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## EXAMINING PEACE-ORIENTED MEDIA IN AREAS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Vladimir Bratić

**Abstract** / While the relationship between war and media is examined in literature, the cases of the positive use of mass communication channels in the reconciliation of post-conflict societies are virtually unknown. The goal of this study is to respond to the gap in literature by examining theoretical evidence and practical case studies describing media promotion of peace across the world. As a result, a total of 40 media projects in 18 countries are documented and two case studies are examined in detail. Initial lessons from the practical projects in conjunction with historical developments of media in wars suggest that the current practice would benefit from: integration of all available media channels and practices, incorporation of media into other social institutions and processes and regulation of hate media as well as production of peace-oriented media.

**Keywords** / communication / conflict / Ijambo / journalism / media / peace / propaganda / war

When the relationship between war and media is examined in the literature, it almost exclusively describes the exploitation of media for war promotion or war propaganda. Most notorious are the studies describing the skillful use of early mass communication channels by the Allies in the First World War (Creel, 1920; Lasswell, 1927), the cruel manipulation of media by Nazi Germany (Jowett and O'Donnel, 1999; Taylor, 1995) and the recent abuse of media in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (Des Forges, 1999; Price and Thompson, 2002; Thompson, 1999).

Virtually unknown are the cases of the positive use of mass communication channels in the reconciliation of post-conflict societies. In the last 15 years, practitioners from international government agencies and non-profit organizations have conducted such media projects in support of conflict transformation. The Bosnian television network OBN, the Burundian production studio Ijambo, Cambodian radio UNTAC and the Israeli/Palestinian 'Sesame Street' project are just some examples of this innovative application.

Predictable optimism with the idea of peace-oriented media encounters two immediate obstacles. The first is that the literature about the positive impact of media in conflict appears deficient. Considering the established academic interest in media and conflict, it is surprising that there are very few academic studies, journal articles or academic conferences devoted to media involvement in peace processes. The

other problem is more practical. No academic study has attempted to bring together the variety of peace-oriented media projects, and, therefore, the full scope of the practice is unknown. The goal of this study is to respond to each of the problems. First, in the absence of the literature on media and peace, a plausible next of kin is in the literature about media impacts on conflicts and wars. The apparent hypothesis follows that if the literature shows the considerable impact of media on the promotion of war, some lessons can be learned about the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. Second, this study aims to become an initial attempt to assemble and organize practical case studies describing media promotion of peace across the world. As a result, a total of about 40 media projects in 18 countries on four continents are examined in this research.

## The History of Media Use in Conflicts

Often referred to as propaganda, forms of media were used to promote conflicts even in ancient times. Prior to the development of mass media, great and powerful leaders lacked a true mass audience channel. Napoleon, Caesar and Alexander the Great are all considered the ancestors of modern propagandists, but their influence was limited to the spread of their doctrine through coins, art monuments and cultural performances (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999). The word 'propaganda' originated in the 16th century during the Counter-Reformation when Pope Gregory XV established the Congregation to Propagate the Faith (Taylor, 1992). Today, the word 'propaganda' implies a negative, pejorative connotation. Webster's dictionary (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*, 1985: 942) defines it as the 'spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person'. Definitions of propaganda vary from the notion of a general, mostly neutral organized process of persuasion to the making of a deliberately one-sided statement to a mass audience (Lasswell, 1927) and notions of manufacturing consent (Lippmann, 1925) or cognitive engineering (Bernays, 1928). Jowett and O'Donnell (1999: 6) define this active process of persuasion as a 'deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perception, manipulate cognition, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist'.

However, in *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, 1913 edition, propaganda is described as 'any organization or plan for spreading a particular doctrine or a system of principles' (Webster's, 1913: 1148). Furthermore, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911 edition, propaganda was understood as an organization or association for the spreading of particular beliefs or opinions and referred mainly to religious persuasion (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911). The negative connotations, as can be seen from these two documents, are entirely absent from the early understanding of propaganda. Propaganda of that time, at worst, was nothing more than a neutral concept and as such resembles the Ancient Greek view of persuasion as a form of 'rhetoric' (Taylor, 1995).

The First World War was a crucial period in the organized use of media for political causes. For the first time, the governments and ministries of almost all nations involved in the war consolidated their efforts in the pursuit of the most successful

techniques for mass persuasion. The new technology allowed for mass-produced print materials, newspapers and movies to reach a wide audience, while government endorsement provided national credibility and an orchestrated effort.

