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Dissecting the Neglect of Humanitarian Crises in Cameroon: A Poststructuralist Analysis

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Master of Science in International Relations

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Abstract

Millions of people around the world remain trapped in ignored humanitarian crises. Faced by worsening conditions, the work of humanitarian agencies, governments, and natural persons cannot fully meet the needs of vulnerable communities. Although the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence underpin humanitarian aid, some crises garner more attention and financial support. Such is the case of the Republic of Cameroon, where three humanitarian emergencies converge: the insurgency of the Jihadi group Boko Haram in the far north, a civil war between francophone separatists and the armed forces in the west, and a refugee crisis from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the east. Despite the severity of these emergencies, Cameroon seldom makes headlines, the authorities' response is insufficient, and the international community remains silent to the plight of Cameroonians. The following master thesis comes as a reaction to the publication of the report *The world's most neglected displacement crises in 2019*, where Cameroon tops the list (NRC, 2019). The research consists of a literature review that draws on poststructural thinking in international relations to unravel the causes of neglect of the Cameroonian crises. The study aims to dissect the complex social and political dynamics that define the inaction of those involved. The discussion section analyses interventions by key actors and events and drawing from ideas by renowned poststructuralist authors such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, amongst others. The study found that hegemonic actors, such as the central government of Yaoundé and the Cameroonian Armed Forces, by means of discursive formations, have recreated constructed realities where their passivity toward the Boko Haram conflict is justified. Media outlets have relied on identitarian issues, such as the composition of the fighting factions in the Anglophone Crisis, rather than broadcasting the needs of displaced populations and have misrepresented the problems faced by refugees in the east. Finally, international actors have been found to influence collective consciousness with discursive strategies to divest funds from humanitarian crises and suit their political agendas.

Key words: Poststructuralism, humanitarian crisis, Cameroon, Boko Haram, Anglophone Crisis,

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| ACAPS | The Assessment Capacities Project |
| ACLED | Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project |
| AfD | <i>Alternative für Deutschland</i> , Alternative for Germany party |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| CRTV | <i>Radiodiffusion-télévision du Cameroun</i> , Cameroon Radio Television |
| FrP | <i>Fremskrittspartiet</i> , Norway's Progress Party |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Persons |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| LDCs | Least Developed Countries |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| NRC | Norwegian Refugee Council |
| OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PiS | <i>Prawo i Sprawiedliwość</i> , Poland's Law and Justice Party |
| RSF | <i>Reporters Sans Frontières</i> , Reporters Without Borders |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UPC | <i>Union des populations du Cameroun</i> , Union of the Peoples of Cameroon |
| USD | United States Dollars |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

1. Introduction

Millions of people around the globe are trapped in neglected crises. Women, men, and children of all contexts fall victims of warfare and are forced to abruptly flee their homes to protect their lives. According to figures by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2021a), there are at least 79.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the present time, which account for 1% of world population. These communities are afflicted by violence, food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, lack of shelter, and inadequate access to health services and education. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), despite efforts by national governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society; most of the vulnerable populations fail to access the relief they require (NRC, 2019). Amid the dire circumstances of disregarded emergencies, the work of the humanitarian sector, philanthropists, authorities, and engaged individuals does not compensate for the heavy toll and disaster on some neglected areas of the planet (European Commission, 2020). Since some crises garner more attention and raise more funds from international donors (NRC, 2019), the burden of limited resources and labour force is unevenly distributed amongst humanitarian crises. Though impartiality and neutrality underpin humanitarian assistance (ICRC, 2019), NGOs must routinely prioritise some crises over others due to financial and logistic constraints imposed by donors.

The neglect of humanitarian crises that seldom make headlines is aggravated by political apathy and conflicting economic interests (Karunakara & Stevenson, 2012). Due to these political and economic dilemmas, some crises generate more media coverage and receive more support from donor countries and private donors (Franks, 2010). Consequently, this neglect lessens donations and aggravates the hardships of refugees and displaced populations in a snowball effect (Nash & Bacon, 2004). The most notable poststructuralist author, Michel Foucault, warns that human interactions and policy making do not take place in a political void (Newman, 2004). The most notable poststructuralist author, Michel Foucault, warns that human interactions and policy making do not take place in a political void (Newman, 2004). In this regard, humanitarian aid is not exempt from the finely woven political narratives and discursive practices that shape international relations. When dissecting the disregard of humanitarian emergencies, it is therefore crucial to address the intertwined political dynamics and discern how they create and reproduce neglect. By using the empirical case of the Republic of Cameroon, the following study aims to make sense of the social phenomena that perpetuate the neglect of humanitarian crises according to poststructuralist scholarship.

The point of departure for this master thesis was the 2019 report “*The world’s most neglected displacement crises*,” where Cameroon topped the list (NRC, 2019). According to sources on the neglect of humanitarian crises, during the nineties there was a scholarly trend that addressed the inaction of the international community regarding the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia (Vaughan, 1999; Ludlow, 1999; Minear et al, 1996). These scholars focused mainly on political inaction and delved into the involvement, or lack thereof, of Western powers (ibid). In the 2000s, the research centred on the neo-colonialist discourses behind natural disasters and humanitarian crises (Rieff, 2003; Neu, 2000; Gathii, 2000). Whereas the contingency is not unheard of in recent international relations scholarship, most of the analyses are confined to donor-recipient relations and incorporate liberal, constructivist, and the English School perspectives (Brown et al, 2021; Sözer, 2020; Isnarti, 2018). Most of the studies on humanitarian emergencies in Cameroon are centred on health issues and children’s rights (Tatah, 2016; Bosch, 2018; Ngwa et al, 2016). Conclusively, there is a gap in the literature for poststructuralist notions to explore the neglect of humanitarian crises in Cameroon, that this master thesis aims to bridge.

This master thesis provides a comprehensive analysis on the neglect of the humanitarian crises taking place at the present time in the Republic of Cameroon, in accordance with poststructuralist ideas within international relations. The literature review in section 2 is an account of scholarly trends concerning neglected humanitarian crises and the case of the three pressing emergencies of Cameroon. The section also introduces the report *The world’s most neglected displacement crises in 2019* by NRC (2019), the point of departure of the research, and delves into its three assessment criteria of the report: lack of political will, lack of media attention, and lack of international aid. NRC is an independent organisation leader in the field of helping people forced to flee (Merkelbach & Kemp, 2016; NRC, 2021b), and its report on neglected displacements crises and data from the field will enrich the analysis section of the study. Subsequently, the text presents the bibliography that addresses the neglect of the Cameroonian crises and the scholar trends that have defined the issue both within international relations and poststructuralist thinking specifically. The theoretical framework in section 3 introduces the philosophical substratum of poststructuralist ideas, the work of the authors that nurture the analysis section, and provides definitions for the core concepts of discourse, identity, and security. The main research questions and the secondary research questions are also introduced in this section.

The methodology in section 4 explains the rationale behind the research process and centres its attention on the literature review as a method, while elaborating on the limitations,

possible biases, the epistemology, and the ontology of the piece. The background in section 5 contains general information about Cameroon, its history, and the juncture of its three humanitarian crises: Boko Haram, the Anglophone Crisis, and the refugee crisis in the east. The findings and analysis in section 6 first analyses the findings concerning the neglect of humanitarian crises and explains how social reality is constructed through discursive formations and can advance a political agenda. In addition, the notions of discourse, identity, and security are used to make sense of the humanitarian crisis created by the insurgency of Boko Haram in the far north. Likewise, these notions serve to dissect the complex social and political dynamics of the Anglophone crisis and the migration patterns from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in eastern Cameroon. The conclusion in section 7 incorporates a call for action for the humanitarian sector and recognises the resilience of actors during these emergencies, especially that of the local communities.

