Two Conflicts, One Frame. A Comparative Analysis of Women's Representation in the Boko Haram vs Anglophone Conflict Reports

This article presents a comprehensive, mixed-methods analysis of print media representation of women during two distinct conflicts in Cameroon: the Boko Haram insurgency (2014–2021) in the Far North and the Anglophone Crisis (2017–2024) in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Drawing on a content analysis of 2,079 newspaper editions (N=139 specific articles with co-occurrence) and structured qualitative interviews with media editors, the study examines the prevalence of patriarchal framing across disparate conflicts. The findings, grounded in Social Constructionism and Feminist Theory, confirm a persistent hegemony of victimhood in the Cameroonian press. Media narratives consistently prioritise the roles of Victim (Gr=13,532), Caregiver (Gr=18,282), and Peacemaker (Gr=18,277), while systematically marginalising women's political, logistical, and military agency as Activists (Gr=793) or Combatants (Gr=603). Statistical analysis (PERMANOVA, p=0.001) confirms that the framing of women is significantly driven by internal editorial policies and patriarchal newsroom dynamics rather than the objective realities or unique political logic of the respective conflicts. This study concludes that the media employs a singular, non-contextual frame for women across disparate crises, thereby actively perpetuating gendered hierarchies, silencing the subaltern, and undermining the strategic implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in Cameroon.

Keywords: *Gender Representation, Conflict Reporting, Boko Haram, Anglophone Crisis, Cameroon Media, Patriarchal Framing, Peacebuilding.*

Introduction

Women are also combatants; women resist and fight back; they take sides, spy and fight among themselves; and even when they don't see active service, they often support war efforts in multiple ways, willingly or unwillingly (Turshen/ Twagiramariya 1998). As the "fourth arm" of democratic governance, the media possesses the formidable power to influence how conflicts are perceived, understood, and addressed both domestically and internationally. Women's representation in the media can have a profound impact on this narrative, influencing not just social perception but also the strategic direction of peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions (Seager 2019).

Despite the metamorphosis of women's societal roles, patriarchal symbolism persists. Scholars note that women are largely framed as aids to men (García-Moreno et al. 2015; Sharma 2013). The media's focus on women as caregivers, nurturers, and passive victims of conflict reinforce these stereotypes and sets public agendas through selective themes.

Within these presentations of women as casualties of war, postulated that women also play more active roles and undertake frontal assignments, even as

combatants, though sometimes willingly and other times through coercion (Turshen/Twagiramariya 1998). Research consistently demonstrates that the media often portrays women in stereotypical and marginalised roles, perpetuating harmful gender biases (Byerly 2013; Gallagher 2011). This article explores the mass media's portrayal and the specific roles of women in two of Cameroon's most pressing security challenges: the Anglophone Crisis and the Boko Haram conflict.

Women and girls, along with men and boys, play active and varied roles during armed conflicts in state militaries and non-state armed groups. Female active participation is far more common than is generally recognised or portrayed. Often, women act as spies, intermediaries, mercenaries, and food distributors—roles that stand in stark contrast to the media's default framing of women as defenceless physical objects as seen in Africa. Domestic roles tend to bring about confinements and restrictions on women as portrayed in the media. This has significant implications for conflict resolution strategies, as it characterises men as the sole perpetrators and women as mere recipients of casualties (Sharma 2013; Sow 2018).

While debates about the legitimacy of full female participation in state armed forces continue - as the female presence in state military apparatuses and critical decision-making centers often remains virtually weak due to socio-political barriers (Dehshahri 2016) - the non-state arena is of particular interest. Less formal institutional structures allow greater potential to push boundaries, yet the limited mechanisms for recognition often generate near-irreversible gender-specific issues post-conflict. Despite a history of female pacifism, there are numerous global examples of women embracing revolts and independence struggles with enthusiasm. Estimates suggest that women combatants constitute between one-tenth to one-third of fighting forces worldwide (Bouta/Frerks/Bannon 2005).

In Cameroon, the representation of women has been a focus of media studies that investigate subordination by those who control the media industry. Men have traditionally dominated the Cameroonian media landscape, and the few women who venture into this exclusive club often meet resistance (Matole/Ngange/Elonge 2024). Despite contributing enormously to the family unit, the economy, and the cultural development of the country, women are often sidelined in the media decision-making process. This study focuses on how the media has portrayed women primarily as victims, irrespective of their roles as intermediaries, spies, and even suicide bombers.

The history of warfare in pre-colonial Africa mostly celebrates men's achievements, relegating women to the periphery. However, many African women played critical roles in battle. History records Queen Amina of Zazzau, whose military exploits and expansion of the Hausa empire countered early gender biases (Abdulyakeen 2022). Intellectuals like Nana Asma'u bint Fodio, who was an expert in military science and community leadership, and royal figures like the Magira (Queen Mother) of old Borno demonstrate that women have always held strategic roles in society (Shankar 1997; Abdulraheem 2018; Lange 2009).

In military operations, we find the female contingent of Shaka Zulu's army and the Dahomean Mino (the Amazons). Dash recounts that in 1861, some 3,000 Amazons demonstrated military performance using muskets, led by female generals (Dash 2011).

The Dahomey state utilised its female population within the army as an integral part of its fighting machine, where women were feared for their ferocity and were treated with complete equality in terms of hardship and reward (Rodney 1973). This historical lineage proves that the "passive victim" frame is a modern sociological construct rather than a historical reality.