The British government should be given credit for providing one of the first examples of persuasive organization on a mass scale. Their War Propaganda Bureau employed media in support of multiple agendas. The support at home for entering the war was low. This prompted the government to focus on boosting morale in relation to conscription, gaining the support of neutral countries and countering German arguments (Ward, 1989). The bureau's use of the press, posters, pamphlets and films accompanied organized lectures, patriotic clubs and rallies in support of the armed conflict (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999). In the US, President Wilson established the Committee of Public Information (CPI), popularly known as the Creel Committee (named for George Creel, the head of the committee). The committee aimed at achieving political consensus and social cohesion in support of the US's engagement in combat, which was unpopular at the time. The activities of the CPI included newsletters, press releases, a pamphlet series and live speakers ('four minute men'). Later, the committee expanded its domain to motion pictures (Cole, 1998). The success of American propaganda is attributed to the CPI's decision to employ the techniques that Americans manage best – salesmanship. Creel's approach is best explained in the title of his book, *How We Advertised America*, where he confesses that:

*... there was no part of the great war machinery that we did not touch, no medium of appeal that we did not employ. The printed word, the spoken word, the motion picture, the telegraph, the cable, the wireless, the poster, the sign-board – all these were used in our campaign to make our own people and other peoples understand the causes that compelled America to take arms. (Creel, 1920: 5)*

These accomplishments would become valuable lessons in the future war plans of both democracies and tyrannical regimes, and the success of Allied propaganda had both highly valuable and detrimental consequences.

Although social scientists have hypothesized about the positive role of propaganda, the literature rarely addresses the positive influence of mass communication. Lasswell (1927) proposed that instead of mobilizing a community's animosity against the enemy, methods of reconciliation could possibly be 'mobilized' in an effort to bring peace and harmony to the community. Trying to build on the practices and methods of efficient propaganda, this new effort challenged the notion that propaganda is inherently detrimental and innately malicious. It is quite possible to note a framework for positive media use in peace development in Lasswell's sincere proposal from 1927:

*Let us, therefore, reason together . . . and find the good, and when we have found it, let us find out how to make up the public mind to accept it. Inform, cajole, bamboozle and seduce in the name of the public good. (Lasswell, 1927: 5)*

Taylor (1995) presumes admirably when he states that if the history of propaganda in the 20th century appears to be largely one of abuse, it does not follow that this has always been, and always will be, the case.

On the other side, Lazarsfeld and Merton address this issue with a little more skepticism (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1971). Reacting to media developments during the First and Second World Wars, they presented a grimmer scenario in their claim that:

*It is widely felt that the mass media comprise a powerful instrument which may be used for good or for ill and that, in the absence of adequate controls, the latter possibility is on the whole more likely. (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1971: 555)*

The worst-case scenario of the propaganda skeptics came true when German Joseph Goebbels practically applied the theoretical predictions of post-First World War social scientists. Goebbels masterminded the most effective effort of mass persuasion, heavily relying on propaganda messages in motion pictures and radio broadcasting. Aware of the importance of the media, Goebbels controlled the press school for journalists and had a hold over radio broadcasting (Cole, 1998). He induced the industry to produce affordable radio sets, installed loudspeakers in public places and sent 'radio wardens' to monitor the use of those radios (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999). Between 1933 and 1942, the German radio audience increased from 4.5 to 16 million (Thomson, 1977).

The Nazis mastered the use of slogans and boldly colored visuals, but most importantly, perfected the use of town rallies arousing emotional frenzy and support for their leader. Furthermore, the town rallies were then reproduced in Nazi newsreels and shown to audiences all over Germany. This kind of propaganda was exceptionally persuasive, as manifested by the historical persistence of the symbols such as the swastika in popular culture more than 50 years later (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999).

Mass communication research after the Second World War avoided the direct examination of the relation between media and conflicts. This could be attributed to the lack of major conflicts between nation-states. The question of the role of media in conflict was raised again in response to the Vietnam War; however, the approach to analysis was slightly different this time. The popular belief of the time was that newly developed watchdog journalism, free of government control, could defy governmental propaganda (Hallin, 1986; Strobel, 1997). However, both Hallin and Strobel concluded that even if it seemed that the media were free of propagandistic influences, they operated in accordance with the administration, and they barely impacted government policy. Both authors claim that media followed the agenda set by the government, not the other way round. The Vietnam War has clearly prompted governments around the world to understand the possible impact of seemingly unrestricted media that do not follow their war agenda. Known as the Vietnam syndrome, the lesson of the Vietnam era was a need to manage the access to information during conflict.

