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The Semantics of Peace and the Role of the Print Media in the 2007-2008 Post-election Violence in Kenya

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Abstract

The controversial elections of December 2007 in Kenya led to killings, mass displacement, injury and widespread socio-economic destabilization. Despite a series of peace rallies and policy guidelines initiated by the government, the resettlement exercise, dubbed 'operation *rudi nyumbani*', was dogged with controversy and discordant voices from politicians, the clergy, residents of ethnic clash-torn areas, as well as the clash victims. Eventually, voluntary reconciliation through reintegration was promoted and the exercise was renamed 'operation *karibu nyumbani*'. In this article, the author analyzes the implications of the messages of peace and conflict inherent in the utterances of the key political players as reported by the mainstream newspapers, namely *The Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and their weekend editions *Sunday Nation* and *Sunday Standard*. Specifically, the article reviews the language choices that the media used to frame the hopes, fears, expectations and disappointments entailed in the peace messages by setting the agenda through which the public could monitor and evaluate the peace process. It emerges that the Kenyan press oscillated between peace building and peace threatening modes, depending on the prevailing political and public mood.

Key Terms: peace, reconciliation, reintegration, national healing, discord.

Résumé

Les élections controversées de décembre 2007 au Kenya ont été à la source de plusieurs meurtres, blessures, déplacements forcés et en masse de réfugiés et de la destabilisation généralisée du tissu socio-économique. Le programme de réhabilitation appelée alors « opération *rudi nyumbani* », en dépit d'une série d'appels à la paix, a été entaché d'irrégularités et de voix discordantes venant des politiciens, de l'église, des résidents des zones déchirées par les conflits

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ethniques aussi bien que des victimes des affrontements. A la fin, la réconciliation volontaire à travers la réintégration a été promue et le programme été nommé cette fois-ci « opération *karibu nyumbani* ». L'auteur de cet article fait une analyse des conséquences des messages de paix et de conflit inhérents aux discours des grands politiciens tels que rapportés par les journaux, notamment *The Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, *Sunday Nation* et *Sunday Standard*. Cet article étudie en particulier le choix du langage des médias dans le but d'influencer les espoirs, les craintes, les attentes et les déceptions qu'ont engendrés les messages de paix, ceci tout en fournissant un programme par lequel le public pouvait suivre et évaluer le processus de paix. Il devient clair que la presse kenyane vacillait entre deux positions, celui du maintien et de la menace de la paix, dépendant de l'humeur politique et publique du moment.

Mots clés : Paix, réconciliation, réintégration, reconstruction nationale, discorde.

Introduction

The violence that followed the 2007 election results in which Mwai Kibaki was declared winner and hurriedly installed as president of Kenya was precipitated by heightened expectations, hyped pre-election opinion polls and media reports of alleged inevitable rigging. Given their role as watchdogs and opinion shapers, the media monitored the election process and enlightened the public. Through their live updates at the national vote tallying centre, the media set the tempo of public interest as a national conflict unfolded amid finger pointing and grandstanding by political party stalwarts. The ensuing newspaper reports propagated the antagonistic stand of the main political parties, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), and Party of National Unity (PNU), who blamed each other for the breakdown of law and order in Kenya at that tumultuous moment.

The humanitarian crisis that ensued compelled the international community to assign former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to mediate between President Kibaki and ODM's Raila Odinga under the auspices of the Panel of Eminent African Persons. Kenya's leading newspapers, *The Daily Nation* and *The Standard* responded to the crisis by highlighting the initial knee-jerk reaction by the government, when President Kibaki attempted to stamp his authority as head of state and ordered that all Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) had to go back to their homes immediately. Kibaki's decree was considered as merely reactive. Politicians, the general public, and the IDPs themselves, did not receive President Kibaki's hard-line stand on the IDP issue with enthusiasm.

Apparently, the president's attempt to impose peace from above did not match the desires and social needs of the victims. For instance, the press described the order regarding the IDPs that called for peace as hard-hearted when the situation on the ground had not even been assessed properly (*Daily Nation* January 3, 2008). This portrayed a vain attempt to exercise authority by issuing a decree before initiating interpersonal acceptance and reconciliation in the affected areas. The lack of a peace strategy coupled with the prolonged political accusations, counter-accusations and bickering over power sharing that characterized the Kofi Annan-led mediation talks delayed the launch of the IDP resettlement exercise (Buri 2008).

This analysis is conducted within the context of a disputed presidential election settled by a controversial power sharing agreement. The article argues that the media played a key role in managing and shaping the public perception of the state of the evolving nation, the peace process, and the regulation of violence.

Methodology

In this article, I analyze the implications of the messages of peace and conflict inherent in the utterances of the key political players as reported by the mainstream newspapers, *The Daily Nation*, *The Standard*, and their weekend editions *Sunday Nation* and *Sunday Standard*. *The Standard* is Kenya's oldest circulating newspaper founded in 1902 as a private enterprise. It is considered elitist in coverage and only began to dabble in politics with the advent of multi-party politics in the early 1990s (Hatchen 1992). It is considered leftist and has progressively become the voice of the opposition in the political conflicts that have faced Kenya since the end of the Moi era in 2002, during the national constitutional referendum of 2005 and the disputed 2007 national election results. *The Standard* and *Sunday Standard* combined have an average daily circulation of 150,000. *The Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation* were registered in 1959. Together, they command the largest market share with an average daily circulation of 250,000 copies. This paper is considered pro-establishment since President Kibaki came to power in 2002 (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2006). It covers a wider variety of political, socio-economic, local and regional issues (Ainslie 1996). A consortium of Kenyans under the Standard Group flagship owns *The Standard*, while His Highness the Agha Khan owns *The Nation*.

A qualitative lexico-semantic approach guided the study and the meaning and context of the target words and phrases were considered. A

purposive sample of newspapers was selected on the basis of thematic content. The period covered spanned from January 1, 2008 when the post-poll violence broke out, to June 2009. This was slightly over one year since the new government assumed office. This was a critical moment because in June 2009, a performance audit of the one-year old government was released.

In all, 45 issues were found to contain articles that substantively addressed the themes of post-election violence, peace and reconciliation. The sample contained 20 issues of *The Standard* and five issues of *Sunday Standard*, 13 issues of the *Daily Nation* and seven of the *Sunday Nation*. From these issues, I read and identified 65 articles purposively because they contained some or most of the key thematic words and phrases related to the post-election violence. The key terms that acted as thematic indicators were: peace, reconciliation, justice, conflict, revenge, violence, incitement, mass action, coalition, negotiation, power sharing, national healing, national cohesion and the related sub-themes.

