

Nexus of conflict reporting: Analysis of Cameroon newspaper coverage of cross border conflicts

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ABSTRACT

The conflicts taking place in the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria and Gabon have raised security concerns for West and Central Africa and have consequently caused a humanitarian crisis, human rights and health concerns for the both regions. This article seeks to understand how the Cameroon print media has contributed to informing and educating citizens of Cameroon about the ongoing cross border conflicts. The Post Newspaper and Cameroon Tribune from July 2014 to December 2014 were content analyzed to examine the level of prominence, the angle and proximity of the stories covered on the said cross border conflicts. Findings reveal that the coverage of these conflicts by Cameroon Tribune and the Post Newspaper focused on the Cameroon Government's intervention in the cross border conflict (27.0%) and on the perpetrators of the conflict (21.4%). This is indicative of more military focused and immediate action reporting than on the widespread and more englobing humanitarian cost of conflicts.

Key words: Conflict reporting, Cameroon, newspaper coverage, border conflicts

RESUMÉ

Les conflits qui ont eu lieu en République centrafricaine, au Tchad, au Nigéria et au Gabon ont soulevé des problèmes de sécurité pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre et ont par conséquent causé une crise humanitaire, des droits humains et des problèmes de santé pour les deux régions. Cet article cherche à comprendre comment la presse écrite du Cameroun a contribué à informer et à éduquer les citoyens du Cameroun sur les conflits transfrontaliers en cours. Les journaux The Post Newspaper et Cameroon Tribune de juillet 2014 à décembre 2014 ont été analysés pour examiner le niveau de proéminence, l'angle et la proximité des couvertures médiatiques desdits conflits transfrontaliers. Les résultats révèlent que la couverture de ces conflits par le Cameroon Tribune et The Post Newspaper a porté sur l'intervention du gouvernement camerounais dans le conflit transfrontalier à hauteur de (27,0%) et sur les commanditaires du conflit à hauteur de (21,4%). Cela est révélateur de rapports plus axés sur l'action militaire et l'action de la couverture immédiate que sur le coût humanitaire généralisé et englobant des conflits.

Mots clés: rapport sur les conflits, Cameroun, couverture des journaux, conflits transfrontaliers

Introduction

For almost a decade, most countries bordering Cameroon have been engaged in ongoing internal conflicts that sometimes impact on Cameroon. The countries concerned are the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria and Niger. The said conflicts have raised security concerns for West and Central Africa Regions as well as caused humanitarian crises, human rights issues and health concerns. They have been the subject of a few studies on conflict management and peace building within the region (Onuoha, 2014, Edeani, 1994).

These conflicts have also pushed the Cameroon Government and the attention of the Cameroonian public to ponder on the consequences of the violence on the livelihoods and security of Cameroonians. People are interested in knowing what is happening in the areas where fighting is ongoing and how this will affect their lives and those of their friends and families.

An understanding of how the media angles stories on conflicts may bring about the resolution or amplification of conflicts (Udomisor, 2013). Consequently, it is in the interest of the public that the media should disseminate information that is balanced. Such information should empower audiences to make informed decisions about the conflicts and the impact that they are having on the political, economic and social health of the countries within the affected areas and the lives of the citizens therein. Conflicts have wide effects across publics that might have convergent or divergent views about the problems. Thus, the onus is on the media to harmonize thoughts and action amongst the publics through insightful reporting.

The history of conflicts in countries bordering Cameroon is a long one. Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) are two countries that have been riddled by political strife, coups and counter coups from their days of independence (Giroux, Lanz

& Squaitamatti 2009). This has generated a discourse of regional conflict whereby security threats can travel across space (Buzan & Waeber 2003; Lake & Morgan 1997). Similarly, Wallensteen and Sollenber (1998) examined regional conflicts based on the experiences of neighboring countries in relation to cross border crises.