2. Literature review

Pascucci et al (2018) warns that several geopolitical issues are at the core of the neglect of humanitarian crises, especially in the African continent. His research on the fleets of Mediterranean border humanitarians, shows that political decision-making, rather than local issues, is key in brokering solutions for communities fleeing violence. Along these lines, Martin et al (2006) warns that, despite the volatility of the African region, lack of political will remains the root cause of worsening conditions in the setting of war. Likewise, NRC (2019) states that all neglected humanitarian crises around the globe are characterised by political passivity. This lack of political engagement is measured in terms of the willingness of the fighting factions to protect civilians and engage in negotiations, as well as the international community's disposition to mediate (Hoffman, 2011). Likewise, Heath (2020) expresses that the implementation of a peace accord and the decline in the number of refugees are intrinsically linked to political will. While actions by governments have a direct impact on the status of a crisis, central and western Africa has a long history of corruption and absence of the state in security matters (Michael et al, 2020). Therefore, crises like the ones in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, amongst others, rely on media attention to foster change (Kalyango & Onyebadi, 2012).

Broadcasting crises to a wider public is a *sine qua non* when tackling the consequences of war and natural disasters and dealing with the aftermath. Choi (2013) states

that humanitarians depend on media to bring attention to the needs of affected communities and ensure a constant flow of donations. Experts in the field of media coverage of humanitarian emergencies such as Greussing & Boomgaarden (2017) and Scott (2018) argue that the level of media attention does not necessarily correlate to the dimension a crisis. When elaborating on humanitarian advocacy, Franks (2010) warns that scarce and ineffective media coverage is at the core of the stagnation or failure of peace mediations. Simply stated, ineffective reports are those that overshadow the adversities of susceptible communities with the broadcasting of political alliances, motivations of the confronting parts, and military strategies (ibid). Prior research by the author exposes a direct connection between media coverage and international intervention, which is pivotal in an eventual truce or peace accord (Franks, 2006). Dependable media reporting is accordingly key in addressing ignored humanitarian calamities around the world.

Media certainly plays a preeminent role in amplifying the dire need for assistance, but this distress signal must ultimately reach the ears of donors. Whereas other mitigation schemes are vital, international aid remains the single most important factor in interrupting the neglect of a humanitarian emergency (NRC, 2019). United Nations (UN) agencies and international NGOs engage with donor countries, launch donation campaigns, and reach partners in the private sector to secure funds for relief (Olin & von Schreeb, 2014). Willitts-King (2019), however, warns that the financial resources obtained by these efforts are rarely sufficient to back humanitarian operations. For instance, auxiliary funding includes in-kind and monetary aid by natural persons and vulnerable communities themselves, national and regional support from authorities, remittances, and faith-based contributions; and the sector also benefits from volunteers (Aflaki & Pedraza-Martinez, 2016). Moreover, international aid has stagnated in recent years with funding reaching a high of 29 billion USD in 2019, virtually the same figure as in 2017 and 2018, yet the number of people in need keeps escalating (Parker, 2020). These donation campaigns are met in varying proportions and, according to literature (Syroka & Wilcox, 2006; Rose et al, 2013; Barnett & Walker, 2015), countries in west and central Africa tend to garner the least attention and aid.

Rose et al (2013) asserts that the African continent is by far the most neglected region when it comes to relief efforts in natural disasters and war context. Case in point, Africa hosted nine of the ten most neglected humanitarian crises in the world in 2019, with the Republic of Cameroon at the top of the rank (NRC, 2019). The country is a cause of great concern for humanitarian agencies and international organisations such as the African Union (Okereke, 2018). People fleeing regional warfare and the Séléka insurgency in the Central

African Republic and tribal clashes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have converged in the east (Buchanan-Clarke, 2021; UN News, 2021). Boko Haram conducts terrorist attacks and abducts civilians in the far north. (Oxford Analytica, 2019; Forku, 2021) and confrontations between separatists and the Cameroonian Armed Forces (*Forces armées camerounaises*) in the anglophone regions have led to social upheaval in the west (Kamé, 2018; Crisis Group, 2017). In addition, the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has given no respite to the nation, as 8,000 new refugees and internally displaced people were added in the first quarter of 2020 (HRW, 2020).

Albeit facing three separate humanitarian crises, Cameroon garners minimal media resonance and hardly makes headlines overseas (NRC, 2019). As reported by NRC (2019), the country leads the list of the world's most neglected crises. Given its history, Cameroon is accustomed to dealing with humanitarian emergencies that have been consistently disregarded by the international community (Takougang & Krieger, 2019). To put things into perspective, Cameroon scores 0.08 in the scale of media reach of humanitarian crises created by Meltwater, in which Iran, the most covered crisis in 2020, was given a value of 1 (Dods, 2020). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the aid appeal by the UN to respond to the displacement crisis in Cameroon only reached 50% of the target funding in 2020, which shows little support by the international community (IOM, 2021). As per political neglect, Cameroon scores 1, the lowest amongst all ranked countries, in a scale created by NRC (2020a), in which 10 represents an improving situation, 5 stagnation, and 0 worsening conditions. For this last ranking a total of 41 crises causing more than 200,000 displacements in 36 countries were assessed.

The status of the three distinct emergencies has been progressively worsening and international agencies, the government, and civilians see no respite (Nwati, 2021). As informed by Reporters Without Borders (RSF, 2019), journalists in the country routinely face arbitrary incarcerations, detentions, and heavy interference by authorities and non-state armed groups. A very reduced number of journalists have been granted access to conflict areas, thus worsening the absence of neutral reporting (NRC, 2019). Cameroon was the lowest funded international humanitarian crisis in the globe in proportion with its size, with less than half of the required funding reached in 2019 (Yotebieng, Syvertsen, & Kum Awah, 2019). Moreover, the political setting is volatile and efforts in mitigating the impact of war and displacement are insufficient (Pemunta & Aristide, 2013). During 2019, there were unsuccessful mediation attempts between clashing parties and insecurity has become widespread in rural areas (NRC, 2019). As of the time of writing of this master thesis, the

Cameroonian humanitarian crisis showed no signs of improvement whatsoever. Cases of looting are commonplace, at least 700,000 children have abandoned school due to confrontations, and 300,00 people are fleeing the Jihadi group Boko Haram in the far north (NRC, 2021a).

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Poststructuralism

Due to its focus on unveiling realities disregarded by hegemonic views, poststructuralist philosophy will be the cornerstone of the discussion throughout this study because (Edkins, 2007). Since humanitarian crises are consistently neglected by dominant actors (e.g., donor countries), poststructuralism can help us understand the hidden dynamics and is therefore a suitable perspective to tackle this issue. Accordingly, poststructuralism presents itself as a useful tool to deal with humanitarian crises, as they encompass both global political dilemmas (e.g., relations between donor and recipient countries, securing a shift in international humanitarian policy, etc.) and local contingencies (e.g., providing aid in hard-to-reach areas, building resilience and social capital in vulnerable communities, etc.).

International relations, as a discipline, saw the dawn of these perspectives in the early nineties with the work of James Der Derian & Michael Shapiro and Richard K. Ashley & R.B.J. Walker, which built upon the philosophy of French sociologist Michel Foucault (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016). Poststructuralism primarily presents a critical lens to global politics and aims to challenge what is accepted as knowledge and truth (Edkins, 2007). As the world is never separate of personal interpretations, this school of thought calls into question the possibility of reaching universal truths (Hansen, 2016). Notable poststructuralist authors such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, and Julia Kristeva are sceptical of universal narratives that claim to offer an objective perspective of the world because hegemonic views establish such assumptions (Edkins, 2007). In so doing, they argue that knowledge and truth become extensively accepted due to the prestige of certain social actors, who inform dominant narratives (McMorrow, 2018). This perspective therefore collides with traditional thinking in international relations, as it considers that dominant perspectives are incapable of explaining the wide array of phenomena in international politics (Selby, 2007).

Foucault's theories have shaped Western communication studies, psychology, anthropology, sociology, literary theory, Marxism, feminism, and critical theory since the 1960s (Ezzamel & Willmott, 2010). According to his philosophy, the concepts of elites,

discourse, the power of language, and binary oppositions all converge in what he defines as a *regime of truth* (Besley, 2002). His model applies to the dominant discourse that operates unchallenged within society, disguised as the truth (Edkins, 2007). A regime of truth is constituted by the dominant discourse, elite actors, and the language used to create and sustain meaning and truth, which ultimately serve the interest of the favoured actors (Selby, 2007). Poststructuralism aims to highlight existing regimes of truth and shows that conventional analyses in international relations are unable to identify how discourses erase certain scenarios from the start (Miller, 1998). Judith Butler builds upon this idea and claims that the exclusion of possibilities makes people grieve some world events, such as humanitarian crises, more than others (Hook, 2007). For instance, Carter (2013) explains how civilian casualties in countries such as Afghanistan and Palestine, oftentimes by Western actors, are seldom mourned or memorialised in Western media.