Of the 65 articles, 26 (12 by The Standard Group, 14 by The Nation Group) turned out to be pro-Kibaki and PNU while 39 (31 by The Standard Group, 8 by the Nation Group) were pro-ODM. *The Standard* and *Sunday Standard* largely pushed the theme that PNU had rigged the elections while *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation* foregrounded the need for an immediate end to the violence and that ODM should have gone to court if they felt aggrieved. The papers therefore followed a dichotomy based on political party lines.

Specifically, the analysis examines the language choices that the media used to frame the hopes, fears, expectations and disappointments entailed in the peace messages. The analysis also focuses on the semantic import of the public rhetoric of politicians, government functionaries, public opinion and editorial commentaries carried in the print media and how they built or potentially threatened peace.

Theoretical Conceptions of Peace and the Kenyan Situation

Galtung (1968) distinguishes between two forms of peace. To him, negative peace is that which entails the absence of war or cessation of violence and hostility while positive peace is a process of life enhancement. Galtung (1968) suggests that there are political, military, economic and cultural dimensions of peace that can be realized by developing 'Peace Journalism'. Peace is therefore not the conservative concept of law and order but entails justice, equity and harmony (Galtung 1974). Despite the lofty phrases on paper, the implementation of Kenya's national accord caused resentment

among the disillusioned public, newspaper commentators, the donor community and the IDPs. It has been acknowledged that law and order may have been restored in Kenya but the other prerequisites for peace, namely justice, socio-economic equity and harmony have remained elusive since independence (Wamwere 2009).

Azar, Jureidini and McLaurin (1978) agree with Galtung (1968) by holding that attitude change in war-torn countries is not achieved by simply signing peace treaties. This view bears a lesson for Kenya, in the sense that the signing of the National Accord between Kibaki and Raila simply ended the violence but grumbling persisted and perceptions of threats to peace pervaded public debate. Press reports were replete with sentiments of betrayal and a demand for the leaders to address the underlying historical injustices that had little to do with the disputed election results. The need to streamline land rights in the Rift Valley was often mentioned as a prerequisite for lasting peace and coexistence. For instance, a *Daily Nation* editorial stated that 'the bitterness in the Kiambaa area [where IDPs perished in a church fire] serves as a stark reminder that historical grievances based on Kalenjin resentment against the Kikuyu in the Rift Valley still makes the region a powder keg' (Odunga 2009:15).

While underlining the role of the media in perceptions of peace as seen through the media, Van Dijk (1988) suggests that the processing of news by audiences essentially depends upon news structure or the emphasis given to a story. The news writer frames ideas and opinions by means of information selection and dissemination to audiences. News reports can therefore offer a broad picture of social reality and promote social solidarity by reinforcing national identity and shared beliefs through language choices. In pursuit of this role, a consortium of private media owners, the Standard Group, The Nation Media Group and Royal Media Services, attempted to promote social solidarity by running a media campaign with the title 'give us back our country'. The state-owned media did not participate in this peace initiative because it was basically a campaign of the public against the inaction of the state. By using the inclusive phrases 'us' and 'our' to represent the citizens' voice and right to enjoy peace, the message was that ordinary Kenyans were keen to dissociate themselves from political machinations by demanding the unconditional restoration of the erstwhile peace. Nation Television, Nation Newspapers, Kenya Television Network and the Standard Newspaper carried the campaign. This lobbying for peace through the media was intended to influence the leaders to search for a peaceful agreement since the electorate who were being used as pawns in the game were communicating that they were no

longer interested in violent means of resolving the election impasse. The media peace campaign was carried in the daily newspapers and aired on prime time TV through open letters and graphic images of fireballs, dead bodies and shattered buildings. These media messages with emotional overtones were meant to appeal to the leaders' conscience and jolt them into action.

In situations of political uncertainty, the mass media are said to play a crucial role in the construction, articulation and reflection of reality where public opinion tends to become more media dependent (De Fleur and Ball-Rokeach 1989). In the Kenyan case, the media determined the mood of the nation by running headlines that held readers on tenterhooks. For instance, on February 10, 2008, *The Standard* reported that the whole of the following week it would be 'all eyes on Serena' for the hopeful yet apprehensive Kenyans. This implied that the media was prodding the public to focus on the news that would emerge from Serena Hotel where the Kofi Annan-led mediation talks were in progress. This media angle reinforced the notion that Kenyans had suspended their daily activities until the impasse was solved.

It has been concluded that journalists and editors may select and transform the news (Fowler 1991). In the context of post-election violence in Kenya, the print media initially highlighted stories that portrayed heightening apprehension, mistrust and little hopes for the restoration of peace. For instance, the running head of *The Standard* for the first two weeks of January 2008 was 'Kenya Burns'. *The Daily Nation* also reported that 'the Republic of Kenya was a smouldering burnt out shell' (February 3, 2008:1). The descriptions of Kenya as a burning place evoked a sense of helplessness and self-destruction that could scare away investors and tourists, since no one would be interested in entering a burning house. This was a threat to peace because it could fuel violence through revenge and counter-attacks. It also implied that the Kenyan conflict had reached a point of no return. The obsession with reportage on violence and news from the warfront tended to mask the unfolding humanitarian crisis following the death and displacement of so many people. It was therefore not appropriate to comment that Kenya was on fire at a time when peace efforts were in top gear, especially after the arrival of the Panel of Eminent African Persons.

The media can also be catalysts of attitude change in conflict and peace situations. Barta and Antebi (1992) argue that attitude change can only be brought about by social actors working with tools such as [civic] education, language, socio-political practice and the media. Similarly, Fiske (1992)

argues that media discourse has the power of transmitting to the public an interpretation of events that makes sense to them. At the onset of the post-election violence in Kenya, press reports were devoid of peace messages until Kofi Annan arrived one month later. Even after the signing of the National Accord, the peace building mode lasted only two months, and then the media downplayed the achievement of the Accord as the naming of the cabinet was put off several times. This frame is seen in a report in the *Daily Nation* that 'Kibaki and Raila could not agree on names to appoint to the cabinet because they were being held hostage by their party hardliners' (April 11, 2008:2).

The media reports of unending squabbling among national leaders implied that the national leaders could not be trusted and that they had a different agenda from their followers. This attitude of the media reinforced the contention by Wolfsfeld (1997) that conflict is the *sine qua non* of news. The rapidly changing focus of newspaper reportage on the Kenyan conflict illustrates that the media play a dual role that can either enable or disrupt national identity, depending on the circumstances. This oscillation between brief periods of patriotism in times of national catastrophes and the prolonged checks on the government in peacetime suggest an ambidextrous media. One should note that after the formation of the grand coalition that did not provide for an official opposition in parliament, analysts argued that the press ought to play the role of the opposition to fill the void (Kwayera 2009).