Despite a substantial body of research on conflict, the mass media's portrayal of women remains significantly skewed toward victimhood. While terrorism has received considerable attention for decades, the prime focus remains on males as terrorists (De Weert 2021). Questioning this portrayal is vital for understanding how women's roles affect peacebuilding efforts. The Global Media Monitoring Project (1995-2015) has revealed the intensity of gender bias and underrepresentation of women in the news across time and space (Macharia 2015).

The analysis of media representation in the context of the Boko Haram and Anglophone conflicts is grounded in an integrated multi-theoretical framework. Social Constructionism suggests that media actively construct gendered reality, institutionalising roles restricted by traditional norms (Berger/Luckmann 1966). This is operationalised through Agenda Setting and Framing, prioritising the "victim" or "caregiver" narrative to align with patriarchal expectations (McCombs/Shaw 1972; Goffman 1974). The Feminist Perspective (Radical Feminism and Post-colonial Theory) interrogates the systemic domination by male-led media structures, where the "subaltern" woman is doubly silenced (Spivak 1988).

Four Cameroonian newspapers—the Cameroon Tribune, The Guardian Post, The Post Newspaper, and L'Oeil du Sahel—provided 2,079 newspaper editions with N=139 articles explicitly addressing women in conflict, along with interviews of the newspapers' editors-in-chief.

Representation in Focus

Contextualising the Anglophone Crisis and Boko Haram conflicts

The security landscape in Cameroon is defined by two distinct yet equally devastating upheavals. The Anglophone Crisis is rooted in colonial history, stemming from grievances by the roughly 20% Anglophone population over the erosion of their Anglo-Saxon legal and educational systems following the country's unification. Peaceful protests in 2016 rapidly escalated after a heavy-handed government response, leading to the 2017 emergence of "Ambazonian" militias and a devastating war. Although often framed as a male-led rebellion, the conflict has drawn women into active combat and support roles, with maternal validation carrying immense cultural weight and the diaspora managing crucial logistical support.

Simultaneously, the Boko Haram conflict spilled over from Nigeria into Cameroon's Far North Region in 2014. The group rejects secular Western values in favour of a strict Sharia state, capitalising on widespread poverty. The insurgency is characterised by mass abductions and the notorious use of women and girls as suicide bombers, a frame that reduces them to "explosive wombs"—biological tools

to penetrate security zones—and denies them ideological motivation (Bloom 2011). Abductions have cemented the image of the "Boko Haram wife," a role involving sexual enslavement but also occasional logistical support.

Women have also joined "Comités de Vigilance" to protect communities and have stepped into economic roles like farming, even providing food for insurgents as a survival strategy.

Empirical studies of the two conflicts show a stark difference in the framing of women's "deviant" roles. The Boko Haram conflict's "explosive wombs" frame denies political agency, transforming the reproductive capacity of women into a weapon of terror (Bloom 2005). The Anglophone women's support for separatists is sometimes framed through maternal validation – as wives and mothers – who encourage their sons to fight or who provide sanctuary for "Amba Boys". However, as this study demonstrates, even these active roles are frequently overshadowed by the overarching "victim" narrative in mainstream print media, resulting in a fragmented and incomplete portrayal of the conflict's human landscape.

Historical Continuity of Female Agency in Africa

The media's portrayal of women as "passive victims" constitutes a form of historical revisionism, as pre-colonial African history is rich with examples of female military leadership and strategic agency. Figures like Queen Amina of Zazzau and the Dahomean Mino ("Amazons") exemplify this legacy (Rodney 1973). In Cameroon, the Anlu rebellion (1958-1961) and Takembeng movements further demonstrate a history of traditional female resistance to political grievances (Kah 2011). Despite this evident historical agency, women are often "doubly silenced"—marginalised by local patriarchal norms and a media that adheres to Western-centric definitions. Conflict may create openings to dismantle domestic boundaries, but women's roles are frequently ignored or erased post-conflict to restore the patriarchal status quo (Spivak 1988; Bouta/Frerks/Bannon 2005).

The Gendered Realities of the War Economy

A critical and often overlooked aspect of conflict is the "war economy"—the process by which war becomes a source of livelihood. In both the Boko Haram and Anglophone conflicts, traditional economic structures have collapsed, forcing women to navigate new and dangerous economic terrains. In the Far North, women have had to take over agricultural labour in high-risk zones to provide for their families, sometimes even providing food for the insurgents as a survival strategy. This aligns with broader findings that women exhibit distinct, community-focused patterns of coping and resilience during crisis and war situations (Zysberg 2025).

In the Anglophone regions, the "ghost town" directives and lockdowns have paralysed formal employment, pushing women into the informal sector or, in desperate cases, the "prostitution industry". However, the media rarely reports on these economic shifts as acts of resilience or strategic adaptation. Instead, they are framed either as symptoms of victimhood or are ignored entirely. The "war economy" reinforces the marginalisation of women by ensuring that the resources

for conflict resolution—which are often focused on disarmament and military demobilisation are directed primarily toward men, while the economic labour of women that sustains communities throughout the conflict remains uncompensated and unrecognised (Enloe 2014).

Contrary to the passive victim trope, the reasons women join armed groups—whether state or non-state—are varied and complex. Conflict often presents a paradoxical opening for gender role transformation.

