

Media and Conflict Project

# Mapping the Somali Media: An Overview

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## 1.0 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 national 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 itself, starting with a historical overview. It is important to note that there has recently been an explosion of Somali web-based news outlets, with Abdisalam Issa-Salwe suggesting that there have been as much as a 44% increase in the amount of Somali web pages from 2006 to 2011 alone.<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> Abdisalam Issa-Salwe (2011): "Somali Diaspora and the Adoption of Mailing List Technology" lecture given at the Oxford workshop on Media

month.<sup>2</sup> All non-web based Somali radio stations aired inside Somalia (on the 1st of May 2011), are explored, although some smaller stations in the country side might have been left out, as some of these stations emerges and collapses quite quickly. We took height for the fact that some TV stations, 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 news casts from the Shebab online to see where they were from.<sup>3</sup>

All TV stations are also explored, as are all newspapers. Some of the websites form parts of larger media houses, (where a broadcasting house controls a website, a radio station and a TV station), in these instances, this will be explored in the Radio and TV section (4.0), as long as they have TV/radio activities. If a media house has newspaper activities, it will be explored in the newspaper section.

Some general traits have to be noted. Firstly, there is no doubt that 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 the circulation numbers are low, with the largest Somali paper, the Hargeisa based Jamhurya, reaching an estimated circulation of 6000 copies (although these are re-circulated and read by many more readers). TV is also a media for the urban and the privileged. There is satellite and cable stations but one need televisions, satellite dishes or cable connections in order to access them. The Internet sites have a good coverage on the 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, 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 distinct from others.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.alex.com/siteinfo>

<sup>3</sup> The current webpages affiliated to the Shebab are <http://alqimmah.net/>, which is operated by non-somalis, probably targeting a non-somali audience. More Somali focused sites are [somalimemo.com](http://somalimemo.com) ; [halganka.wordpress.com](http://halganka.wordpress.com); [youtube.com/user/QolkaDacwatuTawxiid](http://youtube.com/user/QolkaDacwatuTawxiid); [http://amiirmuur.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=4735:wilaayada-islamiga-ee-jubooyinka-dhulkii-waa-diyaaree-kaalaya-oo-ka-faaidaysta-qaybtii-2aad-warbixin-sawiro-indhaha-u-roon&catid=48:wararka](http://amiirmuur.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4735:wilaayada-islamiga-ee-jubooyinka-dhulkii-waa-diyaaree-kaalaya-oo-ka-faaidaysta-qaybtii-2aad-warbixin-sawiro-indhaha-u-roon&catid=48:wararka) Radio Furuqan has their own page; <http://radioalfurqaan.com/>; GBC Codka Nabada ([www.gbcsomtv.com/](http://www.gbcsomtv.com/)) [www.hornafrik.com](http://www.hornafrik.com)