The public's dependence on media messages for guidance therefore increases when the social environment is ambiguous, threatening, or is rapidly changing as was the case in post-violence Kenya. Journalists' reporting and media discourse have a strong impact on framing stories and shaping images and representations of nations, actors and events through war and peace reporting which interprets the world for journalists and media audiences alike. As Blumer and Gurevitch (1997) argue, there is a link between media change and social change. Shinar (2003) also observes that in situations of uncertainty, people turn to the media for guidance. The media become the most effective channels for acquiring information to use in making decisions about political goals. This link was apparent at the height of the election dispute in Kenya when Kibaki and Raila were petitioned, mainly by the media – including publishing open letters – to set aside their differences and meet for the sake of peace (Mburu 2008). A sustained media campaign that Kenya was 'on the brink of war' (Buri 2008) ensured that the antagonistic parties engaged in self-examination and backed down from the initial explosive stands.

Wolfsfeld (1997) holds that 'all news media employ a particular cultural and political perspective that has a major impact on the tone of news coverage, hence the news media have become the central arena for political conflicts today' (p.3). Indeed, the Kenyan media have been used to fight political battles. Politicians often blame the media for fanning tribal or political feelings and conversely for giving them a blackout or not reporting on their 'positive deeds or achievements of the government' (Wamwere 2009:11).

A more holistic view of peace is provided by Baldwin (2005) who argues that peace is the liberty and ability to obtain fulfilment and prosperity in life. In the Kenyan context, this means that, even though the national accord was signed and a semblance of normalcy restored, the tens of thousands of IDPs have not experienced peace because they still live in turmoil, insecurity, disease and hopeless anticipation of compensation. Indeed, the *Sunday Standard* (February 10, 2008) cautioned Kenyans that the calm that followed the signing of the national reconciliation accord by Kibaki and Raila in February 2008 and the eventual handshake by the two principals should not be mistaken for peace. True to the media's prediction, two months later, violent demonstrations were soon planned in protest at the delay in naming the coalition cabinet. Mandelzis (2007) indicates that peace was traditionally equated with the absence of war. On the contrary, current thinking and the events witnessed in Kenya show that peace perspectives go beyond the mere absence of war.

The Kenyan media cannot be said to be fully independent, free and democratic. They have been known to take sides during political campaigns and sometimes play to the whims of the powers that be. The media owners hold sway in editorial policy and political alignment determines the reportage with some unabashedly supporting the ruling party (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2006). For instance, during the national referendum in 2005, *The Standard* was decidedly pro-opposition while *The Nation* published views supporting the Kibaki government that were proposing the draft constitution (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2006). Such blatant political patronage and short term partisan loyalty does not augur well for sustainable peace and national cohesion because a section of the public may eventually shun any peace messages initiated by sections of the media that they do not favour. For instance, the readership of *The Daily Nation* plummeted in opposition strongholds, such as Kisumu, shortly before and after the 2005 referendum and the paper was declared alien in the area. It would be difficult for those who

subscribe to the ideological leaning of an alternative media house to identify with the peace initiatives of the perceived enemy paper and its editors.

The Kenyan press has been accused by politicians of being anti-peace for highlighting the bickering in the grand coalition government, the ever present plight of IDPs, the failure to promote national healing and the failure to jumpstart the reform agenda and the constitution review process. For instance, Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka asked the media to focus more on the achievements of the coalition government instead of reporting petty political disagreements (*The Standard*, November 12, 2008). What is reported and how it is framed influence public opinion because, as Karlberg (2005) opines, the ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject. The upshot of the Kenyan media's obsession with political reportage is that the sprinkling of peace messages are buried under stories of conflict that capture the abuse of power, mega-scandals, misrule, power struggles, premature campaigns and other forms of non-conformity with the wishes of the electorate. Despite the fact that the media plays its watchdog role by blowing the whistle on poor governance, stories of conflict have the potential to excite public debate, and both politicians and the public link every national conflict to the 2012 elections. When this frame of unending cycle of conflict is propagated, the IDPs are wary of their fate in future (Isiakhorida 2009).

So, did the Kenyan media suffer burnout and shift too fast from the peace building mode of early 2008 to the dominant strategy of foregrounding conflict? To answer this question, I now examine the language and implications of the peace and conflict messages communicated following the post-elections violence period. The discussion focuses on three phases identified to illuminate issues that either promoted or curtailed the post-conflict peace and reconciliation process. The three phases are framed as follows: (i) echoes of intense conflict and conditional peace, (ii) voices of reconciliation and negotiated peace, and (iii) reports of elusive peace and disillusionment.

Echoes of Intense Conflict and Conditional Peace

The print media initially adopted pessimistic descriptions of the 2007 elections. The negative adjectives served to heighten tension among the audiences and agitated the grieving ODM while PNU was sent into a damage control mode. Depending on the media house, the persuasion of the reporter and the target of the accusation, the elections were described as bungled, stolen, marred, chaotic, sham, discredited, infamous, bloody,

divisive, disgraceful and contentious. The press initially framed the situation variously in the standard language of conflict as violence, chaos or skirmishes. These usual words did not convey the magnitude of the situation as one that deserved external intervention because Kenyans were accustomed to reading reports of chaos or inter-clan skirmishes. As the conflict intensified, however, press reports adopted a more emotional and desperate style by describing the violence as bloodletting, self-destruction or madness (*Sunday Standard*, February 3, 2008). The latter three nouns had the potential to influence the leaders and citizens to question their moral role in the saga and reconsider the destiny of the nation. Bloodletting implied intentional killing while self-destruction carried overtones of a nation wilfully committing suicide.

The vote tallying was variously described as doctoring, heavily rigged, stage-managed, daylight robbery and full of falsity and contradictions. The ODM rallying call that was picked up by the media was: No Raila, no peace, and a threat to hold a million man march on state house and install the peoples' president. Mogeke (2005) notes that pejorative language, such as the foregoing, fuels antagonism and hence is a threat to peace. The aforementioned descriptions underlined the lack of legitimacy of the PNU and sustained the sense of loss for ODM besides fanning the desire to launch revenge or seek justice. These frames would therefore sustain the debate on the electoral fraud, thereby distracting attention from finding a peaceful way forward. The media aptly warned that Kenyans should not expect peace without justice (*Daily Nation*, January 3, 2008).

