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THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PEACEBUILDING IN IRAQ AFTER ISIS

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Abstract: The victory over the territorial rule of the so-called Islamic State provides an opportunity for the government of Iraq to restore its state institutions and reassert its authority. Can the Iraqi leadership step beyond cycles of failure in this transition to tackle the systemic issues that sustain state weakness and promote the emergence of groups like ISIS? This paper aims to enlighten the challenges faced by Iraq after ISIS for the restoration of peace between minorities and religious groups, and coexistence after the myth, so that conflicts are going on between minorities and religious groups, particularly in Mosul and other cities under the control of ISIS, the state could not reconcile the displaced people. Correspondingly, this paper intends the focus and role of local, regional, and international media in the process of peacebuilding and coexistence in Iraq after ISIS.

Keywords: Media; Peacebuilding; Coexistence; ISIS; Iraq

INTRODUCTION

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared on 9 December 2017 that the so-called Islamic State had been defeated (ISIS). He told the Iraqis at the victory ceremony, "Your lands have been completely liberated" (NBC News 2017). Yet this is not the first time Iraqis have celebrated victory over an organization like that. The Iraqi state has been embroiled in a cycle of devastation and repairs since the 2003 US-led invasion. Instead of merely toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, the United States and its partners restructured the 1921 British-built state, establishing a new decentralized and federal state, based on a market economy (The New York Times 2017). This new state has so far proven incapable of resisting pressure from local, national, regional, and foreign actors, as well as non-state actors, such as terrorist groups. The weakness of Iraq has allowed rival groups to engage in a perpetual power struggle for control and influence. Yet the state has never fully collapsed, defying widespread predictions of the 'End of Iraq'.

This vulnerability has at times contributed to inter-ethnic-sectarian and inter-ethnic-sectarian violence centered on sub-national identities. The civil war of 2006-2008 underlined the excesses of the Sunni-Shia and Shia-Shia conflicts.

METHODS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide a thematic analysis of the role of the media in peacebuilding in Iraq after the ISIS battle. As the difficulties of peacebuilding in Iraq since the country's founding in 1921 have been a critical issue. This study depends on thematic analysis and content analysis methods to highlight the role of the media in peacebuilding in Iraq following the ISIS battle, which lasted from 2014 to 2017. Expert remarks and perspectives on the role of the media in peacebuilding will also be examined.

PEACEBUILDING AND THE MEDIA

Peacebuilding refers to the development of peaceful relations and the strengthening of viable political, socioeconomic, and cultural institutions capable of dealing with conflict, as well as the development of various processes that will either establish or support the circumstances for long-term peace (Groenewald and Sherriff 2005). The media has demonstrated throughout history that it can promote peace and environmental awareness. This simple relationship, however, should not be taken for granted and should be scrutinized. With the advancement of technology over the previous 50 years, the media's power has expanded enormously (Wolfsfeld 2004). Until the end of the Cold War, when specialized, non-governmental, and intergovernmental agencies codified the practice of peacebuilding and media technologies advanced to allow non-professionals to develop and distribute their media, media did not become an intrinsic part of official peacebuilding. As a result, the practice of employing media for peacebuilding began in the latter decade of the twentieth century, when peace organizations explicitly began using media to further their goals in violent conflict zones (Bratic 2016). Several military battles, some of which have been ongoing for decades, have effectively concluded since the conclusion of the Cold War. However, just ratifying a peace treaty does not solve the challenge of how to restore war-torn civilizations on material, social, or human level. Conflicts may persist without regular peacebuilding measures, and there is always the risk that violence will erupt again, which is why researching on media's role in transitioning from war to peace is an important issue (Kempf 1998).

The media are a two-edged sword in that they may be utilized for both peace and conflict. The mass media also played a central role in shaping public opinion during WWII and the rise of fascism, as well as in recent decades in Bosnia-Herzegovina and

