

THE SIERRA LEONE CONFLICT: ITS POTRAYAL IN THE KENYA PRESS (APRIL-JUNE 2000)

**A Research Paper submitted to the School of Journalism, University of
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Graduate Diploma in Mass Communication**

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION**

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September 2000



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DECLARATION

We, the researchers, declare that this work is original and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of any qualification

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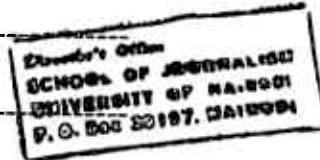
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DEDICATION

Mugo Edwin Wawcru wishes to dedicate this paper to mum, Patriciah Wairimu, dad, Davidson Mugo, the Atekus, relatives and friends led by Ann Akinyi for their moral and financial support throughout my Post Graduate Diploma in Mass Communication. Also I would not to forget my Cucu, the late Elizabeth Waringa whom I have fond memories of.

I, Christine Pekeshe, wish to dedicate this research to my beloved parents, Mary and Moses Pekeshe Chigogo whose great support and encouragement saw me through this Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication course.

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I cannot forget all my friends and relatives whose support enabled me realise my dream. May God richly bless you all. Amen.

Finally Mugo E. Waweru thanks Moses Araya of SoJ and good friends “out there” who responded to my call for educational funding. May God bless you abundantly.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

Sierra Leone has known virtually no peace for about 10 years now. The West African state has been embroiled in political turmoil ever since which has seen it sink into crises, one after the other.

American journalist, Robert Kaplan calls Sierra Leone a case study in lawlessness- owing to its overpopulation, migration, environmental degradation, economic instability, and the breakdown of social cohesion - "all which appear to render conflict in that country impervious to conventional methods of diplomacy."¹

The coverage of the Sierra Leone crisis in the period April-June 2000 when a host of peace keeping forces among them Kenyan were seized and held hostage by rebels led by, Foday Sankoh forms the subject of this study. It was also the period that, Sankoh who is largely blamed for sparking the country into civil war and who had engaged the 6,000 Unomsil forces (they later rose to 11,000) there in a stand-off was seized.

Unomsil moved into the country towards the end of 1999 to replace the Nigerian-led intervention (Ecomog) force that had moved in earlier under the auspices of the Economic Community of West Africa States (Ecowas). The UN peacekeepers were to oversee a cease-fire agreement supposed to end the bloody eight-year civil war.

The country that occupies 71,740 sq. km attained its independence from Britain in 1961. With about a dozen ethnic groups, Sierra Leone neighbours Liberia and Guinea.

Since independence, successive rulers bought loyalty of ethnically diverse strongmen who controlled resources, commanded authority of their own, and whose allegiance was needed for the effective exercise of power.

Concerned that strongmen could use state institutions to threaten their own hold on power, Sierra Leone's rulers weakened government bureaucracies and manipulated access to resources to undercut potential challengers.²

This in turn led to dissent, discontent and permeated unrest, coups and countercoups.

The slide to the current state can be traced way back to 1991 when Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the country's military and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took arms against the civilian government of President Joseph Momoh. The rebellion continued against Momo's successor, Captain Valentine Strasser who took over power in a coup an year later.

In January 1996, his deputy, Julius Maada Bio who promised to restore a civilian government after multi-party election, toppled Capt Strasser in a palace coup. This first multi-party election in 23 years were held in March of the same year and won by Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. Kabbah survived three coup attempts in his first year in office before he was eventually toppled by the military under Johnny Koroma and whom Sankoh went on to rally around.

It was in May 1997 that members of a junta assisted by RUF rebels seized power from Kabbah but about 10 months later in February, the rebels were routed out from the capital, Freetown by Ecomog, which duly returned Kabbah to power in March.

Sankoh who was in Nigeria at the time of the coup but urged the rebels to support the junta was extradited to Sierra Leone and sentenced to death. The rebels in turn threatened to "destroy every living thing in the country should anything happen to Sankoh" sparking widespread lawlessness countrywide.

The chaos was characterised by widespread terror perpetrated by RUF rebels against civilians opposed to them. The rebels are widely believed to have killed, raped and

maimed thousands of villagers through rampant torture as well as to have engaged in an orgy of looting.

