

MAPPING THE SOMALI MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

From the late 1980s, hundreds of Somali media outlets (newspapers, radio stations, various TV channels and websites) have been created. These are in large part accessible over the internet. Given that there has been an upsurge of warfare in Somalia, different media establishments continue to have strong interests and stakes in the outcome of the Somali conflict. While some of the media actually try to promote peace building and nation building, they run the risk of being targeted by any of the warring parties. Others, because of their clan ties or ideological orientation, may attempt to stimulate further conflict or present a particular interest in reporting their stories (McChesney 2008). Others again might function as inciters of violence in some situations; often where the interests of the faction or clan they back is at stake, but genuinely attempt to promote conflict reconciliation when other clans or factions wage war.

In order to assess the peace-making capacities of the Somali media, one has to first map the media landscape, starting with a historical overview. It is important to note that there has recently been an explosion of Somali web news outlets, with Abdisalam Issa-Salwe suggesting that there has been as much as a 44% increase in the amount of Somali web pages from 2006 to 2011 alone.⁵ Therefore, due to its nature, this project did not have the resources to fully map this aspect of the Somali media.

The project will therefore study along with print media, radio and television, the Somali news websites of most importance. “Importance” will be measured by examining the web-pages ranking on Google hits, which indicates how widespread the page is on the internet, as well as the so-called Alexa index, basically the traffic ranks of the Alexa system, indicating the amount of visitors per month.⁶ All non-web based Somali radio stations aired inside Somalia (on the 1st of May 2011), are explored, although some smaller stations in the rural areas might have been left out, as some of these stations emerges and collapses quite quickly. We took into account the fact that some TV- and radio stations, as well as newspapers, might be affiliated with the radical Shebab group, and individuals interviewed in the qualitative interviews might be too afraid to identify such outlets. During the in-depth interviews we asked individuals to report which Shebab media stations they knew existed, and attempted to map all the media outlets affiliated with the Shebab, as well as systematically study the available newscasts from the Shebab online to see where they were from.⁷



⁵ Abdisalam Issa-Salwe (2011): "Somali Diaspora and the Adoption of Mailing List Technology" lecture given at the Oxford workshop on Media

⁶ See <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo>

⁷ The current webpages affiliated to the Shebab are <http://alqimmaah.net/>, which is operated by non-Somalis, probably targeting a non-Somali audience. More

Somali-focused sites are somalimemo.com; halganka.wordpress.com; youtube.com/user/QolkaDacwatuTawxiid;

http://amiimuur.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4735:wilaayada-islamiga-ee-jubooyinka-dhulkii-waa-diyaaree-kaalaya-oo-ka-faaiidaysta-qaybtii-2aad-warbixin-sawiro-indhaha-u-roon&catid=48:wararka Radio Furuqan has their own page: <http://radioalfurqaan.com/>;

GBC Codka Nabada (www.gbcsomt.com/) www.hornafrik.com

house controls a website, a radio station and a TV station); in these instances, this will be explored in the Radio and Television section (Section 4), as long as they have TV/radio activities. If a media house has newspaper activities, it will be explored in Section 3 (Print Media).

Some general traits have to be noted. Firstly, there is no doubt that the most efficient media for outreach in Somalia is radio. Radio receivers are small, cheap, and can be handled by the nomadic population. Printed media is limited due to the large illiteracy rate and the circulation numbers are low. The largest Somali paper, the Hargeisa based *Jamhurya*, has an estimated circulation of 6,000 copies (although these are re-circulated and read by many more readers). TV is also a media for the urban and the privileged. There are satellite and cable stations but one needs televisions, satellite dishes and/or cable connections in order to access them. The internet sites offer a good coverage of Somalis in Somalia and of the diaspora but access inside Somalia is limited. However, it should be kept in mind that both the diaspora and the urban elite are highly important for conflict resolution as well as conflict promotion, so although limited in reach, the internet, as well as the printed press, need to be explored. Clan affiliations are also highly important, as expressed by a journalist interviewed in Nairobi:

The Somali media is structured and are based on tribal affiliations so this makes them different from the world's media. When you listen or read a website, you can understand what tribe it's coming from so that is a sign that it is distinct from others.⁸

Clans remain important for the Somali media in the form of real allegiances, where a media outlet reports only from their clan leaders and reports only the killings of their clans as well as other issues touching the interests of their clan. However, it also becomes important because of alleged and not necessarily real clan ties, perceptions that could alienate parts of the Somali society. A reference group of 20 persons was used to present alleged clan loyalties. It should be noted that we had no opportunity to study if these allegations were true, and the lists indicate alleged rather than real affiliations.

This report is divided into four sections, each mapping a different aspect of Somali media. The first (Section 2) concerns online media; the second (Section 3) concerns print media; and the third (Section 4) covers radio and television stations. The final section (Section 5) offers conclusions and recommendations for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁸ Interview made in Nairobi 24/10 2010.

mind that internet access is limited within Somalia; direct access to Somali websites will largely also be diaspora based.

In this section is a short overview of the key Somali web media. Here the particular focus is on continuous operation and relevance, so that the longevity and infrastructural stability is a key. It is important to note the unpredictable nature of online media connected with Somalia; indeed, websites can rapidly emerge and disappear leaving very few traces behind.

2.1. ONLINE MEDIA ECOLOGY

At the time of writing (2011), the diaspora clearly dominate the online media environment. However, there is a large range of views displayed across the numerous websites and online news providers, much of it professionally and semi-professionally produced. This contributes hugely to a Somali public sphere, creating the space for debate and contestation of key issues in Somali society. A rather interesting effect of the dominance of the diaspora is that the public sphere is, in a sense, external to the nation itself both in terms of foreign hosting and technical infrastructure, but also in terms of its outlook and ideologies. As previously mentioned the domestic media tends to reuse material from the diasporic web media and can therefore act as an echo-chamber for views that originate from outside the country. This places it within a strong position to counter ideas and to further propagate ideas and knowledge within the national boundaries of Somalia, and indeed beyond. Within the political class, there is also a large proportion of diaspora who naturally will be comfortable with the use of the diasporic media forms and the online news environment. Another notable feature of these websites is the vibrancy of the chat-room and forum hosting which some of the media providers support. These allow discussion on a wide range of issues of interest to both the diasporic and domestic Somalis. However, as noted below, there is a tendency to a large proportion of posts being made by diaspora users⁹.

Generally, Somali websites are employed for: (i) propaganda (as information war), (ii) community information, (iii) preservation and revival of Somali culture and literature, and/or, (iv) Islamic teaching. Issa-Salwe (2011) has usefully classified Somali websites into the following categories, which should be taken into account with the general naming convention that tends to use names which are not identified by a particular political group, region or clan.¹⁰ Therefore, they generally use common names such as, for example, SomaliNet, SomaliTalk or Somalia Online (see Appendix 1). However, exceptions are websites that have regional or city names that are national in their coverage but still have the tendency of emphasising issues that have a clear connotation to clan, region or the Somali nation:

1. Community/political:

By focusing on community views, concerns and interests, this type of community/political website acts as a community and political front. They make up the majority of Somali

⁹ These forums and chat rooms offer an interesting research possibility for data-mining and search/discovery. Both in terms of current discussions within the Somali public sphere, broadly conceived, but also in terms of the way in which consensus and political identity formation is taking place online. This would require further study.

