

In Peace We Trust: The Common Man Perspective on the Arabs-Jews Conflict

Abstract:

The conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Jews has remained one of the darkest spots of humanity for over 54 years now.

On 11th September 2001, the World Trade Centre twin towers in New York, USA were blown off by two hijacked airliners in what the international community came to accept as a handiwork of terrorists. Immediately intelligence experts worldwide and anti-terrorists agencies came to think of only one group with such kind of ability, Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organization, as the perpetrator.

Bin Laden in turn sanctified the act as a method to fend the Palestinians in their war against Israel in so doing he is trying to justify his heinous and barbaric conduct through the suffering of other people, the Palestinians. His stands emanate from what he claims the US was bankrolling Israel's military campaign against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In other words Osama is creating more confusion in the already confusing quagmire. Basically this paper recapitulates the human tragedy and history of the Middle East not from scholarly point of view as the myth and reality, or as one-land two peoples but from a Common Man point of view from a far off country from the point of conflagration. The segments of the paper include rationale as to why despite the evaporation of peace in the Middle East, ordinary people who remains 'voiceless' worldwide, fathom solution is possible to the area.

This study also seeks to closely examine one of the strongest profession of our times, Journalism, and its role in abetting conflict, and in this case not an ordinary one, because of its magnitude, emerged as the major conflicts of our time, the Arabs-Jews conflict.

The presentation might also give glimpse as to why change of fighting methods and the emergence of conspiracy of terrorists on Islamic clerical gowns are threatening the crumble of one of the biggest religion in the world, Islam. The paper also accounts for what may have been a vital threat facing Moslems worldwide today, 'lack of laid down and internationally acceptable religious leadership'.

The theory is Common Man and Woman on the streets of Jerusalem, Gaza or anywhere worldwide have some perception and opinion in relations to the Middle East Crisis and likewise they might provide a solution.

The paper is of the opinion that besides experiencing crises, the major challenges facing the world today is to learn how to listen and not heeding to the voiceless. The presenter looks on the common man perception as portrayed in the Tanzania media, Internet and other easily gauged international media. So with all sincerity this presentation

encapsulates a media review that seeks to agitate the media to seek out voice of the voiceless on the complex issue of the Middle East crisis.

Introduction

There are three sides of every story: His, hers, and the truth or likewise mine, yours and the truth. As saying goes: “Right is right even if the whole world is wrong,” and even when the right is not known.

When researchers or ordinary people look on the issue of the Arab-Israel conflict, similar pattern can be discerned. There emerge the Israelis story, the Arabs (Palestinians) story and the truth, which is supported by neither and engulfed in the cobweb of allegories, tales and legends. All in all for us living in East Africa, far from the spot of conflict, a portrait of a modern Middle East remains religiously enchanting and bewitching but dangerously brutal.

Hijacking, terrorism, lynching, kidnapping, martyrdom, loss of life, political and social instability amidst much personal discontent are all there. And as if that doesn't suffice, men are frightened of the future. That is the picture of Israel/Palestine of today. Mind you, most of this information is transmitted to us via media.

Sometimes it needs heart rather than head to listen, to judge and to understand. It is the heart that makes a man rich. The richness of a man according to what he is rather than according to what it takes.

If one uses head in the Middle East conflict, s/he might think it is just a straight away case of the rightists and the wrongdoer the case closed. But judging from time that the conflict has taken to date, one comes to a conclusion only the thinking heart can do wonders to bring about a solution. This is more so because the reasons forwarded in support of the conflict are always coated with religious antidote. And as they say “religion does not normally deal in compromise.” To religion something is either right or wrong, there are no gray areas. And unfortunately religious rules are not easily amended either.

To many people worldwide, inheriting a conflict was just a fable written in novels like ‘Kane And Abel’¹ but for those living inside Israel/Palestine that is a living reality where children are coached to hate their neighbouring fellow children simply because they were born either Arabs or Jews.

An African statesman, the Late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere former Tanzania President, once said: “The greatest sin of all mankind is to eat human meat. The anathema with this sin is if you start eating the human meat you will never stop.”²

The way I am seeing the Arab-Israel conflict I totally concur with Nyerere's above observation. If you start conflict by hatred and killing each other like eating the human meat, you will never stop no matter what. The problem is becoming more complex when you leave few leaders to determine this course supported by policies of extermination. In

¹ Archer, J., famous book: ‘Kane & Abel’, Fawcett Book Group, 1976

² Julius Nyerere, in a public speech campaigning for the 3rd Tanzania president, October 10th 1995

the long run the few leaders turn into warlords who love killing policies and killing whoever labeled enemies for its sake.