This approach to international events underpins a notion of state that sets poststructuralism apart from traditional scholarship in international relations, which considers the state as natural and imperative (Peters, 1996). Poststructuralist scholars oppose this approach and rather centre their attention on the creation of state, as it does not exist *a priori*, according to their ideas (Devetak, 2013). According to Weber (2014), the sovereign state should not be conceived as an *a priori* presence, as there is not a subject/state prior to the political process, it is continuously built through historical practices. More specifically, the existence of the state is the consequence of performativity that is created and re-created through discursive practices, domestic policies, security defence strategies, and membership to international organisations with a distinct identity (Devetak, 2005). This approach, however, is not ought to be understood as an anti-state stance, as poststructuralists neither ignore the state nor aim to go beyond the state (Fagan, 2013). Poststructuralists consider that the state-centric paradigm and its limitations is responsible for the erasure of many aspects of global politics. As a result, they focus on discursive formations that produce the state-centric perspective and tackle the elimination of non-standard practices (Devetak, 2013).

Poststructuralists tackle critical interrogations that involve the exclusions of rogue subjectivities and practices that depart from an accepted standard. Specifically in international relations, the poststructuralist research agenda includes state sovereignty, de-politicising international ethics, and *biopower*. Merlingen (2013) defines biopower as “*a power that operates in the name of expertise rather than politics and targets populations by distinguishing between safe life to be fostered and dangerous life to be contained or eliminated*” (para. 13), which is a key concept in understanding current issues of identity

politics, migration, and war (Fung, 2002). Moreover, Taylor & Vintges (2004) state that poststructuralist notions are widely considered in the context of human rights regimes and in societies burdened by war or dealing with the aftermath of a war. The sceptical approach to the regime of truth is particularly useful in humanitarian affairs, as most war crimes are committed in a context of morality (e.g., patriotism, heroism, tribal or family honour, etc.) or legality by the fighting factions (Dillon & Neal, 2015). The above reasons present a solid case to implement poststructuralist ideas in the analysis of social dynamics affecting humanitarian crises.

The analysis section of the study, whilst diverse in sources, is influenced by the work of some key authors within poststructuralist academia. David Campbell is an Australian political scientist that is known for his work in photography, post-realism, and poststructuralism (The University of Queensland, 2021). His academic production is concerned with how individuals and places globally are represented and the discursive formation of humanitarian crises (Campbell, n.d.). Lene Hansen is a Danish professor in international relations at the University of Copenhagen, whose research focuses on securitisation, discourse analysis, constructivism, identity, foreign policy, and gender. Her use of poststructuralist perspectives in making sense of migration issues, sovereignty state, and conflict (Hansen, 1997; Hansen, 2010; Hansen, 2016) is a key theoretical tool used throughout the discussion section. Dirk Nabers is a German professor in international relations, whose 2015 book *A poststructuralist discourse theory of global politics* introduces a treatment of social phenomena as a discursive formation, which influences the ideas of this master thesis (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, n.d.). Norman D. Palmer is an American professor of international relations and politics that explores basic poststructuralist ideas in his book *Structuralism and poststructuralism for beginners* (University of Pennsylvania, 2021). Finally, Jenny Edkins is a British political scientist, whose research revolve around issues of personhood, politics, and justice in a postcolonial world (University of Manchester, n.d.). Her 1999 book *Poststructuralism & international relations: Bringing the political back in* focuses on the notions of discourse, identity, and security, which conform the conceptual framework of this study.

3.2. Conceptual framework

3.2.1. Discourse

In poststructuralist thought, discourse corresponds to a sequence of representations and practices by which meanings and social interactions are produced and, in turn, political

phenomena become possible. As affirmed by Shapiro (1989), discourses are not simply out there in the world, they are structures materialised by linguistic (and inherently discursive) practices—what he describes as “*ready at hand language*” (p. 79). Accordingly, the factual study of language is crucial to understanding the constitution of political and social life (Selby, 2007). When making sense of an event, discourses allow to transcend materiality and conceive it through its *discursive* formation (Nabers, 2015). Despite the existence of a world external to thought, interpretation in the form of discourse cannot be bypassed (Campbell & Bleiker). This interpretation within discourse is not only linguistic, but it also goes beyond the restrictions of words and language themselves (Hansen, 2010). By using interpretation and analysis of representation, poststructuralists defy political outcomes derived from a naturalised understanding, that could have happened differently (Nabers, 2015; Olssen, 2016).

3.2.2. Identity

Foucault explains that identity is a historical achievement that originates in discourse and remains embedded in it (Dyvik et al, 2017). A person’s identity is the consequence of dynamic and tightly intertwined operations of power, which are produced by power structures (Palmer, 2007). When discussing identity, Foucault focuses on binaries that structure human experience in an *inside* versus *outside* duality (Palmer, 2007; Olssen, 2016). Since binaries conspicuously shape identity, *inside* becomes synonymous with primary, good, and original, whereas *outside* becomes secondary, bad, and derivative (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016). Campbell & Bleiker (2016) state that “*the outside is always central to the constitution of the inside*” (p. 207) and Jacques Derrida extensively dissects the dualism as an attempt to overshadow the secondary counterpart (Palmer, 2007). The binary opposition is intrinsically a power relation where the primary supersedes the secondary in the formation of identity (Olssen, 2016). Furthermore, power is not only repressive, but also productive, as it sustains political positions. In this master thesis, identity will be then understood as socially constructed through exclusions and power relations.

3.2.3. Security

Like the notion of identity, poststructuralists conceive security as a discursive practice (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016). Security cannot be linked to the objective military domain and is studied in a way in which the observer analyses if and how a situation is securitised (Edkins, 1999). Correspondingly, security is an act of speech that diverts from the traditional conception of security politics as strategies to defend a state (Hansen, 1997). The concept of

security is analysed as an accord by which states construct their identity (Edkins, 1999). Poststructuralists thus focus on the linguistic dimension of security, rather than its materiality (Hansen, 1997). According to Leonard (2005), security is determined in a set of discourses that create national identities, by means of power strategies and, oftentimes, through discourses of threat and peril. Therefore, there is an unmistakable connection between national identity and security politics. National identities reveal what the state is and how it became to be and depends on the history that perpetuates the creation of identity, denoting an *inside* that requires protection and a threat that comes from *outside* (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016).

The literature review will draw on these key concepts from poststructuralist thinking to analyse the theory and cases in section 6. This analysis will revolve around the main research question: *“How do poststructuralist notions of discourse, identity, and security help us understand the neglect of humanitarian crises in the Republic of Cameroon?”* and the secondary research questions *“what are the political implications of the press releases by the central government of Yaoundé and the Cameroonian Armed Forces concerning the conflict with Boko Haram?”* and *“how do Cameroonian television channels escalate the Anglophone Crisis?”*

4. Methodology

Following the trend of most research pieces in the discipline of international relations, this master thesis relies on qualitative research to draw conclusions from relevant literature on the issue (Bryman, 2006, p. 98). The text will shed light on the humanitarian crises of Cameroon through already established and amply studied poststructuralist concepts such as discourse, identity, and security; being therefore deductive in approach (Berg & Lune, 2012). The study will turn to literature review to advance its analysis, as this research method is relevant when the researcher intends to *“evaluate the state of knowledge on a particular topic”* and (...) *create research agendas, and identify gaps in research”* (Snyder, 2019, p. 33). Aiming to provide a proper understanding of the social phenomena that impact humanitarian response in Cameroon, the discussion includes triangulation as a qualitative research strategy. Specifically, from the types of triangulations identified by Patton (1999), the text will rely on data source triangulation, by mixing both primary sources and secondary sources. The merged discussion and findings sections will build upon reports by media outlets, intervention by key actors in the Cameroonian crises, peer-reviewed material on humanitarian affairs, and bibliography on poststructuralist philosophy.