The consequences were; fleeing of homes to neighbouring Guinea, especially by women and children, kidnappings, youths' failure to attend school, and fear on investing in the country.

The impasse brought the rebels and the government to the negotiation table with Sankoh and Kabbah signing a peace accord in July 1999 that provided for the rebels to have seats in parliament. Despite having four rebel ministers in cabinet as per agreement controlling Industry, Trade and Energy portfolios among others, the rebels refused the deployment of the UN peacekeepers to the eastern and diamond rich districts. This sparked a serious row that culminated in the hostilities that led to killings on both sides and holding hostage Unomsil members early this year.

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Control of a clandestine diamond and agricultural trade in mid 90s by the RUF fighters, sobels, rogue military commanders, and strongmen led the government of Strasser to hire Executive Outcomes, a marines outfit from South Africa. To date, EO who routed the rebels out of Freetown, trained local self-defence units (Kamajors) to replace the unreliable army have in conjunction with successive governments, foreign firms had privileged access to diamonds. Regrettably, EO protects only those who have money or power to award mining concessions; those that have neither quickly lose EO's protection.³

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflicts will always be a source of news, providing good copy for the media. Journalists reporting conflict have been known to fuel the problem rather than the reverse. A case in point is during the Rwanda Civil War of 1994 where the radio served to stir up feeling amongst the ethnic Hutu and Tutsi combatants.

The end result of *Radio Kangura* inciting the feuding groups in Rwanda was one of the worst genocides in human history. It is against this background that we wish to establish whether the portrayal of the Sierra Leonean conflict in the Kenyan press and specifically the *Nation* tallies with the role of the Press in conflict resolution and management. That is did journalists covering this crisis make combatants pick up more arms than look for peaceful solutions?

The Sierra Leone conflict saw a media blitz and particularly foreign. This study also tried to establish the sources of information on the conflict for the Kenyan reader.

Wars, bloodshed and death are the very substance which dominate front pages of and news bulletins in both the print and electronic media.⁴ Such initiatives as dialogue are usually never given mileage in coverage. What themes were highlighted by the Press and reported for the Kenyan readers were investigated.

The very presence of foreign mining firms among other international concerns in Sierra Leone is thought to have fueled the conflict. That foreign agencies covered much of the conflict for the world, the study tried to find out what approach (or angle) their stories adopted.

1.3 Justification

Conflicts abound in Africa. A host of countries in the continent have since their independence experienced civil strife at one time or another. Cases abound-Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Angola, Liberia-which have been embroiled in turmoil to date.

Back home in Kenya, we experienced tribal conflicts in the run up to the 1992 and 1997 general elections. Still inter and intra clan conflicts are on in parts of Eastern and North Eastern Provinces.

The study was chosen because it was felt that the media has a role to play in conflict resolution and management. Journalists could be agents of peace and understanding and through objective reporting set an agenda for resolving conflicts. It was therefore hoped that the study would provide an insight into conflict reporting.

The *Nation* was chosen because of its widest readership in the country. With a circulation of about 130,000 copies a day (for the daily) and 250,000 copies for the *Sunday Nation*, it beats the rest of the print media hands down.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The Sierra Leone conflict was and still is extensively covered by both the electronic and print media. However, our study was limited to the analysis in the print and specifically the *Nation*.

While appreciating that the conflict has been on for the last about ten years, the study is limited to cover a period of three months-April, May and June 2000-only. This was the period Unomsil moved into the country to enforce the peace agreement between RUF leader Sankoh and the government of President Kabbah.

1.5 Operationalisation

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines conflict as a fight, struggle, quarrel, opposition or difference of opinion or desires.

In our study, conflict referred to serious contest or dispute involving two or more parties that may or may not have resulted into a clash or violence.

Conflict resolution (and management) refers to any initiative to solve or lessen the conflict.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Literature Review

In this literature review, we seek to identify different academic perspectives on the role of the media in the society, and specifically in the coverage of conflicts. We also want to find out the effects of messages communicated to the society by the media.

We would like to look at the emphasis the press gives to conflict stories and the balance and constructiveness of the stories published.

