

Full Length Research Paper

Journalism versus national security: An analysis of reportage by journalists in Kenya defense forces activities during “operation Linda Nchi” (2011-2012)

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This study sought to investigate the complex relationship between journalistic activities and national security. The study answered the following questions: At what point should reporters put aside their professional and career interests for the sake of national security? Should press limits be self-imposed? What obligations do journalists have when it obtains information with national security implication? The study used content analysis to measure these thematic areas. The analysis used 18 newspapers drawn randomly from publications by The Daily Nation and the standard newspapers in Kenya between October 2011 and February 2012. It searched for narratives that undermined government efforts to safe guard national security, caused fear among citizens and undermined the Kenya Defense forces efforts in fighting the Al-Shabaab. The study found out that 64% of the articles exposed government moves geared towards protecting Kenya’s national security, 37% caused fear among citizens by exposing the attacks to Al-Shabbab hence retaliation was eminent and 81% did not care about secrecy of information as they exposed crucial information from the government that could endanger Kenya’s national security. The study concluded that journalist should be trained on ethical reporting and guided on how their coverage can either salvage a national security crisis or make it worse.

Key words: Media, Journalism, National security.

INTRODUCTION

Journalists and their media outlets exist to publish stories. The constitution of Kenya offers press freedom and the government has been battling court cases to try and curtail this freedom especially on matters that touch on national security. According to Lowenthal (2017), freedom to publish is not the same as “the people’s right to know”, which usually complicates the aspect of journalists’ right to publish stories on matters concerning

national security. National Security, in the current description of a Nation - State, refers to the effective management of national affairs of a country at all levels of its operation that aims to maintain the integrity of the nation and the security of its people (Abel, 2006). In the present-day age though, national security has diverged from national defense, and has widened to incorporate different facets of a globalized world, in terms of

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economic, human, cultural, and political security. Although still greatly influenced and defined by the government, national security has nowadays entered the public domain and has been framed by most experts as 'the creation of conditions that contribute to the nation's economic, social, and political matters that safeguard territorial integrity of a state, which sustains these conditions, ensure freedom of choices and capabilities to survive in a volatile security environment' (Cohen-Almagor, 2001).

In Kenya, the strength of its democracy and the best way to pursue and maintain its national interests is through freedom of expression and access to information, which allows citizens to make responsible decisions especially when choosing leaders. Kenya's media industry is quite vibrant. The industry is dominated by six main media groups that control approximately 95% of the audience. They include; the Nation Media Group (NMG); Royal Media Services (RMS); the Standard Group, Mediamax, Radio Africa Group and the national broadcaster, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (Yusha'u 2018).

According to Abel (2006), Dworznik (2016), Kampf (2014), and Livingston (2019), freedom of expression and press freedom also allows the media to inform the public about government activities, promote accountability by government officials, as well as provides solutions to conflict. This encourages various views including dissent voices to be heard. Journalists and media houses therefore, play the role of fourth estate which holds the government accountable in all its activities. However, what obligations do journalists have when it obtains information of national security concerns? Cohen-Amalgor (2001) indicates that, a terrorist attack in the nineteenth century in Nigeria would have become known to people elsewhere around the world only after a few days. This has drastically changed in the current century. The evolution of mass communication and the power of journalistic activities have changed the whole trajectory of events. In the past, journalists have come across information with national security concerns and have agreed not to publish for the sake of national security (Lowenthal, 2017). Good examples include the Cuban exile training camps in Florida (Bohning, n.d.). Several media outlets in the US indicated that they had received this information before *WikiLeaks* published, but declined to publish as it was a threat to "national security". On the contrary, a different picture is seen being displayed in Kenya where journalists received classified information but without giving much thought, went ahead to publish. A good example is statistics given from the Global Terrorism Database which used information from Nation Newspaper indicating that;

"Almost four years after Kenya launched an offensive against Al-Shabaab in Somalia, *Nation Newsplex* has looked at how the action changed Kenya. The analysis

found that there was a steep increase in terrorist attacks since October 2011. Attacks in the 45 months since *Operation Linda Nchi* began were nine times the attacks 45 months before the mission" (Daily Nation Friday, October 16, 2015 — updated on August 20, 2021).