Though literature on social research methods expresses that research is to be devoid of personal values, since scientific disciplines are expected to operate on an objective substratum (Bryman, 2016), the discussion would be assuredly influenced by the researcher's philosophical background. According to Killam (2013): "*research is rooted in philosophical beliefs about values, concepts, and the nature of the knowledge*" (p. 3), hence implying that the researcher should strive for objectivity, but this cannot ever be achieved in its entirety. Limitations associated with this research method include exclusion of grey literature, selection bias, and reduced replicability of review methods, which stem from the reliance on literature review as research method (Walliman, 2010). As per the axiological foundation of the study, the researcher will consider the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, as well as religious tolerance, respect for other cultures, racial awareness and allyship, and fraternity. This study will be based on an interpretivist epistemological position, as it deals with social and political phenomena, which differ from the quantifiable traits of hard sciences (Bryman, 2016). Finally, the focus on socially and discursively constructed notions in poststructuralist scholarship is an unequivocal indication that this master thesis is constructivist in its ontology (Elder-Vass, 2007).

The methodology of the literature review followed a seven-step model, as contained in Greene (2006), that was adapted to include poststructural considerations. The motivation behind the study was to learn more about humanitarian response and how to safeguard the lives of vulnerable people in the Global South. In *step 1. Exploring beliefs and topics*, the author retrieved literature that challenged pre-existing biases. This step led to the realisation that the outcomes of the literature review would be inevitably influenced by prevailing personal biases and preconceived perceptions of humanitarian response. Since poststructuralist qualitative research expects to defy hegemonic views (Grant & Giddings, 2002), the author made sure to explore literature that challenge confirmation, culture, question-order, sponsor, and social desirability biases (Schwarz, 2014). In *step 2. Initiating the search*, the report "*The world's most neglected displacement crises in 2019*" became the point of departure of the study, the source of the empirical case: The Republic of Cameroon, and the organisation categories: Lack of political will, media attention, and international aid (NRC, 2019). In *step 3. Storing and organising information*, the information was carefully classified according to the three reasons for neglect. In *step 4. Selecting information*, the geographical framework was reduced to the three regions where humanitarian emergencies were taking place and the time framework was set between 2016, the year of the violent protests in Cameroon, and April 2021, the moment when the collection took place. In *step 5.*

Expanding to secondary sources, the press releases by central government of Yaoundé and local newspapers (both in English and French) were explored. During *step 6. Interpretation phase*, a logical thread between the sources was found and three key concepts: discourse, identity, and security were used to analyse the cases. The final *step 7. Communication phase* will entail the publication of the thesis its subsequent defence. The process required several iterations between steps to generate a proper main research question (Bryman, 2016).

This methodology always considered the particularities of qualitative research using poststructuralist perspectives in international relations. Poststructuralist scholarship critiques, instead of accepting seemingly value-free descriptive or explanatory analysis (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Therefore, methodology enables the researcher to disturb the self-evidence of dominant academia and mediated representation of international affairs that the researcher is tackling (Selby, 2007). The researcher is therefore encouraged to reveal the construction of meaning and how “*subjugation and social injustices that are uncritically and continually reproduced as if they were inevitable*” (Sterling-Folker, 2006, p. 159). Moreover, since poststructuralist perspective emphasise the disruption of hegemonic views and dominant narratives by elite actors (Edkins, 1999), the researcher is expected to adopt a critical attitude and adhere to high ethical standards. As expressed by Foucault:

“The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (Campbell & Bleiker, 2016, p. 232).

Finally, the transgressive nature of poststructuralism makes it suitable to undertake research from the high politics of conflict, global order, intergovernmental networks, and high-level diplomacy to the treatment of vulnerable populations (Davies, 2010), it is therefore a proper perspective to tackle the main research question of this study.

5. Background

5.1. General information and history of Cameroon

Located at the crossroads between West and Central Africa, Cameroon (in French: *Cameroun*) is a sovereign nation organised as a unitary dominant-party semi-presidential constitutional republic (Awasom, 2000). Its territory of 475,442 km² is bordered by Chad to the northeast; the Central African Republic to the east; Nigeria to the west and north; and the

Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea to the south (McCormick, 2004). As described by Mbaku (2005), the country hosts a highly ethnically and culturally diverse nation of 26 million inhabitants that speak more than 250 native languages. The official languages of Cameroon are French and English, and its population is predominantly Christian, with an important minority of Muslims, and other animist and traditional creeds (Kouega, 2008). Its geography exhibits all major climatic and vegetative features of the African continent: rainforests, savannas, coasts, deserts, plains, and mountains (Tichaawa, 2017). Indeed, the country is vastly known as “*Africa in miniature*” for this geological and cultural diversity (Pereltsvaig, 2020). Its main cities are Douala; the economic hub and seaport, Garoua, and Yaoundé; the political capital (McCormick, 2004).

The earliest inhabitants of the land were the Baka tribes in the rainforests and the Sao people in Lake Chad (Roberts, 2013). In the fifteenth century, Portuguese explorers named the area “*Rio dos Camarões*” (Shrimps River), which evolved into “*Cameroon*” in English (Newitt, 2010). The nineteenth century saw the rise of the Adamawa Emirate in the north and the establishment of chiefdoms in the north-west (Hopkins, 2019). Cameroon became a German colony in 1884 and, after the first world war, was divided between France (*French Cameroons*) and the United Kingdom (*British Cameroons*) as mandates (Davidson, 2014). The political party *Union des populations du Cameroon* (UPC) initiated an independence campaign in French Cameroons that led to the Bamileke War, which ended in 1971 (Hopkins, 2019). French Cameroons gained independence in 1960 and the British Cameroons joined them as a federation 1961, as the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Le Vine, 1964). The United republic of Cameroon followed the dissolution of the federation in 1972 (Hopkins, 2019). Cameroon adopted its current name and became a unitary presidential republic in 1984 (Davidson, 2014).

The 1990s were characterised by a severe economic crisis as a result of corruption, falling oil prices, and drought (Takougang & Krieger, 2019). Whilst the national gross product increased with the introduction of neo-liberal policies, Cameroon has remained reliant on international development aid (Tambi, 2015). Since 1990, the anglophone regions called for greater autonomy from the central government and the Southern Cameroons National Council has pressed for a unilateral declaration of independence (Keke, 2020). After Cameroon gained sovereignty over the oil rich Bakassi peninsula in 2006, locals revolted, and clashes lasted until 2009 (Adigbuo, 2019). In 2008, violent protests against high oil fuel prices in 31 municipalities left a tally of 100 deaths and damage to property at 16 million euros (Amin, 2012). Since 2014, the state has waged a war against the Boko Haram Jihadi

group in the north of the country (Kah, 2017). In September 2017, guerrilla fighters seeking the independence of the English-speaking regions as the Federal Republic of Ambazonia started a war with the Cameroonian Armed Forces (Okereke, 2018).

5.2. Humanitarian crises

5.2.1. Boko Haram

Boko Haram or officially *Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād* (جماعة أهل السنة للدعوة والجهاد, *Peoples of Sunnah for preaching and jihad*) is a terrorist organisation based in north-eastern Nigeria that follows a Sunni Salafi-Jihadi, Wahhabi, and anti-Western ideology (Walker, 2012). The denomination “*Boko haram*” can be translated as “*Western education is sinful*” or “*forbidden*” (Mohammad, 2014). The founder of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, was inspired by ultraconservative Islamic preachers, especially Mohammad Marwa, who criticised the reading of any book different to the Quran (Sergie & Johnson, 2015). Boko Haram is an opponent of Western art, education, or any form of influence over Nigerian Society, as they are all part of a culture of corruption (Mohammad, 2014). Upon its formation, the main goal of the group was to purify the Islamic practices in northern Nigeria, but it later grew into overthrowing the Nigerian government and establishing an Islamic regime (Walker, 2012). As a Salafi Jihadi group, the organisation aims to establish a caliphate that gathers all Muslims on earth and is not a part of any modern sovereign state (Mohammad, 2014). Their attacks mostly consist of suicide bombings as well as armed incursions on both military and civilian sites. Boko Haram gained global relevance in April 2014, when 276 girls, most of them Christian, were kidnapped in Chibok town, Nigeria (Strochlic, 2021).