Taylor (1992) and many others suggest that it was the British who learned the most from the Vietnam syndrome when they applied 'an information vacuum' to their operations in the Falklands War in 1982. They managed to control information about the war partly due to the remoteness of the conflict and its scale. Taylor explains how the government managed to keep the media out of the way in their later military engagements:

*The British, in other words, had apparently found an antidote to the 'Vietnam Syndrome' and the Americans duly went about applying it in the Grenada and Panama operations of 1983 and 1989 when, quite simply, the media were kept well and truly away from the action even though it was taking place in America's very own back yard. (Taylor, 1992: 4)*

At the same, it became clear that the newly emerging media (e.g. the 24-hour news-cycle of CNN) were unwilling to accept restricted access to the military operations. The government realized that it was impossible to keep the advancing technologies (camcorders, satellite phones, etc.) out of the conflict coverage. Therefore, a press pool system – a small group of invited reporters accompanying troops in combat – was organized and encouraged to share the information with the rest of the media. Introduced during the Panama conflict, the press pool became prominent during the First Gulf War (Lee, 1998; MacArthur, 1993; Strobel, 1997; Taylor, 1992). According to the experts, the success of 'Desert Storm' propaganda comes from the fact that the perception created by the live television coverage (mainly through the press pool reporters and briefings) implied a publicly open and un-managed war agenda. Despite the seemingly abundant numbers of images from the Gulf, Griffin and Lee (1995) show that the choice of these topics and images strongly favored the American side in conflict.

Nationalistic wars of the 1990s (Rwanda, Bosnia and Sierra Leone) pointed to the dangerous impact of the new electronic media and the correlation they may have had with the dissemination of hate messages and consequent killings (Des Forges, 1999; Kirschke, 1996; Onadipe and Lord, 1997; Thompson, 1999). This type of propaganda was connected with some of the most vicious genocidal campaigns in the history of humankind. The Rwandan Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines played a crucial role in initiating the slaughter of more than half a million people in less than 100 days. The broadcast messages explicitly calling for the murder of the Tutsi population were believed to have contributed to the massacre (Des Forges, 1999; Kirschke, 1996; Metzl, 1997a). Bosnian electronic and print media helped promote ethnic conflict when they began promoting the ideology of nationalism. While the explicit broadcast of hate messages was rare, the cumulative impact of biased coverage fuelled the hatred over a long period of time (Buric, 2000; Sadkovich, 1998; Thompson, 1999). Taylor and Kent (2000) describe the role of nationalist media in the Bosnian conflict as facilitators of war.

Over the last 80 years, mass media's influence has evolved gradually together with the technology that carries the mass mediated message. The examples from the World Wars, the Vietnam War and the civil wars of the last decade all suggest considerable media influence among populations in conflict. On the one hand, this powerful potential of propaganda to sway the minds and actions of people matches the predictions of an Orwellian type of society. It is not uncommon to find conclusions claiming that media have even been directly responsible for inciting violent conflicts (Des Forges, 1999; Hamelink, 2002; Kirschke, 1996; Thompson, 1999). On the other hand, some practitioners assume that the media must have a similar ability to deliver messages inspiring peaceful conflict resolution (Howard et al., 2003; Price and Thompson, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Taylor (1992) predicts that media have the potential to be utilized rather than abused in a conflict and therefore, the methods,

techniques and the organization of war promotion could serve as beneficial lesson in organizing the peace-oriented media in conflicts.

## **Cultural Violence as a Theoretical Framework for Peace-Oriented Media Intervention**

Defined simply as a pursuit of incompatible goals, conflict can incorporate violence; but violence, as we commonly know it, is not a necessary or sufficient part of a conflict. While conflict is over incompatible goals, violence is directed at doing harm to the other. No one better described this relationship than Johan Galtung (1969), who explains the approach to a positive peace solution, by introducing three concepts of violence:

- Direct violence is what we generally interpret as physical harm to other people.
- Structural violence is the type of violence that results from social inequality, repression and power inequity in a society. It is manifested in different kinds of social injustices, repressive institutions and institutionalized prejudice.
- Cultural violence is another invisible form of violence maintained by cultural institutions that justify direct violence. It is best described as a violence that occurs in the symbolic sphere of our existence (symbols, flags, hymns, speeches but also all kinds of texts produced in and by the media).