¹⁰ Abdusalam Issa-Salwe (2011): "Somali Diaspora and the Adoption of Mailing List Technology" lecture given at the Oxford workshop on Media and Diaspora, 29 June, 2011

websites using news online as their major feature. These websites usually have their own domain name.

2. Cultural/literary:

This type of website devotes its activity to Somali culture and literature. They generally make up part of other domains, particularly the community/ political web type. However, where they have their own domain they are entirely devoted to the preservation and dissemination of Somali literature and culture.

3. Professional/business:

This type of website is mainly devoted to professional or other specific activities such as business. They are usually internet based fronts for existing businesses or professional bodies.

4. Online Newspaper:

This type of website is structured in the form of an online newspaper where the news is published in the form of text, visual or audio. The majority of this web group is web front of existing newspapers which exist inside or outside Somalia. Therefore, their web activity is mainly an extension of their non-web activities.

5. Religious:

This type of website is dedicated entirely to Islamic teaching and information but also posts fatwa's on relevant issues or when such a need arises. Such websites are also connected or represent the different Islamic stances of Somali sheikhs that have different affiliations to Islamic groups in Somalia.

6. Personal:

This type of website has the most striking similarity with the political/community web type as personal web pages are known to present material in a self-presentation form. Many community/political web types start as personal web types.

7. Radio/TV:

The radio/TV website shares some similarities with the online news web-group. Generally, these are incorporated into the other types discussed above.

Type	Sept 2006	May 2011	Increase	Percentage
Community/political	296	501	205	69%
Cultural/literary	17	27	10	59%
Professional/business	96	130	34	35%
Online Newspaper	26	24	-2	-8%
Religious	31	48	17	55%
Personal	166	190	24	14%
Radio/TV	39	44	5	13%
TOTAL	671	964	293	44%

Table 2: Sample of number of Somali Online Media (from Issa-Salwe 2011)

The cultural/literary website types are used in two ways: (i) to preserve Somali literature and culture. Somali websites tend to depict cherished cultural homogeneity and shared heritage of Somaliness and Islam; (ii) they also portray the political and social division of their 'collective consciousnesses.

2.2. SOCIAL IMPACT, POTENTIAL SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

One of the most interesting features of the Somali case is that, due to the control of the media by the diaspora, web based media has a key 'filtering' role in terms of the propagation of ideas and information both into and out of the country. Indeed, we can think of this as an important curatorial function that translates information and knowledge from the wider global perspective into a Somali one, and vice versa. This gives the diaspora a certain degree of media power, able to control and manipulate the content of the public sphere both within Somalia but also outside. Therefore, the diasporic media can have a social impact through the media larger than might be expected at first glance. Indeed, control over the means of communication is hugely important in a country that lacks key infrastructural and state institutions, news and non-verified information channels to ascertain the current situation across Somalia. The contribution of online media to social mobilisation and conflict is still widely disputed; however, it is clear that information is a key resource in the manipulation and control of subject populations. Web based social mobilisation has been frequent and political factions within Somalia have often used the internet for mobilisation, especially to get funds or disseminate propaganda. This includes the warlords, sharia courts, individuals within the TFG leadership, regional States and the Shebab, the latter hosting question-and-answer sessions on Paltalk, as well as the opportunity to send questions to the former

spokesperson Muqtar Robow “Abu Mansoor”. The internet has also been used to recruit fighters, as the examples from the Minnesota recruitment cases show. In some cases, Shebab videos distributed on YouTube have led to the recruitment to other Islamist groups in Pakistan as well.¹¹

These web technologies may enable the Somali diaspora to take the conflict and reproduce it outside their homeland. In this sense, an overview of the more ‘clannist’ tendencies on the internet becomes important also for countries that host the Somali diaspora. On the other hand, they also help the diaspora to take part in local developments such as humanitarian relief and development, including establishing hospitals, universities and schools.¹² So whilst it is important that a plethora of voices is heard within this space, it is also crucially important that news media and especially the online fora develop professional institutional methods to both diffuse these messages but also seek to explain, criticize and disseminate voices from across the Somali civil society. It therefore remains an important task of external bodies to improve the quality of Somali journalism and especially their understanding and skills in relation to the use of electronic media. When the value of peace journalism is considered, it is crucially important that extremist media are contested and the value of contestation and dialogue is both done, and seen to be done, through the media performance of trusted media entities. Paradoxically, such capacity building might be most important in countries where the diasporic media is based, countries like the UK, USA, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, although many of the Norwegian sites have a very poor standard and are clan based. However, general training workshops with journalists in these countries and the Somali part-time web based reporters could be organized. This might decrease clan biases, as well as being used to install stronger ethical standards amongst the diaspora based journalists.

It is an interesting side note that the research has not shown the existence of Somali media aggregation which would enable Somali users and the wider public to bring together many of the dispersed media into one website. This is a technical project which could have important consequences for the development of civil society within Somalia, should it be widely used, but which could also enable dialogue to be seen to be taking place between different media outlets. This would further the notion of a media-centric public sphere in Somalia and also contribute to strengthening civil society and the ‘we-ness’ of an imagined community within the Somali context. In this sense it might counter the fragmenting forces within the Somali society by contributing to the reconstruction of national Somali identity, interest and vision towards the conflict and rebuilding the collapsed State. Seemingly, several web based news servers engage in the storage of Somali poems as well as history, but it should be noted that historical facts, and the symbolic use of language, becomes distorted, often with a tendency to depict one clan and its Somali “credentials” by focusing on the prominent persons from a given clan within a Somali nationalist narrative as national heroes from a particular clan and presenting a narrative of histories that are distorted and/or manipulated. The result is an odd hybridism of social reconstruction in which a clan can be amplified within a nationalist narrative, whilst other clans can be accused of being “anti-nationalistic”, indirectly contributing to conflict.

¹¹ Stig Jarle Hansen (2011) “The History of Harakat Al Shebab” forthcoming report from the Norwegian Defence Research establishment.

¹² Mohamed Husein Gaas (2011) “Somali Diaspora contributing to violent conflict or helping in reconciliation and building peace?” Key lecture given at the Oxford workshop on Media and Diaspora, Oxford University, 29 June 2011

The usage of the online media falls across a wide spectrum of civil society as can be seen in the Table above. The number of hits per month (which is a very rough proxy of usage) can be used to extrapolate the relative importance of the different websites. These websites are located in a number of different countries but are usually written in Somali and English; the largest number is located in the UK, the USA, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

2.3. THE STABILITY OF ONLINE MEDIA

Websites are by nature rather ephemeral media, quickly created and quickly taken down. Although there are examples of Somali media, especially in the online environment, that have been in existence for a number of years, a maximum of ten years without the stabilising effect of institutional repositories, there is always the danger that this history and context could vanish. Online storage projects like the Internet Archive's Way Back Machine (<http://www.waybackmachine.org>) have some archives of the existing online media in Somalia but due to its sampling nature, this is fragmented and offers poor coverage. There is certainly potential for the development of a Somali Digital Library project which could potentially archive some of these materials in a more rigorous and comprehensive fashion. Even the online news media themselves do not offer very useful archives; - *Shabelle News*, for example, only offers archives back to 2010 – and these are extremely patchy. The value of creating a national archive of such materials for Somalia would be immense, creating a 'first draft of history' to which scholars, journalists and others could access the historical timeline of the Somali nation as represented through its news media online. There is great potential for capacity building in this area and the skills of external bodies could contribute to a very worthwhile project towards the institutionalisation of Somali national identity and civil society.