Contrary to the passive victim trope, the reasons women join armed groups—whether state or non-state—are varied and complex. Conflict often presents a paradoxical opening for gender role transformation. Armed conflicts and political upheavals can create openings in power structures that are otherwise unavailable to marginalised populations. For women, the leap toward power during war can be more significant than for men, as the traditional boundaries of domesticity are forcibly dismantled by the necessity of survival (García-Moreno et al. 2015).

In many non-state armies, "sameness" rather than "difference" is advocated, with female combatants expected to discard traditional markers of femininity (Bouta/Frerks/Bannon 2005). Groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Nepal's Maoist movement included women in all units, with their newfound power and confidence often a pragmatic response to manpower shortages. Crucially, post-conflict periods often see a forced return to the status quo, where their military service is erased from official history, and they are denied political rewards.

The Political Economy and Sourcing of News

The underrepresentation of women is driven by the "news economy"—a commercial drive that prioritises sensational, dramatic, and simplified narratives over complex structural analyses (Ross 2017). This creates a hierarchy of credibility where male, official sources (military/government) are seen as objective, while female activists are dismissed as unofficial (Žarkov 2012).

Furthermore, the Cameroonian media landscape is marked by "regional parallelism," where outlets reflect specific ethnic and linguistic inclinations rather than a unified national discourse (Yusa'u 2010; Ngange/Elempia 2019). This fragmentation intensifies during crises, leading to a shift toward sensationalism and propaganda. The state-owned Cameroon Tribune, for instance, serves as a government mouthpiece prioritising national stability, while regional private outlets like L'Oeil du Sahel and The Post reflect specific regional security dynamics (Far North) or Anglophone political grievances, resulting in a polarisation of reporting (Forcha/Ngange 2022; Ngange/Elempia 2019).

Despite these differences, a unifying patriarchal logic persists across all regions, consistently pushing women's roles to the "back burner" of "hard news." Within this economic framework, women are often instrumentalised to attract sympathetic audiences. Sensationalised and insensitive reporting of rape victims, as seen in Bosnia and Rwanda, often re-victimises women for the sake of a compelling narrative (Rehn/Sirleaf 2002). This "black-out" of women's activism in favour of their suffering is rooted in patriarchal traditions of mainstream war reporting.

Journalistic norms like "objectivity" often mean that official (male) sources are viewed as the only credible voices, while peace activists or female survivors are dismissed as "unofficial" or irrelevant (Barker-Plummer/Boaz 2005). Consequently, the human side of conflict—where women are most active as providers and peacebuilders—is marginalised as "soft news," effectively excluding it from the high-stakes discourse of national security and geopolitics.

Deconstructing Media Frames

Framing explains how the media funnels and focuses attention on certain events and places them within a field of meaning (Goffman 1974). For women in conflict, four primary frames dominate:

1. **The Victim Frame:** This is the most pervasive frame, depicting women as helpless, dependent, and in need of male protection (Kreft/Schulz 2022).
2. **The Heroization Frame:** Occasionally, media portrays women as exceptional heroes, often reinforcing the mother stereotype (Kanter 1977).
3. **The Peacebuilder Frame:** Portrays women as innate agents of reconciliation, essentializing their labour as a maternal instinct rather than a strategic choice (Laura et al. 2023).
4. **The Perpetrator Frame:** When women do engage in violence, they are often framed as "deviant" or "inhuman," or their actions are attributed to coercion (De Weert 2021).

These frames differ across conflicts: in the Boko Haram insurgency, female suicide bombers are reduced to "explosive wombs"—biological tools rather than political actors. In the Anglophone Crisis, women's support for separatists is sometimes framed through maternal validation, yet this is still frequently overshadowed by the overarching victim narrative.

As critiqued, the dominant discourse establishes a rigid dichotomy: men as Warrior (aggressor/combatant) and women as Victim (passive sufferer/casualty) (Turshen/Twagiramariya 1998; Elshtain 1987).

Global studies consistently confirm that media coverage of war frames women as victims of sexual violence, displacement, and economic hardship (Kreft/Schulz 2022). This focus, while highlighting necessary humanitarian concerns, systematically obscures women's active roles in violence, resistance, and political life. The romanticisation of women's peace efforts—a narrative often amplified post-UNSCR 1325, despite the resolution's core emphasis on gender mainstreaming and the critical need to increase active female participation in peace processes and peacekeeping missions (Sumertha 2021) —further complicates this. Women are frequently depicted as innate, essentialist Peacemakers, a frame that depoliticises their strategic activism and confines their contribution to the emotional or domestic sphere (Porter 2007).

Crucially, women's involvement as perpetrators or active participants is either rendered invisible or sensationalised as an aberration. In the context of the Boko Haram insurgency, the female suicide bomber represents a highly visible, yet

ultimately non-agentic, figure often attributed to coercion or psychological manipulation rather than ideological commitment (De Weert 2021; Bloom 2011). In contrast, women organised political resistance, such as the Takembeng and Anlu movements in Cameroon, often receive less consistent coverage than their suffering as internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Kah 2011).

Intersectionality and the Cameroonian Media Landscape

The impact of media on gender dynamics is not uniform and must be viewed through an intersectional lens. Women's experiences in conflict are shaped by age, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status (Oyewumi 1997). In Cameroon, the media landscape is characterised by "regional parallelism," where news outlets reflect the social, political, and religious inclinations of their specific regions (Yusa'u 2010).

