

Transitivity Analysis of Darfur Conflict Representation in The *New York Times*

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to use Hallidayan transitivity and contextual analysis to analyze the news reports of the conflict in Darfur region in Western Sudan by The New York Times newspaper (NYT) in the year 2006, from January 1 to December 31. The study uses critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework and aims to identify and explain how ideology is constructed and presented through language use. Analysis of 45 headlines from the online version shows that the language that is used to represent the conflict events and the social actors involved is selected from other available options and choices within the linguistic system. Such choices do not seem to be randomly made. Instead, they appear to be choices that seek to construct reality in a manner that suits the underlying ideologies of NYT's news editors and their intended audience. The analysis also shows how linguistic and textual devices like nominalization, active/passive constructions, agency deletion, circumstantial elements, among others, are purposefully employed to foster ideological interest by manipulating and manufacturing truth.

Keywords: Critical Linguistics (CL); Transitivity; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Darfur Conflict, representation, 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 adhering to.

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 45 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), as an analytical tool. The paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do journalists employ transitivity grammatical resources to weave their biases into their news reports?
2. How and to what extent can transitivity coupled with CDA reveal media bias?

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. Hence, 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. Traditionally, there is 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. Intermarriage 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 this study. It also shows what each process means as well as the roles of the participants.

Table 3.1 Process types, their meanings and key participants, Halliday (1994: 143)

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

3.1 Sampling and Selection of Corpus

The data for this corpus-based study 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 NYT. The newspaper reports covered the duration of the conflict that is between 1st January and 31st December 2006. This time frame 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 newspaper.

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.

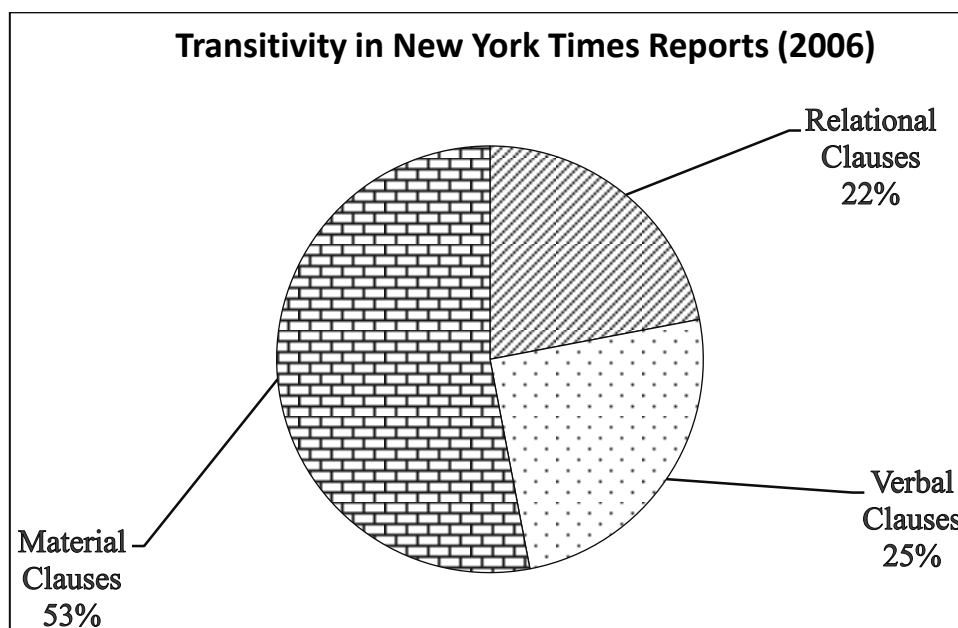


Figure 1

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 24, 2006, African Union Rebuffs Attempt by a Sudanese to Lead It
2. Feb 19, 2006, States Are Aiming to Keep Dollars Out of Sudan
3. Feb 28, 2006, Refugee Crisis Grows as Darfur War Crosses a Border
4. March 1, 2006, Peacekeepers and Diplomats, Seeking to End Darfur's Violence, (B) Hit Roadblock
5. March 6, 2006, Beyond Darfur: A Tragedy Spills Over
6. March 22, 2006, Darfur Attacks Overwhelm Peace Force
7. April 2, 2006, A Simsbury Church Reaching Out to Ease the Crisis in Sudan
8. April 3, 2006, Sudan Blocks Visit of U.N. Official to Darfur
9. April 13, 2006, Rebels Push Deep Into Chad from Bases Set Up in Sudan
10. May 1, 2006, Accord Hopes Dim in Darfur with Departure
11. May 1, 2006, Thousands Rally in Support of American Aid to Darfur