Dr David O. Edeani, an Associate Professor in the department of Mass Communication, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria poses an important question relevant to the role the media play in covering conflicts; Is the role of the Press that of a mirror, the conciliator, or shaper of issues and events in the society?

In a crisis situation when people's nerves and tempers are frayed leading highly charged social atmosphere the role of the media could be decisive in helping to escalate the crisis or assuage the tempers and bring them under control.

Nnamdi B. Emenyonu, says the Public Affairs reporter occupies a strategic position in conflict resolution.

“The first of two contributions he can make to the resolution of conflicts or the sustenance of peace would be to play down on explosive issues, unguarded coverage and ethnically prejudiced sentiments which easily spark off conflicts and wars within and between nations.”⁵

The second line of action, continues Emenyonu, should aim at denouncing the vectors of bloody internecine and international squabbles such as inordinate political ambition, domination and discrimination, marginalisation of people and denial of basic rights, among others.

Dan Edogbo Okolo, says the mass media are the main organs of mass enlightenment and entertainment and also the moulders of mass opinion and attitudes.

Agenda setting is the ability of the media to influence the public's perception of the important topics and issues of the day.

Communication scholars concur that the media has a powerful influence on what issues the public considers important.

William Blum (1972) for instance says that " The rapid rise of the mass media, their ambiguity and their potential influence have led many to wonder about the actual role they play in social life and behaviour. Some writers suggest that mass media are all powerful that they determine thought and action to a major degree."

Walter Lippman in 1922 saw the role of the press as forming " the pictures in our head" from the unseen world around us.

Since the media has great influence to their audience, there is need for them to be fair enough to represent all sides, and provide enough education by emphasizing substantive issues of social and economic development.

Most of the conflicts especially in Africa are as a result of political reasons. We agree with Dr Macharia Muncene who says a vibrant press is a very useful tool in propagating transparency, democracy, and good governance. Political reporters have a historic mandate to be champions of democracy through enlightened and objective reporting and analysis.

And quoting Kwame Nkrumah, Dennis L. Wilcox (1975) wrote: "...our revolution African press must present and carry forward our revolutionary purpose. This is to establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent that will free men from want and every form of social injustice and enable them to work out their social and cultural destinies in peace and at ease."⁶

The late President Jomo Kenyatta said the press should positively promote national development and growing self-respect. He said the press in Africa can have tremendous influence in nation building. It may constantly inspire, or could set out to frustrate the spirit of *harambee* (pulling together) or national unity which every young country needs as the fundamental of its progress.

The power of the press can have negative and disastrous consequences when abused. In 1966, for example, a radio broadcast apparently ignited the second massacre of the Ibo community in northern Nigeria. The broadcast, from a neighbouring country, reported the killing of I Hausa in eastern Nigeria by Ibo. The north retaliated on the basis of the broadcast.

When Tom Mboya was killed in 1969, the then *Voice of Kenya* broadcasting station did not report it right away because of fears such a report would incite Luo tribesmen (Mboya's tribe) to retaliate by killing Kikuyu who, it was thought had killed Mboya.

Dr Edcani has observed that in any conflict the role of the press is to highlight the goals of combatants and comment on the appropriateness of the goals. He says that the media could and does help set the agenda of issues pertaining to the conflict. The media could also contribute to resolving a conflict achieved through publishing statements of the combatants in a balanced way.

He believes that in order to make any meaningful suggestion of a sensitive complex conflict solution, a journalist needs to be sufficiently knowledgeable to understand economic, cultural, political and sometimes religious undercurrents fuelling the conflicts.

The paper seeks to see whether the *Nation's* coverage of the Sierra Leone conflict was in any way in line with finding peaceful resolution of the conflict.

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Balance in Press coverage of crisis and disputes, goes a long way towards convincing disputants and observers alike of fair and equitable treatment by the press, a conviction which may well play the role in the resolution of disputes.

It is not enough to dissect a conflict and criticize the contending parties in an editorial or commentary. It is, Dr Edcani says, very important to be able to proffer informed and plausible suggestions for the resolution of the conflict.