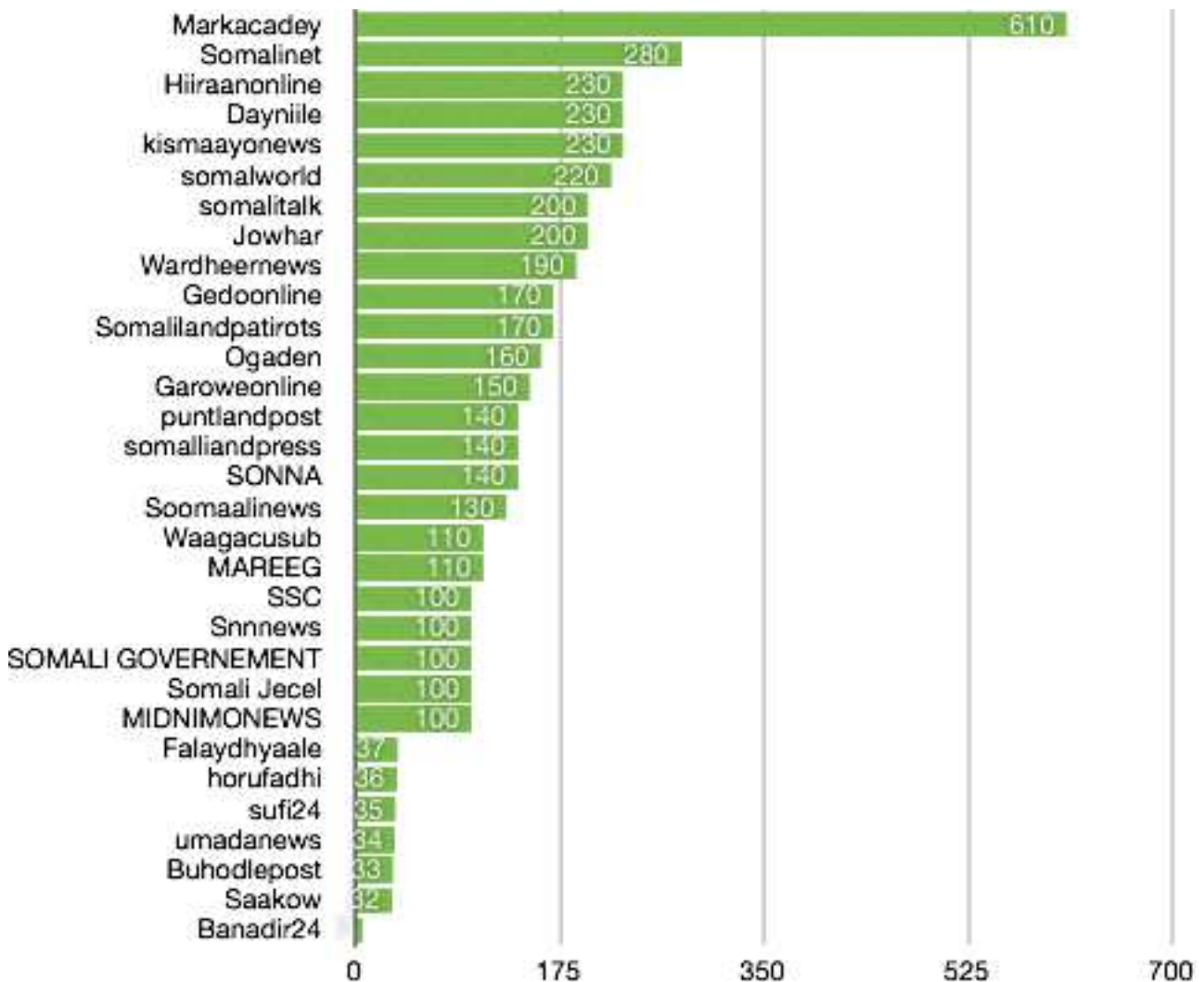
<sup>4</sup> Interview made in Nairobi 24/10 2010.

Clan remains 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 necessary 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 highlighted that we had no opportunity to study of these allegations were true, and the lists indicates alleged rather than real affiliations.

This report is divided into three sections, each mapping a different aspect of Somali media. The first (2.0 - 2.3), concerns online media. The second (3.0 - 3.6) concerns the print media and the third (4.0-4.2) covers Radio and Television stations. Section 5.0 will offer conclusions and recommendations for The MFA.

## 2.0 Online Media

From its humble beginnings in the 1990s, Somali Internet activity has exploded. The Somali



online media ecology is extremely vibrant with a large number of different media forms presented. Within this space there is a great variety of news and information presented and constant change as websites develop, merge, decay and disappear over time. One of the notable features of the web 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. For example, domain name registration requires credit card authorization, as does web hosting services and the like. With its greater access to the Western banking system and the easy access to credit card facilities, it is no surprise that the diaspora dominate the online media environment, but it should be kept in mind that well connected residents inside Somalia can get friends to register pages for them.

Other forms of media, like the printed press or the radio often use cut-and-pasted material from websites into their own printed media or as material to read out on radio and television. Exception to this practice may well be the international radios with Somali services such as the BBC Somali service and VOA Somali. This puts the web-based media, and the diaspora that dominates them, in a stronger position in relation to projecting media frameworks of analysis and talking points into the country. However, it should be kept in mind that internet access is limited within Somalia, direct access to Somali websites will in large 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), 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 tend to reuse material from the diasporic web media and can therefore act as an echo-chamber for views that originate from outside of 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 users<sup>5</sup>.

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 tend to use names which are not identified by a particular political group, region or clan.<sup>6</sup> Therefore they generally use common names such, as for example, SomaliNet, SomaliTalk or Somalia Online (see Appendix 1). However exception to this is these websites that have regional or city name that is national in its coverage but still may well keep the tendency of emphasising issues that have clear connotation to clan, region or the Somali nation :

### **1. Community/political:**

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

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<sup>5</sup> These forums and chatrooms 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.