12. May 1, 2006, Deadline Passes Without Darfur Accord
13. May 2, 2006, U.S. Diplomat Heads to Nigeria to Try to Unsnarl Darfur Talks
14. June 17, 2006, Dealing With the Devil in Darfur
15. Aug. 6, 2006, Rebel Chief Gets Post in Accord on Darfur Peace
16. Aug.22, 2006, Sudan's Plan for Darfur Involves Its Own Force, Not the U.N.'s
17. (A) Sept. 1, 2006, U.N. Council Votes to Send Troops to Darfur; (B) Sudan Objects
18. Sept. 4. 2006, Sudan Gives African Force an Ultimatum
19. Sept. 9, 2006, With Little Authority, African Union Force Struggles With Its Mission in Darfur
20. Oct. 18, 2006, Sudanese Soldiers Flee War to Find a Limbo in Chad
21. Oct. 23, 2006, Khartoum Expels U.N. Envoy Who Has Been Outspoken on Darfur Atrocities
22. Nov. 8, 2006 In a Calm Corner of Darfur, Villagers Rebuild Ties
23. Nov. 14, 2006 Hundreds Killed Near Chad's Border With Sudan
24. Nov.15, 2006 Arab Gunmen Kill Hundreds of Villagers

While formal linguistics only deals with linguistic forms without their social function, the aim of critical linguistics is to explore the social function of language and to discern the concealed 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 23 out of the 24 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. Noteworthy too is the fact that the actor/agent roles are mostly occupied by proper nouns. In fact, Sudan government officials and rebels occupy the agent roles in 7 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 both the Sudanese government and Darfur insurgents.

The act of discrediting Sudan is clearly observable in the use of such active constructions as in Headline 8. In this particular headline, the Sudanese government is presented as actively responsible for the process of 'block' and in turn affecting the goal element, which is a planned visit by the UN's top humanitarian official to Darfur. Thus, the Sudanese government is depicted as the responsible party for hampering the humanitarian efforts in the war-ravaged region of Darfur.

In a similar fashion, Headlines 17 (B), 18 and 21 assign to Sudan the agent roles of the processes; 'objects', 'expels' and ('gives' an ultimatum) that likewise impact three patients; a security council resolution, the African forces in Darfur and a UN envoy.

Foregrounding Sudan in all these negative processes casts the Sudanese government in a negative and much less favourable light showing Sudan as being at odds with the international community.

Furthermore, the circumstantial element in Headline 21 that reads, 'Who Has Been Outspoken on Darfur Atrocities' functions to obscure the true reality behind the expulsion of the UN envoy. In doing so, the paper sways the reader to believe that the only fault of the UN envoy is being truthful, unbiased and unflinching in his commitment to reporting the atrocities committed by the Sudanese government together with its allied militias against the helpless civilians in Darfur. The Sudanese government however, is represented as being uncooperative and unwilling to collaborate with international community efforts in the region.

This unfavourable portrayal of the Sudanese government relative to the international community work is further reinforced by the circumstantial element of Headline 16 "Not the UN's", in reference to Sudan's objection to the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Darfur.

Headline 9 deals with Chad rebels. What makes it relevant here is the newspaper's inclusion of the circumstantial element, "from Bases Set up in Sudan" to express the unstated goal of implying that Sudan harbours Chadian insurgents. This inclusion also functions to highlight the levels of instability and lawlessness that exist at the borders of the two neighboring countries.

Headlines 12 and 14 suggest that Abuja peace talks are being conducted in a gloomy atmosphere. These talks are said to have persisted and continued far beyond the deadline set by the AU mostly due to the deep distrust each party in the talks holds for the other.

In Headline 20, the Sudanese soldiers are assigned the agent role of the negative process 'flee' (from a battle), thus showing them as improperly armed and feeling unenthusiastic about their mission.

Furthermore, Headline 24 underscores the theme of tribalism as the article presents the 'Arab Gunmen' as actively responsible for the process 'kill' affecting a goal element, 'hundreds of villagers'. Yet in the same space, Headline 22, these villagers are shown to have both coexisted with and have lived peacefully apart from the rebels as well as the government-backed militias. Hence, both the government forces and the rebels are depicted as the responsible parties behind the chaos in the region.

