

The Construction of Ideology in The New York Times's News Reports of Darfur Conflict

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Abstract

There have been numerous attempts by media analysts to scrutinize the news reports concerning the Darfur Conflict in Western Sudan. However, scant attention has been paid to the linguistic or other rhetorical devices employed in the language of media reporting to represent the events and social actors involved in the conflict. This study uses an eclectic approach of Hallidayan transitivity and critical discourse analysis to analyze The New York Times' (NYT) press coverage of the conflict in Darfur region in the year 2007, from January 1 to December 31. The study aims to identify how the events and social actors involved in the conflict are stereotyped in the journal's news stories. For analysis, the data comprises 43 headlines chosen out of online editions of the newspaper. The findings show that the language used to represent events and people involved in the conflict is selected from other available options and choices within the linguistic system. The researcher has discovered that such editorial choices are not random, accidental alternatives. They are in fact those choices that seek to manipulate reality and (re)present it in a manner that more readily suits the underlying ideologies of NYT's news editors and their intended audience.

Keywords: Critical Linguistics (CL); Transitivity; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Darfur Conflict, nominalization, The New York Times newspaper

1. Introduction

The negative perspective in the coverage of affairs in developing countries by Western media has been widely scrutinized. Representation of African issues in the American media in particular is mainly characterized by news of conflicts, disease and famine. Such deliberate negative biases and predetermined stereotypical perception of African issues and roles have prompted many studies that aim to scrutinize so-called journalistic ethos of objectivity and impartiality the Western media claim abiding by.

The coverage of the conflict in Darfur region in Western Sudan is no exception. Claims of preferential and biased reportage have been levelled by all sides involved in the conflict, but mainly by the Sudanese pro-government media who have provoked questions about the role of journalists in shaping public appraisal of the conflict.

In this connection, media researchers employ the colonial perspective and the East-West lens framework when endeavouring to unravel the ways in which African issues are stereotyped in the Western media. The former focuses on the values of the West and at the same time downplays efforts made by developing countries. The latter, however, views Africa as barbarous and lagging behind the rest of the world. Nohrstedt (1986) argues that Western journalists are under the influence of two kinds of ideological biases when reporting African issues: the traditional colonial image of primitive societies, along with the current foreign policy interests in the home countries of the publications.

However, the present content and textual analysis study is an attempt to investigate instances of anti-African bias in American press reports by analyzing published articles that have dealt with the conflict in Darfur over a period of one year by the American news outlet, NYT.

To this end, the present study attempts to identify and explain how ideology is constructed and presented through the manipulation of language in the articles that are under analysis. The data for the study comprises 43 headlines extracted from formerly published news articles.

The study uses an eclectic approach combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Hallidayan Transitivity, which “has proved a useful analytic model in both stylistics and critical linguistics” (Simpson 1993). The paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the potentials of Transitivity as an analytical tool of representation?
2. What notable media frames predominate the coverage of Darfur Conflict by the newspaper under study?

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Transitivity

Transitivity stemmed in Halliday’s (2004) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Generally, transitivity refers to how meaning is represented in the clause. Therefore, it is best understood in the context of the general clausal function developed by MAK Halliday. Halliday (2004) maintains that the clause is a multifunctional construct consisting of three language functions (metafunctions). The clause as such is a semantic construct. This notion is a complete departure from the sense of the term in traditional grammar that only studies and analyzes the clause structurally. The three metafunctions of the clause involve the textual metafunction (clause as a message), which refers to the use of language to signify discourse. The second one is the interpersonal metafunction (clause as exchange) and it refers to the use of language to establish and maintain social relations. The third metafunction is the ideational or experiential (clause as representation). This metafunction refers to the use of language

to convey content and to communicate information. These three metafunctions map into each other in a single clause providing a three-layered dimension of meaning.

The researcher's main concern in this study is the 'experiential', which is also called the 'ideational' clause simply because transitivity is part of this ideational language function. People's experiences of the world are sorted by the grammar of this clause into figures of (happening, doing, sensing, saying, being or having). Each figure involves a process that comprises two main components; the process, which is expressed by the verb phrase in the clause and the participants being directly involved in this process. They are realized by the noun phrase in the clause. The process may also involve other factors such as circumstances of time, space, cause, manner ...etc.

Transitivity, as pointed out earlier, is part of the ideational metafunction of language. The way transitivity carries out this ideational language function is by expressing processes. As such, transitivity sorts people's endless experiences of the world into a manageable set of 'process types'. Out of the six processes outlined by Halliday (2004), the researcher is mainly concerned with the material, verbal and relational as they are mostly used by journalists in reporting events, issues and happenings.

The meaning of transitivity differs from the sense of the term in traditional grammar, where there is only a syntactic distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs depending on whether they take an object or not. Fowler (1991) believes that this syntactic distinction oversimplifies or even neglects some important differences of meaning between various types of verbs, and therefore between various types of clauses. Transitivity is present in every action whether it affects the doer only (intransitive) or whether it affects an external entity (transitive) or whether it is about 'being' or 'having' (attributive). Unlike traditional grammar, the term transitivity is used here more as a semantic concept than simply as a syntactic description i.e. whether the verb takes an object or not. Also, the participants are not treated just as 'subjects' or 'objects' as in traditional grammar, but as entities with particular forms of functions. The verb drive, for instance, in 'I drive well' doesn't have an 'actualized' object, yet it is transitive in transitivity analysis since 'drive' semantically is an action that must be carried out on another entity or participant i.e. something must be driven.