Boko Haram’s insurgency started in 2019 and swiftly spread across the basin of the Lake Chad, including Cameroon (Amnesty International, 2021). According to Oxford Analytica (2021), attacks in Cameroon in the past two years were higher than those of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad combined. Since December 2020, their militants have killed at least 80 civilians and looted hundreds of houses in the far north region. Their attacks frequently target populated areas, seemingly to maximise the number of civilian deaths (HRW, 2021). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the national government has not taken proper measure to protect vulnerable populations whilst “*Boko Haram is waging a war on the people of Cameroon at a shocking human cost*” (HRW, 2020, para. 2). Moreover, international NGOs have reported widespread human rights violations and crimes under international humanitarian law by Cameroonian Armed Forces fighting Boko Haram in the

far north (Bokeriya & Omo-Ogbebor, 2016). These crimes include arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, systematic torture, and have forced hundreds of IDPs to garrison towns (Bokeriya & Omo-Ogbebor, 2016; HRW, 2020).

5.2.2. The Anglophone Crisis

The Anglophone Crisis (*La crise anglophone*) or simply the Cameroonian Civil War is a conflict in the north- and south-west regions of Cameroon (jointly known as *Southern Cameroons*) between English-speaking separatists and the Cameroonian Armed Forces (Okereke, 2018). Following the suppressing of the 2016 protests, Ambazonian insurgents launched an armed campaign after unilaterally declaring independence (Agwanda et al, 2020). In November 2017, the government sent its forces to the anglophone regions, and the conflict escalated within a year (Okereke, 2018). In summer 2019, the government regained control of the main urban areas, while the Ambazonian nationalists controlled the countryside (Agwanda et al, 2020). As of 2020, there are clearly define frontlines with a mutual acknowledgement of who governs over which areas (Nwati, 2021). Though the Cameroonian Armed Forces have been known to raid villages under separatist jurisdiction, there have been no attempts at recapturing them, focusing instead on keeping a presence in the major cities (ibid). This ongoing crisis is the consequence of what historians call the *Anglophone problem*, meaning the historical tensions between English- and French-speaking Cameroonians, which have origins in the colonial legacy of the former German, British, and French empires in the country (Okereke, 2018).

Though the Anglophone problem dates to the identitarian tensions of the 1970s, the crisis has never been as acute as it is today (Nwati, 2021). Small secessionist groups emerged in January and are taking advantage of the current tensions to radicalise rural populations with the backing of the anglophone diaspora (ibid). These groups were responsible for ambushing senior government officials, killing gendarme officers, policemen, and civilians, (Xinhua, 2021a; Xinhua, 2021b) and, recently, for sabotaging the postponed 2020 African Nations Championship in Limbe (Atabong, 2021). In order to assuage tensions, in March the government created the National Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, new seats for Common Law at the Supreme Court and departments at the National School of Administration and Magistracy and recruited bilingual instructors for the national educational system (Foute, 2021). According to leaders of the Anglophone movement, these measures are insufficient after decades of political inaction (Amin, 2021). Moreover, such initiatives have failed to appease hostilities, and the displacement crisis deepens by the days; whilst the

international community remains silent (NRC, 2021c). According to Forcha (2021), without coordinated pressure from international partners, lasting solutions will not be implemented.

5.2.3. Refugee crisis in the east

Cameroon, with a population of 25 million, host close to 2 million refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPS (Kindzeka, 2021). About half a million of these correspond to people fleeing violence in the neighbouring Central African Republic, Boko Haram in other countries of the Lake Chad basin, and tribal clashes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Lengauer & Mack, 2021). Central African nationals remain the most numerous with 322,000 living in Cameroon, mostly in the East Region (Kindzeka, 2021). Though the borders between the two countries are officially closed due to the COVID-19 restrictions, 5,655 people have managed to cross into Cameroon between mid-December 2020 and mid-June 2021 (UNHCR, 2021c). According to Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the Central African Republic “*is now the most dangerous place for humanitarian work,*” (Kindzeka, 2021, para. 4), adding that in June 2021 the country accounted for over 46% of worldwide incidents registered by international NGOs. These acts include detentions, abductions, verbal or physical assaults, attacks to facilities, theft of humanitarian supplies, killings, and injuries (Lombard, 2016). At the present time, there are refugee centres in Borgop, Gado BAdzere, Lolo, Mbilé, Timangolo, and Yakadouma and entry points in Adamoua, Garoua-Boulai, Gbiti, Kentzou, and the East Region (ReliefWeb, 2021).

6. Findings and discussion

6.1. Neglect under the microscope: *humanitarian crises and post-structuralist thinking*

Understanding the motivations and the rationales behind the press and media scope of coverage of humanitarian crises is crucial to overcoming their neglect. Media, in all its forms but especially digital, is a fast way to showcase humanitarian needs and open the gate to first-hand information. Media companies, however, as most profit-oriented organisations, operate in conformity with the trends of supply and demand. That is, articles that gather the most views, reads, likes, and shares—and in turn gross more revenues—are given priority and are repeatedly sensationalised (Carvajal, García-Avilés, & González, 2012). According to Edkins (2007), discourse is created through portrayals or depictions that overstep materiality, which successively shape social reality. When media conglomerates broadcast humanitarian crises that their public could feel more fascinated by, they make use of discursive techniques to heighten the emergency and garner more viewership (Moeller, 2006). The exacerbated rendition of the events establishes a social reality that the audience accepts without

questioning, and later reproduce, as explained by McMorrow (2018) and Dyvik et al (2017). In this constructed reality, some crises become more imperative to tackle than actual data collected by researchers and field workers states. As a result, crises that require more coverage, but are less fascinating for viewers or readers, end up in a self-perpetuating cycle of neglect.

6.1.1. Pushing a political agenda

Nabers (2015) explains that social reality through discourse is not only responsible for aggravating a crisis by dissipating media attention, but also by pushing a political agenda. Scholars such as Seib (2005) and Harb (2017) have recognised how Western media reports on Middle Eastern crises in a manner that favours the anti-migrant stances of national governments. For instance, when reporting on the humanitarian needs of Syria, Norwegian news concentrate on the end of the conflict (Dagsavisen, 2021) and characterise the notorious advancements in security in cities like Damascus and Aleppo (Lien, 2021). Similarly, Politiken, a Danish news outlet, goes further and reports fondly on the “*genopbygning af Syrien*” [rebuilding of Syria] (Jerichow, 2021, para. 1). These comments certainly do not occur in a political void: The Danish government is planning to open asylum centres in third countries (BBC, 2021) and the Norway’s Progress Party (FrP) is proposing to follow the lead (Capar, 2021). Here, the discursive formation generates a reality where anti-migrant policies are needed, in spite the profusion of reports that show otherwise (OCHA, 2021; UNHCR, 2021a) and, thus, neglects the severity of an ongoing crisis. In conformity with Hansen (2010), power lies in its discursive framing and its capacity of creating a widespread perception of an event, like in Scandinavian reports about the Syrian crisis.

As with these political agendas in media coverage, identity can serve a crucial role in making sense of the neglect of a humanitarian catastrophe. When broadcasting incidents in warzones, journalists are likely to put an emphasis on the identity of the opposing factions, elaborate on the war strategies, and focus on isolated events that have to do with ethnicities, religious or cultural differences (Tumber, 2008). In highlighting these easily recognisable traits, news outlets appeal to biases that their public might hold and fabricate a reality that can be explained in simple binaries. Let us take for instance the case of French media in the Central African Republic, where they have been noted for their depiction of regional clashes as a sheer Christian-Muslim conflict (Bouju, 2015). French media advances a narrative by portraying Christians as defenceless, diffusely labelling Muslims as aggressive (Dickès, 2015). It is evident here the formation of a Muslim identity that is derivative of the primary

Christian counterpart and therefore principled—as explained by Jacques Derrida’s poststructuralist thinking (Palmer, 2007). By antagonising Central African Muslims, media companies share a digestible message to an overwhelmingly Christian audience and dissipate the attention from the emergency, which perpetuates its neglect.