The paper adopts passive constructions in Headline 23, where causality and agency are omitted. Thus, the patient is constructed as both agent and affected participant in the same instance. Such construction makes the agent less grammatically powerful than the patient. In this headline, the patient 'hundreds' is placed in a subject or thematic position with the agent concealed. In this way, the prominence of the message is placed on the patient and the action suffered. Thus, the mass killing of civilians could have been executed by any of the active forces on the ground. By means of agency deletion, the paper depicts a chaotic picture of the security situation in Darfur.

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, attack, crisis, and tragedy". 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 processes 'kill' and 'kidnap'. It is also instructive to know that the patients of these processes are civilians and humanitarian workers.

Likewise, the choice of the verbs 'overwhelm' and 'dim', in Headlines 6 and 10, 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. Moreover, the inclusion of the circumstantial element in Headline 10 "With Departure" lays the burden of blame for any foreseeable failure of Abuja peace talks at the doorstep of the then Sudan's vice president, who is reported to have very abruptly left Nigeria for Sudan.

Nominalization as seen by Toolan (1988) 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 3 and 5. These headlines use the negative labels "crisis" and "tragedy" in reference to the situation of the refugees on the border of Sudan and Chad. The two processes are packed with ideological manipulation depicting Sudan as the main cause of the spread of chaos into neighboring countries. Furthermore, the construction of the headlines helps sway the reader to believe that the existence of 'Refugee Crisis' and 'Tragedy' is an established truth. 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, which are 'grows' and 'spills over' respectively. In other words, these nominalized clauses have not specified any facts about how and when the details of the refugee crisis and the tragedy were obtained and verified.

It is noteworthy that the African Union is assigned the agent role only twice in the headlines with material processes. In Headline 1, the process discredits Sudan when it is said to have been rebuffed by the AU leaders in an attempt to prevent the country assuming leadership of the organization. In Headline 19, however, the process 'struggles' discredits the AU as being poorly equipped and not exercising full mandate on the ground.

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 all the headlines are in the active construction placing the prominence of the processes on the agents, which are mostly American institutions, officials or individuals.

Headlines 2 underscores the measures taken by the USA to press the government of Sudan to end the violence in Darfur and to accept a UN-led peacekeeping force. Such measures are reported to include stiff economic sanctions on the government of Sudan, in reference to the signing of the divestment bill by the then US president.

Similarly, Headlines 4A and 13 place US officials in agent positions of the processes 'seeking' (to end Darfur violence) and 'heads to' (Nigeria to push the peace talks forward). Thus, the two headlines evaluate the American officials positively in the processes that they had performed.

The newspaper also credits American individuals and institutions in Headlines 7 and 11. A church in the USA is said to be raising money for Darfur in Headline 7. Moreover, in Headline 11, thousands of Americans are reported to have attended a rally in Washington with the aim of attracting attention to what they had labelled as 'ethnic cleansing' in Darfur. In addition, they are reportedly exercising pressure on the Bush administration to act on the matter.

Headline 17A assigns to the UN and the Security Council the actor role of the processes 'votes' affecting a resolution that allowed the UN to send peacekeepers to Sudan. The world organization is, therefore, shown as united against the Sudanese nation.

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, poorly equipped and unenthusiastic about their 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. Jan 28, 2006, Plan to End Darfur Violence Is Failing, Officials Say
2. Feb. 4, 2006, Security Council Agrees to Send Troops to Darfur
3. April 15, 2006, After Battle in Capital, Chad Threatens to Expel Sudanese
4. May 3, 2006, Bush Urges Sudan to Continue With Peace Talks
5. June 1, 2006, UN says Darfur Rebels Reject Deal
6. Aug. 9, 2006, Deaths of Aid Workers in Darfur on Rise, U.N. Says
7. Sept. 5, 2006, African Union Threatens to Leave Darfur
8. Sept. 6, 2006, Africa Monitors Threatening to Quit Sudan
9. Sept. 9, 2006, Sudan Agrees to Free U.S. Reporter Accused of Spying
10. Oct. 21, 2006, Sudanese Army Says U.N. Envoy Is Declared Persona Non Grata
11. Dec. 11, 2006, U.N. Says Gunmen Kill 30 in Darfur

The choice of who to quote is ideologically significant. Accordingly, media reporters selectively cherry pick quotations and employ them to convey ideological presuppositions. Furthermore, it is a very common practice for newsmakers to support their copy 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 Headline 2, all the Sayer roles are occupied by proper nouns.