The coverage of conflict has its own constraints and hazards. A *Sunday Nation* Lifestyle Correspondent (August 6, 2000) says overseas writers and journalists "who have flocked in to report on conflicts in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe have made no pretensions about their inherent prejudices about Africa and Africans."⁶

The Correspondent goes on to say that the Western journalists in the conflict zones in Africa have been sent out very much in the way that troops sent by Western nations; to serve their countries' interests, "even if it means publishing heavily biased stories or downright lies."

This is corroborated by *Nation's* deputy news editor, Eric Shimoli who informed the researchers of his experiences in Sierra Leone. He revealed how British troops stationed themselves strategically in Freetown and Lungi airports to only help evacuate their nationals "rather than for genuine peacekeeping motive."

American journalist, Scott Peterson who covered Africa for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* in the 1990s observes in his book, *Me Against My Brothers* that peacekeeping missions have at times lost vision and end up viewing the very people they are protecting as no longer victims but enemies. He cites the Somalia debacle in which the American forces who were part of the UN peacekeepers pulled out before the conflict was resolved. This was after the Somalis turned against the soldiers after a US-led, UN ordered attack on the Somali clan elders which in reality targeted civilians without offering the prospect of concrete and direct military advantage.

A photographer and writer, Peterson exposes the dangers of covering conflict detailing how he nearly died from a mob attack on him led by an enraged lot of Somalis following the above UN attack. He was slashed on the head and only managed to escape death by lying he was British. That same day, in the much publicized incident, four journalists; Ilos Maina, Dan Eldon and Anthony Macharia, all Kenyans who worked with Reuters and AP's Press journalist from Germany, were beaten to death by angry Somali mobs.

And in Sierra Leone, President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in November 1998 announced a clampdown on unapproved press reports about the country's civil war, warning that "offending news outlets" would be punished "with the full force of the law."

The government statement on the declaration required that the Defence Ministry or Ecomog clear all press reports on the conflict against the rebel alliance. The latter then was performing security and national military functions throughout the country.

The aftermath of the decree was the charging with treason journalists from the government run broadcasting service, private media etc. This is purely a violation of freedom of the Press! The worst of the treatment of journalists came in killings of several foreign journalists even as late as this year. AP Cameraman, Myles Tierney was such an unlucky one when he was gunned down on January 10, 1999 as Ecomog troops attempted to bring calm to Sierra Leone.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Macomb and Shaw (1972) argued that the mass media set the agenda for each political, influencing the salience of attitudes towards the political issues. That is, the mass media predetermine what issues are regarded as particularly important at a given time.

Further Macomb and Gilbert (1986) went to say that a news value such as degree of conflict presented in a report becomes a major cue for the audience. That is the media through the quantity of reporting, editorial structuring and/ or media-specific presentation-prominence via headlines (placement), pictures, layout, angle of story etc-influence the path the audience will take on the issue.

During the hostage crisis involving Kenyan troops in Sierra Leone, the local media was awash with editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor etc arguing for and against recalling the troops. This saw the Parliamentary Defense Committee going on a fact-finding mission to Sierra Leone. This had a great deal of effect on the raging conflict in that the troops remained and went on to carry their peace keeping mission.

Social responsibility theory rests on the notion of a free press acting socially responsibly. Soubrette et al 1956 outline the functions of the Press in playing 'responsible' as informing to enable decision making, acting as watchdog, providing entertainment, serving the political and economic system as well as to preserving the financial autonomy.

Reports churned out by the media houses are subject to the whims of the various gatekeepers who restrict the volume of information, that is the selection of themes considered worth communicating. In a conflict as the Sierra Leone one, the "doormen" in the local as well as foreign media decided what occurrences became public occurrences and which did not. What they wrote helped shape the recipients' image of Sierra Leone and the conflict.

Michael Kunczik (1988) says every decision by the gatekeeper(s) to communicate certain themes implies suppression of another or several other themes. Reporters are an example of gatekeepers.

Sierra Leone has seen enough military government and with them reigns bordering on dictatorship. Press curbs are a common phenomenon in the country. Derived from the state philosophy of absolutism, authoritarian theory postulates that recognition of "the truth" is entrusted in only a small number of "sages". (Siebert et al (1956)). The Press is expected to advance government policy and serve the state, which is made possible through patents, licensing and censorship.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling Procedure

Single-stage sampling design will be employed in the research with all editions of both the *Daily* and *Sunday Nation* from April 1 to June 30, 2000 that is our sampling frame being examined. The period takes into account the one month before the hostage crisis and another after it was resolved. It was also during the period when Sankoh was held captive. The Sierra Leone conflict will be explored with the aim of gaining insight into the conflict vis a vis reportage in the Kenyan press. A quantitative measurement of coverage and qualitative analysis of the stories will be done.

