

A Comparative Analysis of the Darfur Conflict in the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star, 2003-2008

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Abstract

Using framing theory, this study examines coverage of the Darfur conflict in the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star. Content analysis was used to determine dominant frames, and dominant social actors who dominated the coverage.

Introduction

Eight years after the outbreak of conflict in Darfur, the region is still in a perpetual state of strife as two main rebel groups—the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM)—are waging war against the Sudan government. Although the Sudan government succeeded in signing a deal with a small rebel group, the Liberation Justice Movement in July 2011, a pact with the JEM and SLM remains elusive. Furthermore, the Darfur Peace Agreement inked in 2006 between a faction of the SLM and the Sudan government, has unraveled. Minni Arko Minnawi, leader of the SLM faction that signed the deal with the government has since abandoned a senior government position in Khartoum and signaled that he is ready to wage war again.

Inhabited by “Arab” and “African” tribes, Darfur, a westerly region in Sudan, is largely arid, remote, and far from the centre of power in Khartoum. For decades after it’s incorporation into the Sudanese state in 1916, Darfur remained on the fringes (Prunier 42-47). A general marginalization of the region, including grievances between Darfur’s “Arab” and “African”

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tribes, culminated in a conflict in 2003, that pitted armed rebel movements of “African” descent against the government of Sudan (Flint and de Waal 99 and Totten and Markusen 11).

To quell the rebellion, the Sudanese government launched a scorched-earth counter-insurgency campaign that utilized the help of an Arab militia known as the *Janjaweed*. The campaign did not distinguish between rebel fighters and the civilian African population deemed to be in support of the rebellion (Daly 263 and Tubiana 69). The attacks involved a three-fold pattern. First, high altitude Antanov bombers would bomb settlements inhabited by the African tribes. This would be followed by helicopter gunship attacks. Lastly, joint ground assaults involving the *Janjaweed* and regular government troops would ensue, followed by plunder, killings, rape, and burning of houses (Cockett 186). Subsequently, the story that filtered from aid workers to the media was one of an “Arab” proxy army carrying out an ethnic-cleansing campaign against a “black African” population in Darfur.

Initially, *Janjaweed* attacks on villages seemed spontaneous and isolated. But as a systematic pattern to the attacks emerged, Non-Governmental Organizations such as the International Crisis Group, Justice Africa, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International alerted the media about the atrocities, but the Darfur story did not garner attention until a year later (Gryzb 78).

A description of the conflict by the UN in December 2003, as the “worst humanitarian crisis” failed to spur a groundswell of media attention (UN News Centre). But in March 2004, media coverage started to pick up following a statement by Mukesh Kapila, the UN resident coordinator for Sudan, who described the atrocities in Darfur as being “close to the definition of ethnic cleansing” (Associated Press A.22). In April 2004, in an occasion to mark the tenth

anniversary of the Rwanda genocide, Kofi Annan, secretary general of the UN, described Darfur as a “Rwanda style” conflict and urged the world to stop the fighting (Saleh A16).

Annan’s allusion to the Rwanda genocide elicited two questions that served to define eventual discourse on the Darfur conflict. First, did the atrocities against non-Arab Darfurians amount to genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, counter-insurgency, or a combination of all four? And secondly, should the international community intervene or not in the conflict? (Grzyb 9). On the first question, comparative genocide scholars on Darfur differ in their definition of the conflict. Alex de Waal, for instance, describes it as a “counter-insurgency genocide” (de Waal 30). Prunier, on the other hand, calls the conflict an “ambiguous genocide,”² while Reeves and Markusen term the conflict as a “genocide” (Reeves 110; Markusen 95).

Viewed through the prism of the Rwanda genocide of 1994, the term “genocide” was a powerful word, both from a rhetorical and political perspective. Governments and the UN shied from the term, in part because of the implications tied to its the usage. In particular, the question of proving intent (on the part of the Sudan government) to commit genocide as outlined in the 1948 Genocide Convention (which defines genocide as the *intent to* destroy a people—in part or in whole), proved to be controversial. For instance, a UN report on the atrocities found that while the acts of the Sudan government may constitute genocide, the intent was to suppress insurgency rather than the targeted killing of non-Arab Darfuris (Markusen 103).

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the term genocide in the Darfur context and the international community’s reluctance to adopt the word, the U.S was unequivocal in its description of the atrocities. In September 2004, then U.S secretary of state, Colin Powell, told

² See Prunier’s book “Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide.”

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “genocide has been committed in Darfur” and the Sudan government and its *Janjaweed* proxies were responsible for the atrocities (Mamdani 25).

Powell’s use of the term genocide, including Annan’s comparison of Darfur to Rwanda, was instrumental in garnering media attention and activists’ interest in the conflict. For instance, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof was among the first journalists to cover the conflict extensively. Described as an “indefatigable crusader on Darfur,” Kristof wrote dozens of columns about the conflict and was among the first journalists to attach the genocide tag to it, after he made six highly publicized visits to the region. For his reporting on Darfur, Kristof eventually won a Pulitzer Prize (Mamdani 29).

In Canada, the *Globe and Mail*’s Stephanie Nolen documented the atrocities in Darfur in a series of intense portraits of the victims of the conflict. Following Annan’s declaration that a Rwanda-style genocide may be unfolding in Darfur, Nolen was dispatched to the region in June 2004, where she rendered a human face to the conflict in feature-length articles that offered depth and context. Through her stories, Nolen explored the human suffering of internally displaced people, focusing on the plight of women and children, overcrowding, sky-rocketing commodity prices in the centres hosting the displaced, and the stereotypes behind the conflict (Nolen F1; A.9).

Similarly, Levon Sevunts, a freelancer working for the *Toronto Star*, was sent to Darfur in August 2004. While Nolen’s coverage was carried out in UN safe havens for refugees and areas controlled by the government, Sevunts reporting occurred in rebel-controlled territory, where he was able to present *Toronto Star* readers an entirely different perspective of the conflict, in particular the stories of rebel soldiers and people behind rebel lines (Sevunts F05; A.07; A06).

From an activist standpoint, the Save Darfur Coalition, a grassroots organization formed in July 2004, was pivotal in generating media attention for the Darfur conflict, especially in the U.S, where its influence was far more significant than in any other country. By 2007, the Coalition claimed a membership of more than 180 faith-based, advocacy and humanitarian organizations and a network of 130 million people, including celebrity movie actors such as George Clooney, Don Cheadle, and Mia Farrow. The Coalition had also raised an annual budget of U.S \$14 million, a large part of which was spent on advocacy to “shape (U.S and Western) government policy through public pressure” (Mamdani 23). Through mass rallies and letter-writing campaigns, the Coalition kept the Darfur issue alive in the media. It pressured U.S companies to divest from corporations investing in Sudan, and spurred the Bush administration to impose sanctions on Khartoum. Andrew Natsios, President George W. Bush’s special envoy to Sudan, acknowledged the coalition’s influence on the media when he was quoted in the *Washington Post* saying, “The Save Darfur Coalition has kept this issue in the news media and before the public and has focused the issue in a way that hasn’t happened in foreign relations maybe since the South Africa anti-apartheid movement” (Birnbaum D01).

Mostly significantly, the Darfur conflict generated intense political debate about whether or not Canada should send troops to the region. In 2005, the debate took a dramatic turn, when Prime Minister Paul Martin’s Liberal minority government, facing a confidence motion in the House of Commons, sought the support of David Kilgour. The Calgary area MP, who sat as an independent in the House, said he would vote for Martin’s government only if Canada increased aid funding for Darfur. Martin promised \$170 million, but Kilgour still voted with the opposition, arguing the amount fell short of expectations (Adeba 3). Martin’s government

narrowly survived the confidence motion when Speaker Peter Milliken was forced to cast his vote to break the tie.

Research question and literature review

This paper examines the coverage of the Darfur conflict in two of Canada's largest newspapers, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions: 1-*What are the themes used by the Globe and the Star in framing the Darfur conflict?* 2-*Who are the social actors who dominate in the coverage that framed the conflict?* 3-*What are the implications of these themes for the public and for policy-makers?*

To understand how the Darfur conflict is covered in the Western media, this study examines the coverage of the conflict in the context in which Africa is generally covered. Western media coverage of Africa is scant, focuses on ethnic conflict, humanitarian assistance, political uncertainty, violence, and famine (Hawk, 1992; Fair, 1993; McNulty, 1999; Wall, 1997; Musa, 2007).

This study utilizes framing theory to examine the news narrative of both newspapers in order to draw conclusions. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1991; 7). Frames are defined as "principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin 6).

Entman has observed that because narrative consists of “nothing more than words and pictures, frames can be detected by probing for particular words and visual images that consistently appear in a narrative and convey thematically consonant meanings across media and time (7). Entman also posits that comparing media narratives in two different newspapers reporting the same events facilitates understanding of the “critical textual” choices used in framing the story, noting that “unless narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably, because many of the framing devices can appear to be “natural, unremarkable choices of words or images” (6).

Rationale for choosing the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*

The *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* are Canada’s largest circulation English-language newspapers. The *Globe and Mail* is a national newspaper with regional editions across the country. The *Toronto Star*, although primarily widely read in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), is the largest circulation daily in the country. In 2008, the *Toronto Star’s* weekly circulation figures were 2.3 million copies. For the same period, the *Globe and Mail’s* weekly circulation was 1.9 million, making it Canada’s second largest circulation daily (Canadian Newspaper Association, 16).

