Framing A Crisis: Newspaper Coverage of The Boko Haram Conflict in The Nation and The Daily Sun Around Nigeria's 2015 Elections

Kingsley Chukwuma Dibie
Corresponding author email: dibiekingsleychukwuma@gmail.com
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Abstract
The Boko Haram crisis has been one of the defining security and political issues in Nigeria, yet empirical research on how the Nigerian press frames it remains thin and has relied largely on predefined, generic frames. This study identifies issue-specific frames inductively and examines whether they differ between two newspapers affiliated with the rival camps in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election and between the periods before and after that election. Using Entman's four frame elements and the frame-as-cluster-of-elements approach of Matthes and Kohring, a quantitative content analysis was conducted on 200 articles (100 each from The Nation and the Daily Sun) published between February 2013 and May 2017. Hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward's method) produced six frames: political and legal issues around elections; socio-economic concern; government and Boko Haram-induced military issues; positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram; social debate around military engagement; and victims' welfare concerns. The social debate around military engagement was the most prevalent frame overall (23.0%). The Daily Sun carried the political and legal frame more often than The Nation (24.6% vs 12.2%), whereas The Nation more often used the positive evaluation and attribution frame (20.7% vs 9.5%). The political and legal frame declined after the election in both papers, while victims' welfare and socio-economic frames gained ground. Findings are descriptive and cannot establish ownership influence.

Keywords: *Media framing; Boko Haram; Nigeria; Newspaper coverage; Content analysis; 2015 elections*

1.0 Introduction

Over the last decade, terrorism in West Africa has been defined largely by the Boko Haram crisis and the conflict between the group and the governments of Nigeria and its neighbours. In less than a decade the group moved from a relatively reserved sect in Borno State to an organisation that attacked civilians, schools, churches, markets and state institutions and posed a direct challenge to the Nigerian state. The group's ideology is hostile to Western education and lifestyle, which helps to explain its attacks on schools, churches and other targets (Ekanem et al., 2012), and its clashes with security forces grew sharply after the death of its leader in 2009 (Eme, 2012). Among the incidents that drew national and international attention were the bombing of a bus station at Nyanya, Abuja, in April 2014 (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015) and the abduction of schoolgirls from Chibok in the same month (Ngwu et al., 2015).

Boko Haram is not the sect's official name. Its official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, while "Boko Haram", loosely rendered as western education being forbidden, is the name by which it is known in Nigeria and abroad (Yusha'u, 2012). Musa (2012) examines the role of socio-economic incentives and new media in the group's campaign of violence in northern Nigeria. Despite the scale of the crisis, terrorism in Africa has received comparatively little empirical attention. A review of 4,458 peer-reviewed articles on terrorism found that the great majority were conceptual "think pieces", with only about 3% empirical and about 1% case studies (Lum et al., 2005). Schmid (2011) likewise pointed to a shortage of empirical work on African terrorist groups and to a shortage of researchers who understand the cultural, religious and historical background. Where the Nigerian press coverage of Boko Haram has been studied, the framing literature has mostly used deductive designs built on predefined generic frames, for example the study of Chibok coverage by Ngwu et al. (2015), which drew on the generic frames of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Matthes and Kohring (2008) caution that deductive designs are limited to frames already established and so are inflexible towards frames that emerge around an evolving issue.

The political context adds a second reason to study this coverage. The 2015 general elections took place against the background of the insurgency and produced the first democratic transition between parties in Nigeria's history. Nigeria had returned to civilian rule in 1999 (Amiso, 2016), and the APC that won in 2015 was formed through a 2013 merger of opposition parties (Akor, 2013). Nsude et al. (2016) argued that the handling of the crisis may have cost the incumbent president his re-election bid, and the insecurity associated with the insurgency worsened welfare and quality of life during the period (Achumba et al., 2013). Political science research treats a crisis as a political phenomenon that can reshape the agenda and the terms of political debate, and holds that leaders are held to account for how they respond (Schneider & Jordan, 2016). If the crisis mattered politically, the way newspapers framed it, and who owned those newspapers, becomes a legitimate empirical question.

This article therefore takes an inductive, issue-specific approach to the framing of the Boko Haram crisis, operationalising Entman's (1993) frame elements and identifying frames through cluster analysis (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). It analyses two national dailies, The Nation and the Daily Sun, each treated in the study as aligned with one of the two principal camps in the 2015 presidential election, before and after the election. The study addresses three research questions:

RQ1: What frames can be identified in the depiction of the Boko Haram crisis in the selected newspapers regarding (a) problem definition, (b) causal interpretation, (c) moral evaluation and (d) treatment recommendation?