It is also significant that Sudanese officials are quoted on only two occasions in the 11 verbal processes. In fact, Sudan occupies the Sayer roles in Headlines 9 and 10. Moreover, the newspaper uses the reporting verb 'agrees' instead of 'says' in Headline 9 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 hastened the release of the American reporter of the Chicago Tribune, Paul Salopek who was accused of spying.

An alternate construction of Headline 9 for instance, might possibly read, "Sudan says it will free U.S. reporter accused of spying". Written in this way, the newspaper would be presenting Sudan's move as proactive and responsible. However, this alternate reconstruction does not serve the ideological interests of the publication.

The issue of Sudan's lack of cooperation in relation to the international community occurs in Headline 10. Sudan's apparent unwilling position is said to be escalating the conflict with the UN by declaring its special envoy to Sudan, Jan Pronk as unwanted. By means of using the reporting verb 'says', Sudan is presented as fully responsible for the expulsion of the UN official.

It is worth noting that only two African leaders are quoted in the headlines that employ verbal processes; namely a Chadian official and the then Libyan president. Headline 3 assigns the Sayer role to a Chadian official who is said to have threatened to expel 200,000 Sudanese refugees after repelling an attempted rebel incursion into the capital, Ndjamena. The same headline contributes to reinforce mental models already established in the perceptions of The New York Times' readers that relate to the ways in which neighboring African countries seek to destabilize each other. Furthermore, the headline also underscores the tragic circumstances in which Chadian and Sudanese refugees continue to exist.

As set out previously, media reporters are inclined to quote individuals whose message aligns with their publication's ideological stances. In Headlines 7 and 8, African Union officials are said to have issued a threat to terminate the mission of the AU in favor of a UN peacekeeping force. Furthermore, these headlines depict the AU as poorly equipped and in possession of a weak mandate.

The media coverage of the Darfur conflict from a negative perspectives is observed in the 'verbiage' that constitutes Headlines 1, 5 and 6, which clearly demonstrate the pessimistic views that both UN and US officials hold in relation to the situation in Darfur. In Headline 1, UN and US officials are shown to be upset about the apparent looming failure of the peace talks.

Headlines 6 and 11 draw a tragic picture of the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur due to the recurring targeting of civilians and aid workers by either Sudanese government-allied militias or rebel fighters. Moreover, the verbiage in Headline 5 'reject a deal' functions to discredit the Darfur rebel fighters by presenting them as the unwilling party in the termination of violence in Darfur. Despite the fact that one rebel faction, Minnawi's SPLA signed the Abuja peace agreement and was engaged in the political process, yet it is put on equal footage with the other two rebel factions that had refused to sign.

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. During the month of the US presidency in Headline 2, the Security Council is said to have approved the deployment of UN peacekeepers with a robust mandate to replace the low equipped African forces. Headline 4 assigns to the then US president, George W. Bush the Sayer role and is reported to have urged the then Sudanese president to send the country's vice president and the key negotiator back to Abuja, Nigeria to expedite the peace talks.

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, p. 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 13, 2006, African Union Lacks Darfur Funds
2. Jan 13, 2006, (There are) 28 Days to Save Darfur
3. Chad and Darfur (have) a Common Destiny
4. Aug. 8, 2006, Killing of Aid Workers (is) on Rise in Darfur
5. Aug. 25, 2006, U.S. (is) to Press Sudan’s Leader to Accept U.N. Force
6. Aug. 25, 2006, U.S. Official (is) to Go to Sudan to Promote Use of U.N. Troops
7. Oct. 23, 2006, Grim New Turn (is) Likely to Harden Darfur Conflict
8. Oct. 24, 2006, War in Sudan: (is) Not Where the Oil Wealth Flows
9. Nov. 5, 2006, Refugee Camps: (are) Circles of Loss
10. Dec. 14, 2006, U.N. Team (is) to Go to Sudan to Study Abuse Charges

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.

Additionally, it is instructive to note that the newspaper employs only two relational processes of the possessive type in Headlines 1 and 3. Relational possessive processes utilize ‘have’ as a verb to express that “X has a” relationship. The other 8 headlines contain relational processes that employ the verb ‘be’ in order to express an “X is a” relationship and are classified as intensive processes.

