



MEDIA FRAMING ON SOMALIA DURING THE  
EARLY PERIOD OF STATE-BUILDING: A  
COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF *GAROWE  
ONLINE* AND *DAILY NATION*

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to find out how media framing on Somalia during the early period of state-building was represented by local and regional newspapers based on the framing theory. The study employed two online newspapers (*Garowe Online (GO)* of Somalia and *Daily Nation (DN)* of Kenya). A total of 223 news stories were collected for a period of three months (1/08 – 31/10/2012). The method used in this study was qualitative content analysis in nature to produce in-depth understanding even beyond the concepts. The findings have shown different aspects between the two newspapers. With regard to *Garowe Online (GO)*, the results indicate that its framing nature of Somalia was positively framed while *Daily Nation (DN)* portrayed negatively. The most framed issues were violence and democratic process and both GO and DN was almost similar in coverage despite the different scale in their stories. Furthermore, the sources referenced by GO and DN were largely different. For GO, the newspaper depended mostly on civilian sources, own reports and military sources while DN prioritized military sources first, News Agencies second and finally, its own reports. The study has concluded that three facts are rooted in these differences: 1) national interest, 2) economic interest and 3) editorial policy. Thus, despite the chaotic situation in Somalia, the local media framing on Somalia was positive which opposes the exposure of international and regional media framing on Somalian issues.

## ملخص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تأطير وسائل الإعلام المحلية والإقليمية للصومال خلال مرحلة بناء الدولة وذلك بناء على نظرية التأطير الإعلامي. اختارت الدراسة تحليل صحيفتين إلكترونيتين وهما: جروي أونلاين (*Garowe Online*) الصومالية، وديلي نيشن (*Daily Nation*) الكينية. لقد تم جمع 223 قصة خبرية خلال ثلاثة أشهر من العام 2012 (أغسطس-أكتوبر). استخدمت هذه الدراسة منهج البحث الكيفي (تحليل المحتوى) لإعطاء فهم عميق للقضايا بعيدا على السطحية حول المفاهيم. ولقد أظهرت النتائج اختلافات بين الصحيفتين. أما فيما يتعلق بجروي أونلاين، أظهرت النتائج أن أسلوب التأطير الإعلامي في هذه الصحيفة كان إيجابيا، بينما كان سلبيا في صحيفة ديلي نيشن. وكانت أكثر القضايا تأطيرا في كلتي الصحيفتين هما: العنف، والعملية الديمقراطية، ولكن الاختلاف الرئيسي كان من حيث مصادر الأخبار، حيث اعتمدت صحيفة جروي أونلاين على المصادر المدنية والعسكرية ومصادرها الخاصة، مثل: المخبرين الصحفيين، بينما أعطت صحيفة ديلي نيشن الأولوية الأولى للمصادر العسكرية أولا، ثم وكالات الأنباء، ثم مصادرها الخاصة. تلخص الدراسة في ثلاث حقائق أدت إلى تلك الاختلافات: المصلحة الوطنية، المصلحة الاقتصادية والسياسة التحريرية. لذلك، على الرغم من الحالة الفوضوية في الصومال، إلا أن الإعلام المحلي يقوم بتأطير قضايا الوطن بصورة إيجابية، والتي تختلف تماما عن تأطير الإعلام العالمي والإقليمي لقضايا الصومال.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion; it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Science (Communication).

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Human Science

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where others stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Abdikarim Barqadle Igale

Signature .....

Date .....

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*This work is dedicated to:*

- *To my parents: my mother, Fatima Adam Warsame and my father, Barqadle Igale Ali who have been and still are the roadmap and safe boat of my life.*
- *To my wife - Kos Mohamed and my babies, Mohamed and Mawaddah who have been the axis of my energy, endurance, resilience, resistance, strength, determination and stamina during this study.*
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*Without your courage and Duas, I could not achieve my dreams .....*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Mass media is the gateway of information for every society; the media frame news to create impact on readers' perception of reality and truth (Shoemaker, 1996). Luhmann (2000, p. 1) argues that "whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media".

The term 'media framing', as revealed by Kendall (2011), illustrates "the process by which the media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television networks and stations, and the Internet) package information and entertainment before presenting it to an audience." (p. 8).

Simply put, in framing news, the media propose and suggest how an idea, issue or personality should be 'seen' by readers (Tetteh, 2011). The media 'define' the truth for readers (Close, 2011). In this regard, they often 'misrepresent' the 'truth'.