For instance, *L'Oeil du Sahel*, based in the North, provides a perspective shaped by the specific cultural and security dynamics of the Boko Haram insurgency, while *The Post* and *The Guardian Post* reflect the political and linguistic grievances of the Anglophone regions. Despite these regional differences, the study finds a unifying patriarchal logic across these outlets. Whether reporting on the Far North or the Northwest/Southwest, women are consistently pushed to the "back burner" of hard news. Even as they take on non-traditional roles as breadwinners, community protectors, or logistical supporters for armed groups, the media continues to reinforce gender stereotypes that prioritise their domesticity.

The misrepresentation of women is rooted in the structural and ideological environment of media production. Patriarchy is seen as an institutionalised system of social structures that ensures male dominance, which extends directly to the patriarchal relations in cultural institutions (Walby 1993). This system is reinforced by the News Economy, which prioritises simplified, sensational narratives that appeal to mass audiences, often favouring the visually dramatic (victims) over the complex and structural (political agency) (Ross 2017).

Journalistic practice, particularly in conflict zones, is overwhelmingly male-dominated, creating a hierarchy of credibility that favours official, male sources (military, government) over unofficial, often female, voices (activists, grassroots organisers) (Žarkov 2012). This results in a self-perpetuating feedback loop: male reporters prioritise male sources reporting on conventional acts of combat, thus reinforcing the perception that women's roles are marginal, thereby justifying their continued exclusion.

The Dominance of the Patriarchal Frame

The "Two Conflicts, One Frame" inquisition suggests the media's framing of women is dominated by patriarchal narratives, regardless of the conflict's political nature. The thematic groundedness (Gr) shows a clear hierarchy of representation, demonstrating the prioritising of traditional gender roles:

Figure 1. *Media's Traditional Role Prioritisation for Women in Conflict*

Role Category	Groundedness (Gr)	Total Coverage (%)	Conflict Association
Caregiver	18,282	10.1%	Emotional Support, Provider
Peacemaker	18,277	10.1%	Activist, Mediator, Reconciliation
Victim	13,532	7.5%	Displacement, Rape, Loss
Separatist/Ambazonian	7,089	3.9%	Active participant, Logistics
Terrorist/Combatant	603	0.3%	Suicide bomber, Fighter
Activist/Informant	793	0.4%	Political mobilization, Intelligence

The combined coverage of Caregivers and Peacemakers (Gr=36,559) significantly overshadows active, non-traditional roles such as Separatists, Terrorists, Combatants, and Activists (combined Gr=8,485). This pattern highlights the media's preference for framing women within essentialist roles of domesticity and emotional stability.

Article 1: SW, NW Women Task Force Appeals to partake in resolving Anglophone crisis

Women as Peacemakers underscores the media's portrayal of women as agents of peace and reconciliation. This aligns with global narratives that often depict women as natural peacemakers due to their nurturing and empathetic qualities. However, this portrayal may also reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, limiting the recognition of women's diverse roles in conflict resolution. As reported by The Guardian Post Newspaper, during a March 16th 2019 visit of the South West/North West Women Task Force (SNWOT) to the President of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration, the communication officer, Dr. Eileen Manka'a Akwo, argued that it is erroneous to not include women in crisis proceedings, stressing women's major role as peacebuilders (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2. *(Left - article on SNWOT – Article 1). The Guardian Post, No.1610*

The Guardian Post No 1610 | NEWS/INTERVIEW | Tuesday March 18, 2019 | Page 7

SW, NW Women Task Force appeals to partake in resolving Anglophone crisis

Some women of the South West and North West Women Task Force, SNWOT have pleaded to actively partake in resolving the armed conflict plaguing the Anglophone regions.

This request was the main element on the agenda of a meeting held on March 16 in Yaounde between a delegation of SNWOTwith the President of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration.

In the course of the meeting, the ladies highlighted the absence of women in the management and organisation of most institutions and organisations set up to handle the lingering crisis.

As the meeting rolled on, the women shared their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the committee while proposing solutions that will help end the crisis in the North West and South West regions.

"The oversight of women from strategic setups put in place to manage the crisis is clear indication that government has seen war to be a man's affair, with women having no say. Women are not perceived as combatants which could be a serious mistake because they are very strong and daring warriors. Though we might not have the strength and capability to fight physically, the fact remains that women still have a vital role to play. When women are left out of the peace-promoting structures, how then will the consequences of the war towards women be handled?", the communication officer of the women's task force, Akwo Eileen, pointed out, while laying strong questions on how the affairs of women in relation to the crisis will be looked upon.

According to the women, the capacity of appealing with both parties is a very important role that they could play in conflict resolution.

Fai Yengo Francis: Demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration committee president

Trucks transporting goods stranded at Cameroon/CAR border

From Nawea Harry in Bertoua

For some weeks now, trucks transporting goods along the Central African Republic, CAR corridor have been blocked at Garoua Boulai while 125 others are still blocked in CAR. Scores of trucks have been blocked in Garoua Boulai sub division in the East region, Cameroon's frontier town with the neighbouring Central African Republic for about three weeks now.