RQ2: How is the crisis framed in The Nation and the Daily Sun?

RQ3: How is the crisis framed before and after the 2015 elections?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Terrorism research and the neglect of Africa

Terrorism research draws on political science, international relations, communication studies, sociology, psychology and law. Silke (2009) observed that contemporary relevance, especially for Western democracies, has driven much of the research effort and that most researchers are based in the United States. Reid (1997) traced the field through successive decades, and Schmid (2011) distinguished developments before and after the attacks of 11 September 2001, noting that scholarship has tended to follow cycles of terrorism as perceived by a handful of Western states. Against this background, the geographical imbalance identified by Schmid (2011) and the thin empirical base documented by Lum et al. (2005) frame the present study as an empirical contribution on a case from Africa, written from within the country concerned.

2.2 Agenda-setting, priming and framing

Three concepts dominate research on how media shape perceptions. Agenda-setting holds that the emphasis media place on issues shapes how important those issues appear to audiences, but does not by itself determine how they are interpreted (McCombs, 1993). Priming concerns changes in the standards people use to evaluate political leaders, and is generally understood as an extension of agenda-setting (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). Framing differs from both because it concerns the presentation of issues rather than their salience (De Vreese, 2005), and because it helps explain the news production process, including how groups in society try to shape public discourse by establishing dominant labels (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006).

2.3 Framing: definition, types and operationalisation

Framing research has several empirical goals: identifying the thematic units called frames, investigating the conditions that produce them, examining how frames interact with audiences' prior knowledge, and examining how frames shape public opinion and policy debate (D'Angelo, 2002). Definitions vary in how readily they can be operationalised. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) described a media frame as a central organising idea that gives meaning to a strip of events. Entman (1993) specified that framing selects aspects of a perceived reality and makes them salient so as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. A review of 131 framing studies in leading communication journals found that Entman's definition was the most influential in operationalised content analyses (Matthes, 2009). It is attractive here because it translates directly into codable elements and because, in the context of terrorism, framing is closely tied to power. A further distinction separates generic frames, which apply across topics and sometimes across cultures, from issue-specific frames, which are pertinent to a particular topic or event (De Vreese, 2005). Generic frames include the human-impact, powerlessness, economic, moral-values and conflict frames identified by Neuman et al. (1992) and the conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality and economic consequences frames proposed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Issue-specific studies include Good's (2008) analysis of climate change coverage and the study by Shah et al. (2002) of the news during the final stage of the Clinton presidency. De Vreese (2005) notes that the advantage of the issue-specific approach is the level of detail it permits about the issue under investigation, which is the reason it is adopted here.

2.4 Political influence on framing and the Nigerian press

Framing is not produced in a vacuum. De Vreese (2005) separates frame-building, which concerns how frames emerge in the newsroom and in the wider environment, from frame-setting, which concerns the interaction between frames and audiences. This study is concerned with frame-building. Internal factors such as editorial policies and news values, and external factors such as political actors and organised interests, both shape the frames that appear (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Benford & Snow, 2000). Carragee and Roefs (2004) argue that news stories become a forum in which political actors compete to sponsor their preferred definitions of an issue, and that framing research has paid too little attention to this sponsorship and to the distribution of power it reflects. Hall (1977) frames the media as agents of ideological control that reproduce dominant power relations, and Gitlin (1980) notes that the ability to dominate news discourse depends on a sponsor's resources and knowledge of journalistic practice. Craig (2004) similarly holds that the political system exerts a less formal kind of control over the media landscape through the personal influence of politicians on owners and journalists, while Entman (2007) emphasises that powerful actors devote substantial resources

to imposing frames on mediated communication. Esser and D'Angelo (2006) argue that journalistic framing is contingent on features of a country's political communication culture, and Walter and Vliegenthart (2010) hold that the more control a political actor has over a channel, the more likely a message is transmitted as intended.

The Nigerian press has a long record of political involvement. Duyile (1987) and Daramola (2006) document its role in the nationalist struggle and its shift after independence towards the politics of power and government control. Sriramesh (2009) notes that in many developing countries media ownership rests with political interests and elites, and Daramola (2006) shows that many Nigerian newspapers were established to serve the interests of their owners, politicians and businesspeople. Adesoji and Hapin (2011) examine newspaper ownership in the changing Nigerian polity. Against this history, the normative expectation that coverage should be neutral (McQuail, 1992) is an empirical question rather than a presumption.