The Arabs-Israel conflict is a vivid example of crises doused in policies of extermination on both sides. No matter what few leaders agreed, it would have little effect to quench the killing thirst of bloodthirsty majority who have qualified from within the long-term extermination policies.

There are plenty of other examples engrossed in such tendencies, look at the India-Pakistan (Hindu-Moslems) conflict in Kashmir, conflagration of Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and many blood spots worldwide.

It has become so difficult to solve such conflicts because cruelty always creates more cruelty, and at times it seem slow thinking prevails and most of the time society find itself passed over by opportunities that can lead to solution. But has one taken trouble to ask the suffering majority, women. Civilians and children what do they want?

Coming back to our Arabs-Israel conflict, you can imagine it took about 40 years for at least a first voice of reason to be heard from a prominent head of government or state stating Arabs are ready to live side by side with Israel. ³

And after saying that you all know what happened next, assassination of such a leader on what came to be termed a religious '*fatwa*' and the crime of the Late President Mohammad Anwar Sadat was simply "he had recognised the State of Israel". But no one can refute today about the breakthrough success emerged that followed up Sadat's utterances, which opening fair relations between Israel and Egypt. That is not the whole story it was in 1988 that PLO under international pressure acceded to recognise the State of Israel's right to exist. ⁴

With this kind of speed, it might take another 80 years for these people to come to a notable solution.

The dawn of intifada and six years of uprising, loss of numerous lives that brought a Palestinian Authority and the return of Yasser Arafat to Gaza there emerged another brand of warlords carrying a religious banner this time. What does that tell us? These kinds of warlords are encouraging people to live in the future and not now and here! Mujahedeen are being taught, "basing on ill-digested notions of Islam and ethnic identity⁵," but not in

³ President Mohammad Anwar Sadat

⁴ In 1988 came a change of PLO policy. Yasser Arafat , in a speech at a special United Nations session held in Geneva, Switzerland, he declared that the PLO renounced terrorism and supported "the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to live in peace and security, including the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours". And then signed the Declaration of Principles agreement with Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in Sept. 13, 1993.

⁵ The Mufti of Tartar, Gusman Ishhakov, Quoted in The (Tanzania) Guardian – August 16, 2002

realistic religious tenets from the scripture rather than according to those leading the war. “It is one thing to memorise the Bible, it is quite another to understand it.”⁶

“If they make a step towards peace, do the same. Have confidence on God.”⁷ Yasser Arafat quoted this Qur’anic verse when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo Norway on December 10, 1994.

To these warlord and Mullahs, terrorism, hijacking and political violence are mere semantics what matters is to whether their Mujahed (terrorist) students did as they are being told.

Through the media, we have later seen the start of peace talks and how it’s movement towards no apparent ending with new demands emerging on both sides after every fortnight.

I am yet to hear of the Global Media Monitoring Project that carried out the most comprehensive overview on compiled peace portrayal, or call against war messages in the world’s media as they did to gender or violence.

The myth theory – the belief that fight with enemy can bring about peace has failed to be accepted as an explanation for the chaos in Palestine. We had to promote deep understanding and tolerance between cultures.⁸

Besides, If you went through most media coverage on any war you will learn of politicians and the commanders; the generals of the infantry, navy and airforce. Unfortunately, the media as channels of information fail to give us a glimpse as to whether these people are not taking us for a ride and holding us for ransom!

The media fills us with facts such as surprise factor, good military plans and operations, the military hardware and armaments. We are also fed with facts about the Field Marshals, The Moshe Dayans, Golda Meirs, General Nassers, Sadats and Ahmed Ismails, Shazl, Mustafa Tlas, Colonel Bar Lev, Andrei Gromyko and now Ariel Sharon and the list can go on and on. Unfortunately we are not told anything about what the common man is saying!

Constitutions world-over state: “The People shall govern”! How could it be effected if the so-called people have no say in Palestine and Israel? So I was forced to do my simple survey to see where are the voices of the common people in the media, what opinion do they divulge on the merciless half a century conflict? These are the ones I dubbed the “voiceless”! I believe they have a lot to say about the Middle East crisis but they are not given the chance to speak.

As I pointed out earlier we got most of our information on the Middle East from the media. Then I had to know: What precisely constitutes a “common man’s issue for the

⁶ Bosse , M., The War Lord, Fontana Paperbacks (1983), William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., Glasgow (p.)