This is due to the insecurity reigning in CAR following a recent outburst of violence in that country. Due to the disturbing situation, various transporters trade unions in the East region have been in the field to assess the situation on the ground and the impact on the truck drivers.

Their efforts notwithstanding, the governor of the East region, Gregoire Mvongo, has been appealing to the transporters trade unions to sensitise the drivers to adapt to security measures as first priority.

The insecurity now reigning in the CAR following recent armed clashes has seriously affected and grounded transportation of goods in the CAR.

The trucks which left from Douala en route to the neighbouring country have been idling for weeks now in fear of crossing the border.

About 125 others that ventured to cross the border are still stocked at the other side in the Central African town some 25kms away from Garoua Boulai due to the unrest.

With finances running out, the future looks very bleak for these drivers, reports say.

One of the drivers lamented that even if they left the house with 100,000 or 200,000 FCFA, it is already finished as they have to eat and also pay hotel bills, concluding that they are now short of money.

Following the situation, stakeholders in the transport business plying the lucrative Douala-Bangui corridor have descended to the field in Garoua Boulai led by their transport bureau coordinator, El Hadj Oumarou. He noted that for several days now they noticed that there was a serious problem going towards CAR.

During consultations with the Divisional Officer of Garoua Boulai, Djam Lawrence, the heads of transport syndicates were briefed about the governor's guidelines which basically called on them to raise awareness on safety among their drivers.

So far no driver has been reported hurt unlike in 2014 when some of them lost their lives.

The DO for Garoua Boulai also reassured them that governor Gregoire Mvongo has made it clear that the border between Cameroon and the CAR is not closed.

The President of the Confederations of Transport Trade Unions of Cameroon, Pierre Nyemeck, has addressed a letter to the Central African Republic Embassy in Cameroon, denouncing the deteriorating security situation.

The losses incurred from the delay are estimated at hundreds of millions of FCFA.

The transporters are requesting the government of the Central African Republic to secure the corridor so normal economic activities can resume.

Article 2: CAMYOSFOP, stakeholders discuss the integration of women in small arms control

Women continue to feature prominently as promoters of peace. In Article 2, women are said to have received training from Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP), UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on how to deal with and manage the use of small arms and light weapons in Cameroon, especially in the Far North with Boko Haram and the North West and South West regions with the Anglophone conflict. The article also indicates that this training is important as "Women have become actors and victims of small arms and light weapons… young girls have been involved in the conflict either by providing intelligence to the Boko Haram group or playing the role of detonating explosives." (see Fig. 3)

Figure 3. *CAMYOSFOP, and co-training – Article 2. The Guardian Post, No.2703*

The Guardian Post No 2703 | SOCIETY | Wednesday February 15, 2023 | Page 6

CAMYOSFOP, stakeholders discuss integration of women in small arms control

By Brenda Kiven

Stakeholders in the fight against proliferation of small arms and light weapons, SALWs, have discussed ways of integrating women into the actions.

They have also agreed to take actions immediately by engaging in mass sensitisation.

This was Friday February 10, in Douala during a workshop dubbed "capacity building workshop on strengthening of developmental partners on mainstreaming gender in the control of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

The workshop, organised by the Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace, CAMYOSFOP, UN Women and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeks to reduce the illicit use of small arms and light weapons in Cameroon.

Developmental partners, security officials, law enforcers, amongst others, for two days, discussed causes and consequences of the illicit proliferation of SALWs on sustainable development, small arms control implementation programme, mainstreaming gender in SALW, amongst others. They also held discussions on an action plan for the implementation of the national law on areas and ammunitions.

According to the Executive Director of CAMYOSFOP, Ngalim Eugine, mainstreaming women in issues of disarmament has become key in every policy programme implemented by government and the international community. He further said the training was part of a whole project that is implemented by Cameroon, known as the Saving Lives Entity with the pilot phase of the programme focused on mainstreaming gender and youth on issues of small arms and light weapons.

"Women have become actors and victims of small arms and light weapons. We do have clear examples in the regions that are in difficulty such as the North West, South West and the Far North. If you take the Far North, for instance, you realise that young girls have been involved in the conflict either by providing intelligence to the Boko Haram group or playing the role of detonating explosives. It's same thing in the English-speaking regions," Ngalim revealed.

He further mentioned that women are the most affected during conflicts, taking the example of internally displaced persons and refugees, who are mostly dominated by women.

"Therefore, you can't work on policies, capacities or awareness on SALWs and leave women behind. They must be at the forefront," he stressed.

While thanking development partners for respecting the two-day rendezvous, Ngalim appreciated the new UN Women Representative to Cameroon, Marie Pierre Raky Chaupin, who braved the odds to be part of the meeting.

On her part, Marie Pierre Raky Chaupin said the project is absolutely important, reason they came up with an action plan that has to start now with sensitisation.

Group picture of participants, organisers

"The action plan suggested are quick actions that should be implemented immediately, starting with sensitisation. We need to expand the sensitisation phase and organise ourselves on how we should collect these arms," she said.

Although Cameroon has a 2016 law regulating the gun and ammunition sector, Ngalim Eugine said much still had to be done in terms of operationalising the limitations of this legislation.

Founded in 1999, CAMYOSFOP is a promoter of millenium development goals, human rights, education, peace and conflict management, amongst others.

