aid was not always suitably adapted to the local context.<sup>41</sup>

### **2.3 Role of Media in the signing of the Peace Agreement**

Efforts at securing peace during the South Sudanese conflict had been elusive for a long time. An earlier peace agreement signed in 2015 had failed to secure peace in the country and various factions to the conflict continued to disagree on what they wanted from peace negotiations. Some of the reasons highlighted as contributing to the failure of the 2015 peace agreement dubbed

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<sup>39</sup>UNMISS/OHCHR (2017) *Report on conflict situation in South Sudan*. Conflict escalates and possess danger on regional stability.

<sup>40</sup> U.N. Security Council (2015), *Interim report on South Sudan conflict and questions on implementation of Security Council resolution 2206*, U.N. Document S/2015/656.

<sup>41</sup> Humanitarian Outcomes (2016) *Aid Worker Security Report*.

Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) included failure by the parties to adhere to the terms of the agreement, lack of genuine cooperation by the various factions and insufficient legitimacy of the parties signing the agreement. Additionally, media coverage of the 2015 peace agreement negotiations was criticised for spreading rumours and circulating inadequate information, thereby contributing negatively to the success of the peace agreement. Those familiar with the agreement agree that it was good for the people of South Sudan but deplored its implementation. One respondent for this study concurred that:

The 2015 peace agreement was a fair deal for South Sudanese. Many saw it as a genuine document that was going to end the suffering of many people, but unfortunately it did not realize serious implementation due to the egos of the leaders who signed it. The government takes the biggest share for the failure of the agreement because it insisted from the very early days of implementation on reservations.

Mediation talks for the 2015 agreement was conducted by IGAD, a regional bloc composed of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda, Sudan, and South Sudan. While the role of IGAD in mediating talks for the agreement was highly valued, many accused it alongside AU for not defending its existence.

In 2018, armed and political actors to the conflict signed a revitalised peace agreement after months of negotiations. The peace agreement was signed by President Salva Kiir, SPLM iO's Riek Machar, and other political parties which were also actors to the conflict. All the parties committed to ending the raging conflict and undertaking political reforms while signing the agreement. The

2018 peace agreement dubbed Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) gave way to the setting up of a new Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGONU). Priorities of R-TGONU under R-ARCSS is to oversee national reconciliation, repatriate and resettle the displaced, restore stability, devolve power to local and state level, and establish a new constitution.<sup>42</sup> The revitalized agreement also established a National Pre-Transitional Period Committee (NPTC) whose responsibility is to oversee implementation of activities such as raising awareness of the agreement, reunification of forces, initiation of national reconciliation, implementation of security arrangements, review of relevant laws and fundraising for the implementation of the agreement.

Whereas the 2018 revitalised peace agreement was cautiously received by the international community after the failure of the 2015 agreement, the incumbent government sought the assistance of the media to popularize it amongst South Sudanese. Different types of media including radio, TV, online platforms and print were utilised by the government in circulating information on the revitalised peace agreement.<sup>43</sup> Notable efforts by the media to propagate acceptance of the revitalised peace agreement included broadcasting debate programs, coverage of rallies to create awareness of the agreement, and airing advertisements associated with the peace agreement. Over the reporting period, the media documented various provisions of the revitalised peace agreement that significantly changed the scope of the government. This change in the scope of the government had been prompted by an increase in the number of actors in the conflict. Under the R-ARCSS, the presidency and the cabinet is composed of one president, five vice presidents

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<sup>42</sup> Paula Cristina Roque and Remember Miamingi (2017) Media in stages of conflict and conflict resolution. South Sudan conflict and Media. East African.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Powell, (2019) *Sudan and South Sudan Media and telecoms landscape guide*.

and 35 ministers. The president retains powers and authority as previously enshrined in the 2011 Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (TCSS). The agreement also introduced voting and consensual mechanisms in addition to collegial responsibility in the appointment of constitutional office holders. The First Vice President retains deputy roles in all constitutional institutions in the security, economic and governance bodies.<sup>44</sup>

Wide discussions continue to grace the media over how long the revitalised peace agreement will hold together. Analysts in the media are sceptical on the revitalised peace agreement given earlier peace agreements had failed and various factors exist that seem to threaten the revitalised one. Institutional bodies set up to oversee a smooth implementation of the peace agreement fall short in fulfilling their mandate due to operational challenges that affect their efficiency. Some of the institutions that continue being highlighted in the media include the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), Regional Protection Force (RPF), and Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC).<sup>45</sup> Concerns are rife that these institutions lack sufficient funding, leverage, control and command structures to fulfil their obligations. Constant violation of the cease-fire agreement has also become a consistent media observation. One of the key pillars to the revitalised peace agreement was the incorporation of Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHa) but parties continue to violate and impede its smooth operation. There is a lack of serious commitment by political leaders to show goodwill in observing the terms of the peace agreement.

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<sup>44</sup> Revitalized Agreement of Resolution of the Conflict of South Sudan, September 2018.

<sup>45</sup>The Star (2018). *Salva Kiir and Riek Machar sign peace agreement in Khartoum*.