Direct violence is visible, while cultural and structural violence are usually invisible. If direct violence inflicts harm to the body, then cultural violence is responsible for harm to the mind. The suppression of direct violence, on one hand, is within the domain of political negotiation. Cessation of structural violence requires the elimination of structural injustices, but elimination of cultural violence implies a need for change in attitudes and perceptions.

Artifacts of cultural violence have been perceived as powerful tools that not only incite conflict but also disseminate discrimination. It is within this theoretical framework of cultural violence that the influence of media on both conflict and peace gains a prominent role. Within the domain of cultural violence, media become a venue that can give life to the artifacts of conflict and the ideas for peace. While the propaganda research has confirmed the negative effects of cultural violence, it seems that the elimination of cultural violence could be approached by similarly positioned peace-oriented media intervention.

Newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the Internet are critical for the way we interpret the events outside our direct environment and they inform what is known as a 'symbolic sphere of our existence' (Gerbner et al., 1986). Thus, the media are often a venue where cultural violence is created. Throughout the conception of mass communication studies – from Lippmann (1922) to Gerbner et al. (1986) – an emphasis has been placed on the role media play in creating this 'symbolic sphere of our existence;' or as Gerbner and Lippmann called it 'pseudo-environment', 'second-hand environment' or 'symbolic existence'. Gerbner et al. (1986) agreed and suggested that in modern society, television is the most significant contributor

to this pseudo-environment or, as Gerbner phrased it, the 'symbolic environment'. It is through this environment that media are able to cultivate thoughts and attitudes. People have been known to acquire knowledge and behavior through modeling and imitation of the media (Bandura, 1986). Based on the previous research of media effects, it is understood that the media do not have the power to directly inject a certain behavior into people's brains (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960); however, the effects of the media are neither minimal nor negligible. While the media rarely act as a sole agent of change, they often serve as a prominent factor in complex social systems that induce change (Severin and Tankard, 1992). Therefore, if media do help to create this symbolic environment, then they should be able to tackle the problem of cultural violence on this level.

This study, therefore, builds upon the theoretical findings that suggest that if the symbolic environment is impacted by the messages of peace-oriented media, such media environment can be conducive to the cultural transformation of violence.

## Overview of Peace-Oriented Media in Areas of Conflict

Perhaps due to the novelty of the practical utilization of media in peace, these theoretical assumptions are yet to be empirically tested. An elementary obstacle seems to be an absence of academic research that brings together the variety of practical media projects for analysis and evaluation. Individual examples from conflicts exist only as isolated practitioner reports. Furthermore, the projects were never compared in an attempt to uncover similarities or differences, and their effects are largely inconclusive.

Using peace-oriented media in conflict environments has been in practice for the last 15 years or so, and a variety of projects exist in the field. A missing component is a comprehensive study of all the projects that would approach the general idea rather than a single regional application. The focus of this study is on the compilation of an extensive set of peace-oriented media projects. The following criteria are used to identify the positive application of media in conflict regions:

1. A recent history or presence of armed conflict/violence in the region – this distinction is made in order to differentiate between media in conflict areas and media projects working toward the democratization of states in transition (e.g. the Czech and Slovak Republics);
2. Post-Cold War – only in the last 20 years have mass media equipment and technology become affordable and portable, allowing the establishment of new media sources as an immediate response to a conflict;
3. Involvement of a third party – the presence of a third party is what distinguishes peace-oriented media from sophisticated propaganda (e.g. American media relations in Iraq);
4. Intentional purpose – in order to focus only on specific programs aimed at transforming conflict, the study excludes projects and media channels that are already operating and producing media content in the region of conflict but are not doing anything exceptional in response to the violent conflict.



Therefore, this study examined only post-Cold War mass communication projects developed in direct response to violent conflicts initiated by a party that is not involved in the conflict and intended to respond to imminent violence. The data were gathered through interviews with selected practitioners, texts describing peace media projects and the available primary research conducted by practitioners. Triangulation of the three sources of data painted the most extensive picture of the practice. The primary goal of the study was to identify peace-oriented media projects in national violent conflicts. The media projects selected are from 18 countries, organized in 13 conflict sites and they have generated a total of about 40 peace-oriented media efforts and represent an assortment of conflict types (e.g. intra-state, inter-state, low-level conflict, guerrilla warfare, high-intensity wars) (Table 1). Even though other media projects may exist in other conflict areas, the projects listed illustrate the scope of the practice sufficiently.