Headline 1 foregrounds the AU peacekeeping force as the Carrier of the process. However, once established, it is later discredited for having become immobilized by financial and logistical problems. As a result, the AU is reported to have failed to put an end to the violence experienced in the region. In doing so, the newspaper continues depicting Sudan as being at variance with the international community over its rejection of the UN’s plan that sought to replace such insufficient AU deterrent force with more robust UN peacekeepers.

Likewise, Headline 3 highlights the inseparable nature of the conflict in the two war-ravaged neighboring regions, Chad and Darfur. The article quotes officials from Sudan and Chad trading accusations with one another. Hence, an anonymous Sudanese official is quoted of having accused Chad of harboring Darfur rebels. Similarly, an official in Chad is said to have accused Sudan of backing insurgents in their country.

Moreover, the newspaper digs deeper with details that explain the ways in which the Chadian Zaghawa-dominated government shares ethnic links with some rebel factions in Darfur. Similarly, the Chadian Arab led insurgence is said to be getting support from the Khartoum Arab-dominated government. The paper's attempt to draw attention to such details shows that the paper's news editors seek to amplify the stereotypical perceptions related to conflicts in Africa in that they are tribal-based and that African leaders are constantly plotting ways to destabilize one another.

The negative perspective implied by NYT's coverage of the Darfur conflict is evident in its frightful depiction of the conflict in Headlines 4 and 7. NYT's reports utilize the notion of nominalization as referenced earlier in these two headlines and passes off to the readers the 'Killing of Aid Workers' and 'Grim New Turn' in the fight as established facts. Such phrases are then employed as Carriers of other processes and the negative attributes assigned to them are 'On Rise in Darfur' and 'Likely to Harden Darfur Conflict' respectively.

Headlines 8 and 9 highlight the disparity between the quality of life experienced in Darfur in general and the refugee camps in particular with that led by the elites in the capital, Khartoum. Whereas in the first, the worst atrocities unfold, in the latter, the economy is said to be booming from the oil revenues and foreign investments. Thus, the reports depict the government of Sudan as not treating its citizens on fair grounds.

In contrast to the heavily biased reporting discussed above, NYT employs Relational processes to credit the USA and the UN. Headlines 5 and 6 place the US administration and a US official in prominent positions as Carriers. Both are assigned the positive attribute that they are being hard working. This is reportedly done in order to convince Sudan that it should accept the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops to replace the poorly equipped AU force that is said to have failed to halt the slide of Darfur into chaos.

In Headline 2, the news item declares that the US month-long presidency of the Security Council would be the optimum time to end the agony of the people of Darfur. Even in spite of the fact that Security Council presidency is rotated among the 15 countries that make up the council, the newspaper suggests that the USA is more suited and better qualified than the other nations in its efforts to end the violence and to restore peace and stability in the region of Darfur.

Headline 10 places the UN team in the Carrier position assigning them the positive attribute of going to Sudan to investigate abuses such as rape, pillage and murder in Darfur.

The preceding analysis clearly shows how on the one hand, NYT 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

On the basis of the analysis of the data collected in this research, it is argued that deliberate misrepresentation and partisanship exist in the news reports of the conflict in Darfur for the period covered by this research. For its own ends, the newspaper deliberately employs transitivity processes to bring to the fore the general positive values in relation to the West and in particular to the USA and to deemphasize any negative ones. Conversely, any apparent positive traits or values attributable to the Sudanese government, Darfur rebel factions or the AU are overlooked whereas the negative biases are always underscored. The paper purposefully employs the grammatical resources of transitivity such as lexicalization, passive and active constructions, thematization, and agency deletion to indirectly credit the efforts of Western players while at the same time to downplay those made by Sudan and other African and Arab countries.

Word selection is an effective tool to manipulate facts and creates biases. Hence, the NYT journalists deliberately choose lexical items that in their collocation function to cast a positive light on the actions and intentions of the American and Western players. However, the same writers tend to select harsher terms that are laden with negative evaluations of both the actions of the Sudanese government and those of the insurgents in Darfur. The choice of verbs in particular has established expressive value in the material processes. Action verbs have been used by NYT to endorse and effect support for the actions of the US and Western actors and to discredit and negate the actions of the Sudanese and African ones. Furthermore, NYT has purposefully inserted circumstantial elements in its news reports that function to level blame onto the Sudanese and African players and even to exonerate Western and American actors.

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