⁷ Yasser Arafat

⁸ Thenjiwe Mtintso, Deputy Secretary General, ANC (In a speech -- 16 March 2001)

media?” Why the common man and woman are not included in mainstream news on issues that concern half the world’s population?” Why is the mainstream news not considered of interest to ask common Palestinian and Israelites about their feeling to this in-senseless war? Why women are not asked, why school children are not asked? Why military planners fail to include common man perception in their military strategic plans?

Besides few opinions appearing as readers comment in a limited number, my scrutiny attested to the fact that, “the voiceless” are simply missing in the media pages worldwide.

The Media

The media as an industry thrives on challenging everyone and everything: except itself. It is worse if the challenge is on stereotypes. The outcry on racism in the media during 1960's up to late 1980's (weaknesses notwithstanding) was a wake up call. But we have not as yet had similar outcries against violence and warlords.

The media is a product of society and thus it reflects the values, ideas, attitudes, culture and practices of any given society. Simultaneously it influences and shapes society. Among other things, the objectification, commodification and subjugation of women are at their worst in the media.

Just reflect on what you are likely to have heard, read or seen in the media in the past 48 hours. Warmongers will be praised and portrayed as the model of the world, George Bush, Osama, Chechnya terrorists, warmongers in Ivory Coast. Peace will be glimpsed as a pity needing inputs in the form of wishes of the Americans.

I am from Africa, let me share with you some African experience as to how people regard the media. In Khosa the TV is called the *umabonakude* (that which sees afar) and radio is referred to as *unomatholo* (supernatural voices speaking to you) with *Osiyazi* (does not lie). This descriptive language reflects a belief that these tools are beyond reproach.⁹ This paper is based on the premise that the media can and should play a critical role in the transformation of people towards peace in the society and the world at large. There is no news that does not have conflict implications of some sort. The media cannot effectively play its role without transforming itself.

I hope we need to enter into a stage, and help the media people to redefine **what is news**, determine who defines it, who reports on it, and how it is reported on; assess its value in educational and transformation terms, evaluate its impact and answers the question of whether it helps in transformation of this world of conflicts into peaceful one.

Powered by awesome and fast changing technology with its vast reach, the media is, quite simply, one of the most powerful forces on earth today for shaping the way people think. As I pointed out above as to how people even in the rural areas in Southern Africa perceive the media is the truth.

However, power can be used constructively or destructively. The media could be an amazing force for bridging the gap between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, be it helping to shift societal mindset that have become deeply ingrained structural barriers to the advancement of peace. Unfortunately, research shows that the media is doing the opposite. It is reinforcing and legitimizing those barriers. Those suffering from the perpetrated violence and wars are not given a chance to speak out.

⁹ Thenjiwe Mtintso, Deputy Secretary General of South African ANC, In a Speech March 16, 2001

The quotes only come from the commanders! It's time people should be asked about policies being espoused by the men in power and what visions and dreams they aspire to.

“What, in the end, could be more central to free speech than that every segment of society should have a voice? And what more fundamental and cross cutting fault line is there in every one of our societies than between men and women”¹⁰ and between the led and the leaders.

Journalism is a living profession. And in order for it to continue living, journalism has to be proactive. While it cannot bet respect the mainstream trends and concepts, journalism has the duty of illuminating the path that our society treads, exposing thorns and potholes. Conscious journalists' work will therefore inevitably involve a degree of activism.

Franz Fanon once said: “people have to know what destination they are bound to and why, the political personality must understand that the future will be bored as long as the people's awareness is rudimentary, fragmental and haze.”¹¹

While seeking the truth, journalism is also a vehicle of change. While reflecting the image of society as it is now, journalism has the duty of involving people actively in the management of their lives. Journalism has to help people determine their future. Journalism has to help us become better society.

Call it active journalism or civic journalism, the fact is that gone are days of passivity in newsrooms on the pretext of neutrality. If objectivity and neutrality in effect mean protecting the status quo when things are going wrong, or dragging our society backwards while it could move forward, then these are misnomers that professionals can do without.

¹⁰ Dr. Athalia Molokomme, Head - SADC Gender Unit, In a foreword of ‘Whose News? Whose Views?’ – Gender in Media Handbook, Edited by Lowe-Morna, C, Gender-Links, Johannesburg, 2001

¹¹ In his famous book: *The Wretched of the earth*, translated from the German, on the “Third World” Experience

Reflections

It was not easy for the researcher to get findings or samples of the actual coverage during the Arabs-Israel wars of 1967 or 1973. But suffices to say available history books reveal worthy examples on the media attitude.

