

SOCIAL MEDIA TRIGGER CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN IN 2013.

ABSTRACT

In December 2013, political tensions among key South Sudanese leaders erupted in violence. The political dispute that triggered the crisis was not based on ethnic identity, but it overlapped with preexisting ethnic and political grievances, sparking armed clashes and targeted ethnic killings in the capital, Juba, Bor town. Baliet Malakal, Pariang Benitu and then beyond. With key focus on assessment of the role of social media in conflict in South Sudan in 2013. This paper sought to examine the role played by social media in South Sudan conflict, examine the link between social media, conflict in South Sudan and investigate the influence of social media on South Sudan conflict. The gravity of the conflict has attracted the attention of both the local and international media coverage. News coverage by many media outlets mostly documented the atrocities that were taking place all over the country. Event were aired of rebel forces engaging in battle, families being attacked and massacred and the mass burial of victims. Media reporting was however not only restricted to the coverage of atrocities but also involved the reporting of the ongoing talks and the several attempt made at attracting leaders to the negotiable table. Observers however have made accusations that the way the media covered events of the conflict played a critical role in fanning the conflict as well as in helping extinguish it. The social media was noted to have facilitated the use hate speech and inflammatory language by both the warring forces in online forums to target communities and individuals based on their political views, perceived beliefs and their ethnicity. Through various means of communication, that is, social media exchanges and images was sometimes marked with rhetoric bordering on xenophobia which fuelled a climate of fear, mistrust and violence among the ethnic groups. While there is increasing recognition given to the importance of media and its negative potential in relation to conflict, there is relatively little accessible evidence on what works, guidance for practitioners, or attention from donors.

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INTRODUCTION

Mass media often plays a key role in today's conflict. Basically, their role can take two different and opposed forms. Either the media takes an active part in the conflict and has responsibility for increased violence, or stays independent and out of the conflict, thereby contributing to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence.

More than sixty-four different ethnic groups divided into separate tribes to geography called South Sudan their home. The country has witnessed a long-standing history of conflict coverage the ethnic groups, which intensified further in 2013 during its recent civil war. The conflict and resulting destruction of property and the massive displacement of people severely worsen the humanitarian needs in the country, Thejubamirror is one of the independent website which aims at publishing reliable and authoritative and verify information from different sources within and beyond our borders of South Sudan

The goals and missions of Thejubamirror website is to published the news in a country where ethnic and tribal reach newsrooms as indifference has brought divisions and violence since country got independence from North Sudan, we believe that they only ways to bring people of South Sudan together is through Media House like thejubamirror website that will play a role of break down ethnic and tribal mind-set among South Sudanese, despite conflict has cause divisions among communities' clans, Media has strong role to play to bring people together as one by break down ethnic walls .

Thejubamirror website has created avenue for young south Sudanese to express their opinions base on life they, have gone through and the website promote freedom of expression in South Sudan. Thejubamirror news is establish an engaging young South Sudanese to discuss their opinions that also help them to enhancing to get accurate information about their country. Therefore, the media play an important role in society as a source of information, but also as a "watchdog" or scrutinizer as Thejubamirror news will work for the benefits of citizens, Thejubamirror was founded in South Sudan when Media Houses and bloggers exposed in its coverage of South Sudan conflict when some of individuals or vernaculars radio stations accused of inciting ethnic violence in 2013 conflict. We have established online platform to preach among South Sudanese. Thejubamirror is only online media and platform that run news that united people of South Sudan As media trigger and propagator of violent conflict across the world for

quite long period in South Sudan media chooses what to broadcast and what not to broadcast to public. This has made some attention through vibrant exposure on the media while others have failed to receive significant due to negligent many African countries Conflicts where millions have died such as the wars in Congo since 1997, Rwanda genocide and Sierra Leone conflict and so on.