The degree of commitment to R-ARCSS and the search for peace continue to face hurdles because of mistrust in government and media portrayal of R-TGONU as “a marriage of convenience”.<sup>46</sup> This is because the entities to the agreement have been forced to operate together due to circumstances and are not bound to a peaceful coexistence because their wishes hardly coincide. According to an article by Roque and Miamingi, if there is no peace and harmonious working relationship by those working in the executive, then by extension peace will be elusive among ordinary South Sudanese citizens. The media and the public therefore see the leaders as people who cannot be trusted to pursue a much needed governance change that is expected to ensure peace.<sup>47</sup>

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The media played varied roles in the conflict of South Sudan. When the conflict first erupted, media coverage of the conflict was able to air to the world civilian killings that was taking place during the clashes, gross human rights violations and the displacement of thousands. The consequences of the conflict was most devastating to civilians who lost their livelihoods, got displaced, injured or died. The media reported on the ensuing humanitarian crisis and aired stories of a life of displacement, starvation, disease, and malnutrition. Efforts at securing peace through peace talks and the signing of peace agreements also attracted media attention. The media offered international actors assistance in sensitizing citizens on the ongoing peace talks during the conflict and the milestones that were to be achieved from both ARCSS and R-ARCSS. Notable efforts by the media to propagate acceptance of the revitalised peace agreement included broadcasting debate

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<sup>46</sup> The Star (2018). *Salva Kiir and Riek Machar sign peace agreement in Khartoum*.

<sup>47</sup> P. C. Roque and R. Miamingi (2017) *Beyond ARCISS: New fault lines in South Sudan*: ISS East Africa.

programs, coverage of rallies to create awareness of the agreement, and airing advertisements associated with the peace agreement.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LINK BETWEEN MEDIA AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN

#### 3.0 Introduction

Over a period of nine years since the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the media has had a substantial part to play in arbitrating relationships between the state and citizens, and influencing the democratic dispensation of the country. The media in South Sudan has transformed how marginalised communities access information and the communities have increasingly become reliant on the media, treating information churned out by the media with greater credibility than other sources. For most of the period after independence, the media was seen nationally and internationally as an indicator of democratic vitality in South Sudan. The media was always at the forefront of the advances made to transform South Sudan and always acted as a platform for giving public debate a vigorous fora. Estimates indicate that when the conflict started in 2013, seventy media houses had their operations in South Sudan, including sixty TV and radio stations and eight newspapers.<sup>48</sup>

The conflict that started in 2013 when President Salva Kiir disagreed with his Vice president Riek Machar and dissolved the entire government, however challenged the reputation of the media which played a fundamental role in alerting and informing the public of the choices, threats and dangers they faced throughout the conflict period. Most local mainstream media outlets governed their coverage and avoided the dissemination of information that would be perceived to stir conflict. Certain observers however accused the media of having failed to live up to ethical and

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<sup>48</sup> South Sudan Statistical Yearbook 2013

professional standards and thus contributed to fanning the fires of ethnic animosity and hatred, which was sweeping across the country during the conflict.

### **3.1 The advent of Local Media and its link to the Conflict**

The mainstream media and social media coexist as part of the media in South Sudan. After independence in 2011, the government of South Sudan passed a series of laws that liberalised the media and paved the way for the establishment of multiple television and local language radio stations so as to enhance local capacity and address news and information void that was present in the country. Competing for audience and listeners to the more than sixty indigenous ethnic groups that call South Sudan their home, another major incentive that drove the opening of these media stations was neither political nor developmental but commercial. Majority were founded as entertainment vehicles and were profit making enterprises for the owners. Upon their establishment, more local language radio stations attracted larger audiences than mainstream radio and TV stations like the state owned South Sudan Radio and South Sudan TV.<sup>49</sup> A baseline survey conducted in 2013, for example, recorded that 70% of households in the country listen to local radio stations and that radio remains a major source of information for people both in the rural and urban areas.<sup>50</sup>

Early content broadcasted by the local language radio stations was mainly entertainment and music based, but listeners' demands encouraged them to quickly shift their airtime in favour of public discussion fora. Among the first radios to shift their airtime in favour of public discussion fora included Radio Malakal, Bakhita Radio, Radio Saut Al-Mahabba Malakal, Radio Rumbek, Radio

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<sup>49</sup> Robert Powell (2011), '*South Sudan and international Media and telecom topology guide*', BBC Media Action and commendation.

<sup>50</sup> South Sudan Statistical Yearbook 2013



Jonglei Bor, and Radio Wau. Almost all the local language radio stations had an extremely popular phone-in programmes and talk shows, often in prime time slots. Progressively, the talk shows became outlets for public debates and a medium for the expression of voices that had been suppressed for a long time by decades of wars long before South Sudan got its independence from Sudan. Many of the voices were disaffected, angry, and determined on change. Such platforms arguably became of much need if tensions rather than violence were to be defused through public debate.