6.1.2. Sharing the spotlight

The convoluted phenomena of identity equally affect crises that are more removed from the collective imaginaries. Foucault recognises that identity is defined by history and, more precisely, as the culmination of historical processes (Palmer, 2007). As reported by the monitoring centre Meltwater, Mexico was at the peak of most widely covered humanitarian crises in 2020, whilst the Democratic Republic of the Congo lied at the bottom (Dods, 2020). When reporting on the security emergencies taking place in Mexico, media outlets accompany their digital articles with mentions of well-known Mexican staples such as gastronomy, TV series, and music (Olsen, Carstensen, & Høyen, 2003)—which are historically constructed identities. The intense crisis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by contrast, is narrated exclusively in terms of actors and figures (Odine, 2013) and with unrelated references such as the Rwandan genocide of 1994 (Rédaction AfricaNews, 2021). As explained by Olssen (2016), historical processes, and consequently identities, shape collective consciousness and imaginaries. This process favours crises in countries with well-established identities, as they are more likely to generate more media attention. Therefore, crises like the one in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are less likely to garner coverage and this snowball effect leads to more neglect.

6.1.3. Funds and anti-migrant rhetoric

Fundraising for neglected humanitarian crises is also informed by the complex dynamics of discourse and identity. In conformity with Beaumont (2019), resources for the aid sector have been in a steady decline since 2017 and were in a distressing low level even before the COVID-19 pandemic rattled global markets. Figures by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that humanitarian assistance has fallen 8% since 2017, and development assistance to the least developed countries (LDCs) by 3% (OECD, 2021; UNCTAD, 2021). According to NRC (2019), nine of the ten most neglected humanitarian crises are occurring in LDCs, with the only exception being Venezuela, where, in any case, economy has been in a freefall for years. Immediately before the pandemic, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed that global humanitarian needs accounted for 26 billion USD and donors only supplied 7 billion USD (ICRC, 2019). Donor

countries, however, argue that their duties to the global humanitarian sector are being fulfilled (Pupavac, 2016) and, through anti-migrant rhetoric, insist that these crises are not responsibility of affluent countries (Chadwick, 2015). As explained by Nabers (2015), these discursive formations are to blame for the unceasing neglect of crises, as explained hereafter.

Prominent scholars such as Smith (2018) and Cheung-Blunden (2020) state that anti-migrant speech in Western liberal democracies also upset international aid and security trends. The case of ex Polish Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński and leader of right-wing Law and Justice party (PiS) serves as an illustration of how identity takes place within security discourse (Hansen, 1997). Recognised for his xenophobic remarks, Kaczyński has referred to Afghan asylum-seekers as “*parasites*” (Chadwick, 2015, para. 4). His political agenda pushes nationalistic ideas and advocates for the securitisation of the borders of the European Union (Yermakova, 2019). Embedded in his speeches there is a clear contrast between *inside* and *outside* that further emphasises the formulation of a national (or supra-national here) identity and constitutes a power relation between two opposing parts, as continued in Leonard (2005). This new identity distorts the plight of refugees and their needs, and suggests that budget should be allocated on security, rather than aid. Versluys (2016) explains that these discourses can explain why European authorities have consistently defunded humanitarian causes. This contention elucidates how power, as understood by poststructuralist philosophy, is not only coercive, but also productive, as it introduces political subjects.

The duality of *inside* and *outside*, thereby, assigns identities to those that are within the border of donor countries and those that want to seek asylum. The formation of a supranational identity in the discourses of political movements in the European continent. The representative of the political party Alternative for Germany (AfD), Björn Höcke, once said: “*Let’s not forget, the Syrian who comes to us has still his Syria (...), but if we lose our Germany, then we have no more home!*” (Oliveira & Chadwick, 2015, para. 5). In the same speech, he called for tighter border controls for asylum seekers and reiterated the *driven*, *generous*, and *laborious* nature of Germans (ibid). Here, the discursive petition for securitisation is what Leonard (2015) classifies as a strategy for power through discourses of threat and peril. The contrasting identities create power relations in which the primary identity of German (or European) people set the stage for secondary identities of *lazy*, *selfish*, and *unassertive* qualities of refugees. The cases of Kaczyński and Höcke prove how discursive practices have an impact on collective imaginaries and bolster the neglect of crises in Afghanistan and Syria.

The absence of financial support for some humanitarian crises is as well related to the notion of “*distance*” embedded in the collective consciousness. Specifically, politicians and residents in donor countries believe that a crisis is happening too far away and there are more urgent matters that require funding (Pupavac, 2006). The discursive formations that pinpoint this reality possess a strong claim to truth, as they portray humanitarian aid as a luxury, rather than a necessity (Whiting & Ayala-Öström, 2009). According to Western (2002), policymakers or politicians trying to present an austere façade, support defunding projects that are far removed from voters’ consciousness. When interviewed by Beaumont (2019), NRC Secretary-General Jan Egeland stated: “*It is a question of priorities. The world’s total military expenditure has increased to a whopping \$1.8tn. The cost of closing the humanitarian funding gap and providing people with basic support equals to just about 1% of this*” (para. 11). Furthermore, discursive practices can clearly serve to diffuse attention from issues that do not fit the dominant narrative, as claimed by Dyvik et al (2017).

6.2. Boko Haram and constructed realities: a chronicle of political hues

6.2.1. Political and military inaction

The Boko haram crisis in Cameroon represents a neglected crisis shadowed with political hues and an insufficient government response (NRC, 2019). Hostilities with the Jihadi group have left more than 2 million civilian deaths in the Lake Chad basin, yet the government’s reaction has been scarce and bulky (Mahmood & Ani, 2018). According to Kindzeka (2020), Cameroonians are increasingly concerned that both the government and the military are undermining the war against the insurgency in the north. Experts such as Harkness (2020) and Touo (2020) have denounced the handling of attacks on civilian targets, yet the Cameroonian Armed Forces categorically reject any criticism. As informed by locals in Nguetchewe village, communities are counting on militias, rather than the military to shield their villages from Boko Haram (Kindzeka, 2020). Likewise, residents of Mozogo town state that only ill-equipped vigilantes are seen patrolling the area and believe that the government should recruit more soldiers (Series, 2020). By contrast, the government in Yaoundé informed in January 2020 that the security situation had improved in Mozogo and went as far as to state that Boko Haram was close to being defeated in Cameroonian soil (Kindzeka, 2020). Figures by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), however, show that there were 87 recorded attacks by the group, 22 of them in the Mozogo region in the same timeframe (ACLED, 2020). Here, both Yaoundé and the Cameroonian Armed Forces push a narrative that can be understood under the light of poststructuralist philosophy.

By rejecting reports that portray the dire circumstances experienced by civilians under Boko Haram's reign of terror, the government promotes a reality that suits its agenda. Let us take for example the comments by the Chief of Defence René Claude Meka in 2018 (Ngota, 2018). As reported by Ngota (2018), during a press conference, Lieutenant Meka described how the Cameroonian Armed Forces were "*effectively at work protecting all citizens, their properties and public edifices from the terror group*" (para. 6) and how special envoys continuously visited the troops "*to see if there are adjustments to be done for the military to be more professional in its strategies against Boko Haram*" (para. 6). This embellished version of the facts downgrades the severity of the crisis and creates a false sense of security. Yet, international NGOs at the time of the speech, continued to report attacks in places such as Mozogo, Mawa, and Masahava (International Crisis Group, 2018). In terms of Shapiro (1989), this is a case of how discourses transcend materiality and craft a reality through discursive formations. Claiming that the army is close to defeat Boko Haram (Kindzeka, 2020) is a clear example of *ready at hand language* that creates the social world and informs collective consciousness. It is therefore possible to discern, that in this case, discursive formations allow for a reality where authorities can bypass their duties, thus deepening the neglect of humanitarian needs.

6.2.2. Child recruitment by terrorists

This constructed reality not only allows for a false sense of security, but also removes issues that could undermine the integrity and public perception of the Cameroonian Armed Forces. The literature review of this study found that the military systematically reject reports and assessments that could compromise their reputation. This is especially the case for Boko Haram's recruitment of children, which will be explained hereafter. Onapajo (2020) reports rising concerns by international NGOs over the role of children in the Lake Chad basin and explains how the burden is worsening in what he describes as the "*neglected facet of a decade of terror*" (p. 195). Boko Haram is responsible for the recruitment and use of at least 3,600 children between January 2017 and December 2019, mainly through abduction, in combat and other support positions, including sexual slavery (de Brouwer et al, 2020; Omenma et al, 2020). Isokpan & Durojaye (2016) and Maza et al (2020) state that children are strategic to the insurgents, as they make up for a significant part of their ranks and act as servants.