The unit of analysis will be any story item reporting the Sierra Leone conflict.

3.2 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

A content analysis of 91 issues of the *Daily* and *Sunday Nation* in the three months will be conducted. Stories to be looked into are news, features, editorial, commentaries and profiles.

Their sources, angling, orientation and themes-political, military, diplomatic, economic and humanitarian-will be done. Coding cards will be used to record data in which tabular representation of the findings will be made for each of the three months.

Earl Babbie (1989) defines content analysis as a social research method appropriate for studying human communications. The method, he says, is used to study other aspects of social behaviour besides studying communication processes.

Babbie adds that in content analysis, researchers examine a class of social artifacts, typically written documents. Among the possible artifacts for study include newspapers, magazines speeches, and letters.

Garbner (1969) asserts it is important in the analysis of verbal data, which involves counting and sometimes casts results in tabular form. This concept can however be extended to analysis of written words and the space of the words that they occupy.

Edwin Emery et al (1970) on the other hand, says the analysis provides a vital clue to editor or writer's intentions and to the kind of audience, which a publication attracts. Combined with readership studies it gives clues to what people want to read about.

Babbie notes that content analysis also attempts to answer the classic question of communication research: "who says what, to whom, why, how and with what effect."⁷

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sources of Stories

Stories analysed appeared in both the *Daily Nation* and the *Sunday Nation* in the months of May and June. It is a fact that most news coverage in the region are sourced from the same international news agencies and wire services.

Stories appearing in the editions surveyed were sourced locally and from the main wire services namely; Reuters, Agence France de Press (AFP), Associated Press (AP), and Agencies. At least one story each came from DPA and IPS, but which were analysed in the "Agencies" category.

A total of 98 stories were published occupying a total of 2382cm. Locally sourced stories provided the bulk of coverage of the crisis by the *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation*. That is nearly half the number of stories and slightly over half the area of coverage.

The Agencies that came second had slightly over half the frequency of stories (45.92%) compared with the local sources but well below half in terms of space (53.82%).

AP came last with a paltry 4.08% number of stories, which again occupied the least space (5%).

Table 1: Sources of Stories

SOURCE	FREQUENCY	%	SPACE (cm)	%
Local	45	45.92	1282	53.82
Reuters	9	9.18	240	10.08
AFP	14	14.29	202	8.48
AP	4	4.08	119	5.00
Agencies	26	26.53	539	22.63
TOTAL	98	100	2382	100

4.2 Placement of Stories

How important the print media views a story is determined by its placement.

The Nation Media Group publishes sensational news and hard news reports on its page 1 and back page. National news go to pages 2, 3, 4, 5 while foreign news are published on pages 9,10 and 11 (for the Daily Nation) and pages 12 and 13 by the *Sunday Nation*.

Editorials, commentaries and cartoons are placed on page 6 while page 7 is reserved for the mailbox (letters to the editor) column.

Of the 98 stories, majority (40.82) were placed in the international pages-the traditional Around Africa and World News Background pages of the *Nation* and *Sunday Nation*. The stories in these pages also occupied most space (40.22%). Only about a fifth of the total stories were displayed most prominently on Page 1 and 2. Stories appearing on back pages were minimal, with a frequency of only 7.14% and space of a low of 5%, though the page is considered the second most prominent.

Surprisingly, though editorials, commentaries and mailbox are based on the most important topics at the time, the *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation* devoted less space for the same.

At only 12.24% occurrence and a total space of about 18%, coverage of the crisis in pages 6 and 7 is wanting bearing in mind the hostage crisis involving Kenyan troops continued for months!