## **Case Studies: Studio Ijambo in Rwanda and Bosnian Media Campaigns**

For a more in-depth illustration of the practice, two cases of peace-oriented media interventions are presented in this study. The projects were chosen because they represent cases from very different sociocultural and political contexts. In addition, the effectiveness of both projects has been independently evaluated and therefore offers empirically based evidence about the potential effects of peace-oriented media.

Rwanda went through one of the most brutal periods of violence in 1994, when 800,000 people were killed by Hutu militia (UNICEF, 2004). Shortly after, the counter-attack by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) brought the Tutsis back into power. At about the same time, Studio Ijambo (Kirundi for 'wise words') was established in Burundi in direct response to the neighboring conflict and since then, it has provided a model for production of peace-oriented media content not only for the conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi but throughout the African continent. The main objective of the studio was to produce a variety of programs that could contribute toward peaceful transformation of the conflict.

### ***Organization***

Studio Ijambo was founded by Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a Washington, DC-based organization. SFCG was established in 1982 as a non-governmental organization and it employs almost 400 people on four continents, mainly in the production and dissemination of media content. Most of the funding for the organization comes from governments (60 percent comes from European governments), while the rest is provided by grants from foundations, businesses and non-profit organizations. SFCG has the longest history of media intervention in conflicts, which has gained the organization an expert reputation in the field of peace-oriented media.

TABLE 1

**List of countries in Conflict and Major Peace-Oriented Media Projects**

Countries and regions in violent conflict	Peace-oriented media projects conducted in a response to the conflict
Angola	Search for Common Ground production studio
Cambodia	Radio UNTAC, regulation efforts
Central African Republic	Radio MINURCA, Radio Ndeke Luka
Colombia	'Medios par la Paz' – organization of journalists
Indonesia/East Timor	Studio Moris Hamutuk, comic book <i>Geng Bola Gembira</i>
Israel/Palestine	Sesame Street program – <i>Rechov SumSum/ Shara'a SimSim</i> , the Common Ground News Service
Liberia	STAR radio, Talking Drum Studio
Northern Ireland	McCann-Erickson's 'Good Friday Agreement' campaign, regulation of commercial press
Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo	Studio Ijambo, Radio Agatashya, Radio UNMIR, Radio Okapi, Radio Isanganiro, The Hironnelle News Agency, UNHCR information campaign
Senegal	Radio soap opera in Casamance region
Sierra Leone	Talking Drum Studio, UNHCR campaign
Sudan	Radio Voice of Hope
Yugoslavia (former SFRY): Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo	TV OBN, Radio FERN, 'Postujes li Zakon' (Respect the Law), 'Dosta je' (It's Enough) and 'Koliko jos?' (How Long?) campaigns, regulation efforts (Bosnia); <i>Nashe Maalo</i> TV series, peace agreement media campaign (Macedonia); Radio Blue Sky Kosovo, Project SPEAR, regulation efforts (Kosovo)

**Media Format**

Under the slogan 'Dialogue is the Future', Studio Ijambo produces social affairs, news, dramas, documentaries and children's programs. Most programs directly address the roots of the regional conflict. One of the most effective media projects employs a popular format – the soap opera. The most widely listened to soap opera, *Umubanyi Niwe Muryango* ('Our Neighbors, Ourselves'), features neighboring families who overcome daily conflict tribulations. *Our Neighbors, Ourselves* is set in one of the

rural hill areas and centers around the problems facing a Hutu and a Tutsi family. Their living experiences are dramatized in a series of episodes that depict the complexities of the relationships between these families due to the conflict. These programs are usually broadcast on five different state and private radio stations.

Another trademark of Studio Ijambo productions are the stories that focus on solutions and common people. The radio program known as *Heroes*, featured more than 150 episodes about people 'who risked their lives during a time of crisis to save the life of people of another ethnic group' (Slachmuisjlder and Nkurunziza, 2003: 16). Such coverage resulted in a phone-in follow-up program where listeners contributed their personal stories of others who had helped them during the violent conflict. Another type of programming was aimed at the children in both Rwanda and Burundi. Thirty percent of the entire population claimed to have listened to the children's program *Sangwe* (SFCG, 2004).

The studio was set up not to compete with local stations but rather to supply them with pro-social, peace-oriented media content. However, Studio Ijambo recently became a center for training and support for journalists from the entire region. As a result of the training, the journalists have launched a new radio station Radio Isanganiro (Crossroads Radio) that now features Studio Ijambo programming.