<sup>6</sup> Abdisalam 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



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 they publish news 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 the Islamic teaching and information but also post a fatwa’s on issues relevant and at times 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 self-presentation form. Many community/political web types start as personal web types.

**7. Radio/TV:**

The Radio/TV website type shares some similarities with the online news web group. Generally, they are incorporated into the other types discussed above.

Type	Sept 2006	May 2011	Increase	Percentage
<b>Community/political</b>	296	501	205	69%
<b>Cultural/literary</b>	17	27	10	59%
<b>Professional/business</b>	96	130	34	35%
<b>Online Newspaper</b>	26	24	-2	-8%
<b>Religious</b>	31	48	17	55%

<b>Personal</b>	166	190	24	14%
<b>Radio/TV</b>	39	44	5	13%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>964</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>44%</b>

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, 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 have 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, lacking 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 mobilization 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 mobilization, especially to get funds or disseminate propaganda. This includes the warlords, sharia courts, Individuals within the TFG leadership, regional states and 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 shows. In some cases Shebab videos distributed on YouTube have led to recruitment to other Islamist groups in Pakistan as well.<sup>7</sup>

These web technologies may enable 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, and universities and schools.<sup>8</sup> 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 forms develop professional institutional forms that are able to both defuse the power of 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 skill-set 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, UK, US, 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 of 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 its 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

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

8 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

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 narrative of histories of other distorted and manipulated. The result is an odd hybridity of social reconstruction, in which clan can be amplified within a nationalist narrative, and other clans can be accused of “being anti-nationalistic”, indirectly contributing to conflict.

The usage of the online media falls across a wide spectrum of civil society and 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 language mediums, and the largest number is located in the UK, the US, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

### 2.3 The Stability of Online Media

Web sites 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, maximum 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, on the whole, with *Shabelle News*, for example, only offering 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.

## 3.0 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 environment 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 regimes orbit were allowed unless it was certain that such paper was pro regime and under its spheres of regulation.

The Somali print media came along with the introduction of the Somali alphabet. On the 21st of 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 Arabic language. Both of these were printed on a daily basis. Meanwhile, *Heegan* newspaper, also owned by the Government, was printed in English twice a week. In the 1980s, a presidential decree laid down foundation for the establishment for *Ogaal* as the fourth newspaper and the second newspaper with 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 Somali, *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 speech 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 that were mostly educated. One of the journalists of the paper at that time is the previous vice president of Puntland regional state of Somalia, Mohamed Ali Yusuf "Gagaab". *Ogaal* occasionally directed open criticism of the 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 and as the paper published an 8 pages long article on a corruption scandal of which several

ministers was involved. *Ogaal* thus was put into complete closure in 1988. The remaining four newspapers continued operating up to 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 of the focus for all newspaper in this phase, they all provided dedicated columns for culture, poetry, social affairs, commercials, government programs, and promoting socialism ideology and Somali identity rather than clan. Further, it's during this period that Somali print press was highly circulated and had its days of larger readership. Also, what distinguishes this phase is that it is when Somali language newspapers were established 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 a 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) Second, this was the phase that defined the Somali language. After the collapse of the above 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 state collapse and civil war in 1991 and lasted until 2000. During this period, print media in Somalia is a lack of journalistic ethics, training, and bias; low circulation, low quality, and the explosion of 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, Hargeisa, and Kismaayo, subsequently expelling the military regime that had ruled Somalia for almost 21 years. The state collapsed with the complete destruction of the state infrastructure, including the press. The rebels of, Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), Somali National Movement (SNM), and United Somali Congress (USC) became factionalized and contending over the direction of the country. This triggered the total destruction of infrastructure and 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 crises and civil war. The 4 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 were increased needs for information on inter- and intra-clan conflict in Somalia.