This is not the first time it is partnering with UN Women. They have both worked for the good of persons living with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current disarmament project is part of a global project that seeks to contribute to international peace, security, gender equality and sustainable development, by enhancing the effectiveness of small arms control through the promotion of gender-responsive framework and by promoting equitable participation of women in all arms control decision-making processes.

In Africa, Cameroon, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central Africa Republic are the countries concerned with this phase of the project.

Article 3: NW Women Call For Ceasefire

Women marched against the continuous violence, deaths, and abductions in the Anglophone Regions since 2016. They demand that both parties involved in the conflict stop fighting and restore peace. Patricia Efon shared her sadness about the deaths of children and innocent people, who, to her, do not even understand why they are being killed. Judith Tayoh requested that President Paul Biya have compassion for the women and heed their request for peace. Nicoline Wazeh mentioned that women have a duty to bring back peace and that they will continue until there is a ceasefire, describing the conflict as a "nonsensical war".

Figure 4. *NW Women Call For Ceasefire. The Post, No. 01944*

NW Women Call For Ceasefire

Women in the Northwest Region, Friday, September 7, staged a peaceful demonstration of Lamentation in the capital city of Bamenda under the banner of the Southwest and Northwest Women Task Force, SNWOT.

The women's outing to decry killings, msiming, kidnapping in the two Anglophone Regions came after a similar demonstration that took place in Buea in August 2018.

The women carried placards and peace-plants decrying the killings in the two Anglophone Regions and called on both parties to lay down their guns and let peace return to Cameroon. Following the escalation of the Anglophone Crisis in 2016, the rate at which personnel of the military, activist and civilians are dying is alarming.

Talking to The Post, Patricia Efon, one of the demonstrators said "These are our children whom we carried for nine months. This is not good. This is not right. We give birth to them, nurtured them and educated them. We don't know why they are being killed. Enough is enough".

A Teacher Judith Tayoh called on the Head of State, Paul Biya to have pity on the Women and listen to their cry, bring back the peace they long for. She also asserted that a good leader has all it takes to bring peace in time of peril.

Addressing both parties involved in the struggle, Nicoline Wazeh, said the killings are dishonouring to women. She added that Women will not sit and watch their Children die on what she described as a nonsensical war.

She reiterated that it is a moral obligation to listen to Women, promising that they will not stop until there is a ceasefire.

Before the wailing women left the abandoned Municipal Stadium where the demonstration and prayers took place, their last lamentation "We have prayed we are positive and we believe in five days we will see results".

By Spencer Amoh Abaji (UB Journalism Student on Internship)

health districts affected, accounting for 87 of the 142 suspected cases reported from the Centre Region in July.

The World Health Organisation, WHO, along with UNICEF, has put together strategies to handle the situation. The WHO has been educating the refugees from Nigeria who are being housed at the camp in the northern part of Cameroon on some basic hygiene to prevent them from getting sick.

A communiqué published in June revealed that UNICEF provided psychosocial support to 18,515 children (8,528 girls and 9,987 boys) in community based child friendly and secure spaces in the Logone and Chari, Mayo Sava and Mayo Tsanaga Divisions.

In addition, UNICEF continues to support the response by providing these areas with basic health and water needs (buckets, soap, among others) tablets for water purification.

"UNICEF is also supporting the training of community health workers and sensitising local population on cholera by disseminating prevention information through community radio stations.

The virus is likely to spread to other parts of Cameroon. A university student says that Yaounde is likely to be infected by the virus as barely 20 percent of its population is open to good drinking water and the remaining 80 percent fetches water from unhygienic spots and if the water is contaminated, so would the people.

By Marivon Sofo Ajanu (UB Journalism Student on Internship)

www.thepostwebedition.com

Comparative Role Distribution by Conflict

The analysis reveals that while the Victim role is common across both conflicts, the nuances of agency and violence differ, highlighting differences in role frequency distributions in the Anglophone and Boko Haram conflicts.

Figure 5. *Comparative Role Distribution of Women by Conflict*

Role Focus	Anglophone Crisis	Boko Haram Conflict	Interpretation
Political Agency	High (1,983 quotes as Separatists)	Low (9 quotes as Terrorists)	Anglophone women are politically visible; BH women are primarily framed as coerced or exploited.
Victimhood (Displacement)	High (765 quotes)	High (241 quotes)	Displacement and loss are the universal frames linking both conflicts.
Economic Role	Low (Implicit in Caregiver)	High (76 quotes as Agriculture)	BH coverage acknowledges women's role in sustaining the insurgency (farming/logistics), framing it as an extension of domestic labour.
Sexual Violence	Moderate (64 quotes as Rape)	Low (4 quotes as Rape)	Sexual violence is reported in both, but Anglophone coverage is higher, perhaps due to higher media access to these regions.

A PERMANOVA test showed that framing of women's roles differs significantly across the four media outlets: $F(3, 4) = 4.32$, with $R^2 = 0.5678$, and a $p = 0.001$. It reveals that approximately 57% of the variance in how women's roles are framed is explained by the differences between media outlets. This demonstrates that the decision to use a specific frame (e.g., Victim vs. Separatist) is driven not by objective conflict reality, but by internal editorial policy and bias.

Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between the state-aligned *Cameroon Tribune* and the regional *L'Oeil du Sahel* ($p=0.049$), and between the private national daily *The Guardian Post* and the regional *L'Oeil du Sahel* ($p<0.001$). Crucially, there was no significant difference between the two private English-language outlets (*The Guardian Post* and *The Post Newspaper*), suggesting that a shared Anglophone editorial culture perpetuates a consistent frame.