Despite this reality, Onapajo (2020) warns that the authorities, including high ranks within Cameroonian Armed Forces, do not pay adequate attention to the issue of child

recruitment by Boko Haram. Likewise, Awosusi (2017) and Yakubu (2016) claim that scholarly narratives concerning Boko Haram in Cameroon and policymaking seem to consistently overlook the problem. This lack of political will translates into few interventions to deradicalise, rehabilitate, and reintegrate children implicated in the conflict (Rackley, 2017; de Montclos, 2018; Zenn & Fox, 2020). Here, it is worth mentioning that Cameroon yearly receives foreign aid to provide life-saving measles vaccination, safe water and sanitation, protection, and education for children affected by war, according to the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2021). Therefore, it is in the government's best interest not to provide evidence that the country is shirking in its commitment to children, especially in such a sensitive issue like recruitment by terrorists. Yet, Yaoundé continues to report on the improvement of children's living conditions and the advancement of policies to safeguard them (Kazel, 2020). In terms of Nabers (2015), this is another instance of how, by means of discursive actions, language transcends materiality and builds a reality to suit an agenda. In this regard, the political inaction not only impacts the freedom and survival of children—a source of concern in itself—but also perpetuates the neglect of the crisis in the far north.

6.2.3. Antagonising Muslim Cameroonians

These constructed realities by authorities can be found in Cameroon, a country marked by sheer differences and a fertile soil to shape collective consciousness and inform hegemonic views. Though Cameroon is characterised to be a religiously tolerant society (Terretta, 2006), the government and the army have been known to use the issue of faith to justify their inaction in the far north (de Montclos, 2014). The Cameroonian population is divided between a more affluent centre and south, where Christianity is the dominant religion, and the north, where economy is weaker and predominantly Muslim (Awondo, 2016). When discussing anti-Islamic discourse in Cameroon, Tamfuh (2020) explains that authorities draw on existing ideas about Muslims to portray the northern provinces as a primitive society. In this regard, efforts by authorities aim to portray the north as far removed from the prosperous and organised south (Ayansola & Oamen, 2019). In this constructed reality, investing in more security for the north—and addressing the pleads by war-torn villages like Mozogo—is pointless, as Muslims in the north are simply dealing with the consequences of their backward ways (Nshom et al, 2020; Messanga & Lontio, 2021).

Regarding the issue of Muslim depiction by the state, one of the main findings of the literature review the feeling of concern for their traditions manifested by Christian

respondents (Ayansola & Oamen, 2019; Nshom et al, 2020; Anchimbe, 2021; Messanga & Lontio, 2021). The study on the influence of the view of Islam on Christian-Muslim relations in south-western Cameroon by Effungani & Mavole (2018) is a clear representation of this phenomenon. Respondents consistently conveyed that their Christian traditions should be safeguarded when discussing Boko Haram, even though they had not been explicitly asked about their beliefs (ibid). In this piece, and as well in Nshom et al (2020) and Messanga & Lontio (2021), respondents had pointed out state news as their main source of information. According to Palmer (2007) and Olssen (2016), Foucault explains that the duality of *inside* and *outside* is key in understanding human experience. Here, Christians in the south, who have a shared identity that has been created through shared historical processes (Dyvik et al, 2017), recognise that there is an *outside* conformed by Muslims in the north, that is derivative from a Christians *inside*. Moreover, the discursive practice that sustains securitisation, as understood by Campbell & Bleiker (2016), can be recognised in the shared desire to protect Christian identity from an enemy bigger than Boko Haram itself: the unpredictable *outside*. By pushing discourses that favour religious profession over a jointly shared Cameroonian identity, the neglect of the crisis persists and the dominant narrative by the elite actors (i.e., the government and the military) is re-created, as explained by Edkins (1999).

6.2.4. Competing for attention

The advancement of narratives that suit elites, in conformity with Foucauldian ideas (Besley, 2002), is not a tactic exclusive to Yaoundé, the international community is also to blame for the cycle of neglect. As informed by Michelle Delaney, NRC adviser, Cameroon is a chronic example of a country that is of little geopolitical interest to world powers (NRC, 2020). Not only is the country overshadowed by larger oil-producing economies in the region, but also, the Boko Haram conflict is not in itself associated with Cameroon, but Nigeria. Likewise, NRC (2021c) explains that the generalised silence by the international community over Cameroon can be attributed to the existence of a more relevant (for donor countries, that is) conflict in the region, that of Nigeria. Moreover, Aghedo & Osumah (2015) explains that, despite the situation being more severe in Cameroon, reporting Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria presents a more convenient narrative. Acknowledging that the conflict has not been contained in Nigeria shows that the efforts by the international community have been unsuccessful and millions of taxpayers' money channelled through multilateral organisations have been wasted (Bappah, 2016). As exposed by Edkins (2007), here we can elucidate the making of a regime of truth that informs public consciousness: in this case to diffuse attention

from the military and social missteps in dealing with Boko Haram. As a result of this hegemonic view, the other pressing issues taking place elsewhere in the Lake Chad basin continue to be neglected. All in all, the neglect of the conflict in the north of Cameroon is the result of political passivity and is sustained by discursive formations and identity dynamics that suit the agenda of dominant actors.

6.3. The Anglophone Crisis: *news outlets and the escalation of tensions*

The media coverage of the hostilities between English-speaking separatists and the Cameroonian Armed Forces in the Southern Cameroons has a major impact on the public perception of the crisis (Ngu Cheo, 2021). Anglophones, who constitute 20% of the population of the country, have felt marginalised for decades. In essence, a poorly conducted reunification has subjected the English-speaking minority to a centralised state based in the francophone regions (Pommerolle, M. E., & Heungoup, 2017). As informed by Fai (2018), most francophones understand little of the so-called *Anglophone problem*. Media coverage by major news outlets has played a pivotal role in informing the francophone public's view of the humanitarian crisis since 2016 (Nounkeu, 2020; Ngu Cheo, 2021). From then on, the Cameroonian government has persistently shut down media houses, arrested journalists, and blocked internet access in the Anglophone regions (Dahir, 2018; Shaban, 2018). Media is a decisive facet of the conflict in the Southern Cameroons, and poststructuralist thinking can help foresee hidden narratives.

When assessing the role of media outlets in the crisis, Ngu Cheo (2021) acknowledges that their framing of popular protests and civil society movements has influenced political debates. Media outlets have exacerbated the tensions and fostered a narrative of the conflict as a fight for territorial integrity (Nganji & Cockburn, 2020; Ngu Cheo, 2021). The study, based on the cases Radiodiffusion-télévision du Cameroun (CRTV) and Équinoxe, the two main francophone channels, concluded that television reports had escalated the tensions (ibid). As previously discussed in section 6.2, binaries conspicuously shape identity, but, in this case, the border between the *inside* and the *outside* has not been drawn across linguistic lines. Contrary to the villainization of Muslims in the far north, anglophone Cameroonians are not perceived as removed from the national identity (Ndille, 2016). The broadcasting of the protests hints that foreign powers are threatening the integrity of the nation and depicts separatists as their lackeys (Anchimbe, 2016). The figure of an external enemy is a powerful discursive formation in a country with a long legacy of European colonialism (Nana, 2016). This solid *regime of truth*, as understood by Dyvik et al (2017), justifies military incursions in

the anglophone regions. Likewise, the discourses re-create a reality where the *inside* is held hostage by a well-known and despised *outside*: colonial powers. In this scenario, the humanitarian facet of the crisis, more than merely neglected, is ultimately absent.