Boko Haram (2009) and Seleka are some of the neighbouring conflicts that have threatened Cameroons peace over the years. The name Boko-Haram can be traced to the Hausa word BOKO which means "Animist", Western or Non Islamic education and the Arabic word HARAM that figuratively means "sin" or "forbidden" (Dauda, 2014). The late Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf as a dissenting force to the political, economic and social realities pitting the Nigerian Muslim North to the Christian or animist south founded Boko Haram in Maiduguri in 2002. Boko Haram rejected the legitimacy of the secular state which they described as being evil and unworthy to their allegiance (Pham, 2012). The group also exploited the fact that the northern part of the country was relatively poorer than the South and from that framed accusations of neglect against the National Government that was presented in their messages as being corrupt and indifferent to the plight of the North. The group's initial attacks against the symbols of the Nigerian State and security forces took place in 2003 when they attacked and killed policemen. However the National Security forces repelled these attacks therein forcing Boko Haram to regroup and move their base to Kanamma (Yobe State) where they hoisted the TALIBAN flag over their encampment and dubbed the place "Afghanistan" in 2004 (Dauda, 2014; Pham, 2012). Boko Haram has escalated its attacks at various Nigerian targets since 2011 and is currently taking punitive incursions into countries like Cameroon, Niger and Chad that are seen to

be members of the international coalition against the extremist Islamic movement.

SELEKA on the other hand is a coalition of Muslim forces from the North of the Central African Republic (CAR). This coalition overthrew Mr. Bozize who was the President of the country from 2003 to 2013 and replaced him with Michel Djotodia. Regrettably the overthrow of Bozize's government and the arrival of Djotodia as the president of the CAR set the stage for more strife in the war ravished country (Zoumara & Ibrahim, 2014).

On taking power, the SELEKA brought in extremist Muslims from Chad and the Sudan to join them in their desire to cleanse the CAR of the presence of Christians and animist tribes. It was even reported that they killed many people and forced others to join their forces (Human Right Watch, 2013). Weak as he turned out to be, Djotodia lost control over his forces and was incapable in his capacity as the President of CAR to protect all its citizens. The SELEKA looted and killed those who tried to stand up to them. The bloodshed and reckless demeanour motivated Southerners, Christians and animists in the CAR to come together and create a resistance force using the umbrella name ANTI BALAKA. The stage was now set for the bloody civil war that

has rocked the CAR. The ANTI BALAKA equally proved to be very ruthless and as they vented their vengeance on anything Muslim. The country was once more thrown into a pathetic state of decay. The fighting led to more refugees moving into Chad and Cameroon thereby creating a humanitarian problem.

The ongoing conflicts in countries bordering Cameroon are having quite a negative impact on the peace of the nation because the belligerent parties quite often transport their battles into Cameroon in cross border raids on retreating factions that use Cameroon as a fallback position (Moore, 2014). The displaced people could be foreigners fleeing from their countries to seek for shelter in Cameroon or internally displaced persons (IDPs) moving away from border areas exposed to cross border raids. Moreover irrespective of the fact that these displaced persons have run away from the affected areas, they sometimes find no haven of peace in Cameroon because the aggression will at times manifest itself right in Cameroon as it has been observed recently with suicide bombings that are currently taking in Maroua or the killing of Cameroonians near the borders with the Central African Republic.

Some Cross Border Raids in Cameroon Blamed on Boko Haram

Date	Incident	Remarks
19/02/2013	Seven members of the Tanguy Moulin-Fournier family kidnapped in Dabanga, Northern Cameroon	Released in April, 2013 in Nigeria in exchange for a \$3.15 million and the release of 16 Boko Haram prisoners in Cameroon
4/4/2014	Two Italian priests and a Canadian nun kidnapped in the North	Released nearly two months later
17/5/2014	1 soldier killed and 10 Chinese workers kidnapped in the town of Waza	Ten construction vehicles belonging to Chinese also taken

Source: Onuoha, 2014

According to a report on the CAR crises and its regional impact by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2014), Cameroon, alongside Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo are hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees. This places a burden on the finances of the nation because the refugees have to be fed, clothed, housed and given medical attention at the expense of the interests of Cameroon's citizens.