Table 2: Placement of Stories

PAGE	FREQUENCY	%	SPACE (cm)	%
1 & 2 (Headline news)	20	20.41	536	22.50
3, 4, 5 (National news)	19	19.39	344	14.44
9, 10, 11, 13 (International news)	40	40.82	958	40.22
6 & 7 (OpEd & Mailbox)	12	12.24	425	17.84
Back Page	7	7.14	119	5.00
TOTAL	98	100	2382	100

4.3 News Orientation

The research analyzed stories appearing in the *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation* in three different categories in relation to conflict resolution and management.

Stories were classified positive if they caused combatants put down arms or if they attempted to bring warring parties to the negotiation table. They were termed negative if they were considered to fuel animosity between rebels on one hand and the peacekeepers and the Sierra Leone government on the other. Stories of the conflict that were objective, without injecting opinion were considered neutral.

The study shows that almost two-thirds of the stories in the *Daily Nation* and *Sunday Nation* between April and June, 2000 on the Sierra Leone conflict were objective. Only about a fifth (21.43%) of the stories were geared to bringing combatants together to seek peaceful resolution to the conflict. Stories that could have enhanced the conflict were fewest (16.33%).

Table 3: News Orientation

ORIENTATION	FREQUENCY	%
Positive	21	21.43
Negative	16	16.33
Neutral	61	62.24
TOTAL	98	100

4.4 Attribution of Stories

Though stories were sourced both locally and from the wire services, they were attributed to various parties to the conflict.

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The United Nations comprised mostly the Unamsil officers, UN officials, who included Secretary General, Kofi Annan. This represented about a third (31.63%) of the total attribution. Ecowas, the West African political block, which had earlier on sent a combined force of soldiers to Sierra Leone before the deployment of the UN peacekeepers had a minimum attribution of 2.04%.

The category Revolution United Front comprises attribution to rebel movement leader, Sankoh and his juniors. The study indicates that the Nation Media Group attached a lot of importance (nearly 20%) that is second only to UN, to RUF as a major player in the Sierra Leone conflict.

Governments attributions are taken to mean presidents of Sierra Leone, Ahmed Kabbah, Daniel Moi (Kenya), Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo) among others.

Table 4: Attribution of Stories

	FREQUENCY	%
UN	31	31.63
Kenyan Parliament	10	10.20
DoD	5	5.10
Ecowas	2	2.04
Governments	13	13.27
RUF	19	19.39
Others	18	18.37
TOTAL	98	100

4.5 Analysis of Themes

The study investigated the coverage of various themes on the Sierra Leone conflict in the period April-June 2000.

Regrettably the *Sunday Nation* and *Daily Nation* in the period under study chose to almost blackout the economic aspect of the war in Sierra Leone whereas the issue of exploitation of diamond mining among other private (foreign infact!) control of wealth is at the centre of the storm. The 98 issues of paper examined devoted only a mere 2.48% space in the only single article that addressed the controversial diamond industry.

Still appalling is the fact that stories on diplomatic efforts to end the conflict occupied just about 20% of coverage. This could have rendered the Kenya readers pessimistic about the likelihood of a peaceful settlement of the conflict between RUF and government or between RUF and the UN peacekeepers.

Most stories (31.67%) covered military conflict-war, actual engagement between the feuding groups-devoting an almost similar proportional space (32.83%). Political-Stories that reported sentiments by politicians came second in terms of space, with 26.74%. Though humanitarian stories almost tied in number with the politically inclined stories, the space allotted this category fell to a low of 18.43%.

Table 5: Themes

THEME	FREQUENCY	%	SPACE	%
Diplomatic	19	19.39	465	19.52
Political	24	24.49	637	26.74
Military	31	31.63	782	32.83
Humanitarian	23	23.47	439	18.43
Economic	1	1.02	59	2.48
TOTAL	98	100	2382	100

4.6 Analysis of Visuals

A total of 52 pieces of either photographs or illustrations were published in the period under study. The Nation Media Group used shocking but very effective pictures.

They could be classified as 22 humanitarian (42.31%), 19 military (36.54%), seven political (13.46%), four diplomatic (7.69%) and none stressed the economic theme.

The humanitarian category of picture themes were mostly of returning Kenyan soldiers who were injured during an encounter with RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, while a few others focussed on the plight of amputees. They too were victims of attacks by the RUF forces.

Photographs depicting military combat came second with a 35.54% frequency.