## Media Channels

Because television broadcasting is in its infancy in most of the regions, radio is indisputably the primary choice of most peace-oriented media projects in Africa. It is still the central source of information for most of the African continent. In comparison to newspapers, radio overcomes the problems of low literacy rates, distribution, language diversity and expense. It is relatively inexpensive to operate and it does not require as much equipment as a television station. Ines Mpambara, co-director of Rwanda's School of Journalism, explains the importance of radio in the everyday life of Rwandans, even after the terrible misuse of the medium during the genocide:

*Radio is the part of life of Rwandans. When you see people coming from their villages coming to sell their things in the city, they are wearing their stuff, food, and the radio. When you look at the people that were killing during the genocide, they had a machete in one hand and the radio set in the other hand. When people are working, the radio is the part of their life. (Pers. comm., 25 July 2004)*

## Audience

Women and children have been one of the most vulnerable groups affected by conflicts and violence. As non-combatants, women are a group in conflict that is stripped of influence, thus making them victims of violence and oppression. Peace-oriented media efforts therefore aim to empower women to take a more active role during peace-building. Studio Ijambo addressed this important issue in Rwanda by selecting a media format – the soap opera – which is likely to appeal to women.

In addition, the wars in Rwanda and Burundi have been especially cruel to children, who were often recruited and forced to join the armed forces. Studio Ijambo

attempted to reach the children and accomplished attracting a large segment of the youth population in Burundi and Rwanda. Surveys indicated that their youth programs were listened to by about 30 percent of the entire population (SFCG, 2004). Two more programs aimed at youth claim similar ratings.

## *Effects*

Information on the effects of Studio Ijambo programs is both anecdotal and empirically generated. Asgede Hagos (2001) recalls his conversation with the staff of Studio Ijambo about the reactions to the magazine show *Heroes*. The show featured stories about people who saved members of the opposite ethnic group from the killings, while often risking their own lives. The staff claimed that following the program, they received many phone calls from audience members who had participated in the killings between 1993 and 1996. They often expressed regret about what they had done, while also contributing stories of other people who saved many selflessly.

SFCG has reported that 12 million people in the Great Lakes region listen to Studio Ijambo programs and that 85 percent of the population in the region have access to radios (SFCG, 2004). Studio Ijambo programs are very popular, in fact, fewer than 20 percent of the audience claim not to listen to the programs (Hagos, 2001). More specifically, the audience seems to have really appreciated the radio soaps. Based on three surveys conducted since 1999, between 80 and 90 percent of the population listened to the drama *Umubanyi Niwe Muryango* ('Our Neighbors, Ourselves') regularly (Radio Netherlands, 2004).

In Burundi, Studio Ijambo asked its listeners about the messages they received from listening to the programs. Sixty-three percent mentioned 'reconciliation', while 53 percent said 'peace' (Hagos, 2001). Studio Ijambo's youth program *Sangwe* is listened to by a majority of children and youth in Burundi. Sixty-four percent of those who listened to the program indicated that they thought that it was 'very successful in bringing Burundi youth together' (Radio Netherlands, 2004: para. 5).

When researchers asked the Burundian people to identify the programs that helped them change or modify their attitude or behavior toward the other ethnic group, those that were mentioned most frequently were the radio drama *Our Neighbors, Ourselves* and the magazine show *Heroes*. Eighty-two percent of Burundians who listened to the dramas believed that these particular programs helped in promoting peace and reconciliation (Hagos, 2001).

Apart from the obvious impact on the audience, many media projects have claimed an impact on social institutions and public figures. Though evidence of such a relationship is rather anecdotal, often times, attention paid to a particular problem raised in a broadcast has alerted the institutions responsible and frequently led to a positive change of direction. One such example is Studio Ijambo's reporting on the killing of refugees in 1997. This later prompted the Voice of America to pick up the story, which indirectly contributed to the closing of the camps in 1998 (Hagos, 2001). Finally, additional evidence of Studio Ijambo's effectiveness is found in the creation of three comparable studios in other conflict sites (i.e. Studio Moris Hamutuk in East Timor and Talking Drum Studios in both Liberia and Sierra Leone).