As what concerns the case of Nigeria, UNHCR has equally highlighted the fact that the BOKO HARAM crisis is forcing Nigerians to flee their country to find refuge in Cameroon. They have registered the presence of more than 19,000 Nigerians in Cameroon with more than 10,000 staying in villages in the Far North Region (UNHCR 2014). In sum, as of August 2014, the country was hosting more than 240,000 displaced people (UNHCR, 2015). Cameroon alone needs over \$54.8 million to manage its refugee problem. Though it receives financial aid from UNHCR, the resources are always in short supply. Moreover the financial assistance does not solve the problem of security if as it has sometimes been observed the refugee camps become hiding grounds for militants as well as targets for attacks.

The burden of managing refugees is not the only problem facing Cameroonians. The Government also has the obligation of defending its borders and citizens. Cameroon's efforts to contain Boko Haram have cost the country in money and lives. Soldiers have died during bouts of fighting and the government is spending millions of francs everyday to maintain a military presence specifically designated to fighting the insurgency in the Northern, Eastern and South Western Regions of Cameroon. There is a heightened sense of loss as parents witness more and more military deaths in border towns. A profession that once was regarded as an easy route to earning

income has become a nightmare. This outcome has resulted in a sharp decrease in the number of young people who want to sign up for the army and the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR).

The Nigerian and CAR conflicts have equally in kidnappings and deaths. Boko Haram, with the assistance of the ANSARU Group of Islamists Extremists operating within the Extreme North of Cameroon have kidnapped Cameroonians and Europeans whom they have used in negotiations for ransoms that sometimes get to billions of Francs CFA. As reported by Cameroon Tribune, Cameroon's National Daily, Boko Haram was responsible in 2013 for the kidnapping of seven French tourists (February 2013), the kidnapping of a French Priest (November 2013) and attacks on several Cameroonian villages in various parts of the North. In 2014, the Sect kidnapped ten Chinese workers from a construction site in Waza on May 16. This was complemented with the attack of Kolofata where the Chief of the village and the visiting wife of the Vice Prime Minister of the country were kidnapped. It is believed that about fifteen people died in this attack. Military sources reported that Boko Haram attacked Amchide (a town located at about sixty kilometers from Maroua) on December 17, 2014 with the outcome being the death of one soldier and 116 militants. They also attacked Makari, Amchide, Limani and Achigachia on December 27 and 28, 2014.

It should equally be noted that the disbanding of militia in the CAR left so many militia men with guns that they sell for a living. To that effect, Cameroon has become a fertile ground for arms trafficking. In 2013, AK 47 rifles (5,400) that were being smuggled to Nigeria through the long and porous borders between Nigeria and Cameroon were seized in Maroua by the Cameroonian military (IRIN, 2014). The guns were officially identified as coming from the Sudan and the CAR.

In view of the fact that the conflicts taking place in countries bordering Cameroon are having a huge impact on the lives of the state and those of its citizens, this study seeks to find out how the media has contributed in informing and educating Cameroonians about the conflicts. In this wise, we are interested in the level of prominence attributed to these conflicts by our media as reflected by the coverage in terms of quantity, type and position (placement) dissemination of story on the newspaper. The study equally seeks to examine the content of the stories to identify belligerent issues that are covered, who features in the story, the angle of reporting, the intensity of coverage and how human interest aspects of the war are covered

Methodology

Cameroon Tribune and The Post newspapers were content analysed in order to determine qualitatively and quantitatively the nature of media coverage on violent conflicts around Cameroon. According to Berelson (1952) content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Holsti (1968) says that it is any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages. Its uniqueness in comparing media content to the real world, describing communication content in relation to typography and layout of newspapers and magazines makes it an indispensable research method for this study (Walitzer et al, 1978).