Walter Laqueur, distinguished journalist and author in his preface to ‘Confrontation : The Middle East War and World Politics wrote thus: “The fourth Arab-Israel war that ended in November 1973 was nicknamed ‘Operation Spark’ by President Sadat. It sparked off a crisis in détente, the eclipse, temporary or permanent, of Western Europe, a world energy shortage and it also opened a new phase in the struggle for the Middle East. This multiple crisis is the subject of a book which starts with the pre-history of the war of Yom Kippur or (10 Ramadhan) and ends with the signing of the first accord between Israel and Egyptian representatives on November 11th 1973.”¹²

Look here at how he is dramatising the issue: “It deals with both a local conflict and world politics, with military, political and economic warfare; in 1973 the whole world was affected, the scene constantly shifted and the end is not yet in sight.”¹³

Let me borrow again from Laqueur who wrote: “The present study is to a certain, limited extent based on conversation with some of the *dramatis personae*, who he later expounded as some of those who had taken part in the decisive meetings in Washington and Moscow, in Tel Aviv and Cairo. It was possible on occasion to lift slightly (the veil of mystery, only to realize that there was no mystery.”¹⁴

M. Daniel Meyer, one in the league of distinguished journalists writing for the French daily, Le Monde Newspaper while reporting the truce between Israel and Egypt in 1973 put it so inelegantly thus: ‘One sells Jews for oil’.¹⁵

Laqueur again wrote: “The coming of the fourth Arab-Israel war could be foreseen.. Concluding my *The Road to War*, dealing with the origins and the aftermath of the Arab-Israel conflict 1967-8 “However unlikely an agreement with the Arabs may at present be, approaches have yet be made with an eye to the more distant future; Israel policy vis-à-vis the Arab government has to be based on the philosophy of the ‘as if’. There are enormous risks involved and there is no guarantee whatever of success. The Israelis will have to talk to the Palestinians Arabs and the refugee organizations. The refugee problem remains a festering sore, yet, since the war, no constructive programmed for its treatment has been prepared by the Israel government ... The Arabs should be told that their present policy will lead them to further disasters. The existence of Israel may be a crying injustice in their eyes and their defeats a terrible blow to their national self-esteem. But they cannot hope to achieve more than a honourable settlement, which would include Israel concessions and a solution of the refugee question. The idea that with more

¹² Laqueur, W., *Confrontation*, (Preface – p. vii)

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*

dangerous; at the most the Arabs could destroy Israel at the price of their own suicide. In the unreal world in which they live, it seems not to have occurred to them that, if faced with the destruction of their state and the annihilation of their people, the Israelis, like Samson, would probably prefer to die with the Philistines, bringing down with them more than the ‘ten millions’ which some of the Arab Maoist are willing to sacrifice. Today these are apocalyptic visions, fairly soon they may be reality.”¹⁶

Mohamed Heikal, one of the greatest journalist of our time from the Arabs side, concluding his foreword of the book, ‘The Road to Ramadan’, wrote: “Apart from any temporary gains or losses there may have been in the October War – the ‘Ramadan War’ its outcome cast a shadow ahead on the inevitable next stage of the confrontation. The Arabs had shown their potential but failed to exploit it properly. The Israelis had been faced with their fundamental weakness, but turned away from it in horror and tried to pretend that it did not exist. The outside world concentrated its efforts on patching over the crisis rather than on attempting to get to the root of it. The main architect of the truce, which succeeded the war, Henry Kissinger, saw it as essentially an exercise in relations between the two superpowers. The only conclusion to be drawn from all these missed opportunities and mutual incomprehension is that another war is inevitable.”¹⁷

The above are common examples of the mainstream media reportage when it comes to the Palestine (Arabs) - Israel conflict, lets now take a breath and see that assumed ignorant common man as per the media standard might not be ignorant at all.

An Indian young man, Utpal Sheth¹⁸, wrote to friends@friends.com: a message that reads, “Last month, a worldwide survey was conducted by a researcher working for the United Nations. There was only one survey question, which was: “Would you please give your most honest opinion about solutions to the food shortage in the rest of the world?”

The young men went on to say survey was huge failure because: Part of the failure was due to respondents’ failure to grasp the questions.

In Africa they did not know what **“food”** meant; In Western Europe they did not know what **“shortage”** meant; In the Middle East they did not know what **“solution”** meant; In South America they did not know what **“please”** meant; In Asia they did not know what **“honest”** meant; And in the United States of all the places they did not know what **“the rest of the world”** meant.