It can be concluded from the above explanation that transitivity is about our perception of the world and our internal consciousness that might be entirely or partially independent of the objective world. Hence, it is an appropriate tool to examine how issues are represented and possibly manipulated or transformed to underline ideological bias and to show how writers encode in language their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them. Transitivity is a fundamental and powerful semantic concept in Halliday (2004), and an essential tool in the analysis of representation.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The main theoretical framework of this research is CDA that views language as a form of social practice. CDA emerged from Critical Linguistics (CL) developed by Fowler et al, and the terms are now often interchangeable. Therefore, the work of

Fowler et al. in 1979 in their book *Language and Control* forms the base of the discipline. Critical linguistics is based upon 'systemic' linguistic theory developed by Halliday. According to Fowler (1991), the aim of critical linguistics is chiefly to formulate an analysis of public discourse designed to detect the ideology coded implicitly behind the overt propositions, to examine it particularly in the context of social formations.

The deficiency of the critical linguistic approach by Fowler et al. can be seen from its over-reliance on textual analysis. Bell (1991) criticizes the critical linguistic approach by Fowler et al. on the basis that it presumes there is a clearly definable relation between any given linguistic choice and a specific ideology. In spite of this criticism, Bell (1991) admits that the news story is controlled by news values. It is not a neutral vehicle, nor is news production a neutral process, despite the journalistic professional ethos journalists claim abiding by.

Modern CDA, spearheaded by Norman Fairclough, Van Dijk and Ruth Wodak, emphasizes the social and cultural aspects of the text over semantic representations. Van Dijk (2006) writes "Critical discourse analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context".

It can be concluded that CDA mainly deals with the questions of inequality and power, power institutes and the relation between language and power. It focuses on the strategies of manipulation, legitimation, and the manufacture of consent to influence the minds (and indirectly the actions) of people in the interest of the powerful. Hence, it is natural to conclude that it has a political attitude (Stubbe et al., 2003).

By and large, the foregoing argument has highlighted the theoretical basis of the study.

2.3. The Present Study

This study will use headlines from the reportage of the conflict in Darfur by The New York Times newspaper. The researcher believes that applying both transitivity analysis, which works at the textual level, and the contextual analysis of CDA can systematically reveal the bias concealed in the reportage of the Darfur conflict.

This study also scrutinizes the ethical claim of objectivity and dispassionate reporting of issue in the journalism profession. Bello (2010) argues that historical realities are reported and even interpreted with an ideologically primed mindset. The language that is used to represent events and people is made from other available options and choices within the linguistic system. These choices are not made at random. They are choices that seek to represent the world in a particular, ideologically enforced manner.

2.3.1 Background to the Darfur Conflict

Darfur is the westernmost province of Sudan. A remote region whose concerns were long overshadowed by the civil war in South Sudan. Darfur became a center of international concern when a new civil war emerged there in 2003. The violence had

roots in economic underdevelopment and long-standing conflicts over land, but became far more destructive as external political influences grew and as conceptions of ethnic identity changed.

3.3.2 Roots and Evolution of the Conflict

The name Darfur is a combination of two words, Dar – home in Arabic – and Fur, one of the territory’s largest tribes. “Home of the Fur” is home to at least three dozen distinct ethnic groups and many more subgroups. Today, nearly the entire population of Darfur is Muslim, owing to a policy of Islamization carried out in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when Darfur was an independent sultanate.

The terms Arabs and non-Arabs (or, alternatively, Africans) are broad categories used to identify the general affiliation of smaller tribes. The terms do not necessarily relate to physical appearance, and they have not always been decisive in determining political alignments. Arab groups are generally herders, whereas most of the non-Arab tribes are sedentary farmers. These differing types of agriculture can produce disputes over land use, which in some cases leads to violence between tribes. Until the end of the twentieth century, such conflicts in Darfur had been generally contained and limited; although intergroup conflict has long been a feature of Darfur’s history, it existed alongside considerable constructive economic and social relationships. Inter-marriage was common between Arab and African tribes. Cattle herders and sedentary farmers traded for agricultural products such as grains and milk, as well as for grazing rights from farmers. Prosperous sedentary farmers sometimes invested in cattle, further blurring the distinctions between the groups.

Darfur contains rich agricultural land, but the entire region has been threatened by desertification since the 1970s. Diminishing fertile land combined with the lack of alternative economic development increased the potential for conflict at a time when forces from outside began to intervene. Among the factors behind the slide of Darfur into chaos is the dismantling of the Native Administration system that had been set up by British colonial authorities. As per this administrative system, tribal chiefs were granted considerable autonomy and were often able to mediate intergroup conflict. Furthermore, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chad’s civil war increased the flow of arms in the region, and hence the interests of both Chadian and Libyan governments in the politics of Darfur also increased. In the mid-1980s, the Sudanese government began arming militias of Arab tribes in Darfur, fearing that the civil war in the south might spread.

From mid-1980s to mid-1990s, the region witnessed a number of disputes over grazing land between cattle herders and sedentary farmers. These limited conflicts soon escalated into insurgencies due to the internal and external factors referred to earlier. These early conflicts also marked the first prominent appearance of the paramilitary militias that later took the name Janjaweed fighters.