Both newspapers have divergent editorial slants: The *Globe and Mail* is a conservative paper compared to the *Toronto Star*, which is a liberal newspaper. Because the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* are headquartered in Toronto, Canada’s largest city and most multicultural urban setting, both papers devote a considerable amount of coverage to international affairs, which touch the lives of their primary audience in the city. This is evident in the pursuit of local angles that connect to broader international stories. When it comes to covering Africa, the *Globe and Mail*, for a considerable amount of the time hostilities in Darfur were unfolding, maintained

a roving reporter—Stephanie Nolen—to cover the continent. The *Star*, on the other hand, occasionally sent reporters to Africa when major stories were breaking.

Methodology

A random keyword search of the word “Darfur” in the *Canadian Newsstand* database was employed in retrieving the newspaper articles. The use of a random keyword search has been established in previous framing research on the Darfur conflict (Alozie 66). Articles retrieved for study include news, features, opinions, and editorials from March 1, 2003 to March 1, 2008. Within this five-year span, the study focuses on specific phases of the conflict that triggered media coverage and generated public interest, domestically and globally. After a meticulous reading of the articles from both newspapers, the phases were grouped in the following years: 2003-2004; 2005-2006; and 2007-2008. The first phase (2003-2004) represents the pre-problem stage, when opinions and information about the war was scant. The second phase (2005-2006) represents the awareness stage, during which information about the conflict was available and opinions about it had been formed. The last phase (2007-2008) is the resolution stage, where opinions about the conflict were in a mature stage, with known remedies for ending it.

The insertion of the word “Darfur” in the *Canadian Newsstand* database turned up 741 articles from the *Globe and Mail* and 762 articles from the *Toronto Star*. This large number of articles, however, contained some stories that did not relate directly to the Darfur conflict, even though they contained the keyword. For example, in some articles, Darfur was only mentioned in passing, in direct or indirect quotes, or in comparison to other war situations. Additionally, some were duplicates, or letters to the editor. To determine that Darfur was the main theme, the articles were screened individually. Determining the main theme was based on whether or not Darfur is

mentioned in the headline, or the first few paragraphs of the lead, or in paragraphs in the main body of the article. A total of 290 articles; 141 from the *Globe and Mail* and 149 from the *Toronto Star* were established to have Darfur as their main thrust. In essence, this means the stories were about the conflict or referred to aspects of the conflict.

Qualitatively, content analysis was used to determine the themes and the social actors who framed the conflict. First, each individual article was read separately in order to understand its contents. Each article was then read a second time, along with detailed note taking, to determine themes and categories such as news, features, editorials, and opinion. Finally, once categories were established, the articles were coded accordingly, as news, features, editorials, and opinion. Similarly, the articles were also coded according to themes. Quantitatively, the study uses figures to discern sample size, prevalence, and proportion from the textual analysis to draw conclusions. The combined use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies minimizes the potential of overlooking critical aspects of news coverage such as patterns, sequences, and tendencies, to ensure that the analysis is thorough (Berg 4).

Content analysis and its limitations

The limitations of content analysis lie in the fact that various researchers may have varying definitions for a particular operational term (Wimmer and Dominick 154). To counter this shortcoming, researchers suggest that it is appropriate to offer operational definitions of key concepts or subjects under investigation. Such definitions describe how a particular concept can be measured or counted (Berger 27). It is further suggested that to support findings, it is important to ensure a systematic process during content analysis. This requires consistency during content evaluation and the development of categories (Kassarjian 1997).

Coding and Operationalization of terms

Coding aids the organization, retrieval, and interpretation of data, enabling researchers to identify meaningful data and set a platform for interpreting and drawing conclusions (Miles and Huberman 56). Before coding, a definition of terms or “operationalization of terms,” a process by which particular words or concepts can be measured, was undertaken to ensure consistency during the evaluation process. Berge contends that content characteristics under examination should be specified and explicit rules should be determined for identifying and recording (314). A coding manual to categorize articles, their contents and themes, as well as the creation of mutually exclusive terms, was developed.

Categorization of articles

Articles examined were categorized as news, features, editorials, and opinion. Although the *Canada Newsstand* database identifies categories such as news and editorials, it does not identify features. In general, features are classified as news, which is misleading. To filter and identify the correct category, the articles were each read separately. The following coding process was used in identifying the articles:

- If the article contains the elements of a news story, it is identified as “news.” (News in this case is defined as an item that highlights a new event, is short and precise)
- If the article contains the elements of a feature story, it is identified as “feature.” (A feature is defined here as a prominent, long, analytical, contextual and in-depth article that focuses on one individual or situation)
- If the article contains the elements of an opinion piece, it is identified as “opinion.” (An opinion piece is defined as an article that reflects the author’s opinion on a particular subject matter, written by a guest writer or an in-house columnist)

- If the article contains the elements of an editorial it is identified as “editorial.” (Editorial is defined as an unsigned article reflecting the views of the newspaper’s editorial board on a particular subject and published on an editorial page)

Determination of themes and social actors

After the above process, the articles were categorized as news, features, opinion, and editorials, and grouped according to the years they were published. For instance, all the articles published in 2004 were grouped together. These articles were then read to determine their themes. The following was used to broadly deconstruct the discourse in the articles:

- Articles that talk about war (rebels fighting government forces and vice versa, attacks on peacekeepers, bandit attacks on civilians, militia attacks on civilians, etc).
- Articles that talk about peace (international efforts to get the warring parties to negotiate, peace overtures from government and rebels, diplomatic pressure to end war, etc).
- Articles about helping the victims of Darfur (military intervention to end war, delivery of food aid, shelter provision, etc).

Prior research on the framing of African conflicts and the Darfur conflict in particular, has established the predominance of themes such as humanitarian action, ethnicity, violence, war, and ambivalence (Alozie 2007; Kothari 2007; McNulty 1999). The articles were read to determine the existence of these themes. Subsequently, upon careful consideration of the Canadian context depicted in the articles in both newspapers, the following predominant themes were identified for the purpose of this study: 1) Humanitarian action; 2) Military intervention; 3) Diplomatic intervention; 4) Violence; 5) International ambivalence; 6) Canadian inaction.

The determination of the social actors started from a broad perspective in which they were listed individually. These actors were then grouped according to their similarities under the

following categories: 1) Local political sources; 2) International political sources; 3) Other sources.

Both categories (themes and social actors) were then tabulated. The articles were read and the themes that emerged were noted in the table. Each theme is noted once throughout an article. Each category (news, features, opinion, and editorials) is analyzed separately and the themes noted. On the completion of this process, the number of times a particular theme is mentioned in all the articles is recorded and percentages are then calculated. The same process was also replicated for determining social actors. However, unlike when themes are only recorded once in an article, social actors were noted on the basis of how many times they were mentioned. Furthermore, strict adherence to their mention by name was employed. The number of times a particular social actor is mentioned by name is recorded and the sum is added up in all categories: news, features, editorials, and opinion; and percentages were then calculated.

Validity, reliability and limitations of content analysis

This study utilizes face validity, a technique that ensures reliability on the basis of a rigid and satisfactory definition of categories as well as a proper conduct of the procedures of the analysis in a research project (Wimmer and Dominick 154). Content analysis is a straightforward and unobtrusive way of conducting research. However it has limitations: the researcher's bias may interfere with the data coding and defining operational terms may be a subjective process. In the research process, a researcher's background may influence the way the subject matter is viewed. In the case of this study, the author's background as an immigrant and a Canadian of African descent may be a factor which influenced the research process through the cultural assumptions that may have been made about the sources and the themes under investigation.

Results and analysis

Overall, a total of 290 articles were retrieved for study. Of these, 141 were from the *Globe and Mail*, and 149 were from the *Toronto Star*. These articles included news, features, editorials and opinion from March 1, 2003 to March 1, 2008. In April 2003, hostilities broke out in Darfur, but the *Globe and Mail* first published a Darfur story on December 8, 2003 and the *Toronto Star* carried a Darfur story on April 17, 2004.

The fact that Canada's largest circulation newspaper took a year before it printed a story on Darfur demonstrates the lack of depth and context that was later to emerge from the *Toronto Star's* coverage of the conflict. Although the *Globe and Mail* fared better, by devoting some attention to the conflict in 2003, a search of the *Canadian Newsstand* database reveals that the December 8th story was the only one that the paper published on Darfur that year. The delayed coverage in both newspapers meant reporters missed an opportunity to learn about the various dimensions of the conflict that would have enabled contextual reporting.

Among the articles selected for study, news by far outnumbered features, editorials and opinion in both newspapers. For the duration of the study period, a total of 100 news articles were among those retrieved from the *Globe and Mail*, and 90 from the *Toronto Star*. Comparatively, news comprised 71 per cent of all articles retrieved from the *Globe and Mail*, and 60 per cent of all articles from the *Toronto Star*. The dominance of the news category is consistent with the fact that newspapers primarily rely on conventional news presentation as a vehicle for conveying information to readers. Features ranked as the second largest category of articles collected from both newspapers: 21 (or 15 percent) from the *Globe and Mail*; 19 (or 13 percent) from the *Toronto Star*. Features offer depth and an analytical perspective to the news. The dominance of the features category is therefore not surprising. The third dominant category was the opinion category: 14 articles (10 per cent) were from the *Globe and Mail* and 26 articles

(17 per cent) from the *Toronto Star*. The least dominant category was the editorial category. Fourteen articles (9 per cent) were published in the *Globe and Mail* and 6 (4 per cent) were retrieved from the *Toronto Star*, as illustrated below. (see Figures 1-4).