2.5 Approaches to the content analysis of media frames

Matthes and Kohring (2008) distinguish five established approaches to measuring frames and propose a sixth. The hermeneutic approach (e.g., Tucker, 1998) gives rich interpretive accounts but leaves open how frames were extracted. The linguistic approach (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) analyses the structure of words and sentences but is difficult to apply to large samples. The manual holistic approach (e.g., Simon & Xenos, 2000) derives working frames from a reading of texts and then codes them, and its validity depends on transparency about how the frames were identified. The computer-assisted approach (Miller, 1997) maps words that co-occur, but reduces frames to word clusters; Hertog and McLeod (2001) note that words central to a text's meaning need not occur often. The deductive approach applies frames from the literature, such as those of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and is inflexible towards new frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). The sixth approach, which Matthes and Kohring (2008) call frames as clusters of frame elements, splits a frame into its constituent elements, which are easily coded in a standard content analysis, and then uses cluster analysis to reveal the patterns in which these elements occur together. It improves reliability and validity relative to coding whole frames directly and allows new frames to emerge from the data. It is the approach adopted in this study.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Design and sample

A quantitative content analysis was carried out (Krippendorff, 2012). Two national dailies were selected: The Nation, whose proprietor is described in the literature as a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) (Adesoji & Hapin, 2011), and the Daily Sun, which the study treats as aligned with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) camp on the basis of its ownership. These parties fielded the two leading candidates in the 2015 presidential election, which the APC candidate won. Affiliation was inferred from ownership; it was not independently measured. The sampling window ran from 28 February 2013 to 26 March 2015 (before the election) and from 31 May 2015 to 11 May 2017 (after the election), excluding the election dates. Articles were retrieved from the LexisNexis database using the keyword "Boko Haram". The searches returned 2,029 articles for The Nation and 1,864 for the Daily Sun in the first period, and 1,584 and 2,198 respectively in the second. To obtain equal numbers for each period, a disproportional stratified random sample of about 50 articles per newspaper per period was drawn using random.org, giving a final sample of 200 articles (100 per newspaper). Articles that merely mentioned Boko Haram without further information were excluded: if no code could be assigned to any aspect of problem definition, the article was removed.

3.2 Instrument

The codebook operationalised Entman's (1993) four frame elements. Problem definition comprised actors and topics; causal attribution comprised the circumstances held responsible for the crisis; moral evaluation comprised the persons or institutions held responsible; and treatment recommendation comprised social, political, economic, legal and military recommendations. Its structure was adapted from a codebook on the construction of ethnic identity on terrorist groups' websites. Actor and topic lists were refined inductively through a pilot study of 20 articles (half from each newspaper and half from each period), after which the final lists were fixed. Actors included the national government, the opposition, non-governmental organisations, Boko Haram, victims, the police, the military, journalists and media organisations, Christian and Muslim leaders and eight foreign states. Topics included victims' welfare, government response, military action, attacks, economy, politics, religious issues, education, social inequalities, human rights, the peace process, corruption and gender issues. Actors were evaluated as negative, neutral or positive, and treatment recommendations were coded as not mentioned, just mentioned, mentioned and disagreed, or mentioned and agreed. Actors, topics and the other dimensions were coded up to three times per article. Table 1 summarises the structure of the instrument.

Table 1: Composition of frame elements in the codebook

Frame element	Dimension	Coding
Problem definition	Actors	19 categories, from national government to foreign states
	Actor evaluation	Not mentioned, negative, neutral, positive
	Topic	14 categories, up to three per article
Causal attribution	Responsible circumstances	12 circumstances (e.g., religious difference, economic deprivation, local politics)
Moral evaluation	Responsible persons	Same list as actors
Treatment recommendation	Social, political, economic, legal, military	Not mentioned, just mentioned, mentioned and disagreed, mentioned and agreed

Source: Author's codebook.

3.3 Reliability and analysis

Intra-coder reliability was tested on 10% of the sample (20 articles), re-coded after an interval of one week, and assessed with Cronbach's alpha. Coefficients for the coded items ranged from .552 to .998, with the lowest values for the first social and military recommendation codings; four items for political and legal recommendations showed zero variance because they were rarely coded. Reliability should be read with this in mind.