2.3.3 The Current Conflict

After 2000, two major opposition organizations emerged among the non-Arab population. The first was the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which had an Islamist ideological orientation and maintained links with the leaders of the Popular Congress party, who had split from the Sudanese government in the 1990s. Another

group, the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLA) modeled itself on the Southern Sudanese People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and offered a secular platform. On February 2003, the JEM and SPLA launched successful military assaults on government targets in Darfur. According to Flint and Waal (2005), members of (SLM/A) and (JEM) group attacked the Sudanese government air base on April 25, 2003 killing more than 75 government troops.

With the outbreak of full-fledged civil war, the government adopted what the International Crisis Group (ICG) called a “scorched-earth” strategy to defeat the rebels. As per ICG, the implementation of this strategy relied heavily on the Janjaweed attacks on the civilian populations that might support the rebellion. Such attacks were backed up by government air strikes. The Janjaweed attacks are reported by ICG to have included mass killings, rapes, whippings, cattle theft, and the burning of hundreds of villages. A small force of 7,000 African Union soldiers entered Darfur on August 2004, but failed to stop the violence. Survivors fled, especially to Chad, and by late 2005 fighting began to cross the border. By the beginning of 2006 up to 2 million people were reportedly displaced from their homes and at least 180,000 were dead.

On July 23, 2004, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution calling the Darfur conflict a genocide, a position later adopted by the Bush administration. There have been multiple attempts to secure peace in Darfur through a negotiated settlement, most of which have failed. The rebels in Darfur have splintered many times, further complicating the road to peace. In May 2006, the government of Sudan signed a peace accord with one faction. The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was made between the Sudanese government and the Sudanese Liberation Army. While it was the first step towards ending the violence in Darfur, peace negotiations leading to the DPA were flawed and hence the resultant agreement was not successful. Moreover, the JEM rejected the agreement, as did splinter factions of the SPLM/A. The UN reported that violence in Darfur actually increased in the months after the accord; divisions among the rebels coupled with the difficulty in disarming the paramilitary militias posed major challenges to restoring order.

As a result, violence escalated again, particularly because of the fragmentation of rebel groups resulting in systematic looting, increased displacements, hundreds of deaths and numerous reports of sexual and gender based violence.

2.3.4 The New York Times

The New York Times is an American daily newspaper founded and has continuously been published in New York City since September 1851. The paper's print version has the largest circulation of any metropolitan newspaper in the United States, and the second-largest circulation overall, behind The Wall Street Journal. It is ranked 39th in the world by circulation. The importance of the newspaper arises from the fact that it is considered as a newspaper of record with 16 news bureaus in the New York region, 11 national news bureaus and 26 foreign news bureaus. The paper also has a daily average circulation of 1,103,600 as by The New York Times website and is read by the decision-makers throughout the United States. Furthermore, following a preliminary analysis of Darfur coverage, it was evident that The New

York Times is one of the few mainstream media organizations in the United States that has been covering the conflict in Darfur consistently.

Likewise, the importance of the newspaper in relation to news coverage of Africa has been further stressed by Zein and Cooper (1992) who found from their analysis of The New York Times' coverage of Africa from 1976 to 1990, that the paper's "large news hole and its tradition of excellence in foreign coverage-represents the best day-by-day coverage of Africa readily available to U.S. readers" (p. 143).

Friel and Falk (2007) also point out the importance of the newspaper as an authoritative voice with respect to controversial policy issues facing the nation, and they argue that many citizens depend on it as a source of information about important events. There is a general belief among the Americans that the newspaper publishes reliable information that helps to inform its readers about complex foreign policy decisions.

2.3.5 Why Headlines

Headlines form the basis of news reports analysis in this study. The importance of the headlines lies in the fact that they are first and on top, and usually in bigger type than the text. There are visual markers that emphasize the importance of the global topic of the text (Van Dijk, 2006). Using the macro structure rules, headlines are the distillation or summaries of the news items involved. They are usually prominent in terms of wording, font type and size. Van Dijk (1988) maintains that headlines and leads summarize the news text and express the semantic macro structures of the news items. In the aspect of news perception, a news schema has already created a mental frame of the prominence of the headlines and leads. Van Dijk (1988) explains that perception processes of news text involve the identification of newspaper format and news item layout and are combined with the visual information associated with our general knowledge about news articles in the press. News headlines are markers that monitor attention, perception and the reading process because they are first on top. Readers mostly come into contact first with the headlines, then come the decision about whether to continue reading the newspaper or not. However, the headlines already form a mental model in the mind of the readers. Some only read the headlines for the gist of the news. The headlines together with the opening sentences, known as the lead, constitute the nucleus of the English language print media 'hard news' reports according to White (1997). He states that this opening nucleus of headline plus lead acts to launch a reader immediately into the heart of the social-order disruption about which the report is organized. At the level of the discursive practice of journalism, headlines and leads have their functions and constraints. Due to the shortage of space, headlines are telegraphic in syntax and tend to involve many short forms to maximize graphic space. Bell (1991) maintains that the length of a headline is dictated by the constraints of page layout and the journalist's own ultimate abstract is in fact the one-word catch line or slug line by which a story is identified as it is processed through the newsroom. Generally, the argument above is meant to justify the selection of the newspaper and headlines as the data of the study.