Figure 1: Chart showing articles retrieved from the *Globe and Mail*. (March 1st 2003 to March 1st 2008)

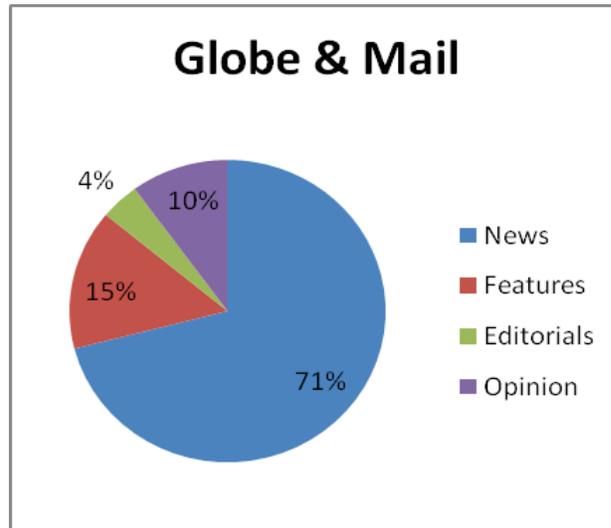


Figure 2: Graph showing the breakdown of the number of articles published in the *Globe and Mail* by year.

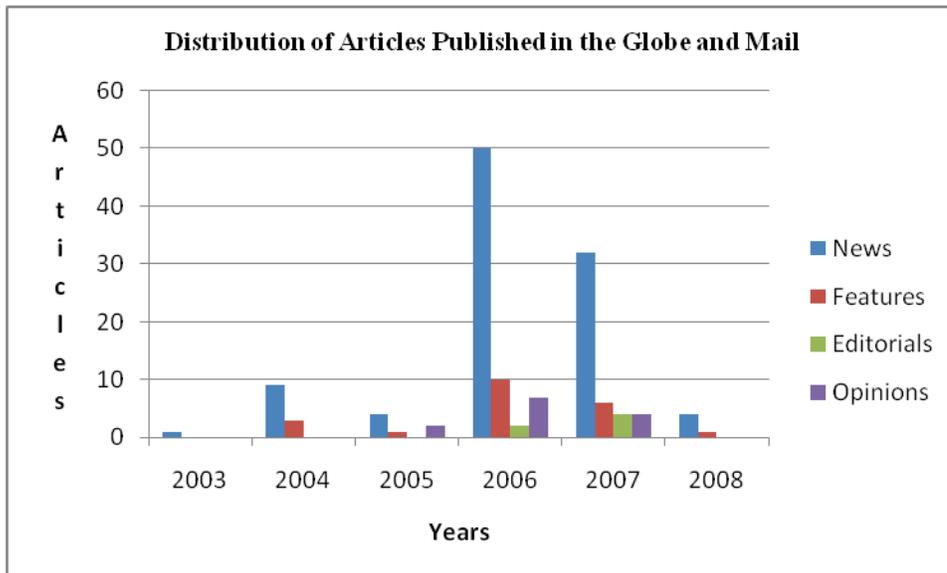
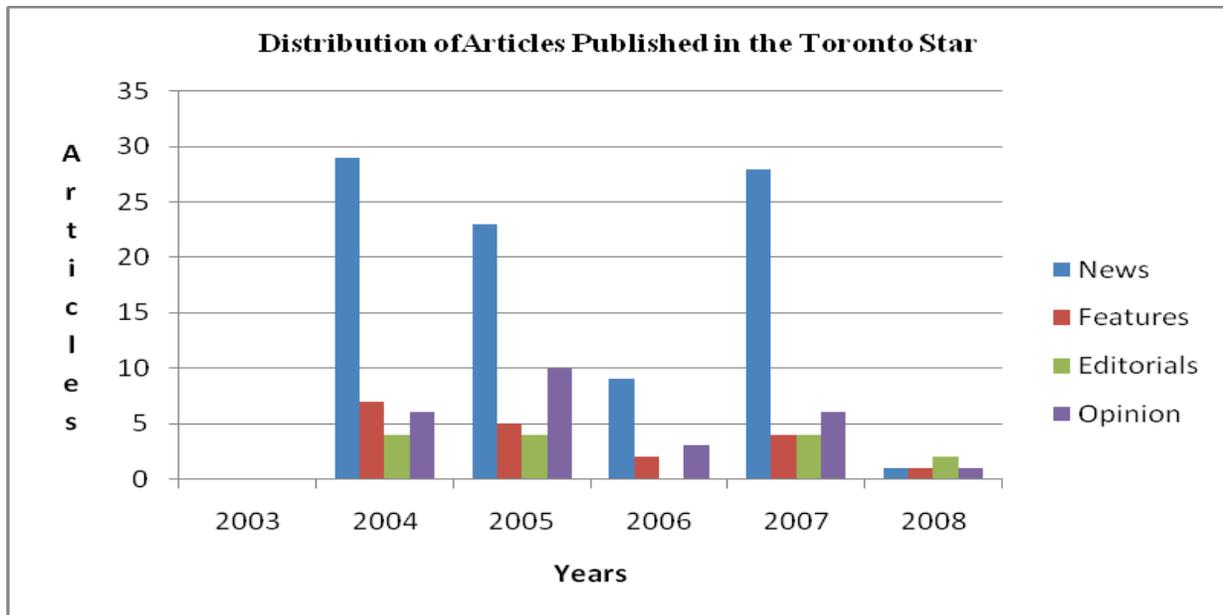


Figure 3: The dominance of the news category is also replicated in the *Toronto Star* as illustrated below.



Of the articles retrieved for study in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, over 50 percent consisted of news. In reviewing the dominance of the news category in each individual year within the time frame chosen for study, the figures show a steady increase. (See Figure 2 and Figure 3). In the *Globe and Mail*, the number of news articles retrieved increases in the first two years (2003 and 2004), drops slightly in 2005, but increases dramatically in 2006 and 2007 and finally decreases in 2008. In the *Toronto Star*, in the first three years (2003, 2004, and 2005) the number of news articles increases. This was followed by a reduction in 2006, followed by an increase in 2007 and a decrease in 2008.

Pre-problem phase (2003-2004) and the dearth of coverage

A plausible explanation for the increase in coverage, as the conflict progressed, can be found in the fact that the conflict was escalating during the period of heightened interest and information about it was beginning to register on the media radar. For instance, in 2003, when

the war broke out, there was very little attention devoted to covering it in both newspapers. This was the pre-problem stage, where although there was an increase in fighting and displacement of thousands, and a UN description of the conflict on December 5th 2003 as the “worst humanitarian crisis,” the media were still largely oblivious to the humanitarian cost of the conflict (UN News Centre). The *Globe and Mail*, for instance, did not cover the December 5th announcement made by Jan Egeland, the UN under-secretary general for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (who described Darfur as the “worst humanitarian crisis”), but instead chose to focus on a story three days later, about rebels claiming they killed 700 Sudanese government soldiers.

The *Globe and Mail*'s first look at the Darfur conflict was a brief 76-word story that put emphasis on the number of government troops killed by the rebels, but failed to mention whether any civilians had been displaced by the fighting. The single-sourced story, which quoted rebel figures, did not say whether the rebels knew of the effects of the fighting on the civilian population.

A Western Sudanese rebel group asserted yesterday that it had ambushed and killed 700 government troops and pro-government militiamen pushing into rebel areas in the arid Darfur region, forcing a retreat.

Government officials were not immediately available to comment on the attack, which rebels said took place Friday at the Abu Gamra dam, 45 kilometres north of government-held Kebkabiya. But officials have previously said there were military operations in the area (“Government troops slain, Sudanese rebels say”).

The *Toronto Star* first covered Darfur in April 2004, a year after the conflict started. The first *Toronto Star* story, which appeared on page A.12, ran to 277 words under the headline “Bloody parallels visible in Sudan’s fight with rebels” (Green A.12). The story was authored by a wire service reporter, typical of most of the *Toronto Star* stories to follow. It described the

conflict as a fight between “Arab militias on horseback” carrying out a “scorched earth policy against villagers,” and drew parallels between Darfur and the Rwanda genocide.

Subsequently, both newspapers published a small number of news stories on Darfur in the first phase of the coverage. Within this period (2003-2004), the *Globe and Mail* published ten stories, while the *Toronto Star* published 29 stories. The *Globe and Mail* stories were mostly short news clips, supplemented by longer feature articles, which was an attempt to explain the significance of the conflict. In contrast, the *Toronto Star* news stories were longer, backed up by in-depth features, as well as editorials and opinion pieces that focused on the mass atrocities in Darfur.

However, during the following 12 months, there was a significant increase in the number of news articles about the conflict in both newspapers. According to Gamson and Modigliani, when journalists cover continuing stories, they look for “pegs,” described as “topical events that present opportunities for broader, more timeless coverage and commentary” (151). These “pegs” were manifested when leaders from humanitarian bodies started raising awareness about the human cost of the war. In March 2004, Mukesh Kapila, the UN resident coordinator for Sudan, described the conflict as “close to ethnic-cleansing” (“Close to ethnic-cleansing in Western Sudan” A.22). A month later in April, the world marked the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan used the occasion to warn of a “Rwanda-style” genocide unfolding in Darfur and urged the world to take measures to curb it (Saleh A.16). In September, U.S Secretary for State, Colin Powell, described the conflict in Darfur as “genocide” (Mamdani 25).