The population of the study are issues of Cameroon Tribune The Post Newspaper from July 2014 to December 2014. Cameroon Tribune is a bilingual daily newspaper while The Post is a biweekly (Mondays and Fridays). Hence, in order to create a representative sample, issues of the various newspapers were stratified according to the days of the week, and since all the newspapers

published on Mondays and Fridays, issues were randomly selected within these two days. The population of the study constitute 2 issues x 4 (per month) x 6 months = 48 issues x 2 newspaper organs = 96 issues. Every story related to cross border conflicts was analysed for the study.

The period of July to December 2014 reflects the period of heightened conflict in both CAR between the Seleka and Anti Balaka factions as well as Boko Haram in Nigeria. This period saw massive influx of refugees from the CAR and kidnappings and attacks by Boko Haram in the North. Six persons were involved in coding data for the study hence increasing the inter-coder reliability. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and cross-tabulation and frequency distribution were used to analyse the data.

Presentation of Findings

The study effectively content analysed 96 issues of The Post and Cameroon Tribune newspapers. However, the findings are presented based on the number of articles on cross border conflicts that were reported in both newspapers. The objective was to attempt to decipher the newspapers' management of news in times of conflict.

Out of 126 stories analysed, 93 (73.8%) were full news stories. This indicates the importance attached to conflict issues reported in Cameroon Tribune and The Post newspapers. The fact that only 1 (0.8%) article was on Vox pop somehow represents the lack of public participation in media debates regarding conflicts around Cameroon's borders. This may be representative of a weak civil society that does not weigh in on issues of public concern or a weak media that does not have the capacity to include divergent voices in important issues at stake. The need for public opinion is very important in matters of conflict as government resources both human and financial are committed to such efforts and the choices that government

makes invariably affects the lives of all citizens. Furthermore, analysis reveals that out of the 126 stories analysed, 8 (6.3%) were interviews and news brief respectively with 7 (5.6%) on commentary/editorial. However, 6(4.8%) of the stories treated were columns while 3(2.4%) were feature stories.

Although a majority of the stories were placed at other pages 77(61.1%), the front page 19 (15.1%) and the middle page 25(19.8%) carried a significant number of stories indicative of the importance sometimes attached to conflict stories. The Post carried more front page stories 11(28.2%) than Cameroon Tribune (9.2%). Only Cameroon Tribune featured stories on its back page 5(5.7%). However, considering that The Front page, Middle and Back pages of newspapers

signifies prominence of stories, Cameroon Tribune on a general perspective treated cross border conflict stories with more prominence which is also apparent in their amount of coverage 87 (69.0%) on cross border conflict as opposed to The Post newspaper 39(31.0%). Furthermore, most of the stories were allotted 1/4 page (49.2%), followed by a heavy coverage of 3/4 pages (23.8%). This shows the relevance attached to issues of cross border conflicts by the Cameroon print media. The media's role to inform, educate and to act as a tool for surveillance is therefore evident through coverage and the prominence given to conflict issues.

Data on Table 2 suggest that newspaper coverage by Cameroon Tribune and the Post newspaper of conflict around Cameroon's borders was mainly focused on government's intervention in the cross

Table 1: Prominence of Articles on Cross Border Conflict

Name of Newspaper	Placement of Articles				Total
	Front Page	Middle Page	Back Page	Other Pages	
Cameroon Tribune	8 (9.20%)	17 (19.5%)	5 (5.7%)	57(65.5%)	87(100%)
The Post	11(28.2.%)	8 (20.5%)	0 (0.0%)	20(51.3%)	39(100 %)
Total	19 (15.1%)	25 (19.8%)	5(4.0%)	77 (61.1%)	126(100%)