3. Method

Transitivity is the grammar of experience, which has proved a successful analytical tool within the critical linguistics tradition. It has been employed to uncover how certain meanings are foregrounded while others are suppressed or obscured. In this way, the transitivity model provides one means of investigating how a reader or listener's perception of the meaning of a text is pushed in a particular direction and how the linguistic structure of a text effectively encodes particular 'world-view'. This world-view will, of course, be that of the producer(s) of the text. Fowler (1986) provides a useful summary of this feature of textual meaning, maintaining that linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally; they interpret, organize, and classify the subjects of discourse. They embody theories of how the world is arranged: world-views or ideologies.

"Transitivity is the key analytic component of ideational metafunction. It provides the potential required for categorizing the infinite verity of occurrence or goings on into a finite set of process types." Teo (2000, p. 25). It expresses who did what to whom and in what condition. Therefore, any transitivity analysis contains three major components: the process (what), the participants (who and whom) and circumstances (in what condition). The table below illustrates the three process types that are the focus of the present study. It also shows what each process means as well as the roles of the participants.

Table 1. Process types, their meanings and key participants, Halliday (1994: 143)

Process Type	Category Meaning	Participants
Material:		
action	'doing'	Actor, Goal
event	'happening'	
Verbal:	'saying'	Sayer, Target
Relational:	'being'	Carrier, Attribute
attribution	'attributing'	

3.1 Sampling and Selection of Corpus

The data for this corpus-based were drawn from the online archive of NYT news outlet. To obtain the news articles, the study used NYT archival search engine to explore the news reports of the period of the study using 'Darfur' as the search keyword. All of the news reports related to Darfur conflict during the period of the study were downloaded. Opinion articles, blogs and commentaries have been excluded because they do not necessarily represent the newspaper's official viewpoints and ideology.

4. Results and Discussion

The data to be analyzed are 45 headlines from the American mainstream news outlet; NYT. The newspaper reports covered the duration of the conflict that is between 1 January and 31 December 2007. This period was selected because it covers the most violent period of the conflict in Darfur as per Amnesty International reports. The news reports of the study are derived from the actual reports of the newspaper. The researcher has excluded all the news reports by outside sources, such as Reuters News Agency, as they do not represent the official viewpoints of the newspaper under study. Hence, all of the data analyzed in this research are written by the correspondents of NYT.

The focus of the analysis is the Participants realized by the noun phrases, Processes by the verbal phrases and Circumstances by the adverbial and prepositional phrases.

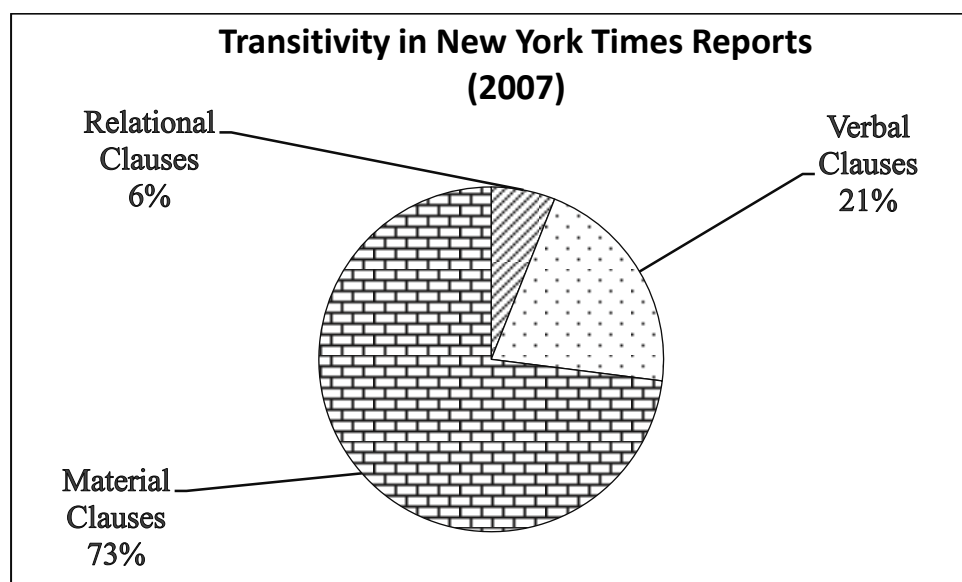


Figure 1.

4.1. Material Processes

Material processes are processes of “doing”. The process is usually indicated by a verb expressing an action, either concrete or abstract. The participant roles involve an Agent, the Doer, or the one performing the action and the ones on the receiving end are the Affected participants or Patients and both of them are usually realized by noun phrases. When the participants both exist, the clause can be either in active voice or in passive voice.

Newspaper headlines are often construed in a complex manner by clipping certain verbs like auxiliary verbs believing that they can be assumed and sometimes combining two or more clauses in one with a single agent. Below are the original constructions of the NYT with material and action clauses.

4.2. Headlines with ‘Material Processes’

1. Jan. 11, 2007 U.S. Governor Brokers Truce for Darfur
2. Jan. 29, 2007 Sudan Snubbed for African Union Post. Will a

Peacekeeping Plan Hold?