The Restore Hope operation led by the US that later became known as UNISOM, created both political and economic opportunities for establishing newspapers. The presence of peacekeeping troops, and various international NGOs as well as UN organization also influenced 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 leader. 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 the papers didn't need professionalism and as papers were typed by typewriter and then printed using old duplicating machines—on A4 papers rather than the round standard news paper sheets. As such all of them were printed in black and white. Moreover, in terms of staff, almost all newspaper had no more than three or four employees. With regard to ownership papers were either directly owned or allied with warlords by far as such it is of no wonder that in this phase—warlords had either run their own or otherwise had an allied newspaper that propagated warlords propaganda as a warfare strategy against those they perceived as their rivals—and adversary clans in the south central regions in Somalia.

<b>Print media established In Somalia (1991-2000)</b>	
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 affairs
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 North or the South parts of the Mogadishu 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 lady nicknamed Biirto and her sister, and *Shuma*, was among a handful of newspapers that dared to keep neutrality and criticized both warlords and their supporting clans. Here, instead of clan motivation per se, it can also be seen that the high attachment to clan and warlords of print media was partially the product of compounded concerns from journalist and newspaper owners for their personal safety and security. In fact, one of the journalists interviewed for this report, worked with one of papers in Mogadishu at that time described an 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, journalist and owners faced economic sanctions if and when they were found to be condemning a warlord in the area their newspaper was produced and distributed. Indeed, papers that dared to, their printing house being destroyed and their distributing restricted, if not banned.

What separates this period from other periods of Somali media, is that it 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 number of newspapers across for instances 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 two regional states of Puntland and Somaliland were established, warlords were becoming weaker, and there was a decrease in violence. Secondly, the Somali diaspora became more important, many returning to Mogadishu. One of the ways 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 diaspora engaging with 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 returning Somali diaspora members into all regions in Somalia (except Somaliland), also created competition. The fact that Somali society is considered traditionally an oral society, played a role as 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 the radio/TV section (4.0) of this report) contributed to the decline of print 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 7 daily and weekly newspapers as well as one monthly-specialized newspaper in Mogadishu. However, the papers are more advanced than they were previously, with some of them being printed in colour as sheet papers in Nairobi and then brought into 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 good across Somalia. *Xoriyo* is owned by the TFG and based in Nairobi, and is now the closest you get 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 times	News	Daily
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 Barri* are both circulated in Puntland and the nearby Galmudug region. The circulations are 550 to 600 papers circulated on a daily basis.

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

For Somaliland, the number of newspapers has continued to increase since the 1990s due to several factors. First, Somaliland is considered a relatively being securer environment compared to South central Somalia and Puntland. Second, albeit difficult to verify, It may also have 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 up its airways to private actors. All radios are state owned, which might contribute to the growth of private information delivery alternatives including newspapers. Sixth, due to all of these factors above the printed media in Somaliland enjoys a far greater readership than newspapers in the south, as well as better quality which makes papers in Somaliland may well be economically more profitable than of these in other parts of Somalia.

Print media Somaliland 2011		
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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 in 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 were result of conflicts arising as the media sided with different and opposing warlords and clans. There are several instances of various print media in Somalia as well as other media purposefully contributing to increased violent conflicts. Good examples of this are the conflict between the United Islamic Courts (UIC) and the warlords, in which major newspapers, radio stations, and TV sided with UIC and mobilized Mogadishu residents to support the UIC and participate in the fight against the warlords. Further, during the Ethiopian invasion of Mogadishu, media in Somalia (except some of the ones in Puntland) took stances that mobilised the Somali public into fighting against the Ethiopian and the TFG troops. Prior to the resignations of Mohamed Abdulaahi Farmajo, the then Prime minister of Somalia, several newspapers were alleged of inciting the public protest that contributed to a standoff within the Transitional Federal Government that threatened its very 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 balance between information and conflict prevention. Scrutiny of corruption and mismanagement is an important function of a free press, but 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

has a good reputation for fact checking, this might be a small problem, as their good 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 on the ground. Instead, it becomes easier for them 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 extensively use unpaid interns that want to be journalists. The quality of their writing is low, and newspaper editors save money by hiring them instead of professional journalists.<sup>9</sup> 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 have the focus or affects on 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 is also activities that contribute to building peace. Indirect contributions to peace are the activities that are not deliberate from the newspaper, but that leads to the long term stability and education of citizens on various issues that are not just related to peace per se. For instance, the existence of newspapers that focus on issues that are of interest to the youth of Somalia, issues 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 illustrates that another life is possible and explores the advantages of a free and open society. While it is true that young people in places like Somalia can't afford to pay for newspapers on a weekly basis, let alone daily, there are other ways for them to get access; borrowing papers from their parents, or better off peers, and possibly others sharing stories they have read with them. There are reasons to believe that these specialized papers influence youths' interests into sport, dating, and entertainment that could have positive effect on their thoughts on violence. However, one should bear in mind that there is a high level press in a country of illiteracy in South central Somalia (the joint needs assessment estimated that literacy currently stands at 19.2%

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Yusuf Gabobe, of Hatuf news, *Hargeisa*, 8 July 2010.