Sparking ethnic conflict

Senior political figures on opposing sides of the conflict as well have made use of social media and arguably manipulate community grievances to advance their political support. Factional spokespersons deliver most of their propaganda through social media, and these often spark debates that are essentially ethnic. One example concerns James Gadet Dak, the spokesperson of opposition leader Riek Machar, from the Nuer, South Sudan's second-largest ethnic group. Dak claimed that Machar was lured to Juba's Presidential Palace, for talks with President Salva Kiir, from South Sudan's dominant Dinka ethnic group, to be arrested. This comment came before the clashes around the palace this July that left 300 soldiers dead. This claim was shared widely on Facebook and spread rapidly. Dak later deleted the post and apologized for it, indicating that he had been misinformed. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done. Another figure that uses social media is Gordon Buoy, South Sudan's deputy ambassador to the United States, who has been on the forefront throughout the conflict from afar, sending messages to the streets of Juba. His fight against the opposition has largely been waged through social media, yet most of these messages are propaganda that arguably divide youth across the country and abroad. On Dec. 13, 2014, Buoy posted the following on his official Facebook page: "This is not 1990s factional fighting. If Riek Machar wants war we will give him the real war that will involve aerial operation such as MIG jets, gunships including amphibious tanks. Riek and his rebel terrorists will see a fight in the dry season that they have never seen before. It is better if they accept peace and surrender to us." This was posted despite the fact that peace efforts were then underway in Ethiopia. When contacted by Anadolu Agency, Buoy dismissed the idea that his utterances as a diplomat could fuel war or sow lasting hatred among the people. "It would be unfair if someone accuses me of negative propaganda, yet I am doing my role, through social media, am fighting enemies of peace that have taken arms against the legitimate government "I cherish and uphold the fact that sovereignty is vested in the people of South Sudan, President Salva Kiir and his entire government that were given the mandate by the

people through elections, and it is my obligation to defend the constitution by all means,” he said.

Tweeting Hate

Matthew Lee Riche, assistant professor at Canada’s Memorial University and post-doctoral fellow at the London School of Economics, and an expert on peace-building who has worked in South Sudan, said in July that while Kiir, Machar, and other leaders were calling for ceasefire, restraint and calm, the war was raging both online and in the streets. The web warriors were busy tweeting and Facebooking hate. Societal tensions and cleavages in the security services, along with desperate economic crisis, have conspired to create all the requisite conditions of a relapse to war all that was required was a spark, which the wrong rumours at the wrong time can trigger,” Lee Riche said. South Sudan lacks laws governing the proper use of social media, but Peter Longole Kwam, who chairs the Peace and Reconciliation Committee in the country’s Transitional Legislative Assembly, admitted there is a legal gap in the constitution on the use of social media but said efforts are underway to address the problem. He said parliament is planning a study to explore the implications of hate speech on social media and how it fuels violence in the country and then see how its misuse can be prosecuted. “I believe that policy will be designed to address hate speech and things that promote hatred among the people and there will be provisions in the Constitution that will be used to prosecute such acts,” Longole told Anadolu Agency. The violence that began in December 2013 in South Sudan has affected many parts of the country and had a disproportionate impact in the capital Juba, and other major towns such as Bor, Bentiu, and Malakal that were devastated by violence. Since the crisis began in December 2013, tens of thousands of people have been killed, and 2.4 million people displaced.

Conclusions

With key focus on assessment of role of media in conflict in a case of South Sudan, this study sought to examine the role-played media in South Sudan conflict South Sudan, the world’s youngest nation, shares the rest of the world’s love of social media, but with one difference: Observers believe combatants have marshalled this digital tool to incite atrocities and massacres along ethnic lines in the nation’s two-and-a-half-year-old civil war. Three-quarters of South Sudan’s young people have access to Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, and most have posted hate speech that may have in one way or another

fuelled the conflict, according to research by an advocacy group, the Juba-based Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO). The NGO says many South Sudanese around the world have departed from the original purpose of social media and shifted it to sowing conflict.

Edmund Yakani, an executive director for CEPO, told Anadolu Agency that 60 percent of South Sudanese social media users use the platform to propagate hate speech that is essentially tribal and “incites violence.” Yakani said a study found that supporters of South Sudanese leaders who have presided over war atrocities and massacres debated and attacked one another online, spreading hatred and distorting the social fabric, drawing deep wounds that will be long in healing. “Sympathizers of the armed opposition and government supporters use social media to their advantage, spreading propaganda to whip up support or attract masses behind them,” Yakani said. He added that many South Sudanese living abroad also stir people up in the country against each other to wreak havoc, as during clashes most warn their relatives, friends, and family members of potential threats either from the opposition, government, or one ethnic group against the other. He argued that the recent fighting in Juba and subsequent movement of citizens into neighbouring countries to seek refuge was fuelled by the misuse of social media “Based on interviews of South Sudanese refugees in Ayilo in northern Uganda, three out of five people fled the country because of hearsay or division along ethnic lines,” he said. In light of South Sudan’s political crisis, the research shows how radio stations (for instance, Bentiu FM, used by rebels to communicate hate speech), the Internet, and social media in particular were instrumental in aggravating the violence.

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