Analyses were run in SPSS. Because variables were coded up to three times per article, the coded data were combined into 501 cases for cluster analysis. To enter the analysis, actors were collapsed into national government (including police and military) and opposition (including NGOs, victims, media organisations and religious leaders); topics were reduced to victims' welfare, government response, military engagement (military action and attacks), socio-economic issues (economy, religion, education, social inequality, human rights, peace process and corruption) and elections; causal attribution was recoded as mentioned or not mentioned;

moral evaluation was recoded into Boko Haram, government and others; and treatment recommendation scales were recoded as described in the codebook. A hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's algorithm and squared Euclidean distance was then run, and the elbow criterion indicated a six-cluster solution. Clusters were interpreted as frames by comparing group means across variables. RQ2 and RQ3 were addressed by cross-tabulating frames by newspaper and by period. These comparisons are reported descriptively as percentages.

4.0 Results

4.1 Sample description

The sample contained 200 articles, 100 from each newspaper. All eleven articles from 2013 came from the Daily Sun. 2014 contributed the most articles (75), followed by 2015 (50), 2016 (44) and 2017 (20) (Table 2). Most articles were short: 163 (82%) had fewer than 1,000 words, 28 (14%) had 1,001 to 2,000 words and nine (4.5%) were longer. All articles longer than 2,000 words came from the Daily Sun.

Table 2: Distribution of articles by newspaper and year of publication

Newspaper	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
The Nation	0 (0.0%)	44 (58.7%)	26 (52.0%)	25 (56.8%)	5 (25.0%)	100
The Daily Sun	11 (100%)	31 (41.3%)	24 (48.0%)	19 (43.2%)	15 (75.0%)	100
Total	11	75	50	44	20	200

Source: Author's analysis. Percentages are shares of each year's articles.

4.2 RQ1: Frames in the coverage

The cluster analysis identified six frames (Table 3). The following descriptions rest on the cluster means for each variable.

Frame 1, political and legal issues around elections (n = 94; 18.7%), features both government and opposition as actors, with elections the leading topic (M = 0.46) alongside some socio-economic content. The government is more often morally evaluated for the crisis (M = 0.26) than Boko Haram, whose attribution is the lowest of all six clusters (M = 0.19), and political (M = 2.36) and legal (M = 1.59) treatment recommendations are the strongest.

Frame 2, socio-economic concern (n = 97; 19.3%), gives the opposition its highest prominence of any frame (M = 0.67) and the government its lowest (M = 0.22). Socio-economic issues (M = 0.39) and victims' welfare (M = 0.21) are the main topics, and the economic recommendation is the most emphasised (M = 2.54) alongside social (M = 1.60) and political (M = 1.69) recommendations.

Frame 3, government and Boko Haram-induced military issues (n = 45; 9.0%), is the smallest. The opposition is least visible here (M = 0.13), military engagement dominates as a topic (M = 0.89), responsibility is strongly attributed to Boko Haram (M = 0.73), and the military recommendation is the highest of any frame (M = 2.80).

Frame 4, positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram (n = 74; 14.7%), combines favourable evaluation of actors (M = 2.72) with strong attribution of responsibility to Boko Haram (M = 0.82), the highest value among the clusters. Victims' welfare, government response and military engagement are the main topics, and social (M = 2.18) and military (M = 2.48) recommendations are emphasised.

Frame 5, social debate around military engagement (n = 115; 22.9%), is the largest. Military engagement is the leading topic (M = 0.50) with some attention to government response,

attribution to Boko Haram is moderate (M = 0.46), and social (M = 1.29) and military (M = 1.26) recommendations are present but weaker than in Frame 4.
Frame 6, victims' welfare concerns (n = 76; 15.1%), centres on victims as a topic (M = 0.42), with both government (M = 0.44) and opposition (M = 0.39) visible as actors, strong attribution to Boko Haram (M = 0.72) and social recommendations (M = 1.47). The military recommendation is the lowest in the analysis (M = 0.93).