Such information sounds classified and can appropriately be shared with policymakers in the security and intelligence offices of the government to allow them to ponder through the next steps.

Therefore, the major question here is; at what point should reporters put aside their professional and career interests for the sake of national security? Should press limits be self-imposed? What obligations do journalists have when it obtains information with national security implication?

Objectives

This study sought to investigate the complex relationship between journalistic activities and national security by answering the following questions:

- 1) At what point should reporters put aside their professional and career interests for the sake of national security?
- 2) Should press limits be self-imposed?
- 3) What obligations do journalists have when it obtains information with national security implication?

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an elusive relationship between national security and the media (Journalists). Freedom of expression and free media, which are the basic instruments of democracy provide terror groups and their counterparts the publicity they need to inform the public about their operations and goals, sometimes causing unnecessary panic among citizens. Cohen-Almagor (2001), Jackson (1990), Kampf, (2014) indicate that journalists are terrorists' best friend. Larry Grossmann, the president of NBC News unapologetically indicates that;

The job of the press is not to worry about the consequences of its coverage but to tell the truth.... As much as those of us in the press (journalists, editors etc.), would like to be popular and loved, it is more important that we are accurate and fair....and let the chips fall where they may (Larry Grossmann).

Kenya's constitution under articles 33, 34 and 35 of the CoK 2010 comprises protections on freedom of the press and freedom of expression. This is because; journalists and media outlets provide access to information about governments activities and allow citizens to give their

opinion about it. However, government officials have unveiled intolerance for critical media, by introducing restrictive legislation that has been invoked to arrest journalists and their media outlets (Kibet, 2015). Journalists are at risk of harassment and being attacked while carrying out their tasks.

Reporters without Borders' (RSF, n.d.) World Press Freedom Index (WPFI) ranked Kenya 102 out of 180 countries with a score of 33.65%, which is an improvement in ranking by one place and a decrease by the score of -0.07 from 2020. The RSF (n.d.) notes that despite the guarantees in the 2010 Constitution, respect for freedom of the media in Kenya is dependent on the political environment and this is likely to continue impacting the freedom and independence of the media (Freedom House, n.d.).

Some scholars, namely Kelsey (2015), Livingston (2019), and McDonald (2013a) have even expressed concern that the rampant harassment jeopardizes the freedom that journalists have, to express themselves through their work. Contrariwise, looking at the implications that some of the articles have had on national security of Kenya, the question we ask is, which is important or which comes first; national security at large or freedom of expression.

Free speech and free media which is a basic instrument of every democracy has been accused of providing publicity to matters of security concern such as terrorist activities, they have been accused of discrediting government activities that are key in safeguarding territorial integrity of a state, as well as feeding the enemy with classified information that is supposed to be held secret (Dowling, 1986). Mbiijiwe, a security consultant in Kenya indicated that, the failure of safeguarding Kenya's territorial integrity was not on the happenings in the neighboring country, but that Kenya had not done enough for its homeland security after going to war, exposing the country to terror attacks. Did Journalists contribute to these? That covering some of the episodes was ethically problematic, allowing the enemy to know more than they needed to? As Lowenthal (2017) indicates, the government might have limited options to prevent the media from reporting information it has obtained, even if it is classified. However, journalists need to understand that freedom to publish is not the same as "the people's right to know".

Professional and career interests versus national security

Robinson (n.d.) advises that, while it is good to report happenings as they take place, journalists should not offer offenders a stage for glorifying themselves. He continues to indicate that journalists should be conscious of the sensitive nature of their reports that implicate on national security. Journalists can take control of the flow

of information by considering their own ways of circumventing around what is happening without necessarily causing a danger to the national security of a country including the soldiers in the field. It is well understood that when covering national security issues, journalists do encounter complex matters which may provide assistance to those who would do harm to the country. However, exposing the deaths and casualty's resultant from any battle exposes the ineffectiveness of a country's security tactics to the terror groups. Such articles only confirm what Surette and Otto (2002) established through a survey that, journalists publish reports on war and other security threats in a populist and dramatic manner using different techniques to attract people's attention. Their selective reports about war and violence do not reflect the nature and extent of war presented in official statistics and victimization surveys.

