

# UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCH TOPIC:

W THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN  
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: A CASE  
STUDY OF RWANDA AND BURUNDI  
1990-2000

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## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the media's role in conflict management. It examines various views by scholars on their perception of the media's contribution in conflict management. What comes out clearly is that the media is an important factor for good and for ill in conflict management as it plays the roles of both an agent for or against conflict and its resolution.

The Rwanda and Burundi conflicts in the year 1990-2000 are the case study of this research. The research examines in particular the radio as the most powerful medium in most of African countries where the majority of the people are illiterate and too poor to afford television. It concludes that the radio was the major media outlet during the conflicts and in particular the National Radio Rwanda as well as the Radio Television Libres des Mille Collines( RTML).

The research also reveals that there are serious misgivings by the society over the behaviour of the media outlets particularly during conflicts due to their role in escalation and expects the media to be part and parcel of conflict resolutions by creating an environment of peaceful co-existence. In this a number of recommendations have been suggested on what the media should do to play the positive role.

The study also brings out the fact that media as an active actor in conflict management is a young phenomenon and its intervention in conflict however is still in its adolescence. This has been revealed by the lack in depth research in this field as well as lack of synergy between conflict managers and the media managers. The study therefore recommends that the media's role therefore needs to be established and integrated in conflict management strategies both at the regional level as well as internationally.

In conclusion the study brings out the fact that if concrete measures and strategies are put in place by the conflict managers as well as by the international community on how media should act in conflict situations, the media can be an effective tool for sending messages about peace, democracy, ethnic tolerance and methods of alternative conflict resolution. On the other hand if these measures are not affected, the media will continuously contribute to the worsening of existing tensions between and within countries by whipping up nationalistic feelings and ethnic hatred leading to a repeat of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.