Serbia, where they have been used to spread propaganda and hate-mongering (Howard 2002). In a conflict situation, most practitioners assume that the media must have the ability to affect the evolution of peace. If the media can influence people to engage in conflict, they must also have the ability to influence people to engage in conflict in the opposite way, advocating peace (Bratić 2006). Peacebuilding has recently been a more prominent part of many donor agencies' and governments' foreign aid policies. Many donors are supporting local media peacebuilding as part of this focus on peacebuilding. Even though there appears to be widespread agreement that local media development initiatives are an effective means of helping peacebuilding, there is a paucity of research that explains why this is the case or that outlines the specific links between local media and peacebuilding (Curtis 2000). Peacebuilding is dependent on peace journalism, and progress cannot be made without it (Mohamud and Mohamed 2015). Peace journalism was established as a conscious, working notion for journalists reporting conflicts and wars in the 1970s by a Norwegian professor named Johan Galtung, he explained, is a "broader, fairer, and more accurate manner of presenting events, building on conflict analysis and transformation principles" (McGoldrick and Lynch 2000). Traditional war media, according to Galtung, modeled sports journalism with the sole goal of winning a *zero-sum* competition. Peace journalism is similar to health reporting. A good health writer would depict a patient's battle with cancer while also informing readers about the disease's causes and the complete range of available therapies and preventive measures. "Media and conflict have been thoroughly studied", Paluck (2009) said, "But research on media's role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution is lacking". The battle or war is considered newsworthy, and media stories are often sensationalized and used to boost ratings and circulations (Allen and Jean 1999).

War journalism, according to Galtung and Vincent, concentrates primarily on violence and pays little attention to the systemic foundations of the conflict. Peace journalism, on the other hand, is an advocacy-based, interpretive approach to reporting about war, conflict, and violence (Galtung and Vincent 1992). The focus of peace journalists is news reports that promote peace initiatives, eliminate religious and ethnic divisions, and encourage conflict resolution, reconciliation, and reconstruction. "Journalism experts backed peace culture by opposing war reporting as anti-peace journalism" (Lee and Maslog 2004). By uncovering abuses, publicizing, and enforcing human rights and moral values, the media may help peacekeeping operations. It can act as a mediator and put pressure on nations to resolve brewing and current problems. It used a conflict resolution method by informing the community about available conflict resolution resources and other successful conflict management examples (Manoff 1997). Peace and the character of the debate regarding the peace process can be positively influenced by the media. During a disagreement, the media can reframe issues to make the conflict more manageable, which then aids the parties in reframing issues and devising alternative solutions (Wolfsfield 2003).

Even though the media was viewed as a tool that fanned the violence, it played a variety of roles, and it has been underutilized for peacebuilding reasons (Gakunju 2017). As the access to smartphones and social media continues to grow at an exponential rate, even in many conflict-affected areas around the world, the focus is rapidly shifting to the transformative potential of new media technologies in augmenting or replacing traditional media in peacebuilding (Best 2013).

Social media platforms can be utilized to help citizens and participants have access to knowledge about peacebuilding and to transform a conflict into a more peaceful situation (Comninos 2013). Social media has a wide range of ramifications that might help or hinder peacebuilding (Legatis 2015). People may now mobilize politically in support of democracy and human rights because of social media technologies. All aspects of social media should be used more strategically to aid peacemakers and human rights campaigners (Simone 2021).

DEMOCRACY ISSUE

Individually and collectively, the battle for justice has become one of the most pressing human demands. This is because justice is seen as a precondition for securing the necessities of other human requirements, as well as the best way to ensure that all aspects of human life's lack of justice are met and dealt with by other human needs, as shown by: There is no political justice. There is no social or legal justice. There is no racial justice. There is no cultural or epistemological equality (Abbas and Jassam 2015). The lack of justice is a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted problem, so the solution to this problem must be multi-dimensional and multi-dimensional as well (Dahl 1964). The absence or weakness of Iraqi civil society's political participation; and building democracy necessitates the creation of democratic citizens, who, in turn, necessitate the creation of various types of institutions for their socialization (Lijphart 1977).

BUILDING COEXISTENCE AFTER CONFLICT

Contact across group lines can minimize bias, forge friendships, and overall strengthen intergroup relationships. Since tolerant people are more likely to prefer contact, researchers have turned to studies to isolate contact's causal effects. In the United States, South Africa, and India, respectively, constructive, and cooperative interaction (which I call meaningful contact) effectively reduced socioeconomic, racial, and caste-based prejudice (Burns and La Ferrara 2015). Observational communication studies rarely include groups in conflict, although meta-analysis did not discover experimental studies of ethnic discrimination among adults over the age of 25 who might display more deeply rooted prejudice. Interventions aimed at reducing ethnic or racial discrimination, on the one hand, produce 'significantly weaker effects' compared

to prejudice towards the elderly or the disabled, for example, indicating that the cleavages common to war are especially unpliable (Paluck and Green 2017). More generally, ethnic violence solidifies the identification of individuals, ethnic stereotypes, and anxieties regarding physicality.