According to Ngwainmbi (2019), Governments and the general public have different opinions of what roles media play. On the one hand, enemies of the government such as terror groups and militia look at media as a collaborator since they publicize their events whether it's hurting national security or not, while on the other hand, governments try to suppress this by all means (McDonald, 2013b). Research conducted by Raphael Perl of Defense Division Research services in the USA government in 2017 argued that, terrorists position themselves with media personnel in order to receive publicity from them. They could even go as far as pursuing control of small and medium news organizations by funding their programs. In such instances these media houses and their journalists are required to cover terror events and become an eye of the arms of government that deal with national security.

Therefore, it is crucial to find the right way to check on journalists' activities and who funds their programs without necessarily infringing on their freedom. Media activities must be considered when forging national security policies as failure to recognize them might threaten the territorial integrity of a country owing to the important role; they play in dissemination of government activities as well as other parties' activities (Zhang, 2011). Terrorist need publicity in order to promote their cause, and since the media tends to report all sides of a story, they expect segments of the public to have a favorable understanding of their message. Simply put, terrorists see the media as their ally. Raphael (2008), of the Defense Division of the Congressional Research Service in the US has successfully argued that terrorists' sympathetic personnel in press position particularly in wire services and in some instances may even seek to control smaller news organizations through funding and seek to court, or place, sympathetic personnel in press positions, particularly in wire services and in some instances may even seek to control smaller news organizations through funding. For governments, the media defend national interests when covering terrorist

events; it should serve as the eye of the government and defend public programs designed to counter terrorist plots and actions. Terrorists need publicity in order to promote their cause, and since the media tends to report all sides of a story, they expect segments of the public to have a favorable understanding of their message. Simply put, terrorists see the media as their ally. Therefore, an important lesson to learn from the Israeli situation is that the power of the media in reporting, analyzing, and capturing images of military involvement around the world must be considered in the forging and execution of national security decision making (McDonald, 2013c; Zhang, 2011). Failure to appreciate the media's influence will likely result in eroding public support for national strategy and policy reversals. Although the media is often portrayed as the villain in national security decision making, it performs an important role altogether.

Imposing press limits

Should press limits be self-imposed? According to Abel (2006), the media play a key role in safeguarding of human rights. They have the ability to expose human rights violations while offering an arena for diverse voices to be heard in the public. However, this power can be easily misused to the extent that the actual functioning of democracy is threatened. Several media outlets in African countries have been turned into propaganda amplifiers for the tyrants in power, while other media incite hatred against vulnerable groups (Kelsey, 2015; Mills, 2008; and Nacos, 2016).

Political activity mostly concerned with national security is a step above propaganda (Lowenthal, 2017). Every political leadership worries about its national integrity and security. Therefore, they could use the power that the media has to propel false fear amongst the enemy. According to an article by Raphael (2008), the tactic used by Al-Shabaab is known as PSYOPS (Psychological Operations). Al-Shabaab took advantage of the lack of transparency from its adversaries, comprising some governments, together with the demand by some international media outlets for details from the battleground, by framing itself as a trustworthy source on the ground hence twisting the information. According to this author, PSYOPS comprises the group's broader messaging operations as well as warfare campaigns. In its PSYOPS strategy, the Al-Shabaab strives to sway internal politics in East African countries, as a way of gaining traction on the battlefield in Somalia. Therefore, media houses and their journalists find themselves in this mix. To avert such predispositions, the media fraternity needs to have a system of self-regulation which is based on an established code of ethics and a mechanism to receive and respond to complaints, for instance through an ombudsman or a media council.

The idea of self-regulation springs out of the desire by

quality-conscious journalists and media to correct their mistakes and to make themselves accountable to the public. One purpose is to develop ethical principles, which would protect individuals or groups from unacceptable abuse in the media (Zhang, 2011).