In a politically fragile environment like that of South Sudan, moderation of such public debate would have required careful and skilled personnel but that was not the case. Most people hired as presenters in the radio stations were hardly trained commentators or journalists but personalities and entertainers familiar with their target audience. Investigations conducted in these radio stations determined that personnel in these radio stations had little to no training in moderating debates or discussions in conflict situations. In fact, a report prepared by the Union of Journalists in 2011 pointed out that journalists in South Sudan lack skills and basic training in journalism and that the available training is insufficient in terms of length, content, techniques, and training language.<sup>51</sup> The report further stated that most media professionals like editors are poorly trained and have no capacity to fully provide guidance and mentoring to other media professionals. As a result, ethical and professional standards are low and in many occasions leads to inaccurate, defamatory or libellous reporting.<sup>52</sup> When the conflict therefore broke out, some of local language radio stations clearly stated the position that a certain community was against another community. Talk shows

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<sup>51</sup> Union of Journalists (2011), *Empowering the Media in South Sudan: A Study of the Role of the Union of Journalists in South Sudan*. Integrity Research and Consultancy.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

appear to have been seized by those with strong and highly organized political views and many bordered on incitement and hate. A field visit to one of the radio station confirms the line, one respondent stated “The ethnic hate that was being propagated by our radio station against those from the other community was just unbelievable. What is most unfortunate is that we let callers speak bile and we just laughed.” Hate speech and inflammatory language appear not to have only been on radio but also on online forums where they also continued to target communities and individuals based on perceived beliefs, ethnicity, or political views. The ensuing negative rhetoric at times laced with xenophobic remarks helped fuel a climate of fear, mistrust and violence among the various ethnic groups.

According to Marieke et al. what was allowed to be said in terms of ethnic stereotyping, prejudices spread, and the spread of fear by some media stations definitely made the media complicit in fanning the conflict.<sup>53</sup> The scholars reports that some of the messages spread by the media were mostly implicit and not explicit. Most of the information passed through radio were not expressly clear that people should be killed, burnt or chased away, instead, they were coded messages mostly from people calling through the in-talk shows saying clearly how they wanted to liberate themselves from certain communities and positions.<sup>54</sup> Such views therefore gained prominence, power and currency by the mere fact that they were in broadcast and would simply galvanize and strengthen people into action. The abrupt rise in hate speech and ethnically driven rhetoric thus polarized communities and intensified violence. It subsequently expanded the nature of conflict from the capital Juba to other parts of the country.

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<sup>53</sup> Marieke T., Tim A., Larry A., (2016) *South Sudan at odds with itself: Dynamics of conflict and predicaments of peace*, London School of Economics Development Studies Institute.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

### **3.2 The link between the International Media and the Conflict**

International media houses are also reported to have been important media players during the conflict. International broadcasters such CNN, BBC World and Aljazeera were readily present in South Sudan during the conflict. These media organisations were responsible in shaping international perceptions of the conflict, and international reports had an influence on public debate. Criticisms have however been pointed out as to how certain international media reported the conflict. International media have been accused of having sensationalised and used inappropriate language to report the conflict. The use of words such as “ethnic cleansing”, “genocide” and “tribalism was common in their reporting.<sup>55</sup> According to a journal written by Baker, the international media sometimes reported erroneously that the conflict was between the Dinka and the Nuer tribes whilst all the indigenous ethnic groups in the country were involved.<sup>56</sup> The international media stations also tended to exaggerate the extent of violence in the certain regions of the country where conflict was minimal.

### **3.3 The National Broadcaster and the Conflict**

Stakeholders in mainstream media approached both informally and formally for purposes of this study believe that the performance of the media in the months and years that the conflicted lasted was a collective failure by media outlets to safeguard the interest of the public. This self-criticism is best articulated by one respondent who said; “I feel guilty as one of the journalists in this country, had the media lived up to its role it could have prevented the death of very many people, perhaps thousands of others would not have ended up displaced.” Such a sentiment echoes the gravity of influence the media had on the conflict.

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<sup>55</sup> Council on Foreign Relations – Global Conflict Tracker, Civil War in South Sudan.

<sup>56</sup> Baker, Aryn (2016). War crimes: Slaughter and Starvation haunt a broken South Sudan. *Time*, 187 (20) pp.20-27.

There were hopes that the signing into law of the Media Authority Act in 2013 by President Salva Kiir would mark a drastic change in character and performance of the media and specifically South Sudanese Television (SSTV). Ever since the inception of SSTV the national broadcaster was considered a government mouth piece. The media act therefore presented an opportunity, at least potentially for it to transform to an independent service broadcaster. During the conflict, the availability of such a broadcaster would have been important in the context of the situation that was prevailing at the time. SSTV is considered to be the only media station in South Sudan capable of becoming a credible source of information and news to its nationwide audience. In other words, during the conflict it had an opportunity to be independent, broadcasting in the best interest of the public and free from influence by commercial concern or the government. For a brief period after independence, collective effort by the government and international humanitarian agencies had been made to give it a transformation into an independent broadcaster, and it remarkably became unbiased towards government concerns and was considered balanced in its reporting. However, that did not last, the government increasingly became offended by the tone in some of its reporting leading to a change in its directorship. The station's legal foundations means that its ownership remains firmly anchored as a government property and therefore a change in its leadership meant that it was a matter of time before it toed back into government line. As a result, it lost credibility and favour with most of its audience and when the conflict began it was never considered a reliable source of information. According to a journal by Johnson, SSTV did not meet even the minimum legal obligations demanded from it as the main public service provider in South Sudan.<sup>57</sup> It

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<sup>57</sup> Johnson, Douglas H. (2014). *The political crisis in South Sudan*. African Studies Review, 57(3), pp. 167 – 174. doi:10.1017/asr.2014.97)

blatantly demonstrated a high level of biasness towards the government and SPLA forces during the crises.<sup>58</sup>