According to Machira (2012), the portrayal of Africa by and large in the Western media is all about misrepresentation. This negative framing is attributed to "biased, unbalanced and subjective reporting, or is a consequence of a new way of perceiving reality where few corporate giants are creating commercialized representations of Africa in order to maintain their own businesses and ideological agendas" (Machira, 2012, p. 6). As revealed by Ebo (1992 cited in Njogu & Middleton, 2009, p. 78), the rationale behind Africa's negligence and/or negative framing by the Western media is deliberate and systematic. The fact is that African images are always presented in the negative, weird, awkward, bizarre and unfamiliar

perspectives (Machira, 2012, p. 6). Meanwhile, since the fall of the Somali central government in 1991, news about Somalia are often being framed within the context of “civil war, state collapse, international intervention, humanitarian crises, failed peace agreements, piracy and terrorism” (Brandwein, 2011, p. 53).

Historically, the American media are very active in reporting about Somalia. Kareithi and Kariithi (2008) observe that Somalia received more coverage in the US media during the US led mission in Somalia in 1992. The coverage given was much more than the Congo crisis of the 1960s, South Africa during the height of apartheid and Nigerian civil war in the early 1970s. Both authors argue that the American news coverage on Somalia in the 12 months of 1992-1993 had little to do with the mission itself and also the existing reality in the predicament faced by the Somali society and how it was addressed (p. 3).

Harper (2012) notes that the dominant global image of Somalia was greatly presented in the Hollywood movie *Black Hawk Down* released in 2001. The film narrates how militiamen affiliated to General Mohamed Farah Aideed (a former General of Somali National Army) killed 18 US soldiers in Mogadishu after shooting down two US Black Hawk helicopters in 1993. The incident had a negative impact on Americans after seeing their soldiers being dragged naked in the streets by crowds of jeering Somalis (Brandwein, 2011, p. 53) following which US troops began to withdraw completely from Somalia that ended in March 1994 (Moller, 2009, p. 12).

After US troop's withdrawal, the problem of political chaos in Somalia continued to rise with ambition to form a powerful functioning government. With the help of international community, some unsuccessful reconciliation meetings were organized outside Somalia which resulted in the formation of some transitional regimes.

During that period of transition (1991 – 2012), Somalia was often framed as a failed state, a safe haven for Al-Qaida, and later as sea-piracy hideouts. Waldo (2009) argues that such presentation is an issue of misrepresentation.

Whatever the disagreement may be, a study on news and features on Somalia published by New York Times (NYT) and Allafrikan.com during the period of 2000 – 2010 showed the following frames: civil war, humanitarian crises, local peace-building efforts, warlords, terrorism/Al-Qaeda, piracy, natural disasters, Islamic insurgency, peace talks/agreements and peacekeeping missions. However, the two sources were different in the degree of salience of the issues framed. Terrorism or al-Qaida frame was the most referred frame item portrayed by NYT with 45% while Allafrikan.com web posted it 16% of that item. The other popular frames used by NYT were civil war or peacekeeping operations and humanitarian crises. Only natural disaster was equally framed by both sources with 8% each. For the formation of Somali transitional Federal Government, the African sources had a tendency to refer to peace-building process while no change was shown in this frame by NYT (Brandwein, 2011, p. 56).

In sum, since 1991, news about Somalia are framed and packaged in the context of civil war, terrorism, piracy, famine and natural calamities (Brandwein, 2011; Osman, 2012). Such packages of stories had become barriers to other ways of seeing Somalia (Harper, 2012). In this relation, this study focuses on how *Garowe Online* and *Daily Nation* cover, frame and represent Somalia's state-building. *Garowe Online* is the only independent online newspaper that specializes in publishing Somali news. The newspaper is run by Somalis. *Daily Nation* is the regional newspaper from Kenya. The newspaper is said to be an independent newspaper and most probably influential in Kenya. For this study, *Daily Nation's* online version is used.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Since the collapse of the Somali central government in 1991, the dominant framing of Somalia's images in news media was much related to negative framing such as describing Somalia as failed state and a failed society. Terms such as 'hunger', 'piracy and corruption' and 'terrorism' have been perfect metaphors for Somalia (Brandwein, 2011; Osman, 2012). These images are not the complete reality in the societal life of Somalia although it is part of the picture (Harper, 2012).