3. THE PRINT MEDIA

The history of the printed press in Somalia can be divided into three distinct periods, all influencing and shaping the political situation in the country at the time. In each period, different focus, trajectories, regulations, operating environments existed. The phases are (i) a stable regulated period, (ii) chaotic period with free press, and (iii) the present period.

3.1. PHASE I: THE BEGINNING OF SOMALI PRINT MEDIA

The first phase starts with the last functioning government of Mohamed Siyaad Bare (1969-1991). At this time, printed media in Somalia was by large in the hands of the State and regulated and no papers beyond the regime's orbit were allowed unless it was certain that such paper was pro-regime and under its spheres of regulation.

The Somali print media introduced the Somali alphabet. On 21 January 1973, *Xidigta Oktoobar* printed its first issue. Gradually, three more government-owned and one private newspaper were in circulation. *Xidigta Oktoobar* was the official government newspaper which also had its sister *Najmatu Oktober* printed and issued in the Arabic language. Both of

these were printed on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the *Heegan* newspaper, also owned by the Government, was printed in English twice a week. In the 1980s, a presidential decree laid down the foundation for the establishment for *Ogaal* as the fourth newspaper and the second newspaper with the Somali language. *Ogaal* was owned by the “Xisbiga Hantiwadaaga Kacaanka Soomaliyeed” (Somali Socialist Revolutionary party) headed by the President. The newspaper was considered to be a competitor to the formal government paper, *Xidigta Oktoobar*. However, the first privately owned newspaper in Somalia, *Aldaleeca*, an Arabic newspaper, became the fifth paper available to readers. *Aldaleeca* was the only newspaper that was owned privately.

In this era, the Ministry of Information regulated the media. There was no freedom of the press and critics against the Government were punished. However, *Ogaal* was somewhat different from the other three newspapers due to the relative freedom it enjoyed, at least until it was shut down by the Government in 1988. The *Ogaal*'s exceptional freedom related to its status as the official paper of the ruling party (Xisbiga Hantiwadaaga Kacaanka Soomaaliyed) and also the fact that it was run and edited by young members of the ruling party who were mostly educated. One of the journalists of the paper at that time is the previous Vice President of the Puntland regional state of Somalia, Mohamed Ali Yusuf “Gagaab”. *Ogaal* occasionally directed open criticism of government policies, sometimes even succeeding in correcting issues and reversing ill-fated policies of the Government. As such *Ogaal* became more popular amongst the Somali public. However, the toleration of *Ogaal* by the regime was short-lived as the paper published an 8-page long article on a corruption scandal in which several ministers were involved. *Ogaal* thus was shut down in 1988. The remaining four newspapers continued operating until the flare-up of civil war in early 1991.

In this period, qualified journalists printed newspapers in black and white sheets. Though politics was much the focus for all newspapers in this phase, they all provided dedicated columns for culture, poetry, social affairs, commercials, government programs, and promoting socialism ideology and Somali- rather than clan identity.. Further, it was during this period that the Somali printed press enjoyed a high circulation and large readership. Also, what distinguishes this phase is that when Somali language newspapers were established, this occurred in conjunction with or directly after the Somali language alphabet was introduced.

There are two important points relevant for today regarding this phase of the history of the printed Somali press: (i) some qualified journalists are still available, often educated in this phase, but they were part of a highly repressive press tradition and will often be seen as stooges for the old regime (there are important exceptions and the reputation of the *Ogaal* should be noted); (ii) this was the phase that defined the Somali language. After the collapse of the above-mentioned papers in 1991, Somali linguistic standards deteriorated.

3.2. PHASE II: THE EXPLOSION OF PRINT MEDIA

The second phase of the print media started from the collapse of the State and civil war in 1991 and lasted until 2000. During this period, print media in Somalia lacks journalistic ethics, training and bias, low circulation, low quality, but the explosion of a number of newspapers. In this period no less than 22 newspapers in Mogadishu, 2 in Puntland, and 4 in Somaliland existed.

In early 1991, a group of loose clan- based rebellious armed factions entered the cities of Mogadishu, Hargesa and Kismaayo, expelling the military regime that had ruled Somalia for almost 21 years. The State collapsed with the complete destruction of infrastructure, including the press. The rebels of the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), Somali National Movement (SNM) and the United Somali Congress (USC) became factionalized and contended over the direction of the country. This resulted in chaos in the country where multitudes of armed militias started plundering the people, committing all types of vicious criminal acts like killing, rape and looting. These malicious actions had a serious impact on the media. With the collapse of the State, Somalia was a country in crisis and civil war. The four remaining newspapers from Phase I (*Ogaal* was closed in 1988), Radio Mogadishu, Radio Hargeisa, and National Somali TV, all ceased broadcasting at a time when there was an increased need for information on inter- and intra-clan conflicts in Somalia.

The Restore Hope operation led by the USA, and later became UNISOM, created both political and economic opportunities for establishing newspapers. The presence of peacekeeping troops and various international NGOs as well as UN organizations also influenced the circulation of papers in south-central Somalia. Because of the conflict, opposing warlords sought to mobilize their respective clan members and allies to intimidate or maybe present themselves to Somalis and to UNISOM as being the sole and undisputed national leaders. This said, at the height of the civil war (1991-1993), the high cost, impracticality of importing and operating radios made it impossible to establish radio stations. The print media was thus the only affordable available option. The production of newspapers didn't require professionalism as papers were typed by typewriter and subsequently printed, using old duplicating machines with A4 paper rather than round standard newspaper sheets. As such, all newspapers were printed in black and white. Moreover, in terms of staff, almost all newspapers had no more than three or four employees. With regard to ownership, newspapers were either directly owned by or allied with warlords. As such, it is no wonder that in this phase warlords either ran their own or otherwise had an allied newspaper that propagated their warfare strategy against those they perceived as rivals and adversary clans in the south- central regions in Somalia.