(Female literacy at 13.1%; with an abysmally low rural/nomadic female literacy rate of 6.7%).<sup>10</sup>), 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 newspaper 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 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 reestablish a national government. The paper was established in 1995 with contributions from members of the associated 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 right 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.<sup>11</sup>

The 2010 election 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 circulations at different times, and in the various regions. The technical quality of printed news was good during the late Mohamed Siyaad Bare rule, but the freedom of the press did not exist. During this period, the press publicly attempted to foster a common Somali identity, but failed to do

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10 See [http://www.somali-jna.org/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=comments\\_jna](http://www.somali-jna.org/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&s=comments_jna)

11 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/>

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

so. The second phase saw a press that promoted militant clannism. Strong warlords prevented a private press. There was a plethora of media outlets, but were all 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 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. Sport 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?

#### 4.0 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 coming 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.<sup>13</sup> 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 minutes programmes were made daily. Initially, a daily news

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

bulletin was broadcast in the morning followed by a commentary in the afternoon. From 1st July, 1961 (the first anniversary of independence of the Somali Republic) the two components were joined together and the programme time was increased from 15 to 30 minutes (1430-1500 GMT) (17:30 - 18:00 local time).<sup>14</sup> 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).

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 shows, often promoting conflict. One such example was radio *East African* which belonged to the warlord Bashir Raghe Shirar. According to Abdi (2009), this radio used to broadcast a program called *Samaale*.<sup>15</sup> This program, which was repeatedly airing interviews with clannist historians was aimed to propagate the conflict between the Hawiye<sup>16</sup> and the Darod<sup>17</sup>, not unlike the way European historians were used to construct national identities at the end of the 19th century. Autochthonous views of clan 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 where started. 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.

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

15 A political name given to some Somali clans

16 One of the largest Somali clans

17 One of the largest Somali clans

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.<sup>18</sup> A year later, in 2005, another Somali speaking TV satellite channel, *Universal TV*, was established. Several of these media organizations had several 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.

#### 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 head quarters 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, examples being 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 has lead 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 inside 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 Somalia* service is perhaps the most important Somali radio service, in competition with 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

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<sup>18</sup> Umar Abdi Mohamed (2011) "The Role of Somali Speaking Television in the Construction of an `Imagined Community", Bachelor thesis, UMB.



broadcasts, followed by a mix of current affairs programmes, the daily broadcasts not lasting longer than one hour. *BBC Somalia* services has received several complaints, one type of complaints concerned the lack of will to broadcast important information and manipulating analysis of news events it presents by only providing opportunity to certain individuals to the commentary role. But also, by denying certain political actors, entities and regions in Somalia having better access to it. For example, Somaliland political parties uniformly felt that it was a lost opportunity when *BBC Somalia* failed to inform about election practices in 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2010 elections, and that such information could have decreased tension.<sup>19</sup> Nor has the service avoided criticism for being biased or clannish, as well as having limited local presence.<sup>20</sup> Several of the non-Somali based radio stations are accused of bias in their broadcast, 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 are more directly feeling 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 up the radio stations into at least two categories, the radio stations in the south that faces outright war and the radio stations in the north that faces 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 outright occupy radio stations and taking over their day to day running. This in turn has led to some radios splitting into two, as the original owners create their own radios outside Shebab controlled areas, *Radio Qoran* being an example of this.

There is a certain extent of standardization between the radios. For instance, the *Andalus 2* radio station in Jowhar is obliged to air one hour a day from *Andalus 1* in Kismayo, and it seems to be a central committee inside Shebab that focuses on standardizing broadcasts.<sup>21</sup> Al Shebab also regularly post 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 Shababs version of news, but also to air religious shows and inform about Shebab regulations in general. It thus seems useful to separate the radios of the Shebab into a category of their own. This does not

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

20 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>

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

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 clan, which can dampen clan conflicts.