The call for military intervention in the context of the separatist campaigns is an indistinguishable sign of security as a discursive practice, as understood by Campbell & Bleiker (2016). Media outlets such CRTV and Équinoxe craft a narrative that underlines the existing sense of belonging to a unified Cameroon of the francophones. This account also re-creates a *regime of truth* where the identity of foreign powers is not only derivative, but also dangerous. In this regard, Leonard (2005) mentions that security is the product of a set of discourses that create national identities, usually through threat and peril. Specifically, the fear of a forthcoming external invasion allows for a military response. Though Edkins (1999) warns that security, in poststructuralist terms, opposes traditional ideas of defence, in this case the military response accounts for a pan-Cameroonian identity sustained by danger. In the diverse “*Africa in miniature*,” this creation of a national identity is particularly effective in a securitised context. In a constructed reality where francophones and anglophones fight on the same side, any demands for regional autonomy do not hold water, thus reinforcing hegemonic views. These unattended demands, in turn, aggravate the situation and diffuse attention from those affected by the hostilities.

6.4. The refugee crisis in the east: *an issue of collective consciousness*

Despite hosting a displaced and refugee population of 2 million people, Cameroon struggles to secure international aid for these communities, according to the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS, 2021). In fact, Walbert (2014) warns that from the three emergencies in Cameroonian soil, the arrival of refugees from other countries in the Lake Chad basin is the most overlooked. International NGOs in the field are in desperate need for funding and key actors in the region such as UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have reduced their food support to refugees in the east, as much as 50 per cent since 2014 (WFP, 2016). In words of a beneficiary of a food distribution scheme:

“In the beginning, UNHCR distributed food to us. But for three years now we have not received any food assistance. One day, they posted a list of names for those that would continue to receive food assistance. We went to look for our names, but our names were not listed. So now if our neighbours receive something, they share with us, and we have something to eat.” (NRC, n.d., para. 8)

When discussing the funding for global HIV and malaria programmes, Spiegel et al (2010) pointed that the public notion of “*possible gain*” (p. 5) affected the willingness of donors to pay for humanitarian schemes. Namely, individuals are more likely to fund projects when the outcomes will be more evident, usually because they would be more easily advertised (Spiegel et al, 2010; Piotrowicz, 2018). Cameroon, at the crossroads of three humanitarian emergencies, is far from this definition. In a similar fashion as the notion of “*distance*” discussed in section 6.1.3., the notion of “*possible gain*” pinpoints a reality with a strong claim to truth, derived from the pressure of providing results, where funding is discouraged.

7. Conclusion

Poststructural thinking provides a useful tool in making sense of the neglect of the humanitarian crises by policymakers, journalists, and international actors. The concepts of discourse, identity, and security can help explain the construction of realities, where overlooking an emergency is more convenient for the hegemonic views. Crises that are fascinating for the public, despite their size, garner more coverage and diffuse attention from more severe emergencies. The discourses undervalue the severity of a crisis and can also advance a political agenda that makes sense in the constructed reality. The focus of Danish and Norwegian news on the improving situation in Syria in a flashpoint of their migration policies exemplifies these dynamics. Identity plays a crucial role in this process, that is, by antagonising an original identity over a derivative one and condensing the complex social dynamics of a crisis into basic binaries of *inside* (original) and *outside* (derivative). Likewise, identity explains why some media outlets prioritise crises from countries that have a well-established identity in the collective consciousness, due to historical processes. The instances of Mexico and the Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrate the difference in public attitudes towards crises that shape neglect.

The poststructuralist notions that inform limited media coverage account for the lack of international funding for the most neglected humanitarian crises. The divestment of funds from humanitarian causes prompted by anti-migrant rhetoric in Europe and the advancement of figures like Kaczyński in Poland show why security is as an inherent discursive practice. In a similar manner, the case of Höcke in Germany misrepresents refugees as an antithesis to the self-imposed identities of donor countries, such as the *driven*, *generous*, and *laborious* nature of German people. Here, the plead for securitisation can be classified as a strategy for power through discourses of threat and danger. This case also shows how identities structure power relations that benefit the original identity and defame the derivative one. Moreover, the

absence of funds for humanitarian aid is related to the notion of distance enclosed in the collective consciousness. Politicians utilise these discursive strategies to the detriment of humanitarian appeals, especially the least known. The discourses that sustain this reality have a strong claim to truth (a concept studied by poststructuralist thinking), as they depict humanitarian aid as a luxury, rather than an urgent need.

In the case of the Republic of Cameroon, poststructuralist perspectives in international relations can help discern the mechanisms that perpetuate the cycle of neglect. In the case of the Boko Haram in the north, the passivity by the authorities and the Cameroonian Armed Forces is sustained by discursive formations and identity dynamics. More specifically, by rejecting reports and assessments that document the dire situations endured by civilians in the region, the government and the army construct, via discursive formations, a reality that protects their interests. Therefore, issues that could undermine their public perception, like the recruitment of children, are systematically bypassed. This burden has been intensively documented by international NGOs, although scholarly trends and policymakers consistently ignore it. This lack of political will leads to fewer efforts to deradicalise and reintegrate former child soldiers, thus aggravating the emergency. Moreover, dominant actors use the existing inequalities (*affluent, Christian, south* versus *impoverished, Muslim, north*) to disincentivise proper intervention in the far north. Finally, the international community re-creates a constructed reality, as explained by poststructuralist thinking, where Boko Haram is an issue of Nigeria, a country with more geopolitical relevance, not of Cameroon. In all these cases, poststructuralist notions such as *discourse, identity, and security* unveil the existence of dynamics that are disregarded by hegemonic views.

The media reporting in the Anglophone Crisis has a crucial role in shaping public perception of the emergency and escalating the hostilities between the separatists and the Cameroonian Armed Forces. Cameroonian television channels, such as CRTV and Équinoxe, have fostered a narrative of the conflict as a fight to protect the territory from foreign invaders. The *regime of truth*, accepted and reproduced mostly by francophones, introduces an *outside* close to collective consciousness: that of colonialism. Likewise, the discursive formations that sustain such reality justify military incursions in the Southern Cameroons. This formations entail a securitisation process, according to poststructuralist thought. In such a linguistically, ethnically, and religiously diverse country, the creation of a national identity is key in safeguarding hegemonic views. In this constructed reality the plight for greater autonomy of anglophone Cameroonians is not sustained and, in turn, the needs of the actual crisis are neglected.

Overall, the topic of neglect in the case of Cameroonian crises is far-reaching and further research on the subject would enrich the discussion and scholarship on this topic. Future research should consider the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country was catalogued as the most neglected displacement crisis in the latest issue of the report, which was published in July (NRC, 2021a). Given the restrictions to curb the infections of COVID-19, the drafting of this master thesis occurred in exceptional circumstances. The impossibility to travel internationally affected the research designs of those that submitted their master theses during the global health emergency. Clearly, a similar study would significantly benefit from other forms of data collection, such as semi-structured interviews, that suitable for face-to-face interactions. Moreover, the inclusion of quantitative data would enhance the quality of the study. For instance, a statistical analysis comparing data between crises to assess neglect or relevance would enrich the literature surrounding the most ignored humanitarian crises. If the study were to be conducted again, the author recommends including more sources from the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, as this were difficult to retrieve given the predominance of the French language. Moreover, the research design should compensate the comparatively larger size of information concerning Boko Haram over the two other crises. The topic could also be tackled with other philosophical substratum within the discipline of international relations, such as constructivism, postcolonialism or feminism.

As extensively discussed throughout this master thesis, the Republic of Cameroon is trapped in a cycle of neglect. As far the author is concerned, this cycle should be broken to safeguard civilian lives and bring stability to the nation. The international community should call out the inaction of the central government in Yaoundé and the Cameroonian Armed Forces. Legislators should enact policies than empower vulnerable people and build capacity and resilience to deal with future shocks. Donor countries should allocate aid funds in terms of needs, rather than geopolitical interests. Likewise, they should grant Cameroon the same importance as other countries in the Lake Chad basin when creating strategies to cope with Boko Haram's insurgency. Aid workers dealing with any of these crises should prioritise advocacy in their operations, as Cameroon is vastly bypassed by international actors. Media companies should invest in quality journalism, strive to unveil hidden narratives, and fight the erasure of stories from vulnerable Cameroonians. Lastly, the author expects this master thesis to amplify the plight of the world's most vulnerable, serve as proof of the paramount role of humanitarian work in a world consumed by indifference, and a recognition to the resilience of people in the context of humanitarian crises.

8. References

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