Johnson points out that SSTV is not the only national broadcaster to encounter such a situation. All former monopoly national broadcasters in Africa have encountered similar challenge of independence encountered by SSTV and are fighting to survive. Liberalisation of the media for example has introduced competition from a dynamic private sector which has achieved dominance and popularity with audiences and has left national broadcasters gasping for survival. Funding for SSTV from the government of South Sudan remains poor or static and this coupled with government control or influence has eroded efforts to build a credible state owned national broadcaster. Nevertheless, had SSTV been able to command national trust and respect with its broadcasts, it would have been in a suitable position during the conflict to come up with a public debate to inform the public. It would have focused on a national debate to establish the underlying cause of the political tension that was existent in the country at the time and was driving the conflict. It also could have played a critical role in the facilitation of a credible democratic discourse that may have worked to convince angry, frustrated or fearful citizens at the time that their voices were being reflected on a national public forum and not on a polarised political platform. Such a role by a national broadcaster at the time would have potentially made a difference especially in regions that experienced intense violence during the conflict.

### **3.4 Government Efforts to curtail Private Media Outlets and Journalists**

The government of South Sudan upon realising the influence the media was having on the conflict, sought to also exercise control of private media houses through the ministry of information and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

the media authority. The two institutions in 2014 released a memorandum advising media stations against broadcasting any content that might aid in fanning conflict. The government directive was rapidly followed by a series of other strict measures that clearly became an attempt to suppress operations of the media in the country. The government used its key institutions including those charged with security to control the media through censoring, confiscating publications and closing media houses. The restrictions imposed by the government were collectively targeted at entities or individuals present in South Sudan whose work, opinion or views the government deemed to be undermining the country's stability. Opinions or views that could trigger government restrictions were made to include those touching on political ineffectiveness, corruption, famine, economic crisis, expression of positive opinion regarding opposition figures, accountability, casualties resulting from military operations and many more. The restrictions would not only target local South Sudanese Media but also the international media who would require a visa and accreditation for their respondents to report from the country.<sup>59</sup>

Security agents were also embedded in media establishments to monitor their operations and direct what the media stations could broadcast or publish to the public. In the course of 2016 for example, the presence of National Security Service (NSS) in printing establishments of the *Juba Monitor* and *Nation Mirror* newspapers led to the removal of eight articles in their newspapers.<sup>60</sup> The censored articles are reported to have made reference to a press release by SPLA – IO chairman regarding Riek Machar being in exile. On 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017, the daily newspaper of *Juba Monitor* contained blank spaces in some of its pages due to edits directly ordered by NSS. The spaces contained content on Presidential Decrees issued regarding the internal restructuring of SPLA and

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<sup>59</sup> Canadian Department of Justice (2014). Armed Conflicts Report – Sudan

<sup>60</sup>The Daily Maverick (2018) *South Sudan: 'Freedom is Never Free'*

its top leadership. Other articles removed contained reporting on SPLA ineffectiveness and corruption, the security situation on the capital Juba after a presidential order directing the arrest of bodyguards for the former Chief of General Staff for SPLA Paul Malong.<sup>61</sup> The NSS on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017 also ordered editing of *The Dawn* newspaper for containing an opinion piece criticising the failure by the government to protect citizens within the territory of South Sudan during the conflict. Similarly, parts of an opinion piece for the same newspaper on its 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017 issue were edited following direct orders by NSS. The edited excerpts accused the government of bad governance and its protracted role in the conflict. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, the NSS ordered the temporary closure of *Eye Radio* for airing a voice clip of the exiled Vice-President Riek Machar. Permission to reopen was only granted eight days later after *Eye Radio* forwarded to the NSS an apology. At the beginning of 2018, *Free Voice radio*, *Al Rai* newspaper, *Al Tabeer* newspaper, *The Citizen* newspaper, and the *Nation Mirror* still remained non-operational even after closure by the NSS in 2015.<sup>62</sup>

The pattern of censorship continued for a long time resulting to not only loss of revenue for the media houses but the denial of critical information to readers across the country on the prevailing state of affairs. Government actions also infiltrated the internet and employed measures to intentionally prevent the access or dissemination of information online. In July of 2017 for example, upon the written instructions of South Sudan National Communication Authority (SSNCA), the websites of certain news organizations were blocked. The websites included those of *Sudan Tribune*, *Radio Tamazuj*, *Nyamilepedia* and others. SSNCA in defending its decision

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> UNMISS (2017), *Conflict in South Sudan: A Human Rights Report*.

claimed that the websites were spreading messages considered to be against the nation's peace interest.<sup>63</sup>

In the context of the conflict, a number of journalists were also reported to have been abducted, arrested or killed. On August of 2017 for example, a freelance reporter died while filming clashes between SPLA and SPLA – IO in the village of Kaya, Central Equatoria region. The journalist was one among ten journalists killed since the conflict erupted in 2013.<sup>64</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2016, a reporter with *Al-Mougif* newspaper, who had allegedly been abducted two days earlier was found in Gumbo area of the capital Juba bearing marks of severe beating. During his period in abduction, the reporter claims that his abductors accused him of writing articles on pervasive corruption in the Government and criticizing the establishment of 28 states by President Kiir. Upon his release on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2016, the reporter sought medical attention and thereafter went into hiding. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, thirteen civilians, three priests and two foreign journalists were arrested by SPLA soldiers and NSS officers in Nzara County in the greater Western Equatoria region after accusations of supporting SPLA-IO by providing food to them. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, a foreign journalist affiliated to Associated Press was arrested in Juba by NSS on accusations of publishing articles that were critical to the government. As a result, the NSS immediately deported him out of the country the same day.<sup>65</sup>

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Many journalists report that restrictions and harassment from the government has forced many of them into self-censorship and can only report on matters considered non-controversial. The

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<sup>63</sup> The Daily Maverick (2018) *South Sudan: 'Freedom is Never Free'*

<sup>64</sup> Martell, Paul (2016). Juba massacre and abuse of Human rights.