According to Pratt (2013), exaggeration of stories concerning national security and terrorism has become common world over, which cultivates feelings of insecurity among civilians. This promotes a siege mentality. It is indicated that misinformation and propaganda can thrive in situations of scarce or partial access to trustworthy alternative sources of information. It can also cause fear among citizens to an extent that they imagine the government has been defeated. These could translate into protests or lack of trust to the government of the day.

Ross (2011) indicates that, the single way upon which media freedom can be matched with matters of national security concerns lie in imposing of regulations. The biggest question is who imposes these regulations? Are they self-imposed by the journalists? Imposed by the owners of the media houses or by the government? According to Ross (2011), self-regulation aids in maintaining the media's credibility with the public. It shows that they are not irresponsible. It will ensure that they are condemned for their professional misconduct, not by the government but by their peers in the profession. However, do the journalists live up to these standards? One purpose is to develop ethical principles, which would protect individuals or groups from unacceptable abuse in the media.

Journalist obligations when they obtain information with national security implication

According to Kibet (2015) journalism empowers reporters to report professionally without feeding the flames of conflict.

Lowenthal (2017) indicates that, governments across the world incline towards suppressing democratic discourse through the media by overturning free speech in the pretense of protecting national security interests. However, contrariwise, the intelligence arm of the government compels some information to be classified on 'need to know' basis. He further indicates that, where security issues are concerned, civilians believe that it is their right to know while the security machinery believes that there are limitations on what should be laid bare in the public domain. 'Ross (2011) argues that, journalists and editors usually confuse quantity for quality, assuming that more details or information (sometimes unnecessary information) could compensate for a lack of quality and new perceptions. Hence, such kind of journalism leads to terror groups or militia groups to entertain more ideas of the same kind. Some observers have even expressed concern that, looking at the implications that some of the

articles have had on national security of Kenya, the question we ask is, which is important or which comes first; national security at large or freedom of expression. There is a delicate relationship between journalism/media and national security. Free speech and free media which is a basic instrument of every democracy has been accused of providing publicity to matters of security concern such as terrorist activities, they have been accused of discrediting government activities that are key in safeguarding territorial integrity of a state, as well as feeding the enemy with classified information that is supposed to be held secret (Dowling 1986). Therefore, this study investigates how journalists, and their media houses put Kenya's national security into an uncomfortable position during operation *Linda Nchi* period between October 2011 and March 2012. As Lowenthal (2017) indicates, the government might have limited options to prevent the media from reporting information it has obtained, even if it is classified. However, journalists need to understand that freedom to publish is not the same as "the people's right to know".

METHODOLOGY

The study employed thematic analysis. The analysis used newspapers drawn randomly from publications by The Daily Nation newspaper and the standard newspapers in Kenya between October 2011 and February 2012. It searched for narratives that undermined government efforts to safe guard national security, narratives that caused fear among citizens, and narratives that undermined the Kenya Defense forces' efforts in fighting the Al-Shabaab. Data was classified into three thematic areas according to the above. The data was then uploaded into the coding sheet and analyzed using NVivo software. The 18 newspapers picked were based on the credibility rating of these papers in Kenya and the wide reach they had across East Africa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At what point should journalists put aside their professional and career interests for the sake of national security?

From the analysis of the codes, the study found out that 64% of the articles exposed government moves geared towards protecting Kenya's national security. On 16th October 2011, an article on the Daily Nation newspaper by Fred Mukinda, with the title; "*Kenyan Forces Go After Raiders inside Somalia*" gave details of how Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) have approached the al-Shabaab territory. One of the paragraphs indicated that '*Internal Security permanent secretary Francis Kimemia said security forces had drawn up strategies to defeat al Shabaab in their own land.*'

By looking at how this article had been framed; anger could actually be aroused among the enemy and their supporters especially seeing the phrase "*defeat... in their own land*". Such narratives could easily have made

the Al-Shabaab terrorists and their sympathizers to get angry and want to fight even harder. Even though journalists are supposed to set headlines that will spark interest from its readers, the best idea is to give it a thought. How could this be written without necessarily causing panic from the enemy hence making them want to retaliate?