There are several reasons, on the other hand, to assume that communication can strengthen post-conflict intergroup relations. Intense bias, along with few opportunities for antagonistic groups to meet, means that when they engage, those populations have a lot to benefit from. This is because racism and social segregation flow through each other (Condra and Linardi 2019). The fulfillment of these conditions may help to explain the positive results of the few experimental communication studies we have from post-conflict settings: substantive contact enhanced cooperation between classmates in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Alexander and Christia 2011).

The Background

In Iraq, the media reported on 14 minority groups. Kurds and Arabs, both Sunni and Shia, are considered minorities in this complicated and changing geopolitical setting. They represent a population of roughly nine million people in Iraq. Shi'a Kurds, also known as Feyli Kurds, are a minority ethnic group in Iraq. Another ethnic group in Iraq is Shi'a Arabs, who number around 15 million people. The Shabak are another Shi'ite confessional minority group. They are concentrated in Mosul, Ninewa Plains, and makeup around 0.7 percent of Iraq's population. Also, the Yezidi are one of Iraq's ancient communities and practice a very specific religion, believed to be rooted in Zoroastrianism, and the Mandeans, who claim descent from the Arameans in the 2nd century, adhere to the Gnostic religion. Besides, the 500,000 Christians of Iraq also form a minority group. They historically live in Baghdad, Mosul, Ninewa, and the KRI, but have mostly left Mosul due to the threat posed by Daesh (AUIS 2016).

A new era of violence against Christians was ushered in by the fall of Mosul in June 2014. ISIS enslaved and murdered thousands in what was once Iraq's most populous province, with unfettered road access to hundreds of Yezidis, Christian, and Shi'a cities. Muslim and Christian, Arab, and Kurdish expellees joined the three million Iraqis displaced from December 2013 to April 2017 by intense fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces and armed groups (UNHCR 2017).

This migration is typified by the city of Qaraqosh. On August 6, 2014, Qaraqosh, an ancient center of Assyrian and Babylonian civilization, was cleared of its Christians for the first time in its history when its inhabitants were given hours to flee 50 miles to Erbil, mostly on foot after reaching the Kurdish checkpoints. In the Christian suburb of Ankawa, most lived in humanitarian camps, church housing, or private residences. A Qaraqoshi mother-of-three interviewed by the author 'brings enough clothes for a couple of nights for my children and myself'.

Qaraqoshis will stay for two and a half years in Erbil. After Ninewa, internally displaced people (IDPs) started trickling back to their hometowns (UNHCR 2017).

Christians are profoundly betrayed by Sunnis (about 45 percent of Muslims in the study), whom they see as allies with ISIS. The fact that some Sunnis 'chose' to live under the rule of ISIS rather than flee fuels this view. For example, a public Radio International was told by one of the first Christians to return to Qaraqosh: "When I knock into [my Muslim neighbors] now, they turn their faces and walk away, they know what they have been doing. They're guilty, they realize. I'm not even saying hi to them" (Hall 2017).

According to a study entitled 'Iraq after ISIL: Qaraqosh, Hamdaniya District' by Erica Gaston (2017) states that the town of Qaraqosh was destroyed by ISIL in February 2017. No home, building, church, or other property appeared untouched. Data shows 13,000 homes need to be rebuilt in the Ninewa Plains alone - around 7,000 in Qarakosh alone. Some of the 50,000 people who fled Qaraqosh were tortured and executed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ISIL fighters. At least 75 women and girls were known to have been captured by ISIL. Some reports indicate this number could be as high as 1,500. However, Kurdish and Iraqi government forces have recaptured two key areas of Qaraqosh, Iraq. The town was overrun by Islamic State (ISIL) in late October 2017. There has been virtually no return to the town just less than 5% of the population pre-ISIS, since then many families are still displaced (Gaston 2017).

Iraqi Media: Rebuilding Peace and Coexistence

With the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the media landscape in Iraq shifted dramatically. Before 2003, media alternatives were limited: the state-owned newspapers, radio and television stations, satellite TV, and the internet were only accessible to Baath Party elites. Following the conflict, over a hundred periodicals arose, reflecting political parties ranging from communist to Kurdish nationalist to Islamist. Iraqi civilians can now use the internet, own satellite dishes, and listen to hundreds of terrestrial and satellite radio and television channels broadcasting from throughout the country and the region (Price, Al Marashi, and Stremlau 2009). The US-led occupation aimed to transition Iraq from an authoritarian to a liberal democratic political system following the invasion and regime change in 2003.