<sup>65</sup> UNMISS (2018), *Conflict in South Sudan: A Human Rights Report*.



measures by the government of South Sudan are being seen as compromising press freedom and the unabated kidnapping, abduction and killing of journalists are being seen as indicative of the government instilling fear among journalists and slowly destroying the media sector. Many journalists have resorted into employing precautionary measures when writing newspaper articles and have had to seek anonymity in order to safeguard themselves and their media houses from state reprisals. Such tactics have not only contributed to the country having weak media institutions but have also perpetuated the culture of impunity because warring factions cannot be held accountable for their actions. The regulatory and policy environment that is present in South Sudan is also considered hostile to the development of the media and a need also exists for progressive laws to be adopted to offer an impetus for the steady growth of the sector.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

Sudan has experienced conflicts for many decades leading to the displacement of many people from their homes. For many years the world's media has been focusing on Sudan with its wars dating back before the country's independence. The government of Sudan and the Southern People Liberation Army were the core parties in the Sudan civil war that lasted for over two decades. The war ended after the formation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the formation of the Republic of South Sudan. However, conflicts have continued to paralyze the newly found state, with the media blamed for fuelling this conflict. Throughout history, media has been a fundamental source of information about the lives of individuals and organizations. The enormous growth in communications technology has significantly changed how warfare, conflicts, and conflict resolution are conducted. Today, people worldwide have access to more information over a shorter timeframe about major developments in global relations. Such influences how these people react towards the information. This paper, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of media in South Sudan during and after the conflict.

#### **4.1 Impact of Media during the Conflict**

Normally, the media may be overlooked during conflict analysis because, in most cases, they are not a direct cause of conflict. However, the reality is that the media can be a vital tool that is used to promote conflict and misunderstandings when combined with other factors. Such has been experiences in various states around the world, for instance, Georgia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia. A report by USIP 2013, targeting the role of the media in vulnerable communities, revealed that the

media is often prone to misuse in developing countries. In South Sudan, the media has been tailored and manipulated to promote conflicts and move society far away from the rule of democracy.<sup>66</sup> Since the emergence of the conflict in Juba back in 2013, the media in South Sudan has been used by the audiences to spread propaganda and hate speech aimed at incitement.<sup>67</sup> A more significant part of news reporting in South Sudan is partisan supporting either the opposition or the government.

State-owned media outlets are the most commonly used news sources, although their level of trust in the society is shallow, particularly when reporting conflicts. As studies reveal, the media can be used to light ethnic conflict flames, and likewise, the same media can play a significant role in cooling down those conflicts. Such has been the case in South Sudan, where the media influences opinions among leaders.<sup>68</sup> The media in South Sudan has been exposed as being affected by many ethical challenges. For instance, state-owned media outlets were very conservative when airing about the conflicting news in the country. The government defended its image before the public by using the state-owned television and radio stations while painting a black image on the opposition. The influence on the media by the South Sudan government meant that the public got contradictory information that further prolonged the conflict.

Social media played a significant role in escalating the conflict in South Sudan. A majority of the south Sudanese citizens acquire information about the conflict and efforts towards peace through

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<sup>66</sup> Nyaba, Peter Adwok (1997), *Politics of Liberation in South Sudan*, Kampala: Fountain Books.

<sup>67</sup> Jok, Jok Madut. Report. Sudd Institute, 2015. Accessed August 4, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11033](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11033).

<sup>68</sup> United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan. (2016). UNMISS Facts and Figures. UN. At: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/facts.shtml>

social media, radio, or phone calls. Often, this information is exaggerated or fabricated, thus being a barrier to peace and reconciliation. It has been revealed that new media sites such as the internet, twitter, Facebook, among others, send out incorrect and misleading information that circulated very first over the internet. Thus, the people acted and made decisions from a biased and misinformed point of view.

Following the Juba incident in December 2013 that led to the conflict, the opposition side took advantage of inciting people against the government to arm and recruit more people in preparation for war. On its part, the opposition media focused so much on documenting this incident, aiming to put their political and military ambitions a notch higher. The opposition through its media took advantage of the Juba 2013 incident to incite the people against the government by framing it as killing its citizens, taking an ethnic perspective. Thousands of Nuer youths got recruited into the armed opposition ready for the rebellion.

It is viewed that the reporting of this incident by the opposition media was for incitement and widening the rift between the government and the citizens of Nuer ethnicity rather than to put into records the tragic human rights violation that happened during the incident. It is argued that the opposition used this incident to stock its military resources and to incite the people of Nuer to take revenge for the loss of their people who died in Juba. Such incitement drew many people into the war with little interest in the political struggle in rebellion against the government.

The opposition used this incidence to spread propaganda against the government by swelling up and triggering the Nuer youth's wrath and anger. They spread rumors that it was genocide against

the people of Nuer aimed at completely wiping the people of Nuer from South Sudan. The opposition media claimed that over 20,000 Nuer people died, further spreading the violence to more extensive regions in a short time. There was no concrete evidence and proof to back up these claims, contrary to a later report by an international authority that documented the number of deaths in Juba at around 500 people.