In addition to being a region that was unfamiliar to the Canadian public, in the early stages of the conflict, Darfur lacked a context through which the media could evaluate it. As

Cook contends, Darfur on its own could not stand as a strong news story because reporters tend to be attracted to continuing sagas that contain larger and broader storylines that have higher, more developed and transcending back bones (100). But the use of the term “ethnic-cleansing” and Annan’s comparison of the conflict to Rwanda, including Powell’s genocide label, bestowed much needed significance to the conflict and contextualized it for the Canadian public. In other words, Rwanda served as a peg and a useful framing device through which both newspapers conveyed news about the conflict to the Canadian public. As a peg, Rwanda offered an opportunity for continuous assessment of the conflict. As a framing device it served the purpose of being an organizing storyline or central idea that offered meaning to an unfolding series of events, contributing to an individual’s understanding and interpretation of an event (Gamson and Modigliani 143).

A qualitative reading of the news articles published in 2004 in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, reveals that the Darfur conflict was being viewed through the Rwanda lens, as shown in the excerpt below, from a story published on page 16 on April 8, 2004 in the *Globe and Mail*:

Sudan began direct talks with rebels fighting a year-long insurgency, as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that a Rwanda-style genocide may be in the making in western Sudan, and said international force may be needed (Saleh A.16).

Similarly, on April 7, 2004, this excerpt from the *Toronto Star* clearly showed that the Rwanda genocide had become a framing device for explaining the Darfur:

As Rwanda remembers the 10th anniversary of its genocide this week, aid workers are drawing parallels with a conflict gripping Sudan’s remote western Darfur region today. Though the scale of bloodshed is smaller than the 1994 Rwandan genocide when some 800, 000 people were massacred in 100 days, Mukesh

Kapila, the U.N. humanitarian co-ordinator for Sudan who was in Rwanda in 1994, said last month that human rights violations in Darfur were on a comparable scale. (Green A.12).

Awareness (2005-2006) phase and increase in coverage

In 2005-2006, the conflict had moved from the pre-problem stage to the awareness stage. The analysis shows that there was an increase in the number of news articles published in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* in this period. In the *Globe and Mail*, the articles numbered 54, compared to ten news articles published in 2003-2004.

In addition to news coverage picking up in this phase because of news pegs that offered context for evaluating the conflict, increased coverage was also due to Darfur being indexed to the interests of the political establishment. As Alexseev and Bennett contend, media are unlikely to devote time, attention, and resources to an issue unless the issue becomes a priority for the political establishment (409). Similarly, Holder has noted that there is a high co-relation between government interests and increased news coverage in so much as the coverage serves the establishment's interests (3).

Focusing on news pegs, first, there was UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's call in January 2005 for sanctions to be imposed on Sudan. The imposition of sanctions is a familiar tool used by Western governments to pressure countries in the developing world on a variety of issues including human rights and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The call for sanctions on Sudan fit into a previous and familiar frame that Canadian news reporters would be conversant with. For instance, the *Toronto Star*, when reporting Annan's declaration, alludes to the familiarity of the sanctions news peg by announcing that a previous sanctions resolution on Sudan was thwarted by the country's allies at the UN.

Western powers argued for imposing sanctions on Khartoum last year, but opposition by China, which has oil interests in Sudan, and Russia, which supplies arms, blocked the motion (“Annan calls for sanctions on Sudan”).

As noted previously, increased coverage in the awareness phase is connected to the political establishment’s interest on Darfur as the examples below show.

On May 13, 2005, Prime Minister Paul Martin formed a high-profile advisory council on Darfur (Fraser A.06). This council was comprised of retired General Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian who led the UN peacekeeping force during the genocide in Rwanda, Liberal Senator Mobina Jaffer, and Ambassador Robert Fowler, former Africa advisor to Prime Minister Jean Chretien and a longtime foreign affairs mover and shaker. Given his past role as commander of the UN force during the Rwandan genocide, General Dallaire’s presence provided a familiar news peg through which Canadian reporters were able to contextualize the scenario in Darfur.

On the same day, Martin announced the formation of the advisory council, he also announced \$170 million in increased aid to Darfur. This particular announcement was made a month after a previous announcement in which Martin had promised up to \$90 million in aid for Darfur (Fraser A.08). This in essence meant the \$170 million was a familiar prism to reporters and offered another context through which to view situations pertaining to Darfur. As a news peg, Martin’s formation of the high-powered council and additional aid to Darfur, served as means for a continuous evaluation and interpretation of the conflict domestically, because, as Cook has noted, reporters prefer stories with what he calls “transcending backbones” that offer long-term and continuous coverage (100).

For instance, the *Toronto Star* first broke the story on the formation of the advisory council on May 13, 2005 (Fraser A.06). Graham Fraser, national affairs correspondent for the

Toronto Star, wrote this particular story. The fact that the story was written in Ottawa, by a staff reporter, demonstrates the point that the Canadian political establishment had began driving coverage in this phase by generating stories that could be covered locally, where journalistic resources were plenty, as opposed to Africa, where they were thin on the ground.

On May 14, 2005, the *Globe and Mail* published a story that built on these two announcements. Jeff Sallot, an Ottawa-based staff reporter, again illustrating the point that politicians were driving domestic coverage of the Darfur conflict, wrote the story. The story also speculates as to whether, in light of the \$170 million aid announcement, Sudan would agree to allow Canadian peacekeepers into Darfur:

The Sudanese ambassador says her country will not allow Canadian troops into Darfur despite an assistance package from the minority liberal government that includes up to 100 military advisors to help the African Union maintain peace in that war-ravaged region of western Sudan.

Ambassador Faiza Hassan Taha said Prime Minister Paul Martin rushed to make the announcement Thursday before anyone from the Canadian government asked the Sudanese whether they agreed.

...Mr. Martin said Thursday that Canada is providing a \$170-million assistance package for Darfur that includes an “initial” deployment of 100 Canadian military intelligence officers, strategic planners and logistics experts to assist the African Union peacekeeping operation in the region with military planning, intelligence and transport (Sallot A.5).

Martin’s aid offer was partly an attempt to woo support from independent MP David Kilgour whose vote was crucial to winning a confidence motion. The fact that Kilgour’s demand provided fodder for a previous story connected to Darfur is proof of the transcending nature of this story, which the *Globe and Mail* builds on in the excerpt below, when it quoted the Sudanese ambassador objecting to Kilgour’s demand:

...Sudan is very concerned about the political atmosphere on Parliament Hill, with independent MP David Kilgour demanding that Mr. Martin send 500 Canadian combat troops to Darfur in exchange for his support on a confidence vote next week, Ms. Taha said (Sallot A.5).

Kilgour's demand for combat troops to be sent to Darfur continued to be a peg on which both newspapers could build, months after he made the call. The story below published in the *Toronto Star* on July 3, 2005, illustrates the point:

A leading critic of Canada's role in Sudan says the West must not shy away from military force in ending what many call "genocide" in the Darfur region.

"Sometimes, there has to be an exception to the peaceful solutions and this one seems to be one of them," said independent Edmonton MP David Kilgour, a former secretary of state for Africa who left the Liberal party in April.

"To me, this is one where we have to stop the killing before we get involved in humanitarian aid."

Kilgour has repeatedly called on Ottawa to muster a stronger military presence in western Sudan's Darfur region, where the Khartoum government and Janjaweed Arab militias have been attacking African farmers in a combat that erupted in March 2003.

More than 180,000 people are dead and 2 million Darfuris have fled to refugee camps in what U.N Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called "the world's greatest humanitarian disaster."

Said Kilgour, "A regime in Khartoum that sends janjaweed into the camps...to drag women out and rape them...is impervious, in my view, to appeals for humanity or appeals for reasonableness or non-violence."

"The only thing that particular regime will answer to is either violence or the threat of violence."

In May, Canada announced it would send up to 100 military advisors to support the African Union (AU) peacekeepers in the Darfur region. It also pledged \$170 million in aid specifically for the peacekeeping mission.

Canada's offer met with strong opposition from Khartoum, which opposes Western intervention in the AU-led Darfur peacekeeping mission (La Rose A.14).

In April 2006, a Canadian initiative called the Responsibility to Protect was tabled before the UN, and served to attract media attention domestically. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

doctrine was the brainchild of a Canadian-funded international commission established to review the world's response to such crises as Rwanda and to provide recommendations on how such internal conflicts could be dealt with in future. The R2P resolution mandates foreign intervention in an independent nation's affairs if it fails to curb crimes against humanity. Similarly, a Security Council resolution authorizing the deployment of 22,600 peacekeepers to Darfur, served to generate media interest.

Also on the Canadian domestic scene, there were calls by some prominent opposition politicians, such as NDP leader Jack Layton, for Canada to intervene (Mertl A.7). Amid increasing concern about what Canada should do, the House of Commons—now home to a minority Conservative government led by Stephen Harper—convened a session to question Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay on the government's action plan (Galloway A.11). Another event that attracted media attention in 2005 was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's announcement that Canada was willing to offer technical support to peacekeepers deployed to Darfur but would not be sending troops (Sallot A.4).

This interest in issues tied to the Darfur conflict during the 2005-2006 "awareness" phase illustrates the point that the Darfur conflict was no longer being viewed primarily through the humanitarian perspective but also from a domestic political policy perspective, increasing its newsworthiness for reporters.

Resolution phase (2007-2008) and familiar news pegs

By 2007-2008, the Darfur conflict had moved to the resolution stage marked by several newsworthy events that still revolved around familiar news pegs. These events were: the International Criminal Court's (ICC) naming of its first suspects for crimes against humanity in Darfur in February 2007; and the deployment of 26,000 United Nations and African Union

troops to Darfur in June 2007. Both events were well-covered by the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*.

Additionally, both events were supported by familiar news pegs. The ICC's naming of the suspects would remind Canadian reporters of similar war crimes prosecutions at the Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The deployment of 26,000 troops to Darfur was also a familiar peg because of previous and similar troop commitments for peacekeeping by Canada in Rwanda and the Balkans.