There are other Radio stations in the south, but they are far from stable, and the turnover rate is high. Despite this, some of them are very important for airing news, and many of them 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 detest them for airing commercials from rivals, or for making investigative reportages 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.

Name	Location	Webpage	Coverage	Remarks
Star FM	Nairobi	<a href="http://starfm.co.ke/">http://starfm.co.ke/</a>	Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya	
BBC Somali	Nairobi/London	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/somali/inenglish.shtml">http://www.bbc.co.uk/somali/inenglish.shtml</a>	Whole of Somalia	
Bar-Kulan	Nairobi	<a href="http://www.bar-kulan.com/">http://www.bar-kulan.com/</a>	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	<a href="http://www.voanews.com/somali/news/">http://www.voanews.com/somali/news/</a>	Whole of Somalia	
Iqra	Nairobi	<a href="http://supkem.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=26&amp;Itemid=19">http://supkem.com/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=26&amp;Itemid=19</a>	Nairobi, border areas towards Kenya	Targets all Muslims in Kenya, with Somali
IRIN	Nairobi	<a href="http://irinnews.org/Country.aspx?Country=SO">http://irinnews.org/Country.aspx?Country=SO</a>	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	<a href="http://www.salaamfm.com/">www.salaamfm.com/</a>		Started 2006; Sends on hour Somali shows per day. Founded
Radio Risaala	Garissa	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Risala-FM-967-Garissa/194644030587058">http://www.facebook.com/pages/Risala-FM-967-Garissa/194644030587058</a> ; <a href="http://risalafm.co.ke/">http://risalafm.co.ke/</a>	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 is a TV station as well) 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 the 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](http://www.goboladaradio.com)

As stated before, 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 make 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 result in minor clashes. Lack of police also mean that the radio stations are facing difficulties with the business sector, which can become angry due to 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 Sivaqrone 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 province which have seen a clan driven insurgency against Somaliland. However, the Somaliland state owns all the radio stations inside Somaliland. In other words, Somaliland's radio scene is more governmental 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, lead to arrests, and the government also has their radios, like *Radio Garowe* for example, controlled by president Faroles clan and close family members.

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 do 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, 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 air 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 faces 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 the 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* also collected money for charitable efforts and argued that this helped them to re-create 'Somaliness'.<sup>22</sup> However, in a society like Somalia, the conception 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 has some kind of affiliation limits the usefulness of re-construction 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 faces 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* where 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's, 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) underlines 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 clan amongst nomads that actually are unaware of political issues, and thus use clan to navigate in politics, making

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

compromise less likely.<sup>23</sup> It was thus a twist of irony that *BBC Somalia* failed to cover this election in such a detailed way that they 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 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 telephone interview with Mohamed Said Atom, the leader of Galgala mountains rebel group, this although Puntland laws are unclear on the issue. Contacts with all parties might be dangerous, for all of the 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:

For example, there were programs like (Mogadishu iyo Maanta) between 2000-2006, that aired in the mornings informing people on the war zones and which streets the conflict is happening at and the people reported this. That's how important the media is to the Somali people.<sup>24</sup>

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 into 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 spillover 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 have to be examined on a case to 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 sin-full and reminding them that there is a common Muslim identity. However, religious divides also create conflict, and it should be remembered

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

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

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 religious issues.

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 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 hard. However, there are successful stories, as the community based; *Radio Xurmo*, highlighted as a success by many of our interviewees.

To conclude, radio stations and TV stations might act to build trust in clan conflicts, even to weaken clan by highlighting shared political interest across clan lines, it seems like 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 medias 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, this by humanizing members of other political groups.

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

## 5.0 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 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 the circulation numbers are low, with the largest Somali paper, the Hargeisa based Jamhurya perhaps reaching a circulation of 6000 issues, although these issues are re-circulated and read by many readers.
- TV is also a service for the urban and the privileged. There is satellite and cable stations but one needs televisions, satellite dishes or cable connections in order to access them.
- The Internet media have a good coverage on the 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, 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 of by merely looking at Internet access. Printed media in Somalia therefore use the online ecology as a repository of news, gossip, and information which they reprint in the 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, clearly there is much work to do here and capacity building is an important part of the investment in the development of a stable civil society within Somalia.