Sheth noted the failure in the Middle East was because they don’t know what **“solution meant.”** That was an inference of a very young man living in far off Tamil Nadu, India on the fact that the Israelis and Arabs of the Middle East lack a right terminology for solution or ignorance thereof!

That brings us to another puzzle on the youths of Middle East. After the September 11, 2001 twin-tower episode and the later identification of the culprits, who most of them

¹⁶ Lawrence C. Whetten, ‘June 1967 to June 1971’ in New Middle East, June 1971.

¹⁷ Heikal, M, The Road to Ramadan, WM Collin & Co, London, 1975 (p.

¹⁸ Utpal Sheth of utpal.sheth@misys.com sent the message to friends@friends.com

seem learned. You will find people asking themselves how could a learned youths, such as Mohamed Atta became suicidal and ready to bring about mass killings?

Was it due to frustrations, politics, religious zeal, and an in-born traits for mass murder or loss of all hope or may be the Imam's condemnations of the US! What were the reasons for such action?

“Mohamed was a very lonely man,” Architecture Professor Dittmar Machule and his fellow student Volker Hauth.¹⁹

Let me borrow from another common man who says, “Despite the pain each side has suffered neither Palestine nor Israel work very hard to bring justice and peace.”²⁰

Referring to the Holy Bible, the man went on to say: “Israel is the land of the Bible. Any news about the land touches the hearts and minds of Moslems, Jews and Christians all over the world ... The people of the Promised Land now live in a state of total frustrations. Middle East is full of violence and crime, and people do just as they please without restraint.”²¹

The above quote and the one follows come from a reader in Tanzania, Tom Ogudah, that appeared in a Tanzania national daily, “National security for Arafat and Ariel Sharon means different phenomenon all together. How many wars will it take to convince the people of Palestine that Israel is there to stay.

The wars have taken many Israel, Palestine and Arab lives. Does the world care? In May 1948, inspite of the bitter opposition from the Arabs, the state of Israel was formed. Israel is surrounded by Arab nations (enemy) determined to wipe out the Jewish nation and repossesses the land. Most Palestinians are predominantly Arabs and Islamic who feel to be part of the great Arab world.”²²

Here is another example, this time from the former Soviet state of Tartar as conveyed in the media:²³ “We were forced by circumstances to send our children abroad to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to study,” Gusman Iskhakov said of the Soviet period, when the region had no religious schools. “When they came back, they began openly correcting the imams. It was like a sick-man who took all his pills at once, he almost died.” Many who took their first steps abroad moved south to Chechnya and Afghanistan, in search of other forms of Islam. Tartars think before they act, Arabs and Jews don't.

¹⁹ The (Tanzania) Guardian – Saturday Aug. 17, 2002, p. 10

²⁰ Letter to the Editor, From: Tom Ogudah of Box 3394, Dar es Salaam, The (Tanzania) Guardian, August 13, 2002

²¹ - ibid -

²² - ibid -

²³ The (Tanzania) Guardian Aug. 16, 2002, Gusman Iskhakov, Tartan's moderate mufti (p.10)

After the September 11, 2001 attack on twin towers this researcher went out and interviewed common men and women on the streets, out of the interviews came this story for Africanews, an online news agency operating from Nairobi, Kenya²⁴:

Some Muslim communities in Tanzania are very unhappy over the September 11 terrorism attacks in the U.S., saying that the actions of a few do not reflect the true faith. They also wonder if a leadership vacuum exists amongst Muslims worldwide.

The September 11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. and subsequent retaliation against Afghanistan have prompted some Muslim communities in Tanzania to question the Taliban's ideology and methods, and whether a vacuum exists worldwide in Muslim leadership.

Immediately following the attacks, none of the leadership of Islamic groups in Tanzania publicly came forward to condemn or even comment on the situation. But some Muslim leaders and community members have made their views known in interviews with Africa news.

"It's true the situation left our followers in a limbo," Sheikh Ali Muhidin, an Islamic cleric in Dar es Salaam, told Africanews. "It seems terrorists know of the leadership vacuum facing Muslims. Who is Bin Laden and who gave him power to issue fatwa in the name of Islam against anyone and more so against the U.S?"

He pointed out that fatwa is not an edict; it is a mere opinion. Fatwa in a Muslim state were traditionally given by a court official, the Mufti, for the guidance of a qazi or judge. The Mufti is one learned in the law fiqh.