Table 2: Angle of Coverage of Cross Border Conflicts

Name of Newspaper	Angle of Article							Total
	Cause of violent conflict	Perpetrators of conflict (boko haram/ selesa)	Government intervention	Impact (economic, political...)	International intervention	Victims of conflict	Conflict resolution	
Cameroon Tribune	4 (5.0%)	17(19.5%)	24(27.6%)	3(3.4%)	17(19.5%)	10(11.5%)	12(13.5%)	87(100%)
The Post	3(7.8%)	10(25.6%)	10(25.6%)	2(5.1%)	2 (5.1%)	9(23.0%)	3(7.8%)	39(100%)
Total	7(5.5%)/	27(21.4%)/	34(27%)/	5(4%)	19(15.1%)/	19(15.1%)/	15(11.9%)/	126(100%)

border conflict (27.4%) and on the perpetrators of the conflict (21. %). While Cameroon Tribune focused more on government intervention (27.6), The Post Newspaper awarded equal coverage to government and perpetrators (10.6%). Recognised as a haven of peace, the heavy coverage of government intervention is indicative of broader security concerns in the face of

potential outbreak of violence within the territory. It also shows that the government has increased its surveillance of the territory thereby accounting for the majority coverage on Government of Cameroon intervention. Notwithstanding, there is a degree of courtesy demanded by the government from the media in reporting issues in times of conflict. Hence, Journalists and media

houses have been given injunctions to avoid publishing or broadcasting any information that endorses the acts of Boko Haram or promotes their ideology. This may account for the fact that print media coverage on cross border conflict is centred mainly on Government counter strategy (30.8%) as well as civilian casualty -death, refugee, property loss, rape (26.9%) and humanitarian intervention strategies (21.8%). Terrorist casualty 18(11.5%), local military casualty 12(7.7%) and international military casualty 2(1.3%) were the least treated issues in the newspapers. Therefore, following newspaper reports of The Post and Cameroon Tribune, one could conclude that between July to December 2014, Cameroon suffered very little loss in terms of human resources during its interventions in cross border conflicts and that the terrorists recorded more casualty rates.

Table 3: Rank Order of Proximity of Impact of Cross Border Conflict

Impact	Frequency (%)
Security	57 (52.3%)
Local politics	18 (16.5%)
Foreign Policy	16 (14.7%)
Financial	9 (8.3%)
Religious	4 (3.7%)
Health	3 (2.8%)
Culture	2 (1.8%)
Total	109 (100%)

A majority of the stories covered in Cameroon Tribune and The Post newspapers were directed towards security concerns (52.3%), followed by local politics (16.5%). These issues are of immediate concern as a result of the fact that Cameroon is directing huge parts of its budget to finance the war effort. The country is currently buying military hardware and recruiting more than 20,000 soldiers and 4700 policemen with the objective of reinforcing its military and surveillance capacities. Media coverage on cross border conflict in Cameroon is directed towards security since government effort is directed heavily on the safety of Cameroonians.

Notwithstanding, there are spillover effects of the crisis that affect culture (1.8%), health (2.8%) and religion (3.7%). These areas have been largely ignored irrespective of the heavy influx of refugees from the CAR, who approach our shores with religious biases that could negatively affect our hitherto peaceful religious coexistence. The impact of the country's financial commitment to cross border conflicts is also minimized (8.3%) irrespective of the fact that heavy sums that go to the military mean that other sectors including health, education and other social amenities will suffer neglect and reduced government spending. Reporting of the impact of cross border conflicts is therefore skewed towards military and security issues, while ignoring the larger social consequences of the conflict.

Table 4: Pictorial Coverage on Cross Border Conflicts

Picture Focus	Frequency (%)
Personalities	57 (45.2%)
No picture	44 (34.9%)
Civilians	13 (10.3%)
Combat	6 (4.8%)
Terrorists	5 (4.0%)
Others	1 (0.8%)
Total	126 (100%)

Majority of the stories either carried pictures of personalities (45.2%) or had no pictures at all (34.9%). Only 5 (4.0%) stories contained images of the terrorists, 13 (10.3%) of civilians and 6 (4.8%) of actual combat. This is indicative of what is commonly referred to as 'armchair journalism'. It is evident from the data on Table 4 that Cameroon Tribune and The Post Newspapers were incapable of having pictures of actual events from the conflict sites. Based on evidence from international news reports, conflict stories are best accompanied by conflict pictures and not pictures of personalities far from the conflict site. It is also recognized that a picture is worth a thousand words, yet in their efforts to report the news on Cameroon's cross border conflicts, the two newspapers have failed to make use of this vital resource. The heavy use of personalities in the

photographs is also indicative of Cameroon's media history of personality news reporting. Rather than focus on what makes news, journalists have developed the tendency of focusing on personalities especially those in government.