Between 1 August, 2012 – 31 October, 2012 many changes had taken place in Somalia including the formation of the Federal government, the signing of the first draft of a new constitution, the selection of Parliament members from various tribes and clans, and holding parliamentary and presidential elections. The events had been widely covered in Somalia's and regional newspapers. During this period of time, issues related to Kenya's intervention in the life of Somalis continued to be an issue. Since 2003, Kenya has played an important role in leading reconciliation efforts in Somalia. Indeed, Kenya is a key regional political player in the Horn of Africa. Thus, news coming out of Kenya on Somalia has an impact on outsiders framing the country. Similarly, issues related to Alshabaab, a group that aims to establish an Islamic State in Somalia, are also made available.

Having said all the above, my statement of problem reads as follows: in what ways Somalia's newspaper namely, *Garowe Online* and the regional newspaper, *Daily Nation*, framed, represented and constructed the reality about Somalia during the period of nation building.

As such, it is interesting to see how local and regional newspapers in particular *Garowe Online* and *Daily Nation* present, frame and construct those mentioned events. The date examined starts from 1 August, 2012 until 31 October, 2012.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The findings are focused on answering the following research questions:

**RQ1.** What are the framed issues presented by *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* on Somalia during the early period of state-building?

**RQ2.** What is the framed nature of news coverage by both *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* newspapers on Somalia during the early period of state-building?

**RQ3.** What are the sources that *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* depended on when they framed news on Somalia during the early period of state-building?

**RQ4.** What are the similarities and differences on reporting/framing on Somalia in *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* during the early period of state-building?

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to find out how the *Daily Nation* of Kenya and *Garowe Online* of Somalia comparatively framed news on Somalia during the early period of state-building, starting from 1 August, 2012 until 31 October, 2012.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the framed issues presented by *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* during the early period of state-building in Somalia.
2. To identify the framed nature of *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* newspapers' reporting of Somalia during the early period of state-building.
3. To know the sources used by both newspapers in framing news on Somalia during the early period of state-building.
4. To assess the similarities and differences between *Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online* newspapers in framing news in Somalia during the early period of state-building.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study attempts to provide beneficial information on how *Garowe Online* and *Daily Nation* framed news on Somalia during the early period of state-building.

An understanding of the media's coverage both locally and regionally on Somalia's state-construction will assist readers and academicians to reach preliminary conclusion on the direction of local and regional newspapers when it comes to "us and others" issues. It further helps the academicians continue researching on the same topic to discover the positive and/or negative impacts in the coverage of a country over a long-term period.

## **CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION**

- a. **Somali state-building:** Somalia's state-building refers to the construction of Somalia's Federal government in 2012 with the participation of most Somali elders after which they selected Members of Parliaments and elected the President.
- b. **The economic frame** is defined as issues which are related to costs and benefits in financial terms (Neuman et al., 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).
- c. **The human impact frame** is defined as event presentation in which groups or persons who are victims appear as details to the issue under debate, (Neuman et al., 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).
- d. **Daily Nation:** *Daily Nation* is Kenyan independent newspaper and probably the most influential newspaper in Kenya.
- e. **Garowe Online:** *Garowe Online* newspaper is the only independent online newspaper so far that specializes in publishing news on Somalia. It is

published in Somali and English languages. It was established in 2004 in Garowe city, the regional capital of the autonomous region of Puntland – the eastern region of Somalia.

Both newspapers (*Daily Nation* and *Garowe Online*) were selected for study to gain wider data that can provide various views on Somali news.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter addresses the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the research objectives and the significance of the study. The key concepts employed in the study include Somali state-building, conflict frame, human impact frame, economic frame, the *Garowe Online* and *Daily Nation*.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is categorized into two main issues. The first part addresses the Somalian and the Kenyan media systems. The second part focuses on framing theory related to the research.

#### **The Media System in Somalia**

It is essential to divide the explanation on Somalia's media environment into two sections. The first part covers the period from Independence 1960 until the collapse of the Somali central government in 1991 and second section covers the aftermath of 1991. During the first period, Somali media landscape was no different from the media situations in other African countries (Skjerdal, 2011); the print media were rather weak. The tendency of media endeavours was mainly related to national approach in style and practice (p. 33). Under the military government (1969–1991), media freedom had been banned throughout Somalia. During this period, the media were fully controlled by the government via the Ministry of Information and national guidance. Only one daily newspaper, October Star, was allowed to publish. The newspaper had editions in four languages: Somali, Arabic, Italian and English. From time to time, the Somali national news agency (SONNA) distributed press reports to international news agencies (BBC WST, 2011, p. 19).

After the downfall of the military rule in 1991, Somalia was fractured into three zones or autonomous regions; 1) South and central Somalia – where the capital