## Bosnian Media

Between 1992 and 1995, more than 150,000 were killed in the Bosnian civil war between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats. The Dayton Peace Agreement ended the violence in 1995 by instituting a provisional, internationally run governing body in charge of peace implementation (the Office of the High Representative [OHR]). One of OHR's initial assessments of the Bosnian conflict was that all three sides in the conflict utilized radio and television broadcasting to further their conflict goals and demonize their opponents (Buric, 2000; Sadkovich, 1998; Thompson, 1999).

### Organization

The OHR decided, therefore, that the Bosnian media must be given a prominent role and a responsibility to facilitate reconciliation. As a result, a number of small and large-scale media projects were undertaken. A new national television (Open Broadcast Network [OBN]) and radio network (Free Exchange Radio Network [FERN]) were created in 1996. From the beginning, these stations were able to provide reliable post-conflict coverage. However, they never managed to compete with the popularity of the nationalistic broadcasters, who never ceased with their conflict-inciting reporting.

Because the election of 1996 brought no significant change in the power structure, more media projects were employed in order to reduce political tensions. One project was a collaboration between the OHR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which resulted in an extensive media campaign involving multiple media formats and channels.

### Media Format

At the time, the issues of refugee repatriation and property restitution were considered to be the major obstacle to peace. Therefore, a three-part campaign – 'Dosta je' ('It's Enough') 'Postovanje' ('Respect') and 'Koliko jos?' ('How Long?') – was launched to address the issues of refugees returning to Bosnia. The campaign directly promoted the return of the refugees and restitution of their homes and properties: the first phase called for an end to the lawlessness (Dosta je), while the second phase asked that the right of repatriation be respected (Postovanje). The two campaigns were followed by a television series *Koliko jos* ('How Long?'), which was broadcast on public television channels. Run as documentary series, *Koliko jos* aired nationally in prime-time for several months.

### Media Channels

The choice and the positioning of the messages in the media channels will be remembered for their emphasis on the unique channel of communication, clever targeting of their audience and their ability to affect the cultural context. In order to ensure successful penetration of its message, the OHR had passed a broadcasting regulation that all television and radio stations were obliged to give a certain amount

of time to the media campaign. Building on such favorable conditions, short public service announcements (PSAs) on radio and television were launched in 1999. Soon after, large billboards, posters, print ads, leaflets and also some non-traditional communication strategies (specially designed folders, matches and diskette holders) were distributed across Bosnia.

Most original were the sugar packets served in the coffee shops, printed with the logo of the 'Postovanje/Respect' campaign. Considering the cultural significance of coffee shops and their importance in the public life of Bosnian society, such promotion has been a very effective way of reaching the audience and inserting the message into the social context. In addition, the messages were reinforced during national prime-time television slots. The documentary series, 35-minute-long stories about people affected by the displacement, ran for three months (March–May 2001) as the concluding phase of the campaign.

## *Audience*

Refugees were one of the principal target audiences as they are often highly affected by violent events. The return of Bosnian refugees was a key issue in the transformation of that conflict because the forced movement of the population had resulted in a high number of internally displaced people. Therefore, a peaceful transformation could not be achieved without the proper and complete return of the population to their homes and properties. Accordingly, the comprehensive media campaign initially targeted refugees, who needed to understand that a safe return to their home was possible. The secondary audience was the greater public, who needed to be reminded about the refugees' legal entitlement to their personal property, despite the long period of unlawful mass expulsions.

## *Effects*

Mareco Index, a commercial public opinion research agency, conducted the research to evaluate the campaign. The first phase of the campaign, 'Postovanje', was seen or heard by 72 percent of people while 54 percent saw or heard its follow-up 'Dosta je'. It is also noticeable that the third phase, the television series, was watched by 37 percent of Bosnians (Sahbaz, 2000).

The results also confirmed significant recognition of the main messages and outstanding public awareness with regard to the campaign. The study found that 91 percent of the Bosnian audience saw the 'Postovanje' campaign on television. More people saw the campaign on television than in any other form: reported results for radio were 61 percent, posters 53 percent, billboards 65 percent, newspapers 56 percent, sugar packets 16 percent, leaflets and posters 30 percent (Mareco Index Bosnia, 2000).

While the decision to use the sugar packet printed with the campaign logo took into consideration cultural norms, the survey results are not as favorable for the sugar packets. Compared to television and radio ads, which carried 91 percent and 61 percent recognition respectively, the sugar packets achieved a modest 16

percent recognition. The strong numbers for the non-broadcast media show that the traditions and customs of a society need to be acknowledged and incorporated into a campaign design. Leaflets, posters, billboards, wall paintings and theater are just some of the underutilized channels that have great potential.