Both events also served as parameters for evaluation and continuous coverage. The *Globe and Mail* reported on the naming of the suspects in February 2007. And several months later, the ICC's action continued to be a reference point for stories on the two suspects as shown in the story below from the *Toronto Star*:

Sudan yesterday refused to hand over two suspects accused by the International Criminal Court of war crimes in the Darfur region.

A three-judge panel is seeking to try a Sudanese government minister and a Janjaweed militia leader on 51 charges of mass slayings, rape and torture in four towns and villages in West Darfur between August 2003 and March 2004. The court's warrants against humanitarian affairs minister, Ahmed Harun, and the Janjaweed militia's "colonel of colonels," Ali Kushyb, could be a crucial step toward bringing atrocities in the Sudanese province to international justice.

Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch said it signaled "the days of absolute impunity...for horrible crimes in Darfur are winding down."

ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said yesterday Sudan was legally bound to arrest the men, but Sudan remained defiant.

"Our position is very, very clear—the ICC cannot assume any jurisdiction to judge any Sudanese outside the country," said Justice Minister Mohamed Ali al-Mardi.

“We do not recognize the International Criminal Court...and we will not hand over any Sudanese even from the rebel groups who take up weapons against the government,” he said.

Asked whether Sudan would continue its past sporadic co-operation with the court, al-Mardi answered, “What co-operation? It’s over.”

Prosecutors named the men in February as the first suspects in their investigations into the conflict, in which 200,000 people have been killed and another 2.5 million displaced since fighting began in the region in 2003.

Harun is currently in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. Sudan says it has arrested Kushyb, but several witnesses said he was moving freely in Darfur under police protection.

The world’s first permanent war crimes court started work in 2002 and is now supported by 104 countries (Corder A.16).

Similarly, the deployment of a joint UN and African Union peacekeeping force of 26,000 troops offered a context for continuous coverage. Sudan agreed to allow the troops in June 2007, but over the following months, this particular news peg continued to be used for further contextual coverage in both newspapers. For instance on August 1, 2007, the *Globe and Mail* published a story that explored the cost of sending troops to Darfur (Leopold A.11). Similarly, on the same day, the *Toronto Star* published a story saying the “hybrid” force was the world’s largest and that it was the first time a joint African Union and United Nations peacekeeping force had ever been established (Ward AA.1). On August 2, the *Toronto Star* published another story that said Sudan had effectively avoided sanctions by agreeing to the deployment of the force (“Sudan accepts UN peace force...”). A month later, the *Toronto Star* published another story that concluded that the troop offer was “sufficient” but raised concern about the efficiency of the African component of the force (Olson AA.3).

Differences in coverage in the three phases

During 2003-2004, coverage in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* shows that minimal attention was devoted to the Darfur conflict. A meticulous search of the *Canadian Newsstand* database reveals that the *Globe and Mail* reported on the conflict for the first time in December 2003, at least eight months after the outbreak of hostilities. The *Toronto Star*, on the other hand, reported on the conflict in April 2004, almost a year after the onset of the war.

However, during the awareness phase in 2005-2006, and in the resolution phase in 2007-2008, there is a comparatively marked increase in coverage in both newspapers compared to the pre-problem phase in 2003-2004. (Refer to Figure 2 and Figure 3). The increase in media attention can be attributed to the presence of news pegs that offered context for framing the conflict in both newspapers. In the 2003-2004 phase, there was a dearth of familiar pegs for contextualizing and interpreting the conflict, until the later phases of this period. A qualitative examination of the contents of both newspapers also shows that familiar pegs became more pronounced in the latter phases of 2005-2006 and 2007-2008. Collectively, these news pegs were: the tagging of the Darfur conflict as genocide; the call for imposition of sanctions on the Sudan government; the deployment of peacekeepers; promises of aid money; the prosecution of war criminals; and Canadian politicians pushing for action to save lives in Darfur.

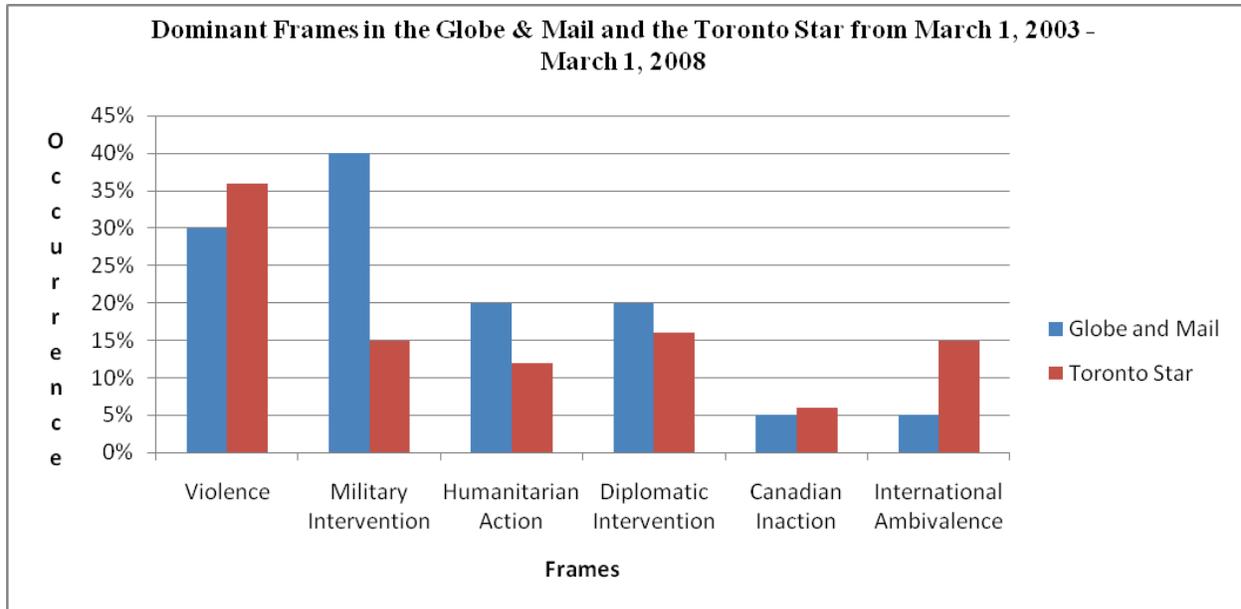
In summary, the presence of news pegs that offered a context for evaluating the Darfur conflict, and the embrace by Canadian politicians of the Darfur issue, were significant factors that fueled and contributed to increased coverage of the conflict.

Dominant frames from 2003-2008

In the *Globe and Mail*, the Darfur conflict was portrayed largely through the military intervention frame, which constituted 40 per cent of the coverage. Overall, although the military

intervention, violence, humanitarian action, and diplomatic intervention frames were dominant, the analysis reveals that the framing of the conflict shifted considerably year over year, especially in the *Globe and Mail*.

Figure 4: Dominant frames in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* March 1st 2003 to March 1st 2008



For example, the military intervention frame was dominant in 2005, but not in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2004 and 2003. In these years, the following frames dominated: Violence (2006, 2007, 2004, and 2003); humanitarian action (2008). But overall, throughout the entire period, the sum total of the times the military intervention frame appears, was more than that of all the other frames, hence its dominance.

Violence constituted the next dominant frame, reflected in 30 per cent of the media coverage in the *Globe and Mail*. The humanitarian action and diplomatic intervention frames were the third dominant frames, each garnering 20 per cent of the media coverage. Lastly, the

international ambivalence and Canadian inaction frames garnered the least coverage, each constituting 5 per cent only.

In the *Toronto Star*, violence was the dominant frame, garnering about 36 per cent of media coverage. The overall dominance of the violence frame was replicated in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007. In 2008, the diplomatic intervention frame was dominant. Records for 2003 are unavailable because the *Star* did not publish a story on the Darfur conflict that year.

This was followed by the diplomatic intervention frame, constituting about 16 per cent. While the military intervention frame was predominant in the *Globe and Mail*, in the *Toronto Star* it was the third dominant frame, which was 15 per cent of overall coverage. Similarly, the international ambivalence frame garnered 15 per cent in the *Toronto Star*. The humanitarian action and Canadian inaction frames garnered the least attention. The former constituted 12 per cent and the latter 6 per cent.