Print media established In Somalia (1991-2000)	
Newspaper	Focus
Aayatiin	Short stories
Ayamaha Nolosha	Love stories
Beeldeeq	propaganda
Bilan	Women rights, development, Needs
Dayax	News
Jamhuuriya	News/politics
Laacib	Sport
Maandeeq	News/politics
Midnimo	News/politics
Mogadihsu times	News/politics
Panurama	Propaganda
Qaran Press	News/politics

Rajo	News/politics
Sanca	News/politics
Shuma	News/politics
Social Press	Social affars
Sulux	Propaganda
Waayahay	News/politics
xogogaal	News/politics
Xoriya	News/politics
SIS	Peace building
Yoobsen	News/politics
Danjire	News/politics
Kaaha Bari	News/politics

Table 3: Print media established in Somalia (1991-2000)

In this phase, there was an almost complete lack of journalistic ethics. Poor knowledge and inflammatory news reporting fuelled conflicts. For instance, newspapers in Mogadishu were based in either the north or south parts of the city, areas controlled by Ali Mahdi and Mohamed Farah Caydiid respectively. Accordingly, newspapers in Mogadishu sided with their clans. Beyond the clan allegiance, all print media sided with one actor or the other of conflicting camps. However, there were few exceptions to this rule. For example, *Mogadishu Times*, owned by a woman nicknamed “Biirto” and her sister, and *Shuma* were among a handful of newspapers that dared to keep neutrality and criticized both the warlords and their supporting clans. Here, instead of clan motivation per se, it can also be explained that the high attachment to clans and warlords by the print media was partially the result of compounded concerns from journalists and newspaper owners for their personal safety and security. In fact, one of the journalists interviewed for this Report worked for a Mogadishu based paper at that time and described the odd situation he was caught in:

It was a dilemma of if I do damn, and if don't damn. If you don't write clan x and warlord x defeated clan Z and bad stuff for draw attention without this delirious actions no one buys the paper. Also, we were always biased not for the sake of our clan affiliations but the fact was that if we report negatively on clan z, I would have been killed long ago

From the 1990s, journalists and newspaper owners faced economic sanctions if they were found to be condemning a warlord in the area where their newspaper was produced and distributed. Indeed, papers that dared to saw their printing house being destroyed and distribution restricted, if not banned.

What separates this period from other periods of Somali media, is that it is the first time specialized papers entered into circulation in Somalia. Papers such as *Laacib*, *Sportpress*, *Social Press* and *Bilan* were all papers that specialized in sport, social affairs, dating and love stories, and women's rights respectively.

The regional variation of the number of newspapers across e.g. Mogadishu, Puntland and Somaliland was due to the above-mentioned factors and also to the various demographic, political, and security conditions.

3.3. PHASE III: 2000 - TO PRESENT DAY

By the year 2000 there were several important developments that affected the print press in Somalia. First, the two regional states of Puntland and Somaliland were established, warlords were becoming weaker and there was a decrease in violence. Second, the Somali diaspora became more important, many returning to Mogadishu. One of the ways the Somali diaspora worldwide involve themselves with homeland politics is through media. As mentioned earlier, print media had grown rapidly and established itself as controlled by a number of warlords or allied with them, or with “big men” in different entities in Somalia. However, with the diaspora engaging itself in Somalia, the end of the Restore Hope operation, and UNISOM II, the formation of both Puntland and Somaliland, the Somali printed press declined. The establishment of radio stations by the returning Somali diaspora in all regions in Somalia (except Somaliland) also created competition. The fact that Somali society is considered traditionally an oral society, played a role in this. Introduction of cheap FM radio receivers costing less than 5 USD in markets across Somalia, combined with the gradual increase of radio stations and eventually TV stations (see Chapter 4, the Radio/TV section of this report) contributed to the decline of printed papers, especially in south-central regions. Diaspora driven telecommunication companies introducing cheap mobile- and internet connection services, even cheaper and more sophisticated to both Somalia and neighbouring Kenya, also affected the printed press, as Somalis got easier access to the news.

Today, there are approximately 7 daily/weekly, and one monthly, specialized newspaper(s) in Mogadishu. However, the papers are more advanced than previously, with some being printed in colour as sheet papers in Nairobi and then brought to Mogadishu. For instance, *SIMAD* press is a unique monthly, 30 pages long, and highly specialized paper produced by Simad University in Mogadishu but printed in Nairobi. It provides market prices of various items including exchange rates and export/import goods across Somalia. *Xoriyo* is owned by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and based in Nairobi, and is now the closest to a State owned paper in the Somali capital.

Print media south-central Somalia 2011		
Newspaper	Focus	Frequency
Xogogaal	News	Daily
Benadir post	News	Weekly
Xoriyo	News	Twice/week
Horyaal Sport	Sport	Twice/week
Wadani	News	Monthly
Mogadihsu	News	Daily
Times		
Ogaal	News	5 days a week
SIMAD	Prices and markets/English	Monthly

Table 4: Print media south-central Somalia 2011

In Puntland, only two older newspapers, both established in the 1990s, exist. The two newspapers, *Illeys* and *Kaaha Bari*, are both circulated in Puntland and the nearby Galmudug region. The daily circulation is 550 - 600 papers.

Print media Puntland 2011		
Newspaper	Focus	Issued
Illeys	News	-----
Kaaha Bari	News/analysis	Weekly

Table 5: Print media in Puntland 2011

For Somaliland, the number of newspapers has continued to increase since the 1990s due to several factors. First, Somaliland is considered as being a relatively more secure environment compared to south-central Somalia and Puntland. Second, albeit difficult to verify, it may also enjoy a higher level of literacy among its population. Third, in Somaliland there is relative press freedom, but serious violations of this freedom have been repeatedly taking place in the past, including the arrest of one of the most prominent editors in Somaliland, Yusuf Gabobe. Fourth, Somaliland has yet to open its airwaves to private actors. All radios are State owned, which might contribute to the growth of private information delivery alternatives including newspapers. And finally, due to all these factors, the printed media in Somaliland enjoys a far greater readership and are of better quality than newspapers in the South, which makes papers in Somaliland economically more profitable than those in other parts of Somalia.

Print media Somaliland 2011		
Newspaper	Focus	Frequency
Jamhuuriya	News	Daily
Almis	Social affairs	Weekly
Maalmaha	News	4 days a week
Somaliland	News/English	Weekly
	times	
Geeska Afrika	News	Daily
	News	Daily
Maandeeq	News	4 days a week
The Horn	News/English	Weekly
Haatuf	News	6 days a week
Waaheen	News/English	4 days a week
Yool	News	3 days a week
Sahansaho	News	6 days a week

Table 6: Print media Somalia 2011

3.4. MECHANISMS PROMOTING CONFLICT

Several members of the print media actually try to promote peace work and nation-building; however, this means that they may also end up being targeted by the warring parties. Others,

because of their clan ties or ideological orientation, may stimulate further conflict. In the 1990s, print media was largely controlled by or attached to a warlord and contained clannish attitudes and hostilities, further fuelling conflicts. The cost in human lives and property destruction was the result of conflicts arising as the media sided with different and opposing warlords and clans. There are several instances of print media in Somalia as well as other media purposefully contributing to increased violent conflicts. A clear example is the conflict between the United Islamic Courts (UIC) and the warlords in which major newspapers, radio stations, and TV sided with the UIC and mobilized Mogadishu residents to support the UIC and participate in the fight against the warlords. Further, during the Ethiopian invasion of Mogadishu, the media in Somalia (except some in Puntland) took stances that mobilized the Somali public into fighting against the Ethiopian and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) troops. Prior to the resignation of Mohamed Abdulaahi Farmajo, Prime Minister of Somalia at the time, several newspapers were alleged to have incited the public protest that contributed to a standoff within the TFG threatening its survival. However, this also illustrates a critical point when analysing the printed press, indeed any section of the Somali media; that is, the importance of maintaining a balance between information and conflict prevention. Scrutiny of corruption and mismanagement is an important function of a free press but it can promote conflict in a tense setting, as corrupt individuals attempt to draw upon clan or ethnic supporters. For papers with a long neutral standing and with journalists that have a good reputation for fact checking, this might be a small problem as their reputation to a certain extent prevents criticism. However, this is not the case in settings where newspapers have 'clannish' tendencies and journalists with little training who are not used to checking the facts. Instead, it becomes easier to promote conflict.