3. Jan. 30, 2007 African Union Picks Ghanaian as Its Leader, in Snub to Sudan
4. Feb. 3, 2007, China's Leader Visits Sudan and Focuses on Growing Economic Ties
5. April 15, 2007, Militia Talks Could Reshape Conflict in Darfur
6. April 15, 2007, Sudan Drops Objections to U.N. Aid in Darfur
7. April 15, 2007, War in Western Sudan Overshadows Peace in the South
8. May 17, 2007, Cavalier Seeks Players' Support for Darfur
9. May 27, 2007, Egyptian Officer Killed by Robbers in Darfur
10. June 7, 2007, Tentative Deal Reached for Darfur Peacekeeping Force
11. June 13, 2007, Sudan Relents on Peacekeepers in Darfur
12. July 6, 2007, In Sudan, Help Comes From Above
13. Aug. 1, 2007, U.N. Approves Peacekeepers for Darfur
14. Sept. 3, 2007, Arab Tribes Battling in Darfur Over Spoils of War
15. Sept. 3, 2007, Chaos in Darfur Rises as Arabs Fight With Arabs
16. Sept. 13, 2007, Buffett Sells Petro China Shares Amid Calls to Cut Ties With Sudan
17. Oct. 1, 2007, Darfur Rebels Kill 10 in Peace Force
18. Oct.2, 2007, Peacekeepers as Targets: Darfur Attack Imperils Talks
19. Oct. 4, 2007, (A) Carter, Path Barred, (B) Confronts Sudan's Security
20. Oct.5, 2007, Darfur Rebels Find Refuge in Eritrea, but Little Hope
21. Nov. 17, 2007, U.S. Measure Against Rape Fails at U.N.
22. Dec. 27, 2007, Despite Aid, Malnutrition in Darfur Rises

Unlike formal linguistics that only deals with linguistic forms, the aim of critical linguistics is to explore the social function of language and to detect the hidden ideologies.

As illustrated in the headline examples above, it can be argued that the preponderance of material processes found in the data is indicative of the interest of *The New York Times'* journalists in reporting actions and events rather than quoting or describing the '*state of affairs*'.

The same headline examples also clearly show how *The New York Times* employs active constructions in 17 out of the 22 headlines that have material processes. The

active constructions place considerable emphasis on the actor/agent roles by making such agents as the first elements in the clauses. However, the goals/patients are placed at the end of the processes and in a far less prominent position. This extensive use of active constructions by *The New York Times* in reporting the conflict in Darfur region suggests that such use serves the ideological stance of the newspaper. It is noteworthy that the actor/agent roles are mostly occupied by proper nouns. Noteworthy too is that Sudan government officials and rebels occupy the agent roles in only 5 of the headlines. By means of these material processes, the general concept of transitivity has been employed in *The New York Times* articles to discredit events involving the Sudanese government, government-allied militias and Darfur insurgents.

The act of discrediting Sudan is clearly observable in the use of such active constructions as in Headlines 6, 11, 14, 17 and 20. In these five processes, the Sudanese government, the government-allied militias and the rebels are all placed in prominent positions as agents of the processes.

Headlines 6 and 11 assign the agent roles of the processes 'drops' and 'relents' to Sudan which in turn affect the patients 'U N humanitarian aid' and 'the deployment of a joint UN and AU force of peacekeepers' in the conflicted region of Darfur. In all cases, the Sudanese leaders are shown to be rash and lacking in vision and insight.

Headlines 5, 14 and 15 further depict Darfur in quite a chaotic and pessimistic humanitarian situation by underscoring the tribal factor in the conflict. The Arab tribes are reported to have further heightened the misery in the region by fighting each other over the spoils of war. Furthermore, the use of the ethnic tag 'Arab' highlights the theme of tribalism as a focal factor in the conflict.

Headlines 17 and 20 place Darfur rebels in thematic positions as agents of the negative actions in the processes 'kill' affecting in turn 10 African peacekeepers and 'find refuge' in Eretria after they had fled the battlefield in Darfur. The rebel fighters are therefore depicted as barbaric, improperly armed and feeling unenthusiastic about their mission. Thus, foregrounding Sudan government and the rebels in all these negative processes casts them in a negative and much less favourable light.

The paper adopts passive constructions in Headlines 2, 9 and 10, where causality and agency are backgrounded or even omitted. Thus, the patients are constructed as both agents and affected participants in the same instance. Such constructions make the agents less grammatically powerful than the patients.

In Headlines 2 and 10, the patients 'Sudan' and 'Tentative Deal' are placed in subject or thematic positions with the agents concealed. In this way, the prominence of the message is placed on the patients and the actions suffered. Thus, the whole African nation is shown, in Headline 2, as united in rebuffing Sudan's attempt to take the helm of the AU. In the same fashion, Headline 9 emphasizes the rift between Sudan and the international community, which is shown as united against Sudan's longstanding refusal of the deployment of UN peacekeepers in the war-racked region of Darfur. By means of agency deletion, the paper fosters the notion of Sudan as a pariah country that stands at odds with the entire world, and not only the members of the Security Council and the African Union. Moreover, Headline 9 paints a chaotic

image of the security situation in Darfur through the use of the phrase 'by robbers' that in effect adds another active force to the many existing ones on the ground.

Word choice matters in providing the reader with cues to the interpretation of events. It can shape and define how we perceive actions and how we are to understand the intentions of the participants in material processes that result in conveying the message that the producer of the text intended readers to receive.