The peacebuilding template developed in the increasing number of multilateral operations done in the aftermath of the Cold War led to this purposeful program of economic and political reform (Dodge 2013). Many media focus on political wars, conflicts, and violence, especially after 2003, and more different lying in the ISIS period (2014-2017) and after ISIS, and so far, the focus on Iraqi, regional and international media is more about local, regional and international violence in Iraq. Because of this, Iraqi media have disseminated more news stories about conflicts and wars among different ethnic and religious groups, which has had more negative impacts on the

failure of peace-building in Iraq (USIP 2009). The following steps have been addressed when discussing potential ways to tackle encouragement in the media:

- the establishment of a self-regulatory code of conduct for all media types Print, broadcast, and online.
- working with enablers of international organizations to establish a network for citizen monitoring that will regulate media coverage across the region.
- working with the National Commission for Communications and Media to campaign for the establishment of an independent watchdog group (USIP 2009).

Between 2003 and 2020, there were two primary approaches to peacebuilding in Iraq. Between 2003 and 2017, the prevailing peacebuilding method was 'liberal peace', which stated that Iraq should follow liberal standardized universal ideals to become a peaceful state with a highly qualified society capable of peaceful coexistence. This has been criticized as a means of legitimizing the interventions. By that time, however, the vocabulary had shifted from 'liberal peace' to 'adapted peace' and 'stable society' (Ali 2021). Besides, finding qualified and unbiased media that contribute to transitional justice conceptions, public opinion, and media practice settings, as well as other techniques in Iraq, is an important strategy for the process of peacebuilding for the stage after ISIS (Muntasser and Adel 2019).


THE USAGE OF REGIONAL ARAB MEDIA IN IRAQ FOR PEACEBUILDING

Iraqis suggested that, based on the agendas of these sources, the regional Arab media cover Iraq's issues. Even though many of the pan-Arab satellite networks have journalists in Iraq, according to some Iraqi media professionals, the ownership of such channels decides the content. The main example was the difference between the coverage of violence in Iraq and the relative success of the provincial elections. For some regional media outlets, violence is always the lead story; alongside covering violence, journalists can cover stories on peace and coexistence in Iraq (EPLO 2014, 3-4). Media organizations and staff involve local players who are or could be mobilized to promote dialogue as part of reconciliation and peacebuilding processes. With the 2003 war, media availability in Iraq changed dramatically. Information options were restricted before 2003: newspapers, radio, and TV stations were owned by the state, and only Ba'ath Party elites could access satellite TV and the internet. Over a hundred newspapers appeared after the war, representing political parties that adopted everything from communist to Kurdish nationalist to Islamist ideologies (EPLO 2014, 3-4). The war has driven more than 13 million Syrians and 3.5 million Iraqis from their homes. There are desperate needs for medical, psychological, and social care for millions suffering from accidents and trauma.

Hence, social media outlets can do a better job of helping displaced people in the country and the peacebuilding process (Dusek and Kairouz 2018).

CONCLUSION

After the collapse of ISIS in 2017, the process of peacebuilding and coexistence in Iraq has challenged numerous complications, and the most prominent of them are the difficulties that have been addressed in this study. The primary and most critical question of national identity is that it has given rise to real barriers, such as corruption, lack of democracy, and covering Iraqi, regional and international media is a silent factor as well. The media organizations in Iraq need to focus more on the process of rebuilding peace among minorities which their cities were destroyed by the ISIS war, particularly Mosul, and the Iraqi media needs to have a strategy to work on rebuilding peace and coexistence among nationalities and different religions believers in Iraq in general and in the postwar territories, to become a factor in spreading peace and coexistence between different nations and religions in Iraq. The media can also monitor and criticize the process of rebuilding postwar peace from 2014 to 2017 among the Iraqis. Regional and foreign media organizations can also play a role in spreading the message of peace, and the coexistence of different minorities and religions in Iraq after the ISIS war.

The media, which can play a role in spreading violence, can also play a role in spreading peace and the process of rebuilding peace in postwar countries, particularly in countries similar to Iraq, where there are various minorities with national, religious, cultural, and ideological differences who have been in conflicts since Iraq's establishment in 1921. Since most media outlets in Iraq are held by the government, political parties, and religious groups, new technologies, and social media can be utilized to affect the peacebuilding process in Iraq. 

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