This highlights a structural problem of the Somali printed press, namely the use of interns as diaspora writers. As indicated by a prominent Somali editor, many Somali newspapers use unpaid interns who want to become journalists extensively. The quality of their writing is low and newspaper editors save money by hiring interns instead of professional journalists.¹³ This also allows editors to put pressure on these inexperienced journalists.

3.5. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION FOR PEACE

Given that there has been a recent upsurge of conflict in Somalia, various print media establishments continue to have strong interests and stakes in the outcome of the violence. However, there are examples of newspapers that help towards reconciliation and clearly contribute to building peace both directly and indirectly. Direct contributions are activities that focus on or affect conflicts. Targeted articles, news reporting, unbiased information, dissemination to the public aimed either at establishing channels for public dialogue and mobilization, or specifically targeted and appealing to the actors of the conflict contributing to reconciliation and building peace. Further, employment creation and being a voice for unity are also activities that contribute to building peace. Indirect contributions to peace are activities that are not deliberately disseminated by a newspaper, but that lead to the long term stability and education of citizens. For instance, the existence of newspapers that focus on topics that are of interest to the Somali youth such as dating, love, sport and short stories, may show an alternative, imagined life to youths engaged as militia by the various factions. Specialized newspapers such as *Laacib*, *Sport*, *Bilan* and *Shan* contain articles that illustrate

¹³ Interview with Yusuf Gabobe, of Hatuf news, *Hargeisa*, 8 July 2010.

another life and explore the advantages of a free and open society. While it is true that young people in countries like Somalia can't afford to pay for newspapers on a weekly basis, let alone daily, there are other ways for them to obtain papers, such as borrowing from their parents or from better-off peers, and possibly others sharing stories with them.. There are reasons to believe that these specialized papers influence youths' interests in sport, dating and entertainment that could have positive effects on their perception of violence. However, one should bear in mind that there is a high level press circulation in a country of illiteracy in south-central Somalia (the joint needs assessment estimated that literacy currently stands at 19.2% (female literacy at 13.1%; with an abysmally low rural/nomadic female literacy rate of 6.7%).¹⁴, which would limit the impact of the printing press. The weak economy within Somalia contributes to this and might contribute to the limited circulation of newspapers. The turn-over rate amongst newspaper organisations is extremely high.

Several newspapers such *Kaaha Bari* and *Illeys* in Puntland, *Mogadishu Times*, *Haatuf*, and a number of others have not only been providing a dialogue for the public on contested issues but have at times deliberately dedicated columns to reconciling conflicting actors. Even during the first phase of the civil war when a majority of the print media was fuelling the conflict, there were dedicated newspapers that focused on reconciliation and peace building. A good example is the *SIS's* (Somali Intellectuals Association) printed paper which was established by a group of intellectuals led by Professor Yahya Ibrahim. The paper had the aim of educating the public in Mogadishu on peace and value of order as well as the need to re-establish a national government. The paper was established in 1995 with contributions from members of the of SIS association and continued to be distributed freely until 1998, when it ceased to exist due to lack of funds. Print media in most regions in Somalia today report human rights abuses and corruption committed by all actors in Somalia, which in the long run, has a clear peace dividend. However, the Harakat Al Shebab restricts circulation of papers in the regions it controls. Further, TFG, Puntland, have all at times arrested journalists.¹⁵

The 2010 elections nevertheless indicated how the Somaliland media has matured. Notably, most of the newspapers were oppositional, and the incumbent party UDUB avoided buying ads from them, creating a slight bias towards the opposition amongst the newspapers. It is important to note that most of the media houses, as well as the three parties and civil society organizations, all felt that the campaign was cleaner than previous elections, and that there had been a large improvement in press relations.¹⁶ The newspaper editors did, however, report that at least three Somaliland ministers filed defamation lawsuits against five private newspapers so far in 2011, indicating a worrying trend.

3.6. COMPARING DIFFERENT PERIODS

The quality of the print media in Somalia has varied in number, quality and circulation at different times, and in the various regions. The technical quality of printed news was good during the late Mohamed Siyaad Bare rule, but freedom of the press did not exist. During this period, the press publicly attempted to foster a common Somali identity but failed to do so.

14 See http://www.somali-jna.org/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=comments_jna

15 National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) (2011): "Statement on World Press Freedom day", <http://appablog.wordpress.com/2011/05/03/national-union-of-somali-journalists-nusoj-statement-on-world-press-freedom-day-celebration/>

16 Stig Jarle Hansen and Linda Kartewich (2011) "The Somaliland elections 2011", NORDEM Report (unpublished)

The second phase saw a press that promoted militant 'clannism'. Strong warlords prevented a private press. There was a plethora of media outlets, but all were of low quality. Today, the print media is becoming more mature and sophisticated, but is still facing problems of bad journalism, low professionalism, shortage of funds and a record high number of journalists being assassinated or arrested. Despite this, Somali press today might be in its freest period for 42 years, which opens up for many possibilities. Community reporting on the achievements of local communities might help build trust between clans, emphasising positive rather than negative events. Sports journalism and finance journalism might have similar effects, bringing the Somali people together.

However, the printed press will have limited effects due to the high level of illiteracy, raising the question that in the Somali context, perhaps the radio is a better tool for reconciliation?

4. RADIO AND TELEVISION

In many ways, Somalia shares much of its history with its neighbours. Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia have been plagued by dictatorships, which influenced press laws and severely restricted freedom of expression. Radio broadcasting in Somalia was started by the British colonial administration in the north in 1945 and was rather free, but this freedom declined from independence and onwards, ending when the military dictatorship of Siad Barre came into power in 1969. Prior to the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in January 1991, the government controlled all domestic publications and broadcasting. The Ministry of Information and National Guidance was responsible for radio and television broadcasts. There were only two radio stations in Somalia, one in Mogadishu, one in Hargeysa. The two transmitted a variety of news and entertainment programs. In 1988, the most recent year for which statistics were available, there were an estimated 375,000 radio receivers in Somalia. Television service was inaugurated in 1983; two hours of programs were broadcast daily from Mogadishu, although this collapsed in 1991.¹⁷ In this sense, the radio and TV medium had been severely restricted and controlled in the period 1969-1991. Consequently, by the end of the Barre regime the general public did not believe reporting through these channels.

There were alternatives, however. Several Ethiopian backed Somali insurgency movements started their own, heavily politicized radio stations in the 1980s. These radio stations acted as a tool for military mobilization. An alternative was the *BBC Somali Service* which started modestly on the 18th of July 1957 with two weekly broadcasts of 15 minutes each. By September 1958 the 15- minute programs were made daily. Initially, a daily news bulletin was broadcast in the morning followed by a commentary in the afternoon. From July 1st, 1961 (the first anniversary of independence of the Somali Republic) the two components were joined together and the program time was increased from 15 to 30 minutes (1430-1500 GMT) (17:30 - 18:00 local time).¹⁸ The popularity of the limited BBC services have to be seen in connection with the lack of other options, it was simply the only more or less neutral media in the early phases of the Somali insurgency (1978-1991).