Quoting Professor Ziauddin Sardan, a leading Islamic scholar who was a vocal critic of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and who now teaches in the U.K., Sheikh Muhidin observed: "Why have we repeatedly turned a blind eye to the evil within our Muslim societies? Why have we allowed the sacred terms of Islam, such as *fatwa* and *jihad*, to be hijacked by obscurantist fanatic extremists?"

Selemani Samula, an Islamic teacher in Dar es Salaam, echoed the cleric's concern, saying: "We have to highlight, the argument goes, the despair and suffering of the Muslim people - their poverty and plight. So, all good and concerned Muslims are implicated in the unchecked rise of fanaticism in Muslim societies.

"We have given free reign to fascism within our midst, and failed to denounce fanatics who distort the most sacred of concepts of our faith," he said. "We have been silent as they proclaim themselves martyrs, mangling beyond recognition in the most sacred meaning of what it is to be a Muslim."

Pained to find some Muslims lauding bin Laden, Samula denounced terrorism in all of its forms. "The worst form of class prejudice is to support one's community even in tyranny.

²⁴ Africanews, November 2001

The Prophet also said: "The highest form of jihad is to speak the truth to a tyrannical ruler." Jihad means exertion. The exertion of reason is *ijtihad* (reasoning), which is one of the sources of Islamic Law.

The teacher also denounced the Taliban "for using the Qu'ran for political and tribal means. Islam and Qu'ran must not be used as instruments for propagating violence, terror and destruction. Today, more than ever, humanity and above all Muslims are in need of the real message of peace advanced by Islam."

"It is time Muslims face the tribunal of secular reason and patiently endure trial by modernity," noted Juma Rashid, the Kisarawe District Secretary of the Muslim Council of Tanzania (BAKWATA). "We need to be at once loyal to the religion's demands of the Islamic tradition and yet, simultaneously, responsive to the rational and critical pressures of the present.

"Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves," he added.

"If a Muslim, or even a group of Muslims, indulges in violence, he (they) must be held responsible for it," said Rashid. "Nevertheless, their actions cannot be attributed to the influence of Islam. Of those who claim to be Muslims, the Qu'ran observes: "You have not believed yet, but rather say, 'we have accepted Islam,' for the true belief has not yet entered your hearts,"" he said.

The terrorists behind the attacks seem to have some support from people hailing from Pemba Islands. As initial reports of the collapse of the twin towers filtered in, the media showed images of people from Pemba Islands now living in Dar es Salaam applauding at the news. The area is a stronghold for the Tanzania main opposition party, Civic United Front.

However, some observers say that it was the media that whipped up such sentiment and subsequent reaction. Local newspapers sensationalised the issue to an extent of confusing people, said prominent journalist Lucy Aloyce, information officer for Women Advanced Trust (WAT), a Dar es Salaam-based non-government organisation.

She said that some papers, either by default or design, painted the attacks in the U.S. as a war between Christians and Muslims, which sparked reaction from the people from Pemba. "It is funny how" some papers went on to report commencement of the war weeks before it really started."

Discussions

To study the media is very hard because needs critical view of conglomerate of institutions. However, some studies to identify for instance TVs influence on violence – that identified the contextual features associated with violent depictions on television and to analyse the television environment in-depth in order to report on the nature and extent of violent depictions, have been done. Focussing, in particular, on the relative presence of the most problematic portrayals.

Prolonged viewing of media violence can lead to emotional desensitization toward real violence and real victims. The conclusion was television violence is a social problem, if not a public health problem, and that the television industry has a responsibility to do something about it.”

The media have been blamed for just about everything from a decrease in attention span to an increase in street crime, to undoing our capacity to think. In *Amusing ourselves to Death* (Penguin, 1986), social critic Neil Postman suggests that the cocktail party, the quiz show, and popular trivia games are reflections of society’s trying to find a use for the abundance of superficial information given us by the media-and useful for little else than attempts to impress one another with small talk.

Peggy Noonan, a former network writer who worked as a speechwriter during the Reagan administration, has observed that experiences are no longer “real” unless they are ratified by television (which is why, she says, half the people in a stadium watch the game on monitors rather than watching the field.)

Marie Winn’s memorable description of a child transfixed by television, slack-jawed, tongue resting on the front teeth, eyes glazed and vacant (*The Plug-In Drug, Penguin, 1985*) has become an often-quoted symbol of the passivity encouraged by television viewing. Everyone wants TV, but we are at the same time worried about the effects of TV on other people’s children.

Questions of whether or not and to what extent media influence our behaviours, values, expectations, and ways of thinking are difficult to answer. While one bibliographer has compiled a list of over 3,000 citations of English-language articles focusing just on children and television (and all written within the last 40 years), the conclusions drawn in these articles vary.