A Chi-Square test further reinforced the narrative on the influence of patriarchal symbolism on role portrayal in both conflicts, with significant results for both the Anglophone Crisis (χ^2 (57) = 382.41, $p < 0.001$) and the Boko Haram Conflict (χ^2 (12) = 45.67, $p < 0.001$). Confirming observed distributions, heavily favouring passive roles, are systematic and not random.

The Politics of Framing and the Paradox of Visibility

The Enduring Logic of the Victim Frame

The pervasive Victim frame, where women enter the news narrative primarily through their suffering, is driven by the "news economy." Editors prioritise sensationalised "war facts" (violence, displacement) over nuanced coverage,

reinforcing the traditional gender order: men as active agents of conflict and women as passive recipients of its impact (Ross 2017).

Romanticising Peace and Silencing Activism

The high frequency of the Peacemaker role (Gr=18,277) reveals the media's romanticisation of women's political labour. While groups like SNWOT actively demand a ceasefire and inclusion in negotiations (a strategic political act), media reports often frame this as an innate, maternal desire for peace. Women's agency is consistently depoliticised and tethered to essentialist notions of femininity, thereby undercutting their strategic contributions to peace processes (Žarkov 2012). Simultaneously, the negligible representation of Activists/Informants (Gr=793) confirms a structural erasure of political agency. This mirrors broader diplomatic challenges; as noted in contemporary studies, despite international mandates, women's representation in formal public diplomacy and peace processes often remains disproportionately low (Brittain-Hale 2024).

The Structural Constraint of Patriarchal Journalism

Qualitative findings highlight that the "Two Conflicts, One Frame" phenomenon is rooted in the internal, structural constraints of the media ecosystem. Editors acknowledged that women are "very underrepresented because we think that they are more victims than participants" (L'Oeil du Sahel). They also cited cultural barriers to deploying female journalists to conflict zones ("Culturally, it is difficult to send women to cover war activities"), creating a feedback loop where male-dominated reporting reinforces androcentric narratives. This aligns with the notion of the subaltern: in the news narrative, women's voices are systematically silenced or filtered through dominant patriarchal discourses (Spivak 1988).

The media, therefore, acts not as a neutral reflector of reality but as an active agent in the social construction of gendered reality in conflict zones.

Modelling the Media-Gender Construction Model

The Media-Gender Construction Model, developed from this study, illustrates the cyclical process by which media narratives are produced and sustained. This model acknowledges that pre-existing social constructs, deeply rooted in patriarchal symbolisms, serve as the foundational backdrop for media production. These societal beliefs inform initial media coverage, while the media simultaneously reinforces or modifies these roles through its reporting practices.

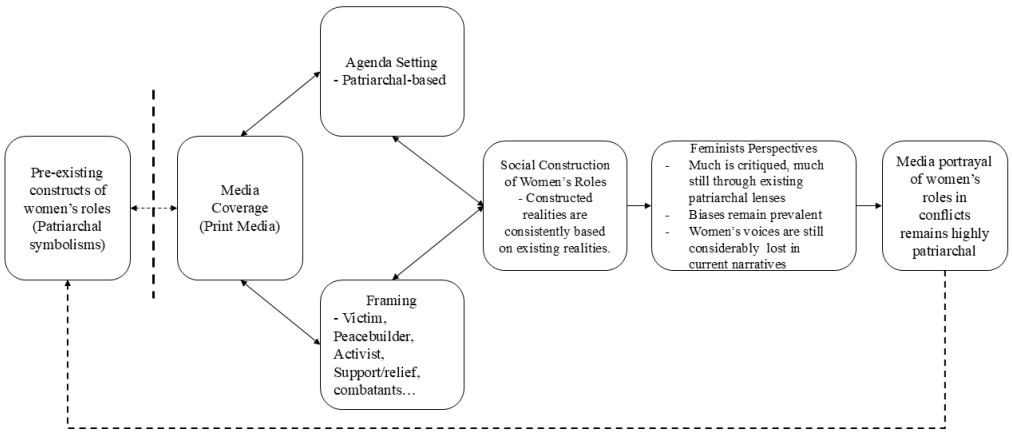
The model functions through two interconnected mechanisms: Selective Agenda Setting and Interpretive Framing. In the first stage, media gatekeepers prioritise specific aspects of women's experiences—typically those involving victimhood or emotional labour—over strategic political or military contributions.

This determines which facets of women's participation are deemed "newsworthy." In the second stage, framing processes apply specific lenses (e.g., the "Suffering Victim" or "Nurturing Peacemaker") to these selected issues, shaping

how the audience interprets female agency.

Ultimately, the model culminates in the social construction of women's roles, producing dominant narratives that often align with traditional gender stereotypes. However, the model also incorporates Critical Feminist Interventions as a potential disruptor. By interrogating these biases and exposing the marginalisation of authentic voices, feminist critique seeks to recover the subaltern experience. Nevertheless, the research highlights a "reinforcing loop" where patriarchal portrayals entrench societal beliefs, making it difficult to shift the narrative without intentional shifts in newsroom ownership and the active claiming of "unconventional" roles (such as combatants or political strategists) by women themselves.