¹⁷ Federal Research Division (1993) "A Country Study: Somalia", Library of Congress

¹⁸ BBC Somali Service (2011) "The history of BBC Somali service": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/somali/historye.html> (accessed 29 June 2011)

This reality changed in 1991 when the Siad Barre regime collapsed. New media emerged, at first mostly directly controlled by the factions. One of the government broadcasters in Hargeisa was captured by the Somali National Movement (SNM) and renamed the *Voice of the Republic of Somaliland* (later renamed back to Radio *Hargeisa*). The warlords also launched their own radio programs, often promoting conflict. One such example was Radio *East African* which belonged to the warlord Bashir Raghe Shirar. According to Abdi (2009), this radio station used to broadcast a program called Samaale.¹⁹ This program, which was repeatedly airing interviews with ‘clannist’ historians, was aimed to propagate the conflict between the Hawiye²⁰ and the Darod²¹, not unlike the way European historians were used to construct national identities at the end of the 19th century. Autochthonous views of clans were most probably intended to create a metaphysical foundation for warlords, promoting them as champions of their respective clan. In this early phase, the media was heavily dependent on warlords and the warlord factions were strong and had relatively good control in their areas.

However, the structural weakness of the warlords, as well as the fragmentation mechanisms of clans themselves, was to change this and also change the face of the Somali media. Warlords did not pay their militias, which had to fend for themselves. This, together with the fact that clans are divided into sub-clans and sub-sub-clans that can be used for mobilisations, meant that sub-commanders defected and became new warlords. The amount of warlords exploded, but they also became weaker and weaker, and were less able to control territories. By the mid 1990s Somalis became settled around the world, and by the late 1990s the Somali conflict settled down in a relatively more stable phase; warlords were weaker and the Somalis had developed mechanisms of coping with the civil war situation. Many journalists returned home in this period and several radio stations were established. Satellite technology and the internet enabled the founding of diaspora radio stations and later television stations, some of them with an impact inside Somalia.

Somali Tele-media Network (STN) and *HornAfrik TV*, both Mogadishu based, might have been the first television networks that appeared in south-central Somalia, airing in 1999. Another television station that appeared at this time was the *Somaliland TV* which was established in Hargeysa. In Puntland, the first television, which still exists, the *Somali Broadcasting Corporation* (SBC), was established in 2001. All of these television stations tend to have a primarily local and clan audience, rather than a national one because their owners had good relations with their clan leaders and warlords. As a result, they were not free from the clan biases. According to Abdi (2011) the first diaspora TV station was founded in 2004.²² A year later, another Somali speaking TV satellite channel, *Universal TV*, was established. Several of these media organizations had different activities. Most of the TV stations had web sites, and many also had affiliated radios.

In the south of Somalia, the situation basically changed after the rise of the Sharia courts and the Ethiopian intervention in 2006-2007. The warlords now were a thing of the past, the new factions were more powerful and the fighting grew more intensive again. The conditions for the media grew worse.

19 A political name given to some Somali clans

20 One of the largest Somali clans

21 One of the largest Somali clans

22 Umar Abdi Mohamed (2011) “The Role of Somali Speaking Television in the Construction of an ‘Imagined Community’”, Bachelor thesis, UMB.

4.1. TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY

This project wanted to separate between diaspora based TV and Radio stations, and local stations. The diaspora based stations are not directly threatened by conflict, the factions cannot close them down since their headquarters are outside the area of conflict and usually protected by their new host states. Some of these services might be vulnerable, however, and there have been instances, for example regarding *Universal TV*, where TV reporters have been kept out / evicted from parts of Somalia when they reported on controversial issues.

Non-Somali institutions such as the BBC, the Voice of America, the United Nations, and The Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims, host many of the radio stations outside Somalia. It might be easy to think that this enables them to be neutral since their owners are aloof from the countries, but recruitment patterns, or alleged recruitment patterns, at times have led to accusations of bias. However, many of them like the VOA and IRIN, enjoyed a good reputation for good journalism. They seem to have enjoyed a large popularity in- and outside Somalia but those trends should be watched closely and monitored. Many of the externally based media houses owned by non-Somali actors have limited airtime allocated to covering Somali issues. Nairobi is the most important hub for these media houses (see Table 8, below).

The *BBC Somali Service* is perhaps the most important Somali radio service, in competition with the VOA Somali Service, and has worked up a good reputation amongst the Somalis since its start in 1957. However, it has limited air time, airing just two daily news broadcasts, followed by a mix of current affairs programs, the daily broadcasts not lasting more than one hour. The *BBC Somali Service* has received several complaints, one is the lack of willingness to broadcast important information and manipulating analysis of news events it presents by only providing the opportunity to certain individuals to play a commentary role. But also by denying certain political actors, entities and regions in Somalia to have better access to it. For example, Somaliland political parties uniformly felt that it was a lost opportunity when the *BBC Somali Service* failed to inform about election practices in 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2010, and that such information could have decreased tension.²³ Nor has the service avoided criticism for being biased or clannish, as well as having limited local presence.²⁴ Several of the non-Somali based radio stations are accused of bias in their broadcasts, and it should not be presumed that diaspora based radio stations are detached from the Somali conflict. However, the respect of the BBC, as well as the relatively untarnished reputation of the *Voice of America Somali Service*, should be noted.

The Somali based radio stations more directly feel the pressure from the Somali conflict, and the press censorship on behalf of the various factions are severe, with perhaps the exception of the Somaliland based media, but even here the press lack European standards of protection from government pressure. Radio stations are most commonly initiated by returned diaspora, they usually claim to be neutral, but some kind of political affiliation, often clan based, is common. It seems useful to divide the radio stations into at least two categories, the radio stations in the south that face outright war and the radio stations in the north that face more stable conditions. However, further analytical divisions are needed. It should be noted that the Harakat Al Shebab has by far the strictest press regime in Somalia and has been known to

23 Interview by authors, Muhamed Kahin, Muhamed Lenin, Feisal Ali Farah Warabe, June 11, 16 and 18 2010.

24 See for example Whardhere news (2005) "The BBC - Once an Icon of Somali Broadcasting May Become an Irrelevant Entity", October 23, 2005, <http://www.somaliuk.com/Forums/index.php?topic=1948.0:wap2>

outright occupy radio stations and take over their day-to-day running. This in turn has led to some radio stations splitting in two, as the original owners create their own radio stations outside Shebab controlled areas, *Radio Qoran* being an example of this.

There is a certain extent of standardization between the radio stations. For instance, the *Andalus 2* radio station in Jowhar is obliged to air one hour a day from *Andalus 1* in Kismayo, and it appears to be a central committee inside Shebab that focuses on standardizing broadcasts.²⁵ Al Shebab also regularly posts a member of their media propaganda team to control their broadcasts. Broadcasts are used for propaganda purposes, including anti-Ethiopian rhetoric as well as news about international jihad, to air the Shebab's version of news, but also to air religious shows and inform about Shebab regulations in general. It thus seems useful to separate the radio stations of the Shebab into a category of their own. This does not mean that Shebab media can be without use for peace and reconciliation efforts. The local Shebab radio station in Mogadishu admittedly focuses on Jihad but also has several other functions, like teaching about the Koran and to inform about Shebab governance activities.