Isolating the media as a casual agent in examining human behaviour is a difficult task, complicated by the challenge of understanding the complexities of the mind; differences in the context in which media are consumed (e.g., the personal, non-media experiences of the consumer and the extent to which media content is actively versus passively processed); the difficulty of finding representative control groups who have not been exposed to media; and the challenge of determining long-range effects. People who consume a lot of media often do so for a reason. They may be of lower socioeconomic

status, more passive in nature, less intelligent than others, or socially alienated—all factors that are conceivable causes of effects attributed to heavy media use.

Thus while researchers have found it difficult to prove that mass media are responsible for significant changes in individual consumers and in society as a whole, they have also found it difficult to prove that they are not linked to such changes.

Media messages serve variety of purposes: They inform, they influence public opinion, they sell, and they entertain. They often do all of these things, sometimes below the level of consumers' conscious awareness. Children watch Sesame Street to be entertained, but they also learn to count, to share, to accept physical differences among individuals, and (perhaps) to desire a Sesame Street lunch box. Adults watch crime dramas to be entertained, but they also learn that they have the right to remain silent when arrested, how (accurately or inaccurately) the criminal justice system works, and that the world is an unsafe place.

Lets borrow from Nicholas Johnson, a former chairman of the US Federal Communications Commission, who had noted, "Every moment of television programming—commercials, entertainment, news—teaches us something."

How such incidental learning occurs is most often explained by two theories. Social Learning (or Modeling) Theory suggests that the behaviour of media consumers, particularly children, is affected by their imitating role models represented via media. The degree to which modeling occurs depends upon the presence of inhibitors, lessons learned in real life that discourage imitation, and disinhibitors, experiences in real life that reinforce imitation. Cultivation Theory holds that media shape behaviour by influencing attitudes. Media provide a "Window to the world," exposing consumers to images of reality that may or may not jibe with personal experience.

Mainstreaming effects occur when media introduce images of things with which the consumer has no personal experience. Resonance effects occur when media images echo personal experience. Thus, a television viewer who has never been in a hospital will be more likely to believe doctors are like those on ER than a viewer who has logged hours in real-world emergency rooms, and a television viewer who has had real-world experience similar to those seen on ER may find that watching the show reinforces their belief that all doctors and hospitals are like those seen on ER.

However, a television viewer who has had personal experiences in hospitals that differ from the images portrayed on ER is not likely to believe what is on television over what has been observed in real life. Heavy media consumers are more likely to be affected than light consumers are, since they spend more time absorbing information from media (and, presumably, have less time available for first person experiences).

With the advent of television, media scholar Marshall McLuhan predicted the coming of a "global village" almost four decades before the coming of globalization. He foreseen by then that communication media would transcend the boundaries of nation: "Ours is a

world of allatoneess. 'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished. We now live in ... a simultaneous happening." A generation later McLuhan's profess come to pass. The availability of a worldwide, 24-hour news network has changed news from something that has happened to something that is happening.

Decisions regarding what stories to beam and how to beam them are made under tight deadlines. Media expert Wilbur Schramm has noted that: "Hardly anything about communication is so impressive as the enormous number of choices and discards and interpretations that have to be made between [an] actual news event and the symbols that later appear in the mind of a reporter, an editor, a reader, a listener, or a viewer. Therefore, even if everyone does his job perfectly, it is hard enough to get the report on event straight and clear and true."

Shramm's comments point to a tremendous impact of selectivity in crafting news messages. What gets into the media and what does not are influenced by choices made by individuals with personal opinions, causes, and biases. The process of keeping these decisions is called gate keeping.

Conclusion and Recommendations

“If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.”

.....
 “The functionaries of every government have propensities to command at will the liberty and property of their constituents. There is no safe deposit for these but with the people themselves, nor can they be free with them without information. Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe.”

“The man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than the man who reads them, in-as-much as he knows nothing is nearer to the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehoods and errors. He who reads nothing will steal learn the great facts, and the details are also false.”

.....
 “It is a melancholy truth, that a suppression of the press could not more completely deprive the nation of its benefits than is done by its abandoned prostitution to falsehood.”

You could be excused for thinking that two different and presumably rival social thinkers made these sets of statements, so diametrically opposed are they. But no, they are from the same man, and that man no less than the great Thomas Jefferson himself, the celebrated American patriot, main author of the American Declaration of Independence, philosopher, artist, scientist and the third president of the United States of America.