Lexical items, therefore, construct particular ideological representations of experiences or events. Simpson (1993) observes that lexical choices are just as strong an indicator of the political stance adopted by the newspaper.

Accounts representing the actions of the Sudanese army, those of the government-allied militias and the rebels are brimming with lexical items associated with violence and death such as "kill, battle, relent, and snub". Such lexical items effectively connote and promote conventional, negative evaluations of the actions of these entities. These actors are presented as actively responsible for the process 'kill'. It is also instructive to know that the patients of these processes are members of peacekeeping forces.

Likewise, the choice of the verbs 'overshadows' and 'imperils' in Headlines 7 and 18 respectively, do not necessarily facilitate us with concrete facts of the events, rather they tell us more about how the reporter chooses to evaluate and interpret them. Hence, the selection of any such abstract terms will have a very powerful evaluative function.

Nominalization as seen by Toolan (2001) is an encapsulation of what is inherently a clausal process in the syntactic form of a noun phrase, treating the entire process as an established thing, which can then serve as a participant in another process.

The New York Times employs this notion in Headlines 15 and 22, where the agent positions are respectively occupied by the nominalized noun phrases; 'Chaos in Darfur' and 'Malnutrition in Darfur'. These clausal processes are laden with ideological manipulations and presented to readers as truthful situations or even established facts. This is done in such a stealthy way that the reader's attention is shifted from the inherent processes in these agents to the processes assigned them 'rises'. In other words, these nominalized clauses have not specified any facts about how and when the details of the chaos and malnutrition were obtained and verified.

It is noteworthy that the African Union is assigned the agent role only once in the headlines with material processes. In Headline 3, the AU is placed in a thematic position as the agent of the process 'pick' affecting the patient 'the Ghanaian president' for the rotating leadership of the AU. However, the circumstantial element 'in snub to Sudan' presents Sudan as being at odds with the African countries and hence fosters the image of Sudan as a pariah country.

By contrast, The New York Times employs material processes to credit events surrounding the West in general and the US in particular. Noteworthy of mention is the fact that other than 19A, the other headlines are in the active construction placing the prominence of the processes on the agents, which are mostly American institutions, officials or individuals.

Similarly, Headline 1 places a US official in an agent position of the process “brokers” affecting the patient ‘truce’ in order to stem the violence and convince the Sudanese president to halt military operations and to accept a UN peacekeeping force. Thus, the headline evaluates the American official positively and presents him as an influential social actors in the process that he had performed.

The newspaper also credits American individuals and institutions in Headlines 8 and 16. Headline 8 emphasizes the American grassroots support of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The top management and players of Ohio's famous basketball club, Cavalier, are said to have lobbied hard for the Darfur crisis. Given the fact that they were potential athletes in the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, the Cavaliers are reported to have signed a petition making a plea to the Chinese government to use all available diplomatic resources and economic pressure to end the agony of Darfur and to secure access to the UN peace support personnel.

By the same token, Headline 16 credits the American businessman, Warren Buffet for selling a great deal of his shares in PetroChina in response to the political stance of his country that culminated in the signing of the divestment bill by the then US president.

Headline 4 puts the Chinese leader in the agent position. However, it discredits him for visiting a beleaguered country whose leader is accused of fomenting war in his own backyard. Thus, the US is portrayed as a defender of human rights whereas China and Sudan are depicted as violators.

The only headline with passive construction, Headline 19 (A) discredits Sudan for denying a delegation termed by the newspaper as “respected international figures” access to a refugee camp. The delegation was headed by the ex-American president, Jimmy Carter and it is reported that they were scheduled to have visited some refugee camps for humanitarian purposes.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident how The New York Times utilizes material processes to discredit both the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels. Each is portrayed as the responsible party for the chaos in Darfur as well as in the neighboring countries.

Furthermore, the government is presented as failing by not collaborating with the international community. The rebel factions too are depicted as ethnic based and disharmonious although in reality they fight for one common cause. In contrast, the West in general and the US in particular are lauded as champions of human rights and as emancipators of the Darfur people.

4.3. Verbal Processes

A verbal process is the process of saying, and it involves a communication between a Sayer and an Addressee, where some message, the Verbiage, is communicated. Verbal Processes exist on the borderline between mental and relational processes. Just like saying and meaning, the verbal process expresses the relationship between ideas construed in human consciousness and the ideas enacted in the form of language. One distinctive feature of verbal processes is that, unlike other

processes, they can act as projected clauses in which one clause projects a second clause, either paratactically or hypotactically as reported speech (Haig 2011)

Examples of verbal processes are “U.N. Says Gunmen Kill 30 in Darfur” and “African Union Threatens to Leave Darfur.” Note that “saying” is used in an extended sense and the “speaker” needs not be a conscious being, hence a verbal process includes any kind of exchange of meaning, such as “The manual tells you how to operate a device” or “The clock says it’s ten.” The participant who is speaking is called ‘Sayer’, the addressee to whom the process is directed is ‘Target’, and what is said is ‘Verbiage’ or the ‘Said’. In this case, since it is a newspaper sort of discourse, we would assume that the unstated audience or Target is the newspaper’s readers and the international community.