Alfurqaan Radio	Mogadishu	According to Somali report one of the major radios in Mogadishu
Andalus	Kismayo	Established 2009
Andalus II	Jowhar	former Radio Jowhar, confiscated first June 2011)
Baydhabo Radio Andalus III	Baidoa	
Andalus iv		Established July 2010, using looted equipment from somaliweyen, said to reach to galcayo
Andalus v	Mogadishu	According to Somali report one of the major radios in Mogadishu
Radio Quran	Mogadishu	Taken over August 2010

Table 7: The major Shebab controlled radio stations

Shebab has been engaged in peace-making between clans, and, while we so far have failed to find examples of this, there could be examples where their radio stations could be employed for such purposes. Secondly, some of these stations are virulently preaching against clans, which can dampen clan conflicts.

There are other radio stations in the south, but these are far from stable and the turnover rate is high. Despite this, some are very important for airing news and many have a stated intention to promote conflict reconciliation. Many are, however, subjected to political pressure and harassment, not only from the factions, but from the business community, which could deter them from airing commercials from rivals, or for making investigative reports on business fraud. They are also easily bribed, and the research team has received credible information about at least one instance when a local NGO bribed a paper to get positive media coverage to show donors. It is easy to underestimate these problems, but it should be noted that when *HornAfrik* became involved in the "Shampoo war of Mogadishu" in the early 2000s (it aired a negative commercial from one Mogadishu shampoo company, claiming that another producer produced a poor shampoo), this resulted in an outright attack on their compound and several deaths.

25 All Africa (2010) "Al-Shabaab Imposes Severe Restrictions On Privately-Owned Radio Station" <http://allafrica.com/stories/201107261752.html>

Name	Location	Webpage	Coverage	Remarks
Star FM	Nairobi	http://starfm.co.ke/	Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya	
BBC Somali	Nairobi/London	http://www.bbc.co.uk/somali/inenglish.shtml	Whole of Somalia	
Bar-Kulan	Nairobi	http://www.bar-kulan.com/	Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya, and Mogadishu, according to interviews relatively popular in July 2006 . Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya	Partners with Voice of America,
VOA Somali service	Nairobi/Washington	http://www.voanews.com/somali/news/	Whole of Somalia	
Iqra	Nairobi	http://supkem.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26&Itemid=19	Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya	Targets all Muslims in Kenya, with Somali
IRIN	Nairobi	http://irinnews.org/Country.aspx?Country=SO	The one-hour daily broadcasts of Radio ERGO are heard across Somalia and the region, including the Kenyan refugee camps on shortwave [0830-0930 UTC on 13685 kHz via	
Salam Radio	Mombasa	www.salaamfm.com/		Started 2006; Sends on hour Somali shows per day. Founded
Radio Risaala	Garissa	http://www.facebook.com/pages/Risala-FM-967-Garissa/194644030587058 ; http://risalafm.co.ke/	Reaches the border areas	2011 reaches border areas only

Table 8: Somali Radio stations, not Internet based, outside Somalia

Of the radio stations in Mogadishu, *Radio Mogadishu* is aligned with the government. The other Mogadishu based radio stations claim to have a civil society agenda and to be independent, but very often tend to be clan based. *Shabelle* (analyzed below, as it also is a TV station) and *Kulmiye* are amongst the larger stations that re-distribute news. Most are located away from Shebab controlled areas.

Outside Mogadishu, only two radio stations were registered (outside Shebab control), the first was independent of Shebab, the radio *Hiraan*. The Shebab threatened this radio station in the summer of 2011 and its current status is unknown. The second is the *Golobada Radio* in Ham, loyal to the TFG, with its own home page at www.goboladaradio.com

As stated earlier, the situation in north Somalia is rather different for the media. The Puntland region has been at peace since 2002, while the Somaliland region has been at peace since 1996. The area just south of Puntland, the so-called Galmuudug state of Somalia, is also more peaceful than the rest of Somalia. This gives more stability for radio stations. However, it also makes sense to divide this group of radio stations into two. Galmudug and Puntland radio stations face more insecurity than Somaliland radio stations, as the level of crime and clan conflicts are higher in these areas, which also hold the major pirate syndicates of Somalia. There is an on-going conflict within Galcayo between the Saad and the Majerteen clan but this usually only results in minor clashes. Lack of police also means that the radio stations are

facing difficulties with the business sector, which dislikes the airing of commercials for rival brands. Further north, Puntland is also plagued with clan rivalry, mainly between the Issa, Omar and Osman Mahmoud sub-clans of the dominating Majerteen clan and as of late, also the Warsangeli, Ali suleiban and Siwaqrone clans. The problems inside Somaliland are of a different type, mainly tension between political parties or small scale clan clashes, with the sole exception of the Sool, Sanaag and Ceyn provinces which has seen a clan driven insurgency against Somaliland. However, the Somaliland state owns all the radio stations inside Somaliland. In other words, the Somaliland radio scene is more government controlled than the Galmudug and Puntland radio scene. Radio stations in Puntland do face crackdowns from the Puntland authorities or clan groups because of their coverage that can, and have, led to arrests, and the government also has their radio stations, like *Radio Garowe*, controlled by the clan and close family members of President Faroles.

The above analysis would allow us to construct a typology of radio stations available inside Somalia. The first type is radio stations based outside Somalia, in relative safety but with somewhat limited local resources and often limited airtime. The second category would be the tightly controlled Shebab radio stations that nevertheless, at times, are able to convene public information and that could contribute to peace-making as long as it is within the Shebab framework. The third category is the southern Somali radio stations, which face the direct consequences of war. The fourth category might be the Galcayo/Puntland radio stations, often private and more secure than the southern stations, but nevertheless less secure than the last category, the Somaliland radio stations.

1. External broadcast Somalia radios
2. Shebab controlled radios
3. Southern Somali radios
4. Galcayo/Puntland radios
5. Somaliland radios

The TV stations in Somalia can in many ways be divided into similar categories. There are very important diaspora based TV stations, the most important perhaps being Universal TV (started in 2005) that airs inside Somalia while having bases outside of Somalia. The Shebab have their Kataiib TV house. And the large TV/radio (combined) houses of central Somalia face somewhat similar challenges to the ones encountered by the radios in the same areas. However, the Somaliland TV houses are more privatized than the radios.

4.2. IMPACT AND POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There are many thoughts on how to promote peace and reconciliation amongst Somali journalists. One idea is simply to report news as unbiased as possible and contribute to the general reconstruction of the idea of 'Somaliness'. *Universal TV* journalist, Umar, highlights this:

Universal TV, during battles of Mogadishu, for example, repeatedly broadcasted images of the protesters waving the Somali flag, symbolizing how Somalis were members of a patriotic community unified whole (Television-NEWS 2006). In 2007, Universal TV had repeatedly showed images of Somali people wearing the country flag, singing Somali unity songs, across the world.

Universal TV as well as *Somali Channel TV* also collected money for charitable efforts and argued that this helped them to re-create 'Somaliness'.²⁶ However, in a society like Somalia, the concept of Somaliness is contested and the TV station has been criticized for biased coverage of for example Somaliland and Shebab. Contested identities and the fact that most media stations in Somalia have some kind of affiliation limits the usefulness of reconstruction of identity attempts, at least for peace and reconciliation work and at least for the short-run.