As the situation caught the attention of the world media, Kibaki issued a press release that for peace to be guaranteed; ODM and Raila must recognize him as the duly elected president or go to court if they felt aggrieved. But he also acknowledged that there was indeed a problem. He also ordered ODM and Raila to tell their supporters to stop barricading roads and destroying property. The imperative 'tell' was an indication of condescension that demeaned Raila's stature. Kibaki further insisted that 'the violence was premeditated, organized and executed by ODM followers and was illegal' (*Daily Nation*, January 3, 2008:23) while ODM issued a press rejoinder stating that the rioters were defending their right spontaneously. The reference to the violence as either 'premeditated' or 'spontaneous' represented two opposing explanations of its cause. The press emphasized that the two positions were irreconcilable. This widened the gap between the antagonists and delayed consensus on the strategy for restoring peace in the short term. The rift occasioned hardening

positions, since no party was ready to take responsibility for the breakdown of security, or to cede ground, hence jeopardizing peace.

In response to the widening rift, the media carried a terse message from the international community to the effect that U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and Kofi Annan had ordered that the violence 'must stop'. Thereafter, the then US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, addressed the press in Nairobi with a message from President George Bush. The press reported that there must be 'real power sharing' (*The Standard*, January 22, 2008) and highlighted the word 'real', implying that the flipside of real would be fake or pretentious power sharing. This subtle insistence on equitable power heightened the suspicion against the PNU side and cast doubt on their commitment to the search for peace.

As the standoff heightened, a clique emerged around president Kibaki as advisors and the press labelled them hardliners, implying that they were not willing to change or cede ground. The most vocal of them was Martha Karua, the then Justice Minister, who told a BBC reporter on the *Hard Talk* programme on February 9, 2008 that 'power sharing was not a must' (*Sunday Standard* 2008, February 10, p.32). President Kibaki also released a press statement emphasizing that he was duly elected and was willing to work with anyone from across the political divide that was ready to work with him. Kibaki's inclusion of the qualifier 'duly' that was highlighted by the media was a contradiction in terms, because he had recommended that the complainants go to court yet he was sanitizing himself before arbitration.

At the centre of the impasse was the fate of IDPs. Kibaki's response to the IDP problem was reactive rather than proactive. The decision to enforce the Operation *Rudi Nyumbani* (Operation Go Back Home) decree and the subsequent closure of IDP camps was seen as a simplistic peace strategy. It lacked a mechanism for reconciling IDPs and the communities they were returning to. The government's assertion that every Kenyan had the right to reside, work and own property in any part of the country did not seem probable because members of one ethnic group in the Rift Valley were still being killed in the areas the government was asking them to return to. The resettlement directive simply assumed that a return to normalcy was tantamount to restoration of peace – which was not the case. As revealed in a story published in the *Sunday Standard*,

... the displaced have not known peace because, like elephants locked in a permanent struggle for supremacy, the two principals [Raila and Kibaki] have trampled on the rights of the displaced and condemned them to embarrassing landlessness and destitution (Wamwere 2009:11).

This report, in other words, stated that continued bickering at the apex of national leadership translated to suffering on the ground and leaders had to set an example by themselves showing signs of harmonious relations. It would appear that external players were equally concerned about the issues affecting the IDPs. It was evident in press reports that there was pressure from the international community for Kibaki and Raila to strike a speedy peace deal. For instance, a news report in the *Sunday Standard* of January 20, 2008 stated that Kofi Annan and Tanzanian President, Jakaya Kikwete – who had been brought in as a neutral neighbour – demanded that the two protagonists had no option but to agree. Further reports highlighted the interest of external players. Kikwete was reported to have said unless there was a voluntary deal signed to stem the violence, the international community would mobilize for immediate intervention. On the other hand, Annan's demeanour in context of his role as the chief mediator was described unfavourably: the matter was so serious that Annan's mood had changed from that of persuasive diplomacy to one of intimidation by warning that UN peacekeepers would be deployed to quell the violence (Musau 2008). Everyone was scared to be seen as the one frustrating the process because unspecified action would be taken by the international community against those perceived to be against the progress of the peace talks. This communicated that those who posed obstacles to peace are usually isolated and castigated. In the Kenyan context, the common phrase 'enemy of development' is used to describe anyone who does not cooperate in any venture that is for the common good, such as the national peace talks. What the press reports implied is that it would have been embarrassing to await external intervention and that there was a need for home-grown solutions since Kenya was not a failed state (*Sunday Standard*, February 3, 2008; Ngumbao 2008).

Reflecting on these reports, one sees some level of coercion and arm-twisting, suggesting that the peace deal was more conditional, bent to external pressure and was not self-initiated by the conflicting parties. The urgency to respond to the need for a home-grown peace deal was evident in the way the media portrayed the country's peace prospects as bleak (*The Standard*, January 22, 2008).

Pessimistic phrases and headlines dominated the news in the first phase of the Kenyan conflict. For instance, it was reported that the prospect of a civil war was real, Kenya was on the brink, Kenya was burning, and Kenya was becoming a failed state (Otieno 2008). Others were that Annan had called off the talks, that it was a make or break situation, and that militias targeted flower farms for revenge attacks (*The Standard* 2008,

January 22). The *Daily Nation* further described Kenya as ‘a burnt out smouldering ruin’ (January 3, 2008). The desperation emphasized by the media had the effect of prodding the leaders into action and formed the channel of communicating the progress of the boardroom diplomacy led by Kofi Annan because Raila and Kibaki could not see eye to eye for the better part of January 2008.

This first phase of media reportage was therefore characterized by reporting frames that foregrounded images of conflict and disagreement. According to Mandelzis (2007), in such circumstances, the antagonists ask the question: Who is the aggressor and how can he be stopped? In the Kenyan context, this led the media to popularize expressions and images of aggression and intimidation. These frames created the impression of escalating conflict, vengeance and mistrust that did not augur well for peace building at the national and village levels.

Voices of Reconciliation and Negotiated Peace

In this section, I explore the role of the media in voicing messages of reconciliation, especially their response to the formation of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Team (KNDRT) in February 2008. This team was mandated to find an end to the violence, formulate the power sharing agreement, initiate a framework for national healing and reconciliation and establish ways of redressing the disputed election results. In one of the first calls for reconciliation and negotiation, an editor asked Kibaki and Raila: ‘How many more must die, how much more must be destroyed before you come to your senses?’ (*Daily Nation*, January 3, 2008). This portrayed a media that demonstrated social responsibility by directly questioning the moral probity of the leading antagonists. It followed the realization that the media could not simply remain objective and highlight the conflict without contributing to attempts at resolving it. Consequently, media owners, in conjunction with the Concerned Citizens for Peace, changed tack and began a programme of peace education. This demonstrated a humane and patriotic, as opposed to an objective but aloof, media. They realized that focusing on the blame game in the face of a humanitarian catastrophe could only promote hatred and vengeance and prolong the conflict.