Discussion

The Media and Conflict Reporting

While the BOKO HARAM and the CAR crises go on, the Cameroonian media as identified in its newspapers, radio stations and television channels, have tried to consistently provide the citizenry with updates on the fighting. Unfortunately, this coverage has been judged to be insufficient and incredible by some Cameroonians. The accusing fingers most often point to the State owned media that is mainly the CRTV and Cameroon Tribune.

Many people feel that the number of deaths reported in the ranks of the Cameroonian military are far from the true numbers. It has equally been observed that the private press has been unable to report on the exact numbers of military deaths ie when it comes to reporting on Cameroonian casualties. This shortcoming has raised suspicions in the minds of Cameroonians. Moreover the Cameroonian media have failed to report on the fact that our youths are now being recruited to join the various militias wherein they lead the attacks against their own country as reported by Yahoo News (2015). The question to be asked therefore is: How do people rate the performances of the media in conflict reporting? It could be said that, the increasing use of media in covering conflict around the world has highlighted more than ever the power of the media to misinform, disinform, or manipulate the citizenry about what really happens in the battlefields. Sometimes the reporting even ends up promoting the crises.

A review of the activities of Radio Mille Collines in the Rwandan crises, the recruitment of young people through the Internet to join terrorist groups all over the world and the use of social media to showcase terrorist acts and popularize terrorism, is evidence of the fact that the media are powerful weapons during conflicts (Nassanga, 2007). The existence of conflicts necessitates media presence, which by their nature are required to play specific roles (Puddephatt, 2006).

The coverage of international conflicts from Iraq to Afganistan, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, Nigeria and even America has revealed several sides to the coverage of conflicts by the media. Journalists are human beings and can emotionally be swayed to sympathise with one or the other faction that is engaged in a crisis. When this happens the reporting might end up being skewed. It is equally the case with a situation where for the protection of the national interest reporters are obliged to withhold information that they feel can embarrass the nation or cause insecurity. In such circumstances the journalist becomes an active participant in the conflicts and therein his coverage becomes a weapon targeting particular outcomes for particular vested interests (Puddephatt, 2006). Such biased coverage could derail peace efforts and thereby promote the violence it was supposed to curb. It has however been noted that international coverage of African conflicts often neglects the real needs of the people and rarely puts pressure on international community intervention. This is contrary to International media coverage of conflict in the Middle East, which according to Puddephatt (2006) has more often than not pushed the international community to intervene.

Clearly, there is a gap in scope and the intensity of coverage from international media. The question then arises as to how African media and in the case of this study, the Cameroon press

attempts to close this gap in the coverage of local conflict. What the coverage of terrorism both by international media and terrorist organizations has shown is that the media is a powerful platform for addressing issues. The terrorist group ISIS has effectively used social media to extend terrorism into the sitting rooms of most families across the world through the gory images of beheadings and other forms of destruction. They have also used this same platform to sell enticing messages to naïve young people, who have been convinced to join the insurgency. Though late in the game, Western governments are making more efforts to use this same platform in addition to traditional media to counter the messages from ISIS. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has mostly used the media to communicate threats to Cameroon and other neighbouring countries that belong to the coalition to fight against it. War and conflicts have therefore moved from the physical spaces where they are fought onto a virtual space, where there seems to be more at risk than had previously been supposed.