On 19th October 2011, an article in the Daily Nation newspaper indicated that; '*In terms of injuries, the first attack saw the death of 73 al Shabaab insurgents, only Kenyan deaths were five killed in a helicopter crash,*' the same article continued to indicate that; '*Heavy military equipment was stuck on the muddy road to Afmadow town, the army spokesman said*'

This is a bit irresponsible as you do not announce the number of enemies killed versus the number of your servicemen killed, showing how you have done a good job yet indicate in the same article that what helped you to do the good job is non-functional at the moment; '*equipment was stuck on the muddy road.*' What stops the enemy from taking advantage of the opportunity? Later on, during the same day, another article was published by Leftie (2011) on the same newspaper, showing how the then foreign affairs minister and a delegation from Kenya to Somalia were almost killed by an Al-Shabaab bomb. Could this be retaliation to the news earlier own published of the number of Al-Shabaab fighters killed? The article indicated that; '*Foreign Affairs minister Moses Wetangula has said the Kenya delegation to Somalia narrowly escaped a bomb attack in the capital Mogadishu that killed five people after changing their travel plans at the last minute*'. As much as it was good for the public to know what was happening, these journalists should have camouflaged some of the words being used to report the incident to avoid causing panic to the Kenyan public. "Narrow escape from bomb attack" should have been rephrased.

On November 9th, 2011 the standard newspaper published; '*A vehicle ferrying Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination papers and a security base came under heavy gunfire in separate attacks by suspected Al Shabaab militants....it was also revealed that there was a crisis at the Dadaab refugee camps as teachers employed by the UN and who were expected to invigilate the KCPE examinations in the camps had fled.*'

On November 12th, the daily nation reported that: '*Al-Shabaab militia have changed tact and returned to guerrilla tactics, a military officer said, indicating that Kenya's engagement in Somalia is likely to be lengthy.*'

Robinson (n.d.) advises that, while it is good to report happenings as they take place, journalists should not offer offenders a stage for glorifying themselves. He continues to indicate that journalists should be conscious of the sensitive nature of their reports that implicate on national security. From the above two extracts on November 9th and 12th respectively, caution was thrown to the wind. This information clearly establishes how the

Al-Shabaab is causing havoc to the normal running of Kenya's government activities such as a major exam like KCPE.

These were astonishing, as such information should be held in confidence. Journalists can take control of the flow of information by considering their own ways of circumventing around what is happening without necessarily causing a danger to the national security of a country including the soldiers in the field. It is well understood that when covering national security issues, journalists do encounter such complex matters which may provide assistance to those who would do harm to the country. However, exposing the deaths and casualty's resultant from the battle exposes the ineffectiveness of a country's security tactics to the terror groups. Such articles only confirm what Surette and Otto (2002) established through a survey that, journalists publish reports on war and other security threats in a populist and dramatic manner using different techniques to attract people's attention. Their selective reports about war and violence do not reflect the nature and extent of war presented in official statistics and victimization surveys.

Should press limits be self-imposed?

From the analysis, the study established that 57% of the articles caused fear among citizens by exposing the attacks to Al-Shabbab hence retaliation was eminent. This begged the question, should press limits be self-imposed?

On 2nd November 2011, an article in the daily nation indicated that; *"a convoy of Kenya Army officers, who were going to reinforce officers at Amuma, was attacked by suspected Al-Shabaab militants. Three of the officers were injured"*.

Such information is good to know but not by the public because it serves to create more fear. If the gallant men (military officers) were being attacked in broad daylight, then what would happen to civilians? Do journalists understand the magnitude of fear they could be creating by such openness?

On 4th November 2011, two articles from the Daily nation and Standard newspapers report the same incident *"boat being sunk by Kenya Navy killing 8 occupants"* but the identity of the occupants is reported differently by the media houses as follows:

Daily nation: *The Kenya Navy on Friday sunk another boat suspected of transporting Al-Shabaab militants. It was the second boat the Kenya Navy has sunk in two days following Tuesday's incident when Kenyan troops killed 18 Al-Shabaab militants after sinking a ship transporting fuel in Kuday area inside Somalia waters.*

The standard Newspaper: *There were conflicting reports over an attack on a boat sunk by the Kenya Navy*

in the Ras Kamboni area. Whereas the Kenyan military reported the Navy hitting the boat after defying orders "to stop for identification", reports from Lamu indicated the occupants were fishermen. Mr. Sheikh Swaleh Abdulrrahman Friday protested that eight fishermen had been killed, one of them his relative whom he identified as Issa Yusuf.