4.4. Headlines with ‘Verbal Processes’

1. Feb. 20, 2007 Polk Awards Laud Coverage of Darfur and Katrina’s
Toll
2. Feb. 27, 2007, International Court Names Darfur War Suspects
3. March 27, 2007, Aid to Darfur Is Imperiled, Officials Say
4. Aug. 2, 2007, Sudan Agrees to U.N. Peacekeepers to Complement
African Union Force
5. Aug. 7, 2007, Darfur Rebels Agree on Approach to Peace Talks, U.N.
Says
6. Sept. 3, 2007, Tribes Accused of Carnage
7. Sept. 7, 2007, Sudan Agrees to Darfur Peace Talks
8. Sept.8, 2007, Chad Says It Will Help U.N.’s Darfur Peace Plan
9. Sept. 9, 2007, Libyan Leader Says He Will Bring Rebels to Meeting on
Darfur
10. Oct. 7, 2007, U.S. Envoy Laments ‘Poisonous’ Atmosphere Dividing
Sudan
11. Oct. 9, 2007, Army Accused of Razing Darfur Town
12. Nov. 8, 2007, U.N. Objects to Expulsion of Aid Official from Darfur

The choice of who to quote is ideologically significant. Accordingly, media reporters selectively choose quotations and employ them to convey ideological presuppositions. Furthermore, it is a very common practice for newsmakers to support their reports with opinions, statements and comments that are derived from external sources. One can argue that the overuse of such external sources is not without ideological implications. The New York Times is no exception in this regard.

It is noteworthy that the dominant themes in the verbal processes cited above are the deployment of joint AU-UN peacekeepers and the peace talks between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels held under the auspices of both the UN and the AU. Apart from Headlines 6 and 11, all the Sayer roles are occupied by proper nouns.

It is also significant that Sudanese officials are quoted on only two occasions in the 12 verbal processes. In fact, Sudan occupies the Sayer roles in Headlines 4 and 7. Moreover, the newspaper uses the reporting verb 'agrees' instead of 'says' in order to manipulate perception and to bias readers towards believing that the actions of the Sudanese government are reactive rather than proactive. The aim is to influence opinion with the notion that the Sudanese government is acting under intense international pressure. Because of such pressure, Sudan is said to have started to reverse its longstanding refusal to allow UN troops into the country.

Alternate constructions of the two headline for instance, might possibly read, "Sudan says it will accept UN peacekeepers in Darfur" and "Sudan says it will resume Darfur peace talks" respectively. Written in this way, the newspaper would be presenting Sudan's moves as proactive and responsible. However, these alternate reconstructions do not serve the ideological interests of the publication.

In Headline 6, the Arab militias aligned with the government are accused, though anonymously, of fighting one with another over the spoils of war. Similarly, Headline 11, also from an anonymous source, levels another accusation at the Sudanese army whose troops are reported to have demolished a town in South Darfur, Haskanita. Shrouding the Sayer roles in anonymity in both the headlines leaves the accusations open to interpretation. Readers are led to believe that the sources of these accusations are not only individuals from rival factions, but also players in the international community. Furthermore, in the western media, violence in Darfur has usually been characterized as government-backed Arab tribes fighting non-Arab tribes. However, this new Arab-versus-Arab dimension, as is the case with the conflict of the splintering rebel factions in Sudan, paints a rather chaotic and complex picture of the situation.

As set out previously, media reporters are inclined to quote individuals whose message aligns with their publication's ideological stances. It is worth noting that only two African leaders are quoted in the headlines that employ verbal processes; namely the Chadian and the then Libyan president. Both leaders of Chad and Libya are reported in Headlines 8 and 9 to have created an opportunity for the leaders of Darfur rebel factions to meet beforehand. The meeting goals were to soften the outlook of the rebel factions before peace talks began as per the articles. These peace meetings had been scheduled to take place in Tripoli, Libya under the auspices of the UN and the AU. The issue of the fragmentation and heterogeneity of the rebels and their lack of a common agenda is highlighted in the above two headlines. Headline 5 continues this issue of splintering among the different rebel factions, which is said to be prolonging the misery of the people of Darfur.

The media coverage of the Darfur conflict from a negative perspectives is observed in the 'verbiage' that constitutes Headlines 3, 10 and 12 that clearly demonstrate the pessimistic views that both UN and US officials hold in relation to the situation in Darfur. In Headline 10, the US official is shown to be upset about the apparent

looming failure of the peace talks. The same official is reported to have blamed the government and the rebels for their unwillingness to discuss anything of a serious nature other than sharing the oil wealth and held both parties responsible for the failure of the talks.

Headlines 3 and 12 depict a tragic humanitarian situation in Darfur refugee camps due to the recurring targeting of aid workers and the expulsion of a UN aid official by the Sudanese government, which result in impeding the humanitarian efforts in the region. In doing so, the newspaper continues depicting Sudan as being at variance with the international community over its longstanding rejection of the UN's plan that sought to replace such insufficient AU deterrent force with more robust UN peacekeepers.

In stark contrast, the US and the UN are shown as the parties who have felt deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation and the peace process in Sudan as in Headlines 3, 5 and 10.

The use of the reporting verbs in verbal processes has been derived from a wide choice of options. Hence, it can be argued that such selections are not made without ideological implications. In Headline 10, the US envoy is reported to have 'lamented' and expressed deep concerns about the poisonous atmosphere prevailing in the peace talks between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels. Thus, the selection of the reporting verb 'lament' for inclusion in the news report function to reinforce media assumptions that the Western players act compassionately in their responses to the sufferings of the African nations. Based on similar sentiments for the people of Darfur, the ICC is reported to have accused two senior Sudanese figures of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Headline 2.