That these statements, and many others like them, were not made at different stages of his long and distinguished career, say before he became president and after he became president, but were rather interspersed during a substantial length of time before and after, is illustrative of the schizophrenic value of the big man’s thinking about the press.

Although these quotes come to us from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they echo our realities today and it is safe to say that Jefferson has an abundance of faithful heirs in our midst today. Why I am saying this is the fact that, inexplicable hypnotic influence of the warlord phenomenon sweeping the world today, is to a great extent creation of the media. However, it is also a fact that the nations worldwide were spell-bounded by them.

Of the many influences on how we view conflicts and wars, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful. Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their

messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms of media communicate images of war machinery, many of which perpetuate fear and helplessness, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. Three themes describe how media represent the Middle East Conflict. First, Arabs or Jews or both are ignorant lots, which falsely implies that those who made up the Arabs and Jewish societies are sub-human and unimportant or useless. Second, Jews or Arabs or both are superhuman, super-intelligent and hence ones cannot match the other in any way. Third, depictions of relationships between the leaders and the led emphasize traditional roles of the mighty and the listeners.

As Giles Foden said in his book 'The Last King of Scotland' that covered Idi Amin's Uganda extensively says: "The acceleration of history is the job of ruthless men." We have to stand trial for letting the ruthless men run history, the media should stand trial letting the ruthless men use the media to accelerate negative history.

This paper sought to act as a catalyst to stimulate discussions about how the media can act to manage world conflicts, and more so the Middle East crisis – from individual, groups, higher learning institutions and the world at large. If I had succeeded even in making you just think about it, I will regard it as a successful trial.

Ask me for a solution to the quagmire and the longest blot in the human history, and I will say I don't have one.

I could might say things like:

- We need to organise a biggest Palestine conference to chart the course ahead or declare the truce.
- Likewise the Jews conference to chart the course ahead or declare the truce.
- Both later to be followed by small scale meetings of different groups in the society, women, youths, scholars, religious leaders, warlords, and everybody towards building reconciliation.
- May be setting up a reconciliation commission in similar fashion to the one held in South Africa.
- Or maybe whichever methods seem feasible to move towards total peace.
- Then joint conference Arabs/Jews for the same purpose.

Experience shows nothing small scale will bear positive results, but our fate, the world fate should not left in the hands of the warlords. All this notwithstanding, the media, as has been stated so eloquently, are part and parcel of civil society and their role will remain crucial in sensitising their societies to make informed choices, be it in governance, economic development or even making a stand against senseless wars.

But I now emphatically know that the media need to change and take responsibility to help in wadding off in-senseless wars in this planet.

The media cannot abdicate their responsibility in the this endeavour. The struggle to bring development, social justice and prosperity must involve the entire populace, or whatever is achieved cannot be called development.

For, trying to bring peace to a people without that people's active participation would be, as it is said, like trying to stage Hamlet without the prince. But even with your prince, how can the play be a success without Hamlet's father's ghost, to jog memories and urge remedial action? To fight fear, act. To increase fear, wait, put off, and postpone. The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.

The media has its sins of omission and sins of commission, however, it should take note of what Rigoberta Menchu Tum said: "Indigenous people, of those who live in poverty and misery, as well as victims of genocide, repression and discrimination. They have not lost their awareness, nor their determination or hope."

By thinking long-term and acting now, we can take advantage of these windows of opportunity to shift misery towards long-term peace. Warlords and those who believe in might rather than right constantly threaten peace and security of millions worldwide. Unlucky enough, the old saying: "Those who live by the sword will perish by the sword" no longer seem applicable because the despot dictators keep on living longer and longer as people keep on perishing.

The media has grown tremendously to be globally recognised provider of information on global processes and their impact of populations' worldwide. This growth has demanded that the organisation constantly reviews their founding and operational principles to ensure that it remains relevant. It is far easier to preach than practice - Engendering peace in the media is a process. It takes time, commitment and effort.

With your permission let me end by quoting another African political stalwart, Nelson Rolithatha Mandela, who said during the ceremony to receive the 1994 joint Nobel Peace prize that: "Let it never be said by future generations that indifference, cynicism or selfishness made us fail to live up to the ideals of humanism. Let the striving of us all prove Martin Luther King Jr., to have been correct when he said that humanity could no longer be tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war. Let the effort of us all prove that he was not a mere dreamer when he spoke of the beauty of genuine brotherhood and peace being more precious than diamonds or silver or gold. Let a new age dawn!"

Thank you very much for your attention.

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