This has led to the recognition that the power of the media having been so well executed to provoke and sustain conflict, can also be used to resolve conflict. This recognition has however not provided the answer to conflict reporting as policy makers take decisions about conflict according to their political whims. Notwithstanding, Journalists are left to report on issues depending the news value. Deciding on what constitutes news or newsworthy depends on the values which are formed by traditions, technology, organizational policy and economics (Dominic, 1999). Tanjong (2012) questions media balance in Cameroon, a value for professional journalism practice, when he asserts that journalists are sometimes compelled by internal and external forces to provide the public with information made available by government functionaries and corporate interest groups. However, Tanjong

(2012) believes that balance is attained by presenting facts supported by evidence as well as by presenting “both sides” of an issue (p. 31) which is hardly the case in conflict reporting. Professional journalism practice also requires journalists to report events based on the value of timeliness (newness), proximity (closeness), prominence (importance), consequence (effect) and human interest (appeal). In times of conflict, events that affect a great number of people have great news value (Dominick, 1999). The overall picture presented by *The Post* and *Cameroon Tribune* newspapers is that beyond a few local military casualties, Cameroon has the upper hand in its intervention efforts in the cross border conflicts. Statistically, local military casualty is 7.7% compared to terrorist casualty of 11.5%. Though the difference is not much, however in terms of loss of life, it is very significant. The concern with the protection of life may be one of the major reasons why both newspapers focused on reporting security issues. Notwithstanding, the minimal reporting and analysis of other effects resulting from the war is indicative of negligence on the part of the newspaper organs as well as a lack of concern over issues that affect the day to day living of the general public. It would have been proper for newspapers to provide more in depth analysis of the humanitarian crises in terms of the cost of caring for refugees, the possible problems that could arise from heavily populated refugee camps such as disease outbreaks, increased violence against women and girls including rape, and how local populations can contribute to mitigate the spillover effects of cross border conflicts.

Also of importance for media coverage of the impact of cross border conflicts is the effect of military spending on other sectors of the economy. How is investment in agriculture, health, education and other social amenities affected by an increased spending in military equipment and warfare? How

does the government raise resources for such spending and why do generals and other top government officials stay quiet about military strategies that are intended to protect the general public? Such insightful reporting is what strengthens the media's surveillance function. They raise questions on issues of concern that may not be visible to the public at a given time.

Furthermore, focusing more on government intervention could also be interpreted to mean that the media was more interested in providing assurance to the public of the government's capacity to prevent the crisis from overflowing the borders and extending into its hitherto peaceful territory. Peace has been lauded as one of Cameroon's greatest achievements in a sub region rife with violence and conflict. It is the overriding theme of every government interaction and this is reflected in the focus of coverage in Cameroon Tribune and The Post Newspapers. From the angle of the story to the density of coverage and the degree of impact covered, majority of the stories are focused on security and government action.

Conclusion

The evident conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that Cameroon Tribune and The Post Newspapers, which represent some of the most widely read newspapers have not made significant efforts to present the total picture of the conflicts around Cameroon's national boundaries. Events of such magnitude that have gone on for a number of years, consumed significant financial resources and led to the loss of life and threatens the country's national sovereignty deserve more and better coverage than has been evidenced so far.

Based on the newspaper reports, security is visibly a priority area. Though true, there are other priority areas that could have been addressed and

developed by the newspapers. Issues relating to spending on social amenities, corruption in the public service that facilitates arms trafficking through the national territory, the exposure of local populations to imported diseases from refugees, the contributions of local populations to this humanitarian crisis and the mobilization of citizens towards a united war effort. These newspapers have left themselves open to accusations of biased reporting or incapacity in reporting cross border conflicts.

The heavy use of personalities in news reports also questions the validity of the stories they accompany. It would have been expected that Cameroon Tribune and The Post Newspapers send reporters to the areas where the conflict is ongoing in order to have eye-witness accounts of the conflict, suitable pictures that support the stories and factual accounts of military interventions and casualties. When it is left for ministers and government officials to say what the news is, the credibility of the newspaper is called to question.

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