As the KNDRT team got to work, the press portrayed the peace and reconciliation process as very delicate by propagating phrases like ‘the stakes are high’, ‘the world is watching’, and that it was ‘a race against time’ (*Sunday Standard*, February 3, 2008). Such phrases put all observers on tenterhooks, besides putting pressure on the negotiators to find a

quick fix to peace. Such ultimatums could have led to the subsequent shaky peace deal that later spawned new conflicts over power sharing.

The gesture of peace and reconciliation imminent in the handshake by Kibaki and Raila on February 1, 2008 was expected to neutralize the preceding period of fierce media and public outrage over how the government had failed to manage the conflict. It is in this second phase of media coverage of the post-election violence that we see the media tone down its language that seemed to escalate the violence, and focus more on communicating messages that sought to promote reconciliation and peace. Of interest is how the media articulated their role in the post-conflict setting. A report in the *Sunday Standard* highlighted the fact that the media were required to show leadership in areas of dialogue, national cohesion and reconciliation (Okello 2009). According to Okello, the media ought to highlight messages that promoted unity and patriotism rather than hype disagreements that drove citizens to the abyss of deeper conflict. Similarly, Bratic (2005) argues that in order to work for the public good, the media should convey messages in forms that contribute to the formation of positive attitudes and opinions and to the increase of knowledge and awareness. He concludes that the journalistic agenda of social responsibility could facilitate the agenda of peace building. The media in Kenya has on various occasions indulged directly in national crises by creating public sentiment. For instance, the *Daily Nation* of January 3, 2008 addressed Kibaki and Raila in an editorial and told them that: 'the earnest cry of all Kenyans is: step back from the brink'. In another report, *The Standard* incited the public sentiment by telling Kenyans to shun politicians who would flee the country by plane if a full-scale war broke out. Therefore, in times of public repression, the media reflects public sentiment by being the mouthpiece of the masses. However, in times of normalcy, the media can whip up emotions by their reports of investigative journalists. Bratic (2005) opines that, since the need for information is increased by uncertainty in conflict situations, the power of the media as the main agenda setter increases, in part due to its power to summarize overarching developments in the conflict. The media should be arbiters in conflict rather than catalysts. Tehranian (1993) envisages that new cultural forces, including responsible mass media, peace discourse and peace journalism, are essential for achieving a transition to a peace culture. Similarly, Bratic (2005) suggests that the media should represent all sides and opinions in a conflict and post-conflict situation since this promotes the potential for reconciliation and acceptance of a diversity of ideas.

The question of whether to offer amnesty to suspects of the post-election violence or to prosecute them featured as a barometer of commitment to reconciliation. ODM reportedly called for the unconditional release of their arrested supporters, regardless of the seriousness of the charges that faced them, arguing that this would lead to peace and reconciliation. As one reporter toned down the issue, 'the question of war crimes does not arise in our case because there was neither war nor a war situation' (Mwalulu 2009). However, PNU responded by telling the press that there would be no blanket amnesty without trial and prosecution to punish the real offenders. Here, there was a subtle negotiation through the media between PNU and ODM, using the violence suspects as the bait. The media promoted the view that since ODM had recognized Kibaki as the president for the sake of peace, the ODM youths should have been released unconditionally from remand in exchange for the ODM peace gesture. The self righteousness exhibited by both PNU and ODM on the issue of how to deal with perpetrators of the violence and the subsequent scuttling of the amnesty debate confirms the contention by Haugerud (1995) that official rhetoric is a strategic balance between coercion and persuasion. ODM has both coerced and persuaded the government to release the ODM youths unconditionally. The media reaction to the amnesty debate as a plank in the reconciliation efforts was nonchalant since they reduced the issue simply to 'the amnesty debate'. The implication here is that political debate is usually a battle of wits and the more convincing and wily debater often wins on the basis of conviction, regardless of the truth of the matter.

The media portrayed Raila as pro-peace and concluded that he had conceded too much while the PNU camp was increasingly painted as content with coalescing executive power around Kibaki. Raila struck a conciliatory tone. He told the press that ODM was committed to the success of the negotiation talks and 'were doing all to ensure that the ground was stable for talks and that Kibaki also ought to have approached mediation in good faith' (*Sunday Standard*, February 3, 2008:3).

This second phase of post-conflict reportage could be called the Operation *Karibu Nyumbani* (Operation Welcome Back Home) phase. Here, IDPs were presented for acceptance through peace rallies and voluntary reintegration by their neighbours. Indeed, the National Dialogue and Reconciliation statement signed by the ODM and PNU negotiators on February 1 states in paragraph 3 (1) that: 'The final goal of the dialogue is to achieve sustainable peace, stability and justice through the rule of law and respect for human rights'. The National Dialogue report was

adopted by parliament and entrenched in the constitution as the National Accord and Reconciliation Act. However, the press consistently referred to the accord as 'the Peace Accord', although the word, peace, was not part of the standard reference to the accord. By popularizing the modified phrase 'peace accord', the media conveyed the public desire for long term peace. The accord provided for the formation of a Grand Coalition Government on the principle of portfolio balance and power sharing on a 50-50 basis.

The Kenyan media apparently shifts its focus periodically between promoting conflict and peace. This tendency is driven by the public record of the personalities involved in the respective political crises. There are stock scandals associated with controversial players in the political arena. These are revived by the media periodically, sometimes for political expediency. For instance, the Goldenberg scandal that dates back to 1995 remains unresolved and is usually featured around election time by the media to dismiss some contenders as unfit for political office (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2006). Conversely, the media cause and frame actions and reactions. In cases where the government's official position is not convincing or totally lacking, the media offer alternative insights, speculation and verification of facts. For instance, when an ODM member of parliament was gunned down by a policeman in January 2008, *The Standard* strongly disputed the police statement and dismissed the government spokesman's explanation that the shooting was an outcome of the intrigues in a love triangle. This media opinion led to major riots. The media may also reflect the desires of the public through such phrases as 'Kenyans are tired' and 'MPs must pay tax now like all Kenyans' (*The Standard*, May 12, 2008:3).