Looking at the above information by two leading media houses in Kenya, it would be good if such information would be regulated and kept off the public. As much as it helps to send fear signals to the Al-Shabaab militants, what does it do to the Kenyan public as well as the rest of the world? There is no clear evidence whether the eight people killed were Al-Shabaab militants or Kenyan fishermen. According to Pratt (2013), exaggeration of stories concerning national security and terrorism has become common world over, which cultivates feelings of insecurity among civilians. This promotes a siege mentality. It is indicated that misinformation and propaganda can thrive in situations of scarce or partial access to trustworthy alternative sources of information. Some of the newspaper extracts are discussed below to show the severity of the information being laid bare.

On November 15th 2011, the standard newspaper (2011) published that; *Kenya gets backing against Al Shabaab. Countries contributing troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (Amisom) were meeting on Monday alongside regional nations to discuss the future of the mission. African Union representative Lulit Kebede said defense ministers from Uganda and Burundi, which both have troops in Somalia, and "interested countries" Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, will attend the closed meeting.*

This is good for the public to know but it would be better without details. The information of countries interested and who will attend should have been kept silent to avoid the insurgents targeting these countries.

On the same November 15th, a separate article in the daily nation indicated that; *At least three huge explosions rocked regions held by the extremist groups on Sunday, witnesses said on Monday. However, it was unclear who had launched the missiles. The attacks came as Kenya secured growing international support for the military operation in Somalia against Al-Shabaab.*

Looking at how media reported these incidences, it sent chilling messages to everyone, both the public and the militants. In fact, the Associated Press (AP) wrote another article almost immediately asking 'Who's bombing Somalia? French, US trade blame?' It continued to say, *'When thundering explosions rattled a small Somali town during a meeting of Islamist insurgent leaders, it sent them scurrying for safety. An international military appears to have launched the powerful, well-timed attack, but no one will admit it.'*

Due to exposure of such incidences to the public through the media, several attacks continued to happen on Kenyan soil affecting all including children.

To avert such predispositions the media fraternity needs to have a system of self-regulation which is based on an established code of ethics and a mechanism to receive and respond to complaints, for instance through an ombudsman or a media council. The idea of self-regulation springs out of the desire by quality-conscious journalists and media to correct their mistakes and to make themselves accountable to the public. One purpose is to develop ethical principles, which would protect individuals or groups from unacceptable abuse in the media.

What obligations do journalists have when it obtains information with national security implication?

The study found out that, 81% of the articles did not care about secrecy of information as they exposed crucial information from the government that could endanger Kenya's national security. Some article excerpts are shared to indicate the level of carelessness by the journalists during this crucial period.

An article by Sigei and Bocha, which appeared on the Daily Nation of October 21st 2011 indicated that; *"Kenya Targets al Shabab's Lifeline,"* the article had information on how the KDF are going to zero into the enemy. Part of the article read; *'While the ground troops close in on Kismayu from the south, the Navy will attack from the North, sealing any possible exit points for both the militants and the pirates through the Indian Ocean.* It is all clear that the journalism ethics and standards require all journalists to operate with truthfulness and accuracy, but how about the principle that advises them to observe "limitation of harm"? From this narrative, one can actually fear for the parties that are participating in the war because their strategy has been revealed to all. As much as it could be a tactic to make the Al-Shabaab see the seriousness with which the KDF are working, the opposite could also be true. The following day, after the article by the two journalists had been published, Fox news published; *"U.S. Warns Imminent Terrorist Attack on Kenya is Possible."* Part of the publication indicated that; *Al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab militants from neighboring Somalia have vowed to carry out an attack on Kenya for sending troops into Somalia.* This established that the Al-Shabaab are keen on what the media is publishing and planning their retaliations accordingly. This could pass for immature and irresponsible behavior from the part of individual journalists and begs the question; what obligations do journalists have when it obtains information with national security implication? If journalists want to live to their mandate of informing the public, then it could be prudent for them to weigh the options between informing the public versus the same public being harmed because of the same information that is out in the public.