Headline 1 exalts the actions of the reporters of The New York Times for their courageous and objective coverage of the war in Darfur. This highlights the codes of objectivity the paper claims adhering to.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced how The New York Times deliberately uses verbal processes to credit the input of Western players and at the same time to downplay efforts made by Sudan and other African and Arab countries.

4.5. Relational Processes

Transitivity relational processes refer to the processes of being. According to Kress (1979:18) relational processes are clauses in which the "process" takes the form of a relationship between two participating entities, or between one participating entity and an attribute. Both of these two types may have the verb 'be', which tends to obscure the difference between them. (Simpson, 1993) suggests that quite often these processes signal that a relationship exists between two participants, but without suggesting that one participant affects the other in anyway. The main relational processes of transitivity may be a) intensive, expressing an "X is a" relationship, b) Possessive, expressing "X has a" relationship; or c) Circumstantial, expressing "X is at/of a" relationship.

4.6. Headlines with 'Relational Processes'

1. Jan. 25, 2007, Chinese Leader (is) to Visit Sudan for Talks on Darfur

Conflict

2. Feb. 28, 2007, 2 Face Trials (are) at The Hague Over Darfur Atrocities
3. March 3, 2007, In the New Warfare, Women Are Targets
4. July 22, 2007, The underground lake: A Godsend for Darfur, or a
Curse?
5. July 26, 2007, Sudan: Aid Convoys (are) Under Attack in Darfur
6. Aug. 12, 2007, (Darfur Conflict is) An Atrocity That Needs No
Exaggeration
7. Aug. 28, 2007, U.N. Leader (is) to Travel to Sudan Area
8. Aug. 29, 2007, U.N. Secretary General (is) to Meet Sudanese Leader
9. Oct. 14, 2007, Peacekeepers (are) Without a Peace to Keep

From the examples cited above, it can be deduced that The New York Times utilizes relational processes to assign negative attributes to the Sudanese government as well as both the Darfur insurgents and the AU.

Conversely, the UN organization and the US players are credited with attributes of a more positive nature by the use of these relational processes as is also the case with the material and verbal processes.

The negative perspective implied by the New York Times coverage of the Darfur conflict is evident in its frightful depiction of the conflict in Headlines 3 and 5. Women and aid convoys are placed in Carrier positions in both headlines. However, they are both assigned negative attributes as they are reported to have been targets of attacks by both the rebels and the government-allied militias.

A rhetorical question is posited in Headline 4 with the announcement of the discovery of a lake in northern Darfur by researchers at Boston University. The fact remains that due to environmental factors, the Darfur conflict occurred. In spite of this, the New York Time's report still voices skepticism about the ability of such a discovery to stem the crisis. On the contrary, the report posits that this newly discovered lake is just as likely to become a source of conflict as much as it could be a solution to the bloodshed. Thus, it is implied that the African conflicts result from a lack of good governance rather than from the want of resources.

Headlines 7 and 8 foreground the UN Secretary General as the Carrier of the two processes, assigning him the positive attribute of going to Sudan in an attempt to stem the violence in Darfur by convincing the Sudanese leader to accept UN peacekeepers in Darfur.

The USA is not a signatory to the Rome Statute. However, in Headline 2, the report praises the fact that arrest warrants had been solicited by the ICC prosecutor to detain two Sudanese officials for charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Finally, the representation of China in relation to Sudan by the New York Times is mainly characterized by criticism of China's disregard of human rights violations in Sudan. Conversely, Headline 1 foregrounds the Chinese leader as the Carrier of the process and assigns him the positive attribute of visiting Sudan with the aim of ending the violence in Darfur. However, this shift in China's stance is suggested in the lead paragraph to have come as a result of pressure from the USA and other Western countries.

The preceding analysis clearly shows how on the one hand, the New York Times employs relational processes to discredit the Sudanese government, the African Union and Darfur insurgents and on the other, seeks to assign huge credit to the USA and the West in general.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data collected in this research, it is argued that NYT has purposefully utilized the linguistic and other related rhetorical devices, made available by the system of transitivity, in representing the social actors and events of the conflict. Accordingly, deliberate misrepresentation and partisanship exist in the news reports of the conflict in Darfur for the period covered by this research. Through such deliberate misrepresentations of the events and social actors involved in the conflict, NYT reinforces the media frames it has already established in the minds of its readers. By means of such stereotypes, the Sudanese government is presented as a pariah country, which is uncooperative and at variance with the international community. The rebel factions too, are depicted as ethnic based, disharmonious and unenthusiastic about their mission.

In the same vein, the African countries bordering Sudan are portrayed in the newspaper's reports as inefficient and unable to resolve their inner problems. What is more, these countries are shown as overly immersed in international border conflicts instead of addressing the root causes of their own domestic issues.

In stark contrast, the West, and the US players in particular, are depicted as powerful and influential social actors in the positive processes assigned to them. Furthermore, they are extolled as champions of human rights, aid givers and as emancipators of the Darfur people. Thus, the paper has managed to build up a completely different picture of the conflict in Darfur in the minds of its intended audience.

By and large, transitivity analysis coupled with Critical Linguistics framework has shown that bias in the media can be established systematically.

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