This also illustrates the problems that the Somali media face with alleged clan or political biases. A radio or TV station can focus on a single clan in their reporting, reporting only murders of their own clan members, only following political leaders from one specific clan. Such biases might be just imagined, it might be that a media house is relatively free of clan recruitment, but a perception of bias might still hamper peace and reconciliation efforts. It should however be noted that bias might not be a problem, a media house that is perceived to have a clan bias leaning towards a neutral clan might be seen as a more or less neutral bystander. In this sense media houses that are perceived to lean against minority clans, as *Universal TV*, might be seen as more neutral. This is important; perceived clan bias towards a weak or even a minority clan, might increase how others trust it outside the group.

Clan bias, or alleged clan bias, does not mean that a radio or TV station could be useless in peace and reconciliation work. Radio *Shabbelle* and *HornAfrik* were often stressed as having successfully made efforts in peace making, as well as having a bias towards their sub-clan. One example mentioned was *HornAfrik* airing a program that talked about how every village is doing and how peaceful it is, thus building trust. If a clan based radio is willing to do community reporting, it might serve a trust-building purpose.

It should also be noted that debates in some instances could limit conflict. Hansen and Bradbury (2007) underline that the Somaliland media could have eased the tension in Somaliland by actually having more political discussions between the parties in order to politicise the electoral campaign, to remove the emphasis on clans amongst nomads that actually are unaware of political issues, and thus use a clan to navigate in politics, making a compromise less likely.²⁷ It was thus a twist of irony that *BBC Somalia* failed to cover this election in such a detailed way that it could address such issues.

Media from the second and third categories are under duress and pressure; they are operating in a war zone and should not be expected to try to arrange any form of mediation or reconciliation that could endanger their existence. It should be remembered that any form of talks with opposing factions might be dangerous. The Puntland based *Horseed* radio might be a good example to illustrate this point. In September 2010, the director of the station, Abdifatah Jama Mire, was jailed for airing an interview of an Islamist rebel leader. He was sentenced up to six years in prison for airing a telephone interview with Mohamed Said Atom, the leader of the Galgala Mountains rebel group, despite Puntland laws being unclear on the issue. Contacts with all parties might be dangerous for all radios inside Somalia. Their contributions first and foremost seem to be in attempting to find common denominators between the parties, as well as solving practical problems for the civilian population. Some of these practical questions are rather pressing:

26 Umar Effi Abdi (2011) "The Role of Somali Speaking Television in the Construction of an 'Imagined Community'" Bachelor thesis UMB

27 Stig Jarle Hansen & Mark Bradbury (2007) "Somaliland: A New Democracy in the Horn of Africa?", *Review of African Political Economy*, 34:114.

For example, there were programs like (Mogadishu iyo Maanta) between 2000-2006, that aired in the morning, that informed people on the war zones and which streets the conflict is happening and the people reported this. That's how important the media is to the Somali people.²⁸

The last categories can, because of more stable conditions, perhaps be employed to mediate between clans, as can the Shebab radios; in the former case especially if there are sub-clan conflicts. It should be kept in mind, however, that Shebab also actively promote an international jihadist agenda on their radio broadcasts.

The big foreign stations airing in Somalia, BBC and VOA, are relatively safe and can work on larger peace-making efforts. Discussion programs, perhaps about managerial issues, or issues on how to handle drought, can be used to launch 1.5 track diplomatic efforts and to conduct practical arrangements on the ground, which might create spill over efforts into larger peace-making processes. However, it should not be believed that these entities cannot be sanctioned by dissatisfied parties, as Somali reporters will have relatives inside Somalia this has to be examined on a case by case basis.

One interviewee reported that *Radio Qouran* was successful in peacemaking, and Islamic radio stations might have an effect on clan based conflicts, if they enjoy the respect of the people, by arguing that clan wars are sinful and reminding them that there is a common Muslim identity. However, religious divides also create conflict and it should be remembered that one of the issues separating two armed groups at war with each-other today, the Shebab and the Aluh Sunnah waah Jaamaa, is just such a religious issue.

Peace training, indeed any type of training, is rare for Somali reporters, and the focus is first and foremost on conflict reporting in the south. This removes the focus from trust building and community reporting (this is somewhat different in the north). Commercial pressure is high, and Somali journalists express that "conflict sells", also indicating that reporting on other issues could be difficult. However, there are success stories as the community based *Radio Xurmo* was highlighted as a success by many of our interviewees.

To conclude, radio and TV stations might act to build trust in clan conflicts, even to weaken clans by highlighting a shared political interest across clan lines. It seems that most radio stations have to be affiliated with a third party in order to achieve this, which gives minority radio stations advantages as these clans are mostly politically inactive. Radio stations with a religious image might have similar effects, as might State- controlled media in Somaliland, as long as we don't explore conflicts in Sanaag where Somaliland is a party. Radio stations can also build trust by reporting on peaceful events, as harvesting in the villages, thereby humanizing members of other political groups.

In one sense a clan bias is not a hindrance for a TV or radio station working as a peacemaker; it depends on the nature of the conflict and it becomes important to know of alleged clan biases to take account of this in the analysis.

28 Interview conducted by authors, X3, Nairobi 24/10 2010.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clan affiliations are highly important in the form of real or imagined allegiances in Somalia. Often, a media outlet reports only from their clan leaders, and reports only issues and interests as well as the killings of their clan members. However, it also becomes important because of the media's alleged (and not necessary real) clan ties, perceptions that could alienate parts of the Somali society.
- The most efficient media for outreach in Somalia is the radio; radio receivers are small, cheap and can be handled by the nomadic population.
- The printed media is limited by a large illiteracy rate and circulation numbers are low, with the largest Somali paper, the Hargeisa based Jamhurya, perhaps reaching a circulation of 6,000 issues, although these issues are re-circulated and read by many readers.
- TV is also a service for the urban and the privileged. There are satellite- and cable stations but televisions, satellite dishes or cable connections are needed in order to access them.
- The Internet media have a good coverage for Somalis abroad (diaspora), but access inside Somalia is limited. However, it should be kept in mind that both the diaspora and the urban elite are highly important for conflict resolution as well as conflict promotion. The Internet, therefore, as well as the printed press has real potential.
- Internet media content is often used as a news source and therefore has a wider audience than might be thought merely looking at Internet access. Printed media in Somalia uses the online ecology as a repository of news, gossip and information which is reprinted in domestic newspapers.
- The Somali online media ecology is extremely vibrant with a large number of different media forms presented online. One of the notable features of the online environment is the hegemony of the diaspora over the online media, partly due to the requirements of technical infrastructure and training, but also, and importantly, due to the need for access to credit cards in order to function in the digital economy.
- Web sites are by nature rather ephemeral media, quickly created and quickly taken down. Without the stabilizing effect of institutional repositories, there is always the danger that this Somali history and context could vanish.
- Although there have been efforts to professionalize the journalists and the ethical outlook of the owners and editors of the Somali media, there is clearly much work to do and capacity building is an important part of the investment in the development of a stable civil society within Somalia.