In addition, the audience research showed that the messages came across very clearly. A majority of the audience understood the messages of the first phase. However, not all the respondents were excited about the design of the message. Sixty percent of respondents neither liked nor disliked the message.

Almost 90 percent of the audience found the campaign to be accurate, useful and fair (Sahbaz, 2000). The four main goals intended to be communicated by the 'Dosta je' campaign were among the top five interpretations reported by the audience and the four intended goals of the television series 'Koliko jos' coincided with the top four interpretations identified by the audience. The two primary goals – to raise awareness of and to provoke thought on the issue – resonated with 59 and 32 percent of the audience respectively (Sahbaz, 2000).

## **Media in Conflict and Peace: Reality and Opportunity**

Perhaps the most significant lesson of the analysis is that there is little doubt regarding the intent of practitioners and development agencies to use peace-oriented media projects in a conflict environment. The two case studies demonstrate how well-organized media programs can impact conflict audiences. However, just like pro-war propaganda did not single-handedly cause the war, peace-oriented media cannot single-handedly end a conflict. Even a very successful media project may not be able to prevent violence if the formation of violence is caused by a combination of multiple causes and conditions out of the media's control. Despite the limitations, media appear to be a necessary element of every future peace operation. Initial practical projects in conjunction with historical developments of propaganda suggest that the current practice could benefit in the following ways.

### ***Integrating Several Media Channels and Practices***

Creel's idea of employing all available 'media of appeal' in pursuit of a cause is the most useful lesson for the new effort. Initially, propaganda became effective when it was consolidated into orchestrated machinery by the war governments. Despite the appearance of an orchestrated message apparatus, current media efforts in peace development are haphazardly organized. In addition, the lack of coordination among the projects and the absence of an overarching strategy are apparent. On the positive side, the practice seems to contain all the necessary ingredients to succeed. Journalists and news producers are determined to improve practices that facilitate peace (Howard et al., 2003; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2000); the entertainment format has been utilized to effectively deliver messages of peace (Howard et al., 2003; SFCG, 2002, 2004); regulators have firmly condemned hate media (Metzl, 1997b; Price and Thompson, 2002); and marketing techniques have been used to support peace agreements (Finlayson and Hughes, 2000; Sahbaz, 2000). In essence, what is needed

is a peace relations agenda closely resembling a commercial public relations campaign. A joint and integrated set of measures involving more than a single media channel or technique is vital to the success of the practice. In the absence of an integrated effort, a single broadcast program or even a single radio station is unlikely to make a significant impact in a sea of media messages and outlets.

### *Integrating Media with Other Social Institutions*

Despite the ability to shape attitudes and opinions in favor of peace, media institutions remain only a portion of a conflict society. The transformation of violent conflict requires an integrated plan of action. In order to be productive, media need to accompany the other social and political institutions in their pursuit of peace-building. The role of media, as Lippmann suggested in the 1920s, is not to substitute for inadequate social organization and institutions. Media can be only as strong as social institutions and processes. Legal, political, economic and other social institutions must assist in transforming the conflict. The media must be understood as an integral and important segment of peace development.

### *Regulating Propaganda as well as Producing Peace-Oriented Media*

While the focus of most of the projects presented in this article has been the production of media content favoring the peaceful transformation of conflict, it seems that the most important feature of the immediate post-violence conflict state is the regulation of propaganda or hate media. Reducing the level and amount of hate messages inciting violence during the conflict would significantly minimize the negative impact of the media on the audience. Even if no peace-oriented media were produced, minimizing the negative impact would translate into a relative success.

An unregulated media environment is also able to prolong the conflict by minimizing the impact of positive media projects. Peace-oriented entertainment, journalism and any other peace media programs would be most effective in an environment where sensationalist hate media do not distract the public's attention. A system of rules and regulations and the ability to enforce sanctions or penalties are a precondition for the successful implantation of peace-oriented media. Nonetheless, regulatory efforts need to be sensitive to the specific sociocultural conditions. While some societies may not object to strong regulatory efforts (e.g. Rwanda), others believe that regulation should be left to the media market itself (e.g. Northern Ireland).

This study should be seen as an initial attempt to identify most peace-oriented media projects in order to encourage further academic research on the topic. Further explanation of the relationship between media and peace is seriously needed. Therefore, it is my hope that this research will encourage discussion, evaluation, and, perhaps mobilize efforts that may contribute toward peace developments in all societies in conflict.



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