The period of negotiated peace was short-lived. Despite the passing of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, further conflict was reported over delayed naming of the cabinet. This threatened to reverse the gains of the truce as reflected in an opinion editorial, headlined: 'It is time to put an end to the madness and demand our country back', published in the *Daily Nation* of April 11, 2008. This was a candid wake up call to the Kenyans to take charge of the peace process and the destiny of their country and not over-rely on the political class for all the answers. Oriang' (2008) wrote that Kenyans needed peace and quiet to search their souls and come up with a new way of co-existing because the principals [Kibaki and Raila] appeared unable to put an end to the nonsense. Here, Oriang' was requesting Kenyans to make peace and to forget how politicians had misused them.

It is also instructive that when the coalition cabinet was formed, the *Daily Nation* of April 14, 2008 set the national sense of accomplishment with their headline: 'Cabinet for Peace'. This portrayed that there were no options except to form an all-inclusive cabinet that catered for all regional, ethnic and political party interests. The media conceded that though bloated and expensive, at least all conflicting interests were taken aboard in an attempt to pacify all. This was, however, a misleading promise because the media soon began to portray the cabinet as a 'Tower of Babel' with dissenting views that threatened the nascent peace (Musau 2008).

A report by Buri (2008) introduced the concept of 'homing' as an idea that pinpointed the missing link in the resettlement and peace campaigns at the community level. Buri contends that homing heightens peace and reconciliation and confirms that operation *Rudi Nyumbani* would not be as easy as the government presented it. 'Homing' here is an excellent concept that captures a deeper understanding of what is needed to promote reconciliation. It is about having a mechanism in place to ensure that the communities where the IDPs were returning to understood the need to accept them back as fellow Kenyans who may be different, based on ethnic identity, but shared one national identity as Kenyans. Buri proposes that, for national healing, there should be repentance of our active and passive participation in the sacrifice of innocent blood at the altar of our political ambitions and greed for control. He further points out that 'resettlement is more than simply telling the people to pack and go back to their lands, and homing entails reinstatement that would bring the people as close as possible to the pre-election state' (p.18).

The report by Buri implied that by building transitional camps and supplying building materials, the government was simply housing rather than homing the returnees. This means that resettlement was more than identifying a piece of land and dumping the landless there to eke out their survival. It is about the role of the larger society in reconciliation and healing. A holistic approach is seen in the media report by Orwa (2008) that emphasized the need for political, social and economic institutions that focus on all the needs of the displaced.

Given the urgency of the humanitarian crisis, peace had to be negotiated. For instance, a government Minister was quoted as telling IDPs that those responsible for their suffering had to be brought to book, but they must also make steps towards forgiveness. This report conveyed the idea that in negotiated peace, one ought to concede certain things in the process of pursuing justice. Another voice of reconciliation was seen in an article by Okanga (2005) that posed the question: 'The differences that

divided us are long gone, so why is so little progress being made in reconciling Kenyans?' This alluded to the complacency that was setting in due to the perceived calm in the country. It was also reported that leaders had become insensitive to the needs of the refugees they helped create and that 'they have gone on with their lives as if nothing happened' (Orwa 2008). These reports suggested that the leaders were the real obstacles to the peace and reconciliation process. The media propagated the notion that leadership and a sustained peace agenda at the national level were lacking.

Reports of Elusive Peace and Disillusionment

In this section, I trace how the media framed the aftermath of the national accord and progress of reconciliation one year after the country was mobilized towards uniting. The objective is to show how the media contributed to the pace of reconciliation and sustaining the peace building mode. Given that the core principle of the grand coalition government in Kenya was a temporary arrangement meant to end the violence and restore peace, it is important to analyze media reports as to whether the national accord achieved the goals of peace or merely restored normalcy. Apparently, too many contentious issues remain unresolved. One year after the peace accord, the media consistently reminded Kenyans that 'Kibaki assumed power with a contested mandate and that his claim to the presidency is at best tenuous, if not downright illegitimate' (Ahmednasir 2009). The idea of a contested mandate implied that Kenyans were simply tolerating Kibaki for the duration of his term for the sake of peace. Therefore the idea of deceptive peace is inherent in the report. The disillusionment and confusion is further captured in an Opinion-Editorial in the *Daily Nation* that:

... We have two governments in one ... we don't know which one to pay allegiance to and the Prime Minister who would have been our Messiah is locked in a bitter power struggle with Kibaki over the interpretation of the National Accord and its full implementation (Kamichore 2009:17).

This newspaper commentary illustrates the fact that commitment to reconciliation remained lacklustre. The media's conception of two governments in one promoted division and bickering at every level, including in the civil service. Moreover, by labelling Raila as the Messiah who failed to liberate the people, the media portrayed him as selfish and power hungry. This is a negative pointer to peace prospects. The use of the qualifier 'bitter' underlines the belated realization that, after all, the National Accord was full of loopholes and could not guarantee peace for Kenyans. This shows that the media both reflect and create the political situation.

The discourse of harmony that had dominated the press around the time of signing of the National Accord and appointment of the cabinet was short-lived as media reports degenerated back to reportage that emphasized the folly of having signed a hurriedly negotiated power sharing agreement that did not spell out all the modalities of implementation. The media's change of tact was due to the realization that the political class had taken Kenyans for a ride and was not interested in real change that could guarantee peace. Some politicians also betrayed the trust of the media and the nationalist tone that had been echoed by the media at the time of signing the accord and in the first three months of the cabinet's existence. The political class began displacing their shortcomings by blaming the media for fabricating stories about them and for highlighting negative issues. The media changed tack, mainly acting as the voice that could audit government performance and follow up on promises of change on behalf of the public.

There were media reports that questioned the sustainability of the peace arrangement and whether it was foolproof. Such reports threatened peace by portraying the leaders as short-sighted and inept. Disillusionment soon set in and an audit report by the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy a year later noted that the public accused the president and the Prime Minister of 'failing to mobilize Kenyans for national healing and reconciliation' (*Sunday Standard*, May 3, 2009:8). The report indicated that a greater percentage of the population lived in fear of their neighbours and there existed a high possibility of chaos come the next general election, unless Kibaki and Raila changed their style of leadership. Failure in national healing and reconciliation was exemplified by hostility towards returnee IDPs, and according to one IDP, 'no one had gone to them [in the camps] to brief them about cohesion and the peace initiative' (*The Sunday Standard*, February 3, 2008:12). This shows that there were no follow-up activities that could hasten reintegration and many were merely fascinated by the high level handshake between Raila and Kibaki which was merely symbolic.