Table 3: The six frames identified

Frame	n (%)	Distinguishing features (cluster means)
1. Political and legal issues around elections	94 (18.7%)	Elections topic 0.46; government moral evaluation 0.26; Boko Haram attribution lowest (0.19); political 2.36, legal 1.59
2. Socio-economic concern	97 (19.3%)	Opposition highest (0.67), government lowest (0.22); economic recommendation 2.54
3. Government and Boko Haram-induced military issues	45 (9.0%)	Military engagement 0.89; opposition lowest (0.13); military recommendation highest (2.80)
4. Positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram	74 (14.7%)	Actor evaluation 2.72; Boko Haram attribution highest (0.82); social 2.18, military 2.48
5. Social debate around military engagement	115 (22.9%)	Military engagement 0.50; Boko Haram attribution 0.46; social 1.29, military 1.26
6. Victims' welfare concerns	76 (15.1%)	Victims topic 0.42; Boko Haram attribution 0.72; social 1.47; military lowest (0.93)

Source: Author's analysis; N = 501 cases. Actor and topic variables range from 0 (not mentioned) to 1 (mentioned); actor evaluation from 0 to 3; treatment recommendations from 0 (mentioned and disagreed) to 3 (mentioned and agreed).

4.3 RQ2: Framing in The Nation and the Daily Sun

Coverage differed between the two papers (Table 4). In the Nation the social debate around military engagement was the most frequent frame (23.6%), followed by positive evaluation and attribution (20.7%) and socio-economic concern (16.9%). In the Daily Sun the political and legal frame was the most frequent (24.6%), followed by the social debate (22.3%) and socio-economic concern (21.6%). The largest differences were in the political and legal frame, which was twice as common in the Daily Sun (24.6%) as in The Nation (12.2%), and in the positive evaluation and attribution frame, which was more common in The Nation (20.7%) than in the Daily Sun (9.5%). The government and Boko Haram-induced military frame was also more common in The Nation (11.8% vs 6.4%). Victims' welfare concerns were distributed similarly across both papers.

Table 4: Media frames in The Nation and the Daily Sun

Frame	The Nation	The Daily Sun	Total
Political and legal issues around elections	29 (12.2%)	65 (24.6%)	94 (18.8%)
Socio-economic concern	40 (16.9%)	57 (21.6%)	97 (19.4%)
Government and Boko Haram-induced military issues	28 (11.8%)	17 (6.4%)	45 (9.0%)
Positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram	49 (20.7%)	25 (9.5%)	74 (14.8%)
Social debate around military engagement	56 (23.6%)	59 (22.3%)	115 (23.0%)
Victims' welfare concerns	35 (14.8%)	41 (15.5%)	76 (15.2%)
Total	237 (100%)	264 (100%)	501 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

4.4 RQ3: Framing before and after the 2015 elections

Across both papers, the frame mix changed after the election (Table 5). The social debate around military engagement fell from 29.7% to 17.1% of cases and the political and legal frame fell from 23.7% to 14.5%. The government and Boko Haram-induced military frame was almost unchanged (9.5% before; 8.6% after). Three frames gained ground after the election: victims' welfare concerns (9.9% to 19.7%), positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram (11.2% to 17.8%) and socio-economic concern (15.9% to 22.3%).

Table 5: Media frames before and after the 2015 elections

Frame	Before the election	After the election	Total
Political and legal issues around elections	55 (23.7%)	39 (14.5%)	94 (18.8%)
Socio-economic concern	37 (15.9%)	60 (22.3%)	97 (19.4%)
Government and Boko Haram-induced military issues	22 (9.5%)	23 (8.6%)	45 (9.0%)
Positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram	26 (11.2%)	48 (17.8%)	74 (14.8%)
Social debate around military engagement	69 (29.7%)	46 (17.1%)	115 (23.0%)
Victims' welfare concerns	23 (9.9%)	53 (19.7%)	76 (15.2%)
Total	232 (100%)	269 (100%)	501 (100%)

Source: Author's analysis.

Table 6 splits the comparison by newspaper. The political and legal frame was more prominent before the election than after it in both papers: in The Nation it fell from 16.2% to 9.1%, and in the Daily Sun from 29.9% to 19.7%. The Daily Sun carried more of this frame than The Nation in both periods. The social debate around military engagement also fell in both (The

Nation 32.4% to 16.7%; Daily Sun 27.6% to 17.5%). The positive evaluation and attribution frame rose in The Nation (16.2% to 24.2%) and in the Daily Sun (7.1% to 11.7%). Victims' welfare concerns rose in The Nation (5.7% to 22.0%) and, more modestly, in the Daily Sun (13.4% to 17.5%). The socio-economic frame was stable in The Nation (17.1% before; 16.7% after) but rose sharply in the Daily Sun (15.0% to 27.7%).