Figure 5: Distribution of frames by year in the *Globe and Mail*

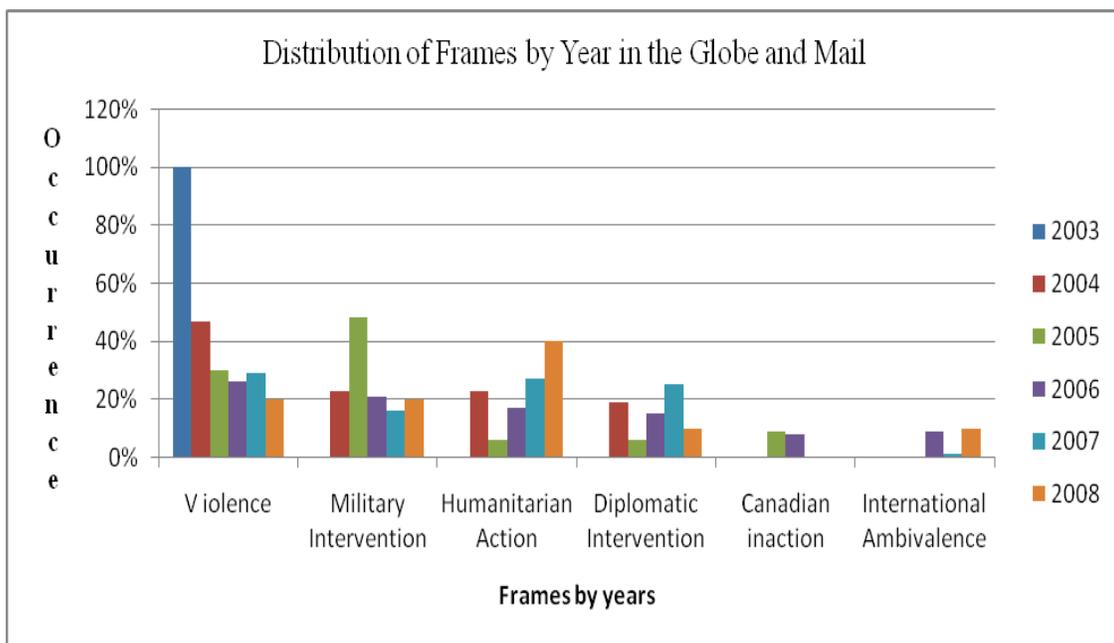
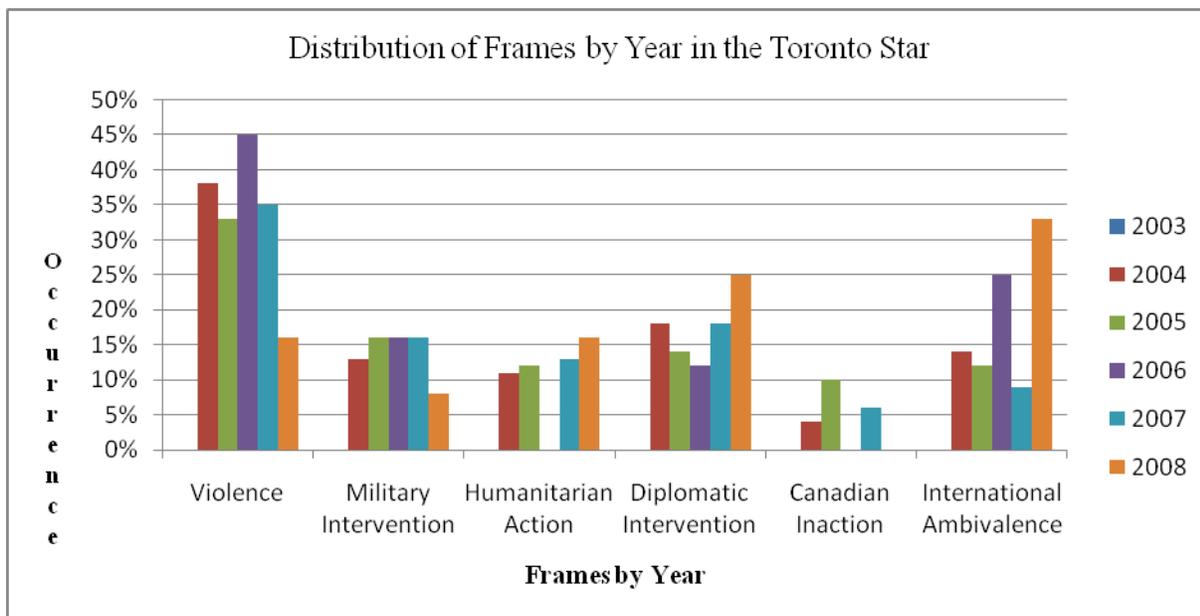


Figure 6: Distribution of frames by year in the Toronto Star



Explaining differences in frame dominance

There were marked differences in the patterns of the dominant frames in both newspapers. The *Globe and Mail* viewed the conflict primarily through the military intervention frame, while the *Toronto Star* covered the conflict largely through the violence frame. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of these differences offers few clues on differences in the dominance of the frames. A possible explanation lies in the sources quoted by both newspapers in the course of covering the conflict. Interestingly, the analysis shows that international political sources were the dominant category of sources quoted in both newspapers. In the *Globe and Mail*, international political sources were visible in 49 per cent of overall media coverage. In the *Toronto Star*, international political sources dominated, with 52 percent of quotes attributed to them. But although these sources dominated coverage in both newspapers, they framed the

conflict in divergent terms. The presence of these divergent frames may rest in the institutional policy directions of the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. The data analyzed for this study cannot entirely explain these policy motivations.

Dominant frames by article category

The preceding analysis looked at the prevalence of the particular frames across the board and found an overall dominance of the ‘military intervention’ frame in all of the *Globe and Mail* coverage and a dominance of the ‘violence’ frame in the *Toronto Star* coverage. But there were interesting shifts in the predominance of frame depending on the type of story, with marked differences among news, features, editorial and opinion coverage.

I-News: The analysis shows that the violence frame was the most dominant compared to other frames in the news category for both newspapers. In the *Globe* it was 27% and in the *Star*, it stood at 59%. **II-Features:** In this category, in the *Globe* and the *Star*, the dominant frame was the violence frame. In the *Globe* it constituted 50% when compared to the other frames. In the *Star*, the figure was 45%. **III-Editorials:** The military intervention frame (57%) ranked top in the *Globe*. In the *Star*, military intervention and violence were the dominant frames, each garnering 22% compared to the other frames. **IV-Opinion:** The military intervention frame was dominant in the *Globe* (34%). In the *Star*, the violence frame ranked top (30%).

Figure 7: Frames as distributed in article categories in *the Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* (March 1 2003-March 1 2008)

Article	Globe and Mail (Frame)	Toronto Star (Frame)
News	1-Violence 27% 2-Military intervention 23% 3-Diplomatic intervention 18% 4-Humanitarian action 16% 5-Inter. ambivalence 9% 6-Canadian inaction 3%	1-Violence 34% 2-Military intervention 17% 3-Diplomatic intervention 17% 4-Inter. ambivalence 14% 5-Canadian inaction 5% 6-Humanitarian action 10%
Features	1-Violence 50% 2-Humanitarian action 34% 3-Military intervention 26% 4-Diplomatic intervention 26% 5-Inter. Ambivalence 10% 6-Canadian inaction 0%	1-Violence 45% 2-Humanitarian action 18% 3-Military intervention 16% 4-Inter. Ambivalence 8% 5-Canadian inaction 5% 6-Diplomatic intervention 5%
Editorials	1-Military intervention 57% 2-Diplomatic intervention 21% 3-Inter. ambivalence 21% 4-Humanitarian action 0% 5-Canadian inaction 0% 6-Violence 0%	1-Violence 22% 2-Military intervention 22% 3-Inter. ambivalence 20% 4-Diplomatic intervention 17% 5-Humanitarian action 10% 6-Canadian inaction 7%
Opinion	1-Military intervention 34% 2-Canadian inaction 21% 3-Humanitarian action 15% 4-Diplomatic intervention 15% 5-Violence 9% 6-Inter. ambivalence 1%	1-Violence 30% 2-Diplomatic intervention 17% 3-Inter. ambivalence 17% 4-Humanitarian action 14% 5-Military intervention 10% 6-Canadian inaction 10%

Dominant social actors in the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star

Three groups of social actors have been identified for this study. They are: local political sources; international political sources; and other sources. For the study period, the analysis reveals that international political sources were predominant in framing the Darfur conflict in both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*.

In the *Globe and Mail*, international political sources were visible in 49 per cent of overall media coverage for the duration of the study. Although Darfur was essentially a Sudanese conflict, the major movers and shakers who influenced decisions on sanctions, peace

negotiations, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance were mostly government figures from countries such as the U.S., Britain, France, China, Egypt, Nigeria, Chad, and Libya.

Similarly in the *Toronto Star*, international political sources dominated, with 52 per cent of quotes attributed to them. For the *Toronto Star*, 149 stories were analyzed for this study, while in the *Globe and Mail*, the number of articles was 141.

Local political sources formed the second dominant category in both newspapers, generating 26 per cent in the *Globe and Mail* and 28 per cent in the *Toronto Star*. The last category in both newspapers was made up of other sources. In the *Globe and Mail*, these sources constituted 24 per cent of newsmakers, while in the *Toronto Star*, they generated 18 per cent of media attention.

The dominance of the international political sources category can, in some measure can be attributed to the following factors: First, Darfur was primarily an overseas conflict that was mainly conveyed to the Canadian public through news. The analysis of the articles in both newspapers shows that 73 per cent of these stories originated from international wire services such as the Associated Press, Reuters, and Bloomberg. In particular, the major stories, including those that marked a milestone in the Darfur conflict, mostly originated from the wire services. For example, the first story that the *Globe and Mail* published on the Darfur conflict on December 8, 2003, was distributed by Reuter's news agency from Cairo, Egypt.

A western Sudanese rebel group asserted yesterday that it had ambushed and killed 700 government troops and pro-government militiamen pushing into rebel areas in the arid Darfur region, forcing a retreat.

Government officials were not immediately available to comment on the attack, which rebels said took place Friday at the Abu Gamra dam, 45 kilometres north of government-held Kebkabiya. But officials have previously said there were military operations in the area ("Government troops slain, Sudanese rebels say").

Following UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's comparison of the Darfur conflict to Rwanda in April 2004, the U.S. became the first country to label the conflict as genocide. On September 10, 2004, the *Toronto Star* alerted its readership to this event through a story written by the Associated Press.

The Bush administration has for the first time branded as "genocide" the attacks on black Africans by government-backed militias in Sudan's Darfur region.

The designation by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell came as an American proposal in the U.N. Security Council to impose sanctions against Sudan encountered opposition.

Powell told Congress that Sudan's government is to blame for the killing of tens of thousands and uprooting of 1.2 million people.