The degree of commitment to the search for peace is further challenged by the news report that The Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission Bill 'devotes seven pages to the question of amnesty and only a single page to the issue of reconciliation and reparation' (Dolan 2008). In a related event, the Minister for special programmes declared that the government had no more money to pay IDPs their compensation and ordered the camps closed while other camps had to be demolished at night by armed government security ostensibly to flush out fake IDPs. Follow-

ing the governments' demolition of IDP camps before reparation, the media painted a picture that the mood in the country was changing for the worse due to disillusionment and despair. The media sentiment was close to the actual mood in the country because it was reported that 'many Kenyans affected by the violence believed that the potential for fresh violence loomed large since the leaders were not interested in the peace situation in the villages so long as all was well in their palatial homes in Nairobi' (*The Standard* 2009, January 12). This report implied that the leaders were the beneficiaries of the violence and could not follow up reconciliation and compensation matters on behalf of the voters. This is further apparent in the report by Kwayera (2009) that when the embers of the 2007 post-election violence faded, it was expected that constitutional and institutional reforms would top the national agenda as a first instance of preventing the recurrence of the mayhem. This report bears a hint of latent chaos in that 'the embers simply faded'. This implies that the hatred, mistrust and predisposition to violence are simply dormant and can be re-ignited instantaneously. The report reinforced the media frame that the peace was temporary and superficial. Hence, Kenyans should not rest easy but should consciously entrench peace, that is, extinguish the embers completely, metaphorically speaking.

The reconciliation efforts faced hiccups because of mistrust in the coalition government, with the media introducing labels like 'strange bed fellows', 'marriage of convenience', 'Siamese twins' and 'a cabal held together by mutual affinity for corruption', to describe the power sharing arrangement (Namunane 2009). These derogatory descriptions by the media portrayed the coalition government as morally deficient or socially inferior. By comparing the coalition government to Siamese twins and people in a marriage of convenience, the press implied that there would be no mutual agreement because these were two entities forced to operate together by circumstances. They were not bound to be the epitome of peaceful coexistence because their wishes would hardly coincide. By extension, if there was no peace in the cabinet, then peace would also be elusive among the ordinary citizens, many of whom considered the national leaders as role models. In the eye of the media, and by extension the public, the leaders could therefore not be trusted to pursue real governance changes that were expected to entrench peace. The media thus sent the government into a damage control mode. The refrain that the leaders were not committed to reform and that the peace agenda had been conveniently forgotten therefore gained currency in the media.

To predict further doom for peace, a debate as to whether the coalition would last till the next elections in 2012 was started by the media even before national healing was complete. The media drew the public attention to the so-called protocol wars in government, pitting the Prime Minister against the Head of the Civil Service and the Vice President. This was followed by press reports of 'cracks in the coalition, sabotage, cancelled cabinet meetings, intra-party wrangles over allocation of ministerial posts, resignations from government, parliamentary censure motions, premature presidential campaigns and crystallizing political alliances in readiness for the presidential battle in 2012' (Okelo 2009). This shift of focus pointed to the fact that the politicians had their own selfish agenda and national healing was secondary to their continued political survival. It would seem that politicians thrive in conflict and political debate flourishes only if there are contentious issues. This implies that peace may not be an interesting topic for politicians. The media apparently hold the politicians accountable for the aftermath of the politically instigated violence. Therefore, newspaper stories and analyses revive debates on unresolved issues when the memory of the public is clouded by secondary conflicts. This helps the readers to refocus when the government and politicians introduce diversionary tactics to cover up the real issues. This is why *The Standard* urged the government to 'walk the talk by implementing the peace accord in full ... especially by redefining the executive powers of the Prime Minister' (January 12, 2009).

It is clear that in Kenya, politicians scheme to court controversy at the expense of peace. For instance, when there was a parliamentary censure motion against the agriculture minister William Ruto, the ethnic group of the proposer of the motion received threats of violence, should the minister be voted out of office. Another political punch bag was the issue of whether to send violence suspects to the International Criminal Court in the Hague or try them locally. Debate on all these emerging conflicts were refereed by the media and at any rate, the emerging conflicts were wont to submerge the real causes of the electoral conflict. Little wonder then, that the press has emphasized 'the need to address all historical injustices if lasting peace is to be achieved, since successive Kenyan rulers had perfected the art of sweeping issues under the carpet and hoodwinking the public through Commissions of inquiry whose recommendations are never implemented' (*The Standard*, December 14, 2008).

Agenda 4 of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation team was meant to address reforms and redress historical injustices. This agenda was suspended and daggers were drawn again with both parties accusing

each other of sabotage. In reaction to the handling of Agenda 4, the media resorted to confrontational words and phrases in their banner headlines for instance: accord loopholes are seed of discord in the coalition, Kilaguni talks collapse, coalition deadlock, dysfunctional government, and calls for fresh elections (*Sunday Standard*, May 3, 2009). Even the militant clarion call by ODM *bado mapambano* (the struggle continues) was thrown into the mix to pressure PNU to accept reforms. Such a change of tune did not augur well for sustainable peace and social harmony. The women leaders of Kenya also called what the press labelled 'a sex boycott' to appeal to the moral conscience of the ruling class to be more proactive to the nagging national problems of the day. The intended national sex boycott could lead one to ask whether peace can begin from the bedroom or whether it was yet another push for peace through punishment and intimidation. For instance, *The Daily Nation* asked whether all diplomatic strategies for peace and change had failed for Kenyans to take politics to their private lives. The sex boycott was considered a threat to peace on the home front as some apolitical men would not support it, leading to domestic violence (*The Standard*, May 4, 2009). It was also dismissed as an insult to the IDPs who shared single tents with their teenage children, had no food, and hence no time to engage in such luxuries. It was seen as a bad example to the youth that leaders could degenerate to mixing such debasing topics with the intricacies of national leadership (*Daily Nation*, April 25, 2009).

The elusive image of peace was further painted by Onyango (2009) who reported that plans to erect a memorial at the site of one of the most horrific killings of the post-election violence had caused inter-community tension to resurface in a village in the Rift Valley. A resident of the area was quoted as saying that they could not take lightly the monument that was being proposed by their Kikuyu friends since it was against Kalenjin customs and would only serve to incite the local [Kalenjin] people. He added that the monument was an abomination according to their culture. While discussing the same issue, Okech (2009) argues that there was merely a cessation of violence in the Rift Valley but there was neither healing nor reconciliation because of a dearth of a unifying national leadership.