At least seven were mugshot pictures raging from Foday Sankoh's (two), President Moi's, General Mulinge's (two) to one of an amputee girl victim of the war in Sierra Leone. Gen Mulinge was the most senior soldier seized from the Kenyan contingent of peacekeepers.

Reuters had seven pictures attributed to it, AP 9, Nation Media Group 18, while seven were unaccredited. *Nation's* seven pictures focussed on local soldiers' plight as they returned from Sierra Leone badly injured. Three of the company's illustrations ridiculed RUF leader Foday Sankoh.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Both the *Daily* and *Sunday Nation* sourced majority stories from the wire services. The Group's staff and local contributors did only 45 out of 98 stories leaving the rest to western agencies-AP, Reuters and AFP.

The coverage however raised ethical issues when a Kenyan member of parliament, Dr Mukhisa Kituyi was accorded the privilege of contributing to a headline news article (June 4, Page 1 and 2) upon his return from a tour of Sierra Leone.

The study revealed that the *Nation* attached a lot of importance to the crisis going by the results of story placement. It actually dedicated a fifth of the stories to page 1 and 2 whereas it committed sizeable space to special reports, commentaries and analysis of the conflict.

The *Nation* failed miserably by not according economic issues the importance they deserved. That clandestine diamond mining and agricultural trade was only addressed in a single story, that is a commentary, leaves a lot to be desired. The issue covered only 59cm out of a total of 2382cm. Neither were issues to do with rampant unemployment, corruption political instability vis a vis foreign and local investment were not addressed too.

Coverage of humanitarian issues in Sierra Leone were also underrated coming second last among the various themes covered by the *Daily* and *Sunday Nation*. With only about 18% space devotion to this aspect, the coverage failed to address the case of the displaced persons in the country, some who fled to Guinea. Rampant thuggery, rape and killings were sidelined too for a moment as the *Nation* concentrated on military actions between combatants.

The coverage was also tilted against Foday Sankoh who was only looked at as the despot and ruthless killer. That his rebel militia perpetrated all manner of injustice to those opposed to them, the newspaper reports did not tell as what, why Sankoh took up arms as early as 1991.

The neglect of the country's youth majority of whom have been recruited into the country's military, the RUF or tribal armies (kamajors) rather than being educated while others have been engaged in drug peddling were not covered adequately.

The study revealed that no story was published on Sierra Leone by either the *Daily* or *Sunday Nation* in the month of April despite the fact that the peacekeeping mission had started in earnest in late 1999. It shows therefore that the papers woke up suddenly to the raging conflict only when the hostage crisis took effect. The first story over the period of study appeared in the *Daily Nation* of May 3.

Churning out stories from Sierra Leone by any journalists must have had its challenges and inherent biases on the part of individuals. What with the well known previous attempts at gagging the press and killings of journalists? This must have certainly interfered (to some degree) with their freedoms and objectivity.

All in all the coverage by the *Nation* was balanced and fair and helped manage the conflict. Positive stories outweighed the negative with 21 stories being positive and 16 negative out of a total 98. This could have contributed to the toning down of calls for the Kenyan peacekeepers to return home before the mission was over.

5.2 Recommendations

That the Sierra Leone conflict was mostly covered by western agencies is wanting especially considering that the western hand in the crisis cannot be ruled out. Western-based mining firms are known to have fuelled the war through their partnerships with the powers that be in government. It is therefore prudent that the local media should diversify news sourcing by utilising other existing foreign agencies like Xinhua of China.

Local reporters only visited Sierra Leone courtesy of the parliamentary committee's trip. It would make better coverage of conflicts in the continent if the local media engages own reporters there.

The press should in the coverage of conflicts report more on humanitarian aspects and diplomatic efforts which in the view of the researchers contribute more towards conflict resolution. The media should also step up coverage of positive aspects of the conflict which unlike negative stories does not fuel animosities.

The media in the event of conflicts must address itself fully to the root causes of the conflict. It is for example regrettable that the media under review failed to perform this role.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

During the course of study, the researchers established that certain constraints inhibit the work of journalists covering conflicts. They included press gagging, violence by feuding groups among others. It is therefore important that thorough research be carried out on what hurdles journalists encounter in their noble task of covering conflicts.

END NOTES

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