In recent interviews with 1,136 refugees in neighboring Chad, the U.S. State Department found a "consistent and widespread pattern of atrocities committed against non-Arab villagers," according to a department report. It added that about a third of the refugees interviewed heard racial epithets while under attack.

Powell said that as a member of the 1948 international genocide convention, Sudan is obliged to prevent and punish acts of genocide.

"To us, at this time, it appears that Sudan has failed to do so," he said.... (Gedda A.15).

Similarly, stories about major events pertaining to the Darfur conflict originated from wire services. For example stories about the likening of the Darfur conflict to the Rwanda genocide by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, U.S Secretary of State Colin Powell's tagging of the conflict as a genocide, the deployment of 26,000 peacekeepers to Darfur, and the International Criminal Court's naming of Sudanese officials as war crimes suspects, all originated from wire services, or had foreign datelines. The use of wire stories may be explained by the fact that financial shortfalls in recent years have forced newspapers to cut back considerably on foreign bureaus in order to save money. The *Globe and Mail*, for instance, had

only one reporter, Stephanie Nolen, to cover the whole of Africa. The *Toronto Star*, which had closed its Africa bureau shortly after the end of apartheid, mostly relied on freelancers, and only occasionally sent staff reporters to Darfur. Second, most of the wire stories were written from outside Canada. The news production process entails several factors such as collecting, analyzing, and writing to deadlines. It is therefore expected that wire agency reporters would quote sources in close proximity to them, hence the dominance of international political sources.

Figure 8: Distribution of social actors across the years in the *Globe and Mail*

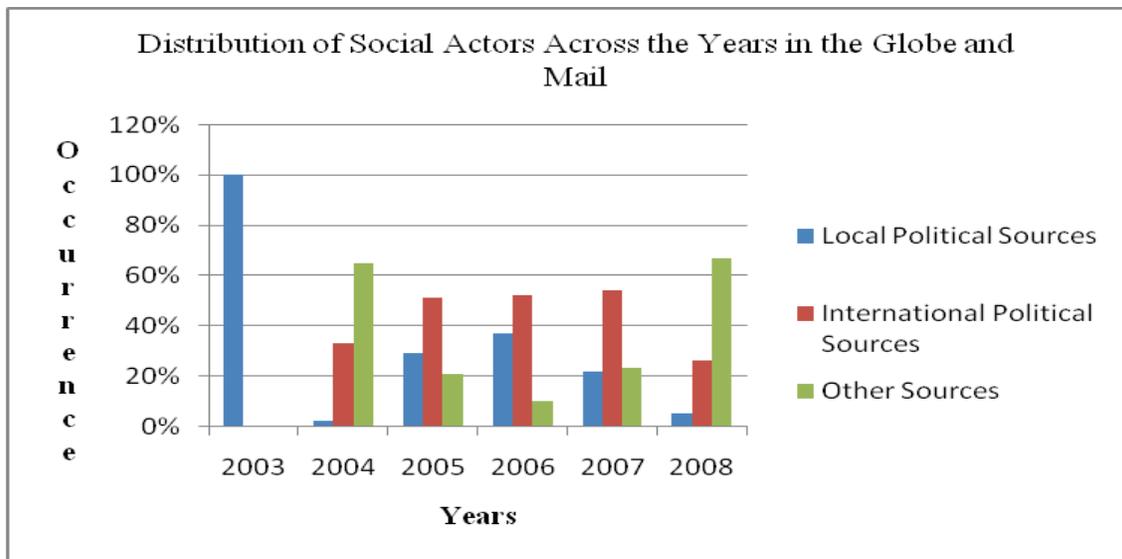


Figure 9: Distribution of social actors across the years in the *Toronto Star*

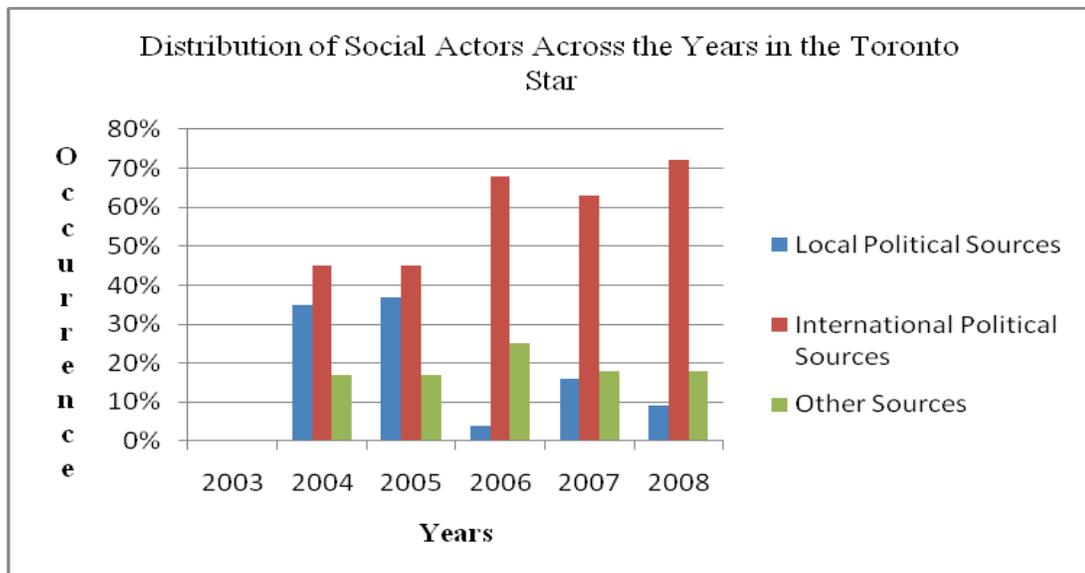


Figure 10: Social actors in article categories in the Globe and Mail

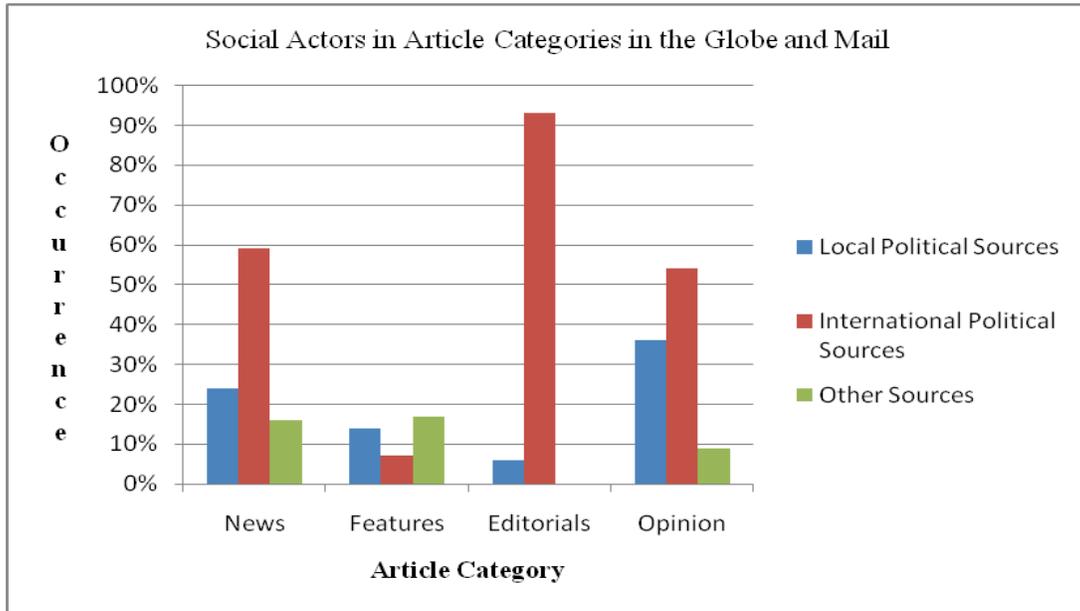
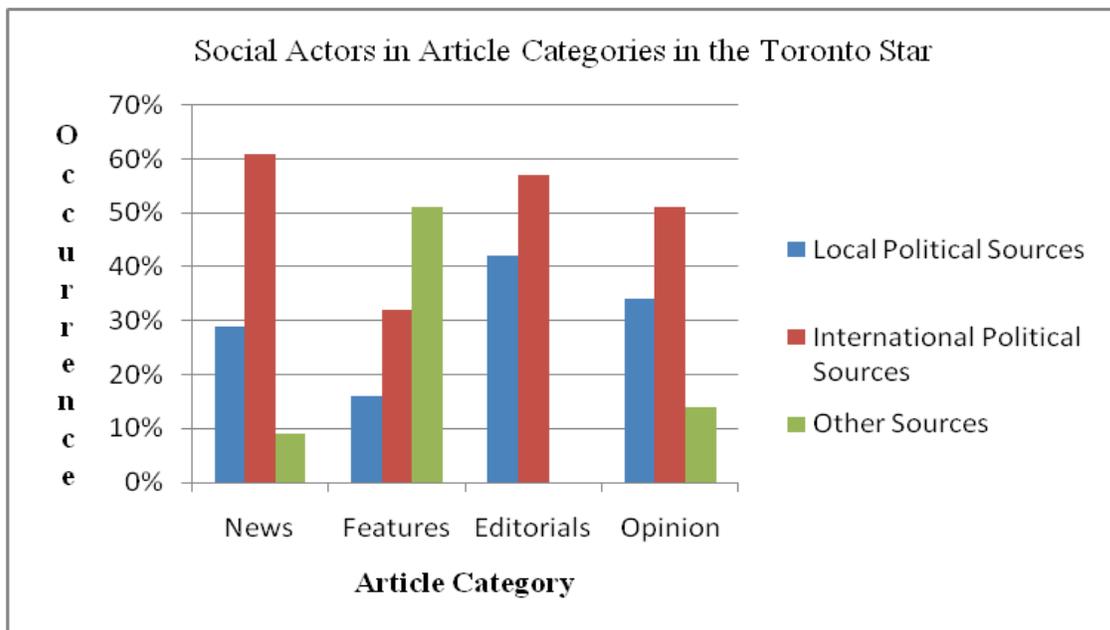


Figure 11: Social actors in article categories in the Toronto Star



Evaluation of coverage of the Darfur conflict

The qualitative reading of the articles used for this study, reveals that the coverage of the Darfur conflict in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, lacked context, focused on violence, and relied on official sources. In December 2004, after more than a year of hostilities in Darfur, the *Globe and Mail* still published stories that offered little background about the conflict, as shown in the example below:

Sudan said yesterday it would immediately and unconditionally cease hostilities in its remote Darfur region, and asked the United Nations and African Union to request that rebels do the same.

Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail, speaking after an emergency meeting with Western diplomats, UN and African Union officials, told reporters they did not discuss withdrawing troops from towns the government has captured from rebels. The AU had given Sudan a 24-hour deadline, which expired Saturday evening, to stop hostilities or it would refer the matter to the Security Council (“Sudan agrees to stop fighting in Darfur”).

The story above, while offering information about the presence of war in Darfur, failed to allude, even briefly, to some of the key reasons behind the war. Nor does the story offer any context for Ismail’s meeting with the UN and African Union officials. The story also does not shed light on the context in which the Sudan government announced a ceasefire in Darfur. Was the Sudan government seeking a breather from a rebel offensive or was it responding to an African Union ultimatum?

The lack of context in stories was also visible in the *Toronto Star*’s coverage as shown in this excerpt from an editorial. In this instance, the religious affiliation of the Darfur protagonists was wrongly identified. The Christian and animist label is usually attached to southern Sudan but not to Darfur, whose population is entirely Muslim.

President Omar al-Bashir’s Arab-dominated regime and its Janjaweed allies have been battling Christian and animist African groups in Darfur who want regional autonomy and control over resources. Horrible crimes have been committed (“Darfur’s long agony”).

The Darfur conflict was also projected in violence terms, in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. The headlines of the news stories often painted a graphic depiction of the war, creating the impression that violence is inherent to Darfur. The following excerpt is from the *Globe and Mail*.

...Ten African Union soldiers were killed and dozens were missing after armed men launched a weekend assault on an AU base in Darfur, the worst attack on AU troops since they deployed in Sudan's violent west in 2004 (McDoom A.15).

Examining random news articles in the *Globe and Mail* published in the fall of 2007, the evidence suggests that violence was emphasized consistently. The story headlines read as follows: Darfur rebel factions battling each other (September 3, 2007); Darfur attack kills 10 soldiers (October 1, 2007); Darfur town razed after attack on AU troops (October 8, 2007); Sudanese army assault leaves at least 45 dead (October 10, 2007)

As well, a random examination of *Toronto Star* headlines in the fall of 2004 reveals the predominance of the violence theme: Massacre looming in Darfur. Dallaire; Sudan may ignite like Rwanda, says ex-peacekeeper (September 21, 2004); Darfur death toll 10,000 a month (September 14, 2004); Arbour reports Darfur horrors (October 1, 2004); Darfur town torched as Sudanese troops enter after deadly raid (October 8, 2007).

Coverage of the Darfur conflict also relied heavily on official sources, which in this study are identified as international political sources. The following excerpt from the *Globe and Mail* illustrates the reliance on official sources:

We are perilously close," a Western diplomat involved in the talks said. "It's boiling down here to the last act."

The peace plan was prepared by mediators from the African Union and amended after the rebel groups balked at an early draft.

...We are going to study them, but the improvements give us the sign that we can agree, that we do not need to renegotiate and that there will be no further delay in the final agreement,” Jaffer Monro, a spokesman for the Sudanese Liberation Movement, told the Associated Press (McCarthy A.19).

The reliance on official sources means minimal attention was devoted to the viewpoints of ordinary Darfuris, except in feature articles that examined conditions on the ground in camps for the internally displaced or in refugee camps in neighbouring Chad. The excerpt below is from the *Toronto Star*.

Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir dismissed criticism by the UN secretary-general yesterday, saying the world body was making unreasonable demands and turning a blind eye to the activities of Darfur rebels.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Thursday the Sudanese government might have to answer “individually and collectively” for failing to protect the people of the troubled western region from killings, rape and destruction (Shahine A.18).

The Darfur conflict has often been characterized as a war between “Arabs” and “Africans.”

The UN has warned of a humanitarian disaster in the region, where Arab militias have been driving African villagers off their land in what international groups have described as ethnic cleansing (“Sudan, two rebel groups agree to 45-day ceasefire”).

This characterization has been challenged by some of the leading researchers on Darfur, who argue that pegging the conflict to a racial squabble undermines the socio-political and economic reasons behind the war and ignores the fluidity of race in the region (de Waal 185-87 and Prunier 4).

To establish whether an “Arab” versus “African” characterization in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* existed, a meticulous reading of the news articles was undertaken for this

study. The reading sought to establish whether the characterization was mentioned, suggested or implied in the news stories.

In the *Globe and Mail*, the “Arab” versus “African” characterization occurred in 23 per cent of the news stories. In the *Toronto Star*, it was prevalent in 30 per cent of the stories. The higher figure in the latter is due to the fact that the number of news stories in the *Toronto Star* was higher (149) than the number of articles in the *Globe and Mail*, which was 141. Overall, in both newspapers, 30 per cent of the coverage alluded to the “Arab” versus “African” depiction.

Conclusion

This study examined the framing of the Darfur conflict in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*, two of Canada’s most influential and largest circulation daily newspapers. Specifically, the study sought to establish the dominant themes in the coverage of the conflict and the social actors who dominated this coverage. As well, the study sought to establish the implications of the dominance of the themes and social actors for the public and for policy-makers.

The results show that in the *Globe and Mail*, the Darfur conflict was framed in military interventionist terms, while in the *Toronto Star*, the war was depicted in violence terms. While the study doesn’t concretely establish the differences in both newspapers’ framing of the conflict, it posits that internal institutional editorial policy directions may be responsible for these framing differences.

The study also established that international political sources were dominant in framing the Darfur conflict in both newspapers, compared to other sources (Canadian political sources and other sources. The latter contains human rights organizations/advocacy groups and representatives). However, the *Toronto Star* quoted more international political sources in its

stories than the *Globe and Mail*. The dominance of international political sources in both newspapers is due to the fact that, although the Darfur conflict was primarily an internal Sudanese affair, its major decision makers were mostly government dignitaries from countries such as the U.S., Britain, France, China, Egypt, Nigeria, Chad, and Libya.

The study also contends that the dominance of international political sources in both newspapers' coverage of the Darfur conflict can be attributed to the fact that 73 percent of the news stories were sourced from international wire services. In essence, the reporters who wrote these stories tended to quote sources in close proximity to them. This is the reason why local sources from Canada were not dominant.

The dominance of the military interventionist frame, the violence frame, and international political sources has implications. These dominant factors obscure a deeper and contextual understanding of the Darfur conflict. Military intervention and violence paint a picture of a situation that is inherently tied to war. These factors dim focus on other urgent issues that require attention, such as the plight of children, women, the elderly, and the conditions of displaced Darfuris in camps both inside and outside Sudan.

Similarly, the dominance of official sources means the viewpoints of the victims of the war have been for the most part, excluded. In the classic, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam, the war correspondent as hero, propagandist, and myth maker*, Phillip Knightley observed that truth is often the first casualty of war. But the art of mainstream journalism, especially in reporting war, can also obfuscate the truth (Boyd-Barrett 25). Boyd-Barrett suggests that truth is rendered a "casualty" when reporters frame war through a narrative that serves establishment's interests. The absence of viewpoints of ordinary Darfuris, who have to bear the

brunt of the war on a daily basis, means policy-makers are likely to prescribe solutions that have a top-down approach, that lack input from the grassroots.

In an overall evaluation of both newspapers' depiction of the Darfur conflict, this study surmises that the coverage lacked context, focused on violence, and relied heavily on official sources (international political sources).

Too often, the Darfur conflict has been depicted as a racial squabble between pastoralist Arab tribes against African tribes who are farmers. This study examined this characterization and concludes that although the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* used the "Arab" versus "African" depiction, this characterization only prevailed in 30 per cent of the coverage. In other words, it was not a dominant depiction.

War reporting continues to be reduced to stereotyped short-hand media clichés that lack depth and context. Newspapers' reliance on wire services and spot news coverage rather than staff-written stories and features that provide depth and context, epitomizes the coverage in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. The short-comings that emerge from this reporting, influence the understanding of the conflict among Canadians. As a result, the mere mention of Darfur conjures up images of a barbaric tribal bloodletting somewhere in the bowels of Africa.

Ironically, despite the fact that Rwanda—and to some extent the Balkan conflicts—served as news pegs for much of the Canadian media coverage of Darfur, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* seemed to have drawn little from the Rwanda catastrophe, which was typified by coverage that obfuscated the complex dynamics of the genocide. The reliance on episodic coverage that barely scratches above the surface has been established as an obstacle to understanding the root causes of a problem. Darfur is certainly not the first or last war to have

lacked context in the way it was reported. News reporters and media organizations need to strive to offer thematic and contextual reporting when they cover conflict around the globe.

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