The foregoing reports that portrayed peace as elusive illustrate that the events were leading Kenyans back to the intense conflict discourse that characterized the immediate post-election reportage of early 2008. They all pointed to heightening tension and the fact that the litany of unresolved conflicts were on the rebound. According to one columnist, 'early elections must rescue the nation before this whirlwind of growing chaos shreds

Kenya into pieces' (Wamwere 2008:12). In his view, even in matters of peace, coalitions are not its only facilitator. He held that a coalition could be terminated if it failed and that in Kenya, the coalition had been pushing the country to the brink that nobody except its political architects seemed ready for (Wamwere 2008). However, I find Wamwere's position partisan and wishful thinking because the sentiments on the ground are that there should be no elections until national healing and reconciliation is complete and effective. In fact, many Kenyans have vowed never to participate in any future national elections, citing the death and suffering occasioned by the conflict over the controversial 2007 debacle. Ironically, and without remorse to the victims of post-election violence, the peace agenda diminished as some politicians, led by one Martha Karua, began to campaign in earnest for the far off 2012 presidential elections within their first year in government (*Daily Nation*, April 7, 2009).

Discussion

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that long-term peace can only be achieved by dialogue, justice and the restoration of mutual trust among grassroots communities that interact and share resources. In the absence of structured dialogue, apprehension rises. This could be why some victims of the violence were reluctant to go back to the Rift Valley until the principals agreed to a peace deal. The victims' apprehension was a pointer to the government that the official peace messages and the top-down intervention strategies were not satisfactory. The news reports from the initial phase of intense conflict revealed that the public mistrust and the government's denial could not guarantee sustainable peace for Kenya.

The choice of words by the media and the dominant reporting frames can be grouped into three distinct phases. Initially, they revolved around aggressive language and grandstanding aimed at maintaining the status quo by PNU on one hand and allegations of stolen elections and quest for electoral justice by ODM on the other. The second phase saw utterances and media reportage geared towards mediation, negotiation, reconciliation and promotion of peaceful coexistence, while the disillusionment phase brought in media analyses that focused on Kenyan's disappointment and loss of hope in the coalition government.

Peace implementation is not a one-step activity. In the mediation phase, therefore, the press emphasized that peace had to start from the top leadership, since 'Kenyans fought because of them' (Otieno 2008). In a related article, *The Standard* reported that Coast MPs had noted that peace could not be imposed. Hence, those who were making hasty peace moves

were warned that 'they were creating monsters by practising nepotism, and that Kenyans had to be patient because we cannot have peace tomorrow' (Ngumbao 2008). Kenyans were told not to waste the golden opportunity for lasting peace through the Annan-led mediation talks. The fact that the media report highlighted phrases that emphasized that peace 'could not be imposed' and that 'we cannot have peace tomorrow' represented the realistic view that if the peace process was rushed, there would be mistakes and others would cry foul. Thus, there was the need for a systematic approach free of short-term measures taken for political expediency. The report also implied that conflict situations provide a window for ventilating sectarian differences and entrenching peace. This way, the media called upon the leaders to take responsibility, stay focused on the needs of Kenyans, and not to criticize the peace efforts, but take up the task of reconciling Kenyans.

The media frame of an increased lack of peace and dim prospects, featured in the third part of my analysis, could be counterproductive. For instance, the Permanent Secretary for Information and Communication told the Kenyan media 'to stop pessimism and development of prosecutorial press that only thrived on gloom' (Ndegwa 2009). This implies that Kenya was simply experiencing a period of suppressed violence and any sensationalization of disagreements could revive the violence and frustrate peace efforts. As Herman (1996) notes, some phases of peace are simply less violent versions of war. Herman's view is pertinent to Kenya in that we have witnessed a version of peace punctuated with a virulent war of words in the press between President Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila and among their coalition cabinet ministers. For instance, Raila once referred to Kibaki's leadership style as archaic while a PNU cabinet minister referred to Raila as power hungry. Such contemptuous references by national leaders cause simmering resentment not only among them but also their followers, thereby destabilizing the national psyche towards peace and unity. Besides publishing the leaders' utterances for public evaluation of their character, the press should also carry feedback that reflects public opinion that indicates to the leaders that they become enemies of peace when they dispense with decorum in public. It emerges that peace messages that involve self initiative of the actors from below are readily acknowledged by the public and the media, as opposed to high sounding official rhetoric that is hardly implemented.

Since Kenyans look up to the media for opinions that shape public debate, the latter should interpret and reflect the public mood to the gov-

ernment. Despite the agreement through the National Accord, the peace oriented media coverage in phase two of the post election saga degenerated due to the suspense and latent mistrust attributed to political blame games. From the media reports, Kenyans faced mixed fortunes and lasting peace was an uncertain prospect. Given the unprecedented post-election violence, the Kenyan media was apparently torn between neutrality and involvement. They oscillated between advocacy journalism and involvement journalism. Tumber and Prentoulis (2003) observe that in involvement journalism, reporters shift from objectivity to subjectivity. Kenyan news reporters adopted subjective phrases such as 'our' and 'we' in phase two of the conflict. This portrayed them as having a personal stake in the future of the country. The step by media owners to sponsor a media campaign, directly exhorting the warring parties to give Kenyans their country back, also indicated that they were not mere profiteers but could also demonstrate social responsibility. This was a strategic shift from the earlier objective and aloof stance that portrayed the media as passive commentators on the conflict as Kenya burned.

Mandelzis (2007) believes that journalism is a professional field whose aim is to facilitate a shared, socially binding viewpoint by providing information unbiased by personal attitudes and beliefs. In the Kenyan case, although the media aggravated conflict and heightened tensions in the initial phase, they sometimes contributed to peace building by directly castigating the perceived antagonists and impressing upon them that if they did not stop the violence, there would be no country left to govern. This demonstrates that in extra-ordinary times of conflict, the media need not be laid back for the sake of neutrality and impartiality. In any case, media freedom was also threatened by the circumstances as were the very lives of the journalists, their property and relatives. This is where a patriotic media was seen at work. The Kenyan media was decidedly more sentimental in their language than the Western media that focused on the violence and international arm-twisting.

Conclusion

In the eyes of the Kenyan media, sustainable peace in Kenya requires a cultivation of a national ethos and facilitation of voluntary social integration from below. Social justice stands out as a key prerequisite for peace. As some media analysts have warned, if Kenyans do not address the underlying causes of the violence, then the national elections of 2012 would foment a worse predicament (Wamwere 2009; Mwalulu 2009; Onyango 2009). The

media can choose to be a catalyst for peace or conflict, depending on their ideological leaning and interpretation of situations. The reporting frames chosen by the Kenyan media in covering the post-election violence of 2007-2008 therefore ultimately influenced conceptions of peace prospects by consumers of news. Significantly, the Kenyan media have upheld the view that peace is neither achieved by signing of pacts nor by policy pronouncements. It should be an inclusive process, defined and pursued in the public interest and not a preserve of the political class.

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