For such reasons, the government has used state legislation to terminate the coverage of opposition news by labeling it unlawful. Through the use of state-owned media outlets such as South Sudan TV, the government has engaged in a counter-attack war against the opposition messages by issuing arrest and violence threats against the journalists or debunking the armed opposition's claims. For instance, the South Sudan Minister of Information warned south Sudanese national media and publications against interrogating any opposition leader as this amounted to violating national security. Such attempts worsened the relationship between the media and the government, further heightening the propaganda. Thus, the international community engaged in blame games with the government accusing it of interfering with the country's politics and rights. In contrast, the government accused the international community of creating unnecessary politics. This promoted a volatile relationship between the government and the international community, particularly after the government allegedly issuing death threats against the media.

A climate of mistrust existed between the conflicting parties and the international community. Likewise, suspicion existed between the citizens of South Sudan and the conflicting parties: the government and the opposition. Thus, the citizens were in a state of political dilemma, not knowing which side to believe or trust. They could only follow the media outlets to get information that was

politically and ethnically biased. The final result is that the citizens made decisions based on misinformation and biased news as the media outlets were in constant competition for consumers aimed at influencing their politics. Such was a cause for the increased division among the citizens of South Sudan, further fuelling the conflict and violence.

The internet and the social media in South Sudan were used to mobilize and promote human suffering based on ethnic lines. The media and internet were vital in promoting the violence that took place in Juba in 2013. A study by CEPO on how Facebook was used during the violence to frame the conflict based on ethnicity rather than being caused by the struggle for political supremacy. This social site was much used to spread untrue and misinforming information to the public by fabricating lies. This false information created an environment of panic and fear, thereby fuelling more violence.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, the media was tailored to present events in a false perspective. For instance, there was a photo circulating in the social media of a Ugandan soldier who was fabricated as having been killed in Bor. In reality, he was killed in Somalia. Another photo illustrating killings in the democratic republic of Congo by the Lords Resistance Army was framed to describe killings in Juba. Such misinformation created an environment of incitement that triggered more violence.

#### **4.2 Impact of Media in Conflict Resolution in South Sudan (post-conflict media)**

Besides media being a vital tool in provoking conflict, studies have also revealed that media can be used constructively to resolve conflict. The media is a vehicle that conveys the varied views

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<sup>69</sup> Cosmas, Read. 2020. "The Role Of Social Media In The South Sudan Crisis". *Peace Insight*. <https://www.peaceinsight.org/es/blog/2014/10/role-social-media-south-sudan-crisis/?en=1>.

and perspectives in society. In this case, they act as agents in the conflict where their actions will impact the development of the conflict.<sup>70</sup> To help the media in South Sudan achieve this goal, UNICEF, in partnership with Search for Common Goal (SFCG) initiative, offered to train the media in South Sudan, who were seen as the leading influencers of the conflict.<sup>71</sup> These efforts aimed to promote these communication mediums to accommodate diversity in reporting and promote constructive dialogue towards reconciliation, healing, and peaceful coexistence. This was achieved by mainly offering media practitioners training on how to handle audiences when reporting news in a manner that will lower the chances of further conflicts.<sup>72</sup> These efforts proved appropriate, bearing in mind that most media practitioners in South Sudan had not received any training on conflict reporting. In contrast, others were entirely untrained and learned on the job. The training improved news reporting effectiveness as media practitioners started posting messages aimed at reconciliation on social media, thus being a road map to the establishment of peace.

Most people in South Sudan obtain news from radios and a few others from TVs. These media outlets have helped heal the conflict by providing a platform for different members of the society to interact and share their views and engage in discussions on how to solve the peace problems in South Sudan. Radio stations like Hiwar al Shabab have been promoting peace in the region by addressing core issues affecting the youth and the peaceful coexistence in the ethnically diverse country.

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<sup>70</sup> 2006. *Mediasupport.Org*. <https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ims-voices-of-war-2006.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> 2016. *Sfcg.Org*. [https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SFCG\\_Final-Report\\_Forcier2016.pdf](https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SFCG_Final-Report_Forcier2016.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

### **4.3 Conclusion**

It is safe to conclude that media freedom is at test in South Sudan. There is a lot of impartiality and imbalance in reporting conflict news, whereby it's challenging to present news from a balanced point of view when challenging the authorities. This is evidenced by threats by the government to arrest or kill journalists reporting for the opposition. Lack of media freedom is a gateway to misinformation, and the public is likely to form judgments based on unverifiable facts.

It has been established that the media is the mirror that reflects on the society, and often the public forms judgments based on news acquired through the media. The media can be a cause of conflict or a solution to the conflict, depending on its use. In South Sudan, the media has greatly been used as a vehicle for violence and conflict. It should be noted that the media alone does not cause conflict actively, but its interaction with other forces can spark a conflict. Media practitioners on old media channels such as the radio, TVs, and newspapers reported the conflict on partisan lines. Those working for the government presented the news in favor of the government while accusing the opposition media of misinforming the public. Similarly, the opposition media pointed fingers on the government. Such environments of mistrust and blame worsened the situation and further fuelled the ongoing conflict.