On October 28th 2011, the daily nation published; "9

Shabaab Men Killed in Battle with Kenyan Army," The same article also indicated that, *"Two Kenyan soldiers were injured, one critically during the fire exchange and were airlifted to the Advanced Dressing Station in Garissa for treatment .It was the first time the Kenyan troops were encountering resistance from the militants since they started Operation Linda Nchi....In Parliament, Foreign Affairs assistant minister Richard Onyonka appeared to have thrown a cat among pigeons when he declared that the government is ready to negotiate with the Al-Shabaab for an end to the current military operation if the group renounces violence and stops its actions there".*

Looking at the information being shared by the journalists above; it seems that the KDF which is well trained and equipped is being attacked as its soldiers are facing resistance from the terrorists. In fact, the journalist goes ahead to indicate that there is resistance to an extent that the assistant minister for foreign affairs back home (in Kenya) declares that the government is ready to negotiate with the illegal group. Well, if that is the truth, the public should not be told. This should be information for policy makers and not the public. According to Kibet (2015), there is a fact to note that in Israel, the military actions are highly guarded and secretive in the amount of information disclosed for public consumption through the media. This is because; there is a cordial relationship between state security and the media. Journalists have been taken through security awareness programmes and have been trained on how to handle the information of national security concerns to avoid causing harm to an already critical situation. Could this be what the Kenyan journalists are lacking?

Conclusion

This study established the following conclusions based on content analyzed; Journalists and their media houses have a symbiotic relationship with the security arms of government and this cannot be ignored. The public needs to be informed about what the government is doing at all times, and the security officials need the support of media to create and maintain public support for all their activities concerning national security and more. Whereas independent reporting is essential to hold the security powers to account, the media are required to be very vigilant on the kind of language they use to inform the public. The choice of words in reporting security matters must be marked by the high level of restraint on the side of journalists (Cohen-Almagor, 2005). The Kenyan constitution under article 33 assures every citizen the right of access to information held by the government. On the other hand, due to national security concerns, the government requires some information to be classified so that access to such information is restricted on 'need to know'. The public believes it is the right of every citizen to

know everything being done by the government while the security machinery in government believes that there are limitations on what information should be laid bare in the public domain.

Experts from national security studies advise that, as much as there is little contention over the need to have a strong national defense and an autonomous press, varied opinions occur when the two are perceived to overlap (Dworznic, 2016). This conflict becomes more apparent when media outlets decide to publish classified information identified by the government as crucial to withhold in the interest of national security. According to Jackson (1990), achieving harmony on the proper balance between media press freedom that leads to openness and secrecy has remained elusive. Therefore, for the sake of national security the study concludes that, the media could help to spread word about terror activities or other fearful activities to the public around the world, however, journalists should strive to resort to responsible terminology which does not help the enemy in their attempt to undermine national security. Secondly, there needs to be a clear difference between covering news and providing the enemy an equal platform to declare their agenda (McDonald, 2013d). Hence, to remain objective, for the sake of national security concerns, journalists and their media houses should never give the enemy the same airtime as the government as this is betraying their ethics and morality. Thirdly, interviewing members of a terror group or the enemy by journalists while an operation is ongoing is ethically wrong. Why would they be given airtime to chest thump yet innocent civilians are being harmed? Scholars indicate that interviews under such circumstances are an express reward to the enemy which undermines the government's efforts to maintain national security and integrity of its borders. This can clearly interfere with the efforts to resolve an ongoing crisis. Furthermore, it is believed that such interviews increase the magnitude of the event and impede negotiations between the government and the enemy while spreading fear among the civilians (Ross, 2011).

Consequently, there is an urgent need to develop a set of guidelines for the media when covering matters of national security. This step will aid in increasing professional as well as ethical conduct by journalists and editors. All media professionals who are selected to cover items of national security concern need to have some background information about the ongoing event if it concerns national security. Some background research should be done before the news is published. This helps the journalists to understand the magnitude of their reportage to national security as reporting any details might harm the country.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interests.

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