Table 6: Media frames by newspaper and period

Frame	Nation, before	Daily Sun, before	Nation, after	Daily Sun, after
Political and legal issues around elections	17 (16.2%)	38 (29.9%)	12 (9.1%)	27 (19.7%)
Socio-economic concern	18 (17.1%)	19 (15.0%)	22 (16.7%)	38 (27.7%)
Government and Boko Haram-induced military issues	13 (12.4%)	9 (7.1%)	15 (11.4%)	8 (5.8%)
Positive evaluation and attribution to Boko Haram	17 (16.2%)	9 (7.1%)	32 (24.2%)	16 (11.7%)
Social debate around military engagement	34 (32.4%)	35 (27.6%)	22 (16.7%)	24 (17.5%)
Victims' welfare concerns	6 (5.7%)	17 (13.4%)	29 (22.0%)	24 (17.5%)
Total	105	127	132	137

Source: Author's analysis. Percentages are shares of each column. Cell counts are consistent with the marginal totals in Tables 4 and 5.

5.0 Discussion

The study set out to identify issue-specific frames in the coverage of the Boko Haram crisis rather than to test frames imported from other contexts. Six frames emerged, and they are recognisably tied to the Nigerian situation: the connection between the insurgency and electoral politics, the socio-economic conditions around it, the military response and the debate about it, and the plight of victims. That pattern supports the case made by Matthes and Kohring (2008) for inductive designs, since a predefined set of generic frames would have been unlikely to separate, for example, a frame that evaluates actors positively while pinning responsibility on Boko Haram from one that focuses on the government's moral responsibility.

The differences between the two newspapers are consistent with the expectation that political context shapes frame-building (Craig, 2004; Entman, 2007). The Daily Sun, treated here as aligned with the PDP camp, carried the political and legal frame about twice as often as The Nation, and that frame placed government and opposition in the foreground and made the government the more frequent object of moral evaluation. The Nation, treated as aligned with the APC camp, more often used the frame that couples positive evaluation of actors with attribution of responsibility to Boko Haram. These results are suggestive, but they do not demonstrate that ownership caused the differences. Affiliation was inferred from ownership and was not measured; the sample was small; and no newsroom data on editorial decisions were collected. The accurate reading is that frame distributions differed between the two papers in ways that fit the ownership explanation, and that they might fit others.

The period comparison is the more telling finding. The political and legal frame was more prominent before the election than after it in both papers, which fits the argument that the crisis was bound up with electoral competition (Nsude et al., 2016) and with the way political actors compete to sponsor their preferred definitions of an issue (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). After the election, the coverage shifted towards victims' welfare, socio-economic concern and the positive evaluation and attribution frame, while the social debate around the military response lost ground. A cautious interpretation is that, once the electoral contest had been decided, the coverage turned from the politics of the crisis towards its human and economic consequences. The data do not allow stronger claims about why.

The study has implications for how Nigerian press coverage is read. Schattschneider (1960) argued that the definition of alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and that the choice of conflicts allocates power. Framing that places elections and legal arrangements at the centre of an insurgency may serve political actors more than it serves audiences seeking to understand the crisis, a concern that follows from the normative expectation of neutral coverage (McQuail, 1992). Because this study did not measure audience effects, that concern remains a hypothesis for future research.

6.0 Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

This study identified six issue-specific frames in two Nigerian newspapers' coverage of the Boko Haram crisis, found that the frame mix differed between a paper associated with the APC camp and one associated with the PDP camp, and found that the political and legal frame lost prominence in both after the 2015 election while victims' welfare and socio-economic frames gained prominence. The social debate around military engagement was the most prevalent frame overall. Several limitations apply. The sample of 200 articles from two newspapers and a single database cannot support broad generalisation, and inductive designs are open to criticism for relying on small samples and being difficult to replicate (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Coding was carried out by one researcher, and intra-coder reliability was uneven for some items. The affiliation of the papers was inferred from ownership. Differences are reported descriptively, and the cross-tabulation test statistics in the underlying thesis are not reported here because they could not be reconciled. The data end in May 2017, so the analysis does not capture later developments in the conflict or its coverage. Future research should broaden the empirical base to more newspapers and to television, compare coverage in other countries affected by the conflict such as Cameroon, Niger and Chad, and consider religious and regional differences within Nigeria. Linking frames across the stages of the framing process, from political elites to the media and to the public (Entman et al., 2009), would also help determine how far the patterns observed here reflect elite sponsorship.

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