Ethnic rivalry and hatred were evident in most of the media news reporting. Rumors of genocide circulated everywhere, accusing the government of planning to exterminate the Nuer tribe that formed most of the opposition. Based on this propaganda, the opposition took advantage of mobilizing, arm, and inciting their youth to rebel against the government. What resulted was a political war fought on ethnic lines.



Similarly, new media such as the internet, Twitter, and Facebook were vital in fuelling the conflict. In the Diaspora, South Sudanese sent fabricated news about the conflict to their relatives at home, thus inciting them to act based on misleading information. Supporters of both the government and the opposition used these platforms to post news and updates about the conflict's state, most of which emerged to be untrue and fabricated to serve the interests of the parties. For instance, killings done elsewhere in other countries were linked with the ongoing conflict in South Sudan.

Contrary to being a cause of conflict, the media has proven to be a key element in peaceful reconciliation and healing. Several news outlets have opted to use their platforms to preach reconciliatory messages to the public to ease the conflict. On the other hand, social media users have opted to spread correct information free of propaganda, which has proven helpful in healing the nation. After the end of the conflict, the impact of media was that it took an active part in peace-building. The media engaged in active role in reporting on the peace attempts that followed the civil conflict in South Sudan. For instance, the media took an active part in monitoring of policy decisions that brought about the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the opposition and the South African government. The media is thus a strong tool for making policy decisions on peace building, and is a strong tool for providing and interpreting information. Also, it is a key element in building diplomatic relations among conflicting parties.

The damage caused by uncontrolled information can cause violence such as has been witnessed in various parts of the world, such as Hitler's hate speech propaganda against the Jews, the Rwanda genocide, and now the conflict in South Sudan. Therefore, it is recommended that the media exercise caution and responsibility when covering conflict news as this is a sensitive matter that

can cause more harm than cure. To achieve this, the media should be left to act independently without influence or coercion.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

With key focus on assessment of the role of media in conflict, a case of South Sudan, this study sought to examine the role played by media in South Sudan conflict, examine the link between media and conflict in south Sudan, investigate the impact of media on South Sudan conflict. This chapter therefore, covers summary of the key findings, presents conclusion and recommendations flowing from the three key objectives that guided the study.

#### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

This section covers key findings from each objective of the study.

##### **5.1.1 Role played by media in South Sudan conflict**

The study has found that when South Sudan was drawn into a protracted violent conflict in late 2013, the need for information regarding the conflict automatically attracted media attention not only at the local level, but at international level. Different mediums were utilized in reporting and circulating news pertaining to the conflict. Several newsworthy events took place during the conflict and attracted the coverage media. The newsworthy events included the eruption of violence and armed clashes, the emergence of a humanitarian crisis, and the holding of negotiations leading to the signing of peace agreements.

The media reported on the ensuing humanitarian crisis and aired stories of a life of displacement, starvation, disease, and malnutrition. Efforts at securing peace through peace talks and the signing of peace agreements also attracted media attention. The media offered international actors

assistance in sensitizing citizens on the ongoing peace talks during the conflict and the milestones that were to be achieved from both ARCSS and R-ARCSS. Notable efforts by the media to propagate acceptance of the revitalized peace agreement included broadcasting debate programs, coverage of rallies to create awareness of the agreement, and airing advertisements associated with the peace agreement.

### **5.1.2 The Link between media and conflict in south Sudan**

The Study has found many journalists reports indicating that there is restrictions and harassment from the government. The government has forced many of them into self-censorship and can only report on matters considered non-controversial. The measures by the government of South Sudan have compromised freedom of press and the unabated kidnapping, abduction and killing of journalists are being seen as indicative of the government instilling fear among journalists and slowly destroying the media sector.

Many journalists have resorted into employing precautionary measures when writing newspaper articles and have had to seek anonymity in order to safeguard themselves and their media houses from state reprisals. Such tactics have not only contributed to the country having weak media institutions but have also perpetuated the culture of impunity because warring factions cannot be held accountable for their actions. The regulatory and policy environment that is present in South Sudan is also considered hostile to the development of the media and a need also exists for progressive laws to be adopted to offer an impetus for the steady growth of the sector.

### **5.1.3 The impact of media on South Sudan conflict**

The study has found that there is a lot of impartiality and imbalance in reporting conflict news, whereby it's challenging to present news from a balanced point of view when challenging the authorities. This is evidenced by threats by the government of South Sudan to arrest or kill journalists reporting for the opposition. Lack of media freedom is a gateway to misinformation, and the public is likely to form judgments based on unverifiable facts. In South Sudan, the media has greatly been used as a vehicle for violence and conflict. It should be noted that the media alone does not cause conflict actively, but its interaction with other forces can spark a conflict. Media practitioners on old media channels such as the radio, TVs, and newspapers reported the conflict on partisan lines. Those working for the government presented the news in favor of the government while accusing the opposition media of misinforming the public.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

In a nutshell, among other roles of media in south Sudan conflict, the key one is that when conflict first erupted, media coverage of the conflict was able to air to the world civilian killings that were taking place during the clashes, gross human rights violations and the displacement of thousands. The media reported the devastating consequences of conflict that included loss of livelihood, malnutrition, displacement, injury and death. Efforts at securing peace through peace talks and the signing of peace agreements also attracted media attention. The media offered international actors assistance in sensitizing citizens on the ongoing peace talks during the conflict and the milestones that were to be achieved from both ARCSS and R-ARCSS.