Figure 6. *Media-Gender Construction Model in Conflict Contexts*



The interplay between theoretical and research outcomes points to the immense influence of patriarchal symbolism on women's roles in society. These societal constructs, historically shaped by gender norms and stereotypes, provide the ideological backdrop against which media coverage occurs – reflecting and reinforcing societal beliefs. Through Agenda Setting — The media is selective on which women's participation to prioritise, like victimhood, seen to be more prominent than their roles as activists or combatants, suggesting that women's suffering is a more "acceptable" or expected storyline. These are framed further by how they are depicted. Conversely, these frames are often infused with patriarchal undertones that either limit the perceived agency of women or exoticise their participation.

Through Social Constructionism, the model highlights that the realities constructed by the media are not neutral; they consistently draw from and reinforce existing societal beliefs. Thus, women's roles in conflict are socially constructed in ways that mirror and perpetuate gender hierarchies. To add, Feminist Perspectives reveal that even when critique is present, much of the media's framing still operates within patriarchal boundaries. The biases embedded in media representations persist, and genuine women's voices often remain considerably marginalised or distorted within dominant narratives.

As a result, media portrayal of women's roles in conflicts remains highly patriarchal. Despite feminist interventions and shifts in societal attitudes, the portrayal largely sustains traditional gender norms rather than fundamentally challenging them. The reinforcing loop indicates that the way the media portrays women can further entrench pre-existing societal beliefs, creating a continuous cycle that is difficult to disrupt without intentional, critical feminist engagement. One way this could be achieved is through [active] ownership and attribution.

For women to accentuate new premises (roles) that consistently deviate from existing stereotypes burdened by male spectrums, they will have to intentionally own these new roles, which could be positively or negatively skewed. For instance, women must be ready to own the tough roles as "Generals" in insurgencies like the Boko Haram and Anglophone conflicts. Women should step forward and be visible on the front lines – so the media can effectively attribute such roles to them.

Arguably, society expects women to align more with positive and responsible things and roles. Nonetheless, if fewer women consistently feature in high-level discussions and things considered positive, then how much more will they ascribe to things considered uncultured? These could, in part, be blamed on the fundamental patriarchal system of the socio-cultural context of Cameroon and most African countries. The intricacies of women owning their roles could be laborious. How many men will allow or give a free hand to their wives or female children to (actively) join ranks in the Boko Haram or Anglophone conflicts? Conversely, in the face of certain unrest, most women are instinctively preoccupied about (and run to) their children (know their whereabouts), before even thinking about their husbands.

Throughout the Anglophone conflict, it has been observed, for instance, in this study, that no women's rights group has objected to the gender specific reference to combatants as "Amba Boys", which is also consistent in media narratives and everyday use, but completely erodes the possibility of girls as combatants. These points, yet again to the non-associative desire of women with things of overt disrepute. To substantively change and reorient existing narratives, women must decisively and forthrightly claim ownership of and participation in "vices and mayhem". This will undoubtedly free the media from serendipitous misidentification, misattribution, and retained stereotypes. Conversely, without such fundamental premises, women will continuously and passively solidify their position as ubiquitous shadows.

Notwithstanding, the imperative for women to "intentionally own these new roles" and "step forward and be visible on the front lines" to change existing dominant narratives is seen in instances of women organising protests, demanding negotiations, advocating for inclusion in peace processes, and even participating in community security (like Rebecca Ibrahim) demonstrating women pushing to actively claim ownership of roles that deviate from traditional stereotypes.[50] Their visibility in these protests and their direct engagement with political processes (though at an incremental incidence) exemplify the desired shift for society and the media to effectively attribute such diverse roles to them, rather than continuously and passively solidifying their position as ubiquitous shadows. This provides strong empirical evidence for the model's reinforcing loop, illustrating how intentional,

critical feminist engagement can begin to disrupt the continuous cycle of patriarchal media portrayals.

Concluding Thoughts: Representation Requires Active Presence

Media representation of women in the Boko Haram and Anglophone conflicts in Cameroon is governed by a persistent, non-contextual patriarchal frame. Despite distinct political, ideological, and religious drivers of these two conflicts, the media consistently defaults to a narrow, monolithic set of roles: the Victim, the Caregiver, and the Peacemaker. These traditional roles, compared to active political agency, demonstrate how women are systematically funnelled into narratives of passivity and emotional labour.

The dominant narrative across the two conflicts is one of Patriarchal Dualism: women are hyper-visible in traditional roles (Victim, Caregiver, Peacemaker) and functionally invisible in roles denoting political or military agency (Combatant, Activist, Informant). This singular framing simplifies complex realities, depoliticises women's strategic efforts, and methodically undermines the objectives of gender-sensitive conflict resolution. The selective emphasis on victimhood over critical roles like Activists, Informants, and Combatants remains functionally invisible, effectively silences the "Subaltern" and denies women their right to narrate (Said 1978).

While the Anglophone Crisis allowed for slightly higher visibility of political agency (Separatist roles) compared to the Boko Haram conflict (coerced Terrorist roles), the overarching frame of the suffering, non-agentic female remained the defining characteristic.

At the end, the failure to represent women accurately lies less in the external reality of the conflict and more in the internal, structural biases of the media, which prioritise sensationalism, simplify complexity, and adhere to a pervasive patriarchal logic.

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