When the conflict first erupted in 2013, the media documented how forces loyal to the government and the opposition broke the implementation of ARCSS (Agreement on the Resolution of the

Conflict in South Sudan) which had been signed a year earlier in Ethiopia under the supervision of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The media reported how the spread of the war from Juba to other parts of the country expanded the conflict's nature.

The media has been noted to have had both a positive and negative impact on the conflict in South Sudan and was therefore a double edged sword in the conflict. Media played a role in fanning the conflict in as much as it was a medium assisting in peace-building. While the coverage and reporting of the humanitarian crises, violence, and peace processes was done with an aim of keeping the public informed, the warring parties utilized various media in different ways to put across their agenda. For instance, the armed opposition was noted to have used the media as a channel for spreading war messages, recruitment of its fighters, and collection of resources.

The media was also noted to have facilitated the use of hate speech and inflammatory language by both of the warring forces in online and offline forums to target communities and individuals based on their political views, perceived beliefs, and their ethnicity. Through the various means of communication, that is, social media exchanges, images, SMS messages, threatening letters, and cartoons, hate speech and inflammatory language was sometimes marked with rhetoric bordering on xenophobia which fuelled a climate of fear, mistrust, and violence among the ethnic groups.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the media exercise caution and responsibility when covering conflict news as this is a sensitive matter that can cause more harm than cure. To achieve this, the media should be left to act independently without influence or coercion. In addition, it has been noted that the regulatory and policy environment that is present in South Sudan is considered hostile to the

development of the media and a need also exists for progressive laws to be adopted to offer an impetus for the steady growth of the sector. Lastly, Media has been noted of having failed to live up to ethical and professional standards and thus contributed to fanning the fires of ethnic animosity and hatred, which was sweeping across South Sudan during the conflict, therefore South Sudan media needs to be impartial and balanced in reporting conflict news.

#### **5.4 Areas for Further Research**

This study has established that in South Sudan almost each ethnic group has its own media outlet, these media outlets are in support of their ethnic group since eruption of conflict in south Sudan. Therefore, there is need of further studies to establish the link between media and ethnic conflict in South Sudan. Lastly, there is also need of research to establish the relationship between media and fight for respect of human rights in general. This is because media has been noted to be the key tool on sensitizing people on their rights in South Sudan.

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## **APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE**

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

INSITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Dear Respondents,

**RE: DATA COLLECTION.**

I am masters' student at University of Nairobi, in department of diplomacy and international studies. Currently am undertaking research study to fulfill requirement for award of Master of Arts in diplomacy. My project topic is "**Assessment of the Role of Media in Conflict: A Case of South Sudan Conflict 2012 -2019**". You have been selected to participate in this study; however your participation is free and voluntarily. Please I request you to feel the questionnaire honestly.

Special thanks for your cooperation.

**OPEN ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE**

Kindly no reference will be made to any person or organization. Confidentiality will be my priority.

**PART A: PERSONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. What is your gender?

Female             Male

2. How many years do you have?

.....

3. What is your highest level of education?

Undergraduate     College     College Not Completed     Secondary School

Primary School     Never Attended.

4. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B**

5. Do you think media plays a critical role in conflict?

Yes             No

6. If yes, what role do you think media has played in South Sudan conflict?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Describe how media plays a critical role in both fanning and extinguishing of South Sudan conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Do you think media is honest and impartial on its coverage of South Sudan Conflict?

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9. What impact do you think media has on South Sudan conflicts?

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10. Do you think that the warring groups use media outlets to spread war messages, recruitment of its fighters and collection of resources?

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11. In your opinion, has the South Sudan warring groups used media to manipulate the population in South Sudan?

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12. Is south Sudan Media free from state control? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. What link does media have to South Sudan conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. To what extent do you think South Sudan media influences its media coverage of conflict?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. What is the relationship between media and fight for human rights in South Sudan?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. In your opinion has media contributed to ethnic conflict in South Sudan?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. In your opinion how do you think media can best cover the South Sudan Conflict news?.

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## APPENDIX II: RESEARCH PERMIT

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 205026	Date of Issue: 11/November/2020
<b>RESEARCH LICENSE</b>	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Ms. YVONNE SHAJEMA of University of Nairobi, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN CONFLICT: A CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT 2012 -2019 for the period ending : 11/November/2021.</p>	
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## APPENDIX III: ANTIPLAGIARISM REPORT

### ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN CONFLICT: A CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT 2012 -2019

#### ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

#### PRIMARY SOURCES

<b>1</b>	<a href="http://www.ohchr.org">www.ohchr.org</a> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<a href="http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke">erepository.uonbi.ac.ke</a> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>3</b>	Submitted to University of Nairobi Student Paper	<b>1%</b>
<b>4</b>	<a href="http://www.i-m-s.dk">www.i-m-s.dk</a> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>5</b>	<a href="http://crsreports.congress.gov">crsreports.congress.gov</a> Internet Source	<b>1%</b>
<b>6</b>	Submitted to Corinthian Colleges Student Paper	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>7</b>	<a href="http://pdfs.semanticscholar.org">pdfs.semanticscholar.org</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>8</b>	<a href="http://orbitu.uni.lu">orbitu.uni.lu</a> Internet Source	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>9</b>	<a href="http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in">shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in</a>	