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Abdissa Zerai

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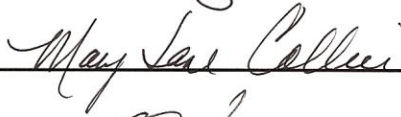
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Approved by the Dissertation Committee:



, Chairperson



U.S. PRESS REPRESENTATION OF THE SOUTHERN SUDANESE

CIVIL WAR, 1983-2005

BY

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B.A., Foreign Languages & Literature (English), Addis Ababa University, 1988

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Communication**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2010

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my late sister, Senait Zerai, whose sudden death I had to mourn from a distant land. She was a precious young girl whose infectious smile and sense of optimism had always been the source of inspiration for the family.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines how the U.S. print news media discursively represented the civil war that raged from 1983-2005 between southern Sudan and the central government in the north over the tenures of three successive war-time Sudanese administrations. The study was situated within the broader theoretical umbrella of cultural studies. However, the theory of representation and postcolonial theory served as the principal theoretical frames for the study.

Employing critical discourse analysis, with framing as a strategy, the study focused on five U.S. print news media outlets (three national newspapers and two national newsmagazines): *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. News articles published on the subject in the selected print news media outlets over the entire stretch of the civil war were collected and analyzed.

The analysis revealed that the narratives of the selected print news media discursively constructed an ethno/racial-religious frame as a colonizing frame in talking about the southern Sudanese civil war. With respect to the portrayal of the warring parties (southern forces and three war-time Sudanese administrations), a shift of narratives was observed over the entire civil war period. While the ethno/racial-religious discursive angle remained the same throughout the civil war period, the news narratives' portrayal of the warring parties oscillated depending on the nature of Washington's policy toward Khartoum's regimes.

It was argued that the news discourse of the civil war focused exclusively on the ethno/racial-religious dimension in explaining the locus of the southern Sudanese civil war, and in so doing, excluded the role of colonial legacy, which could have shared the same discursive terrain, as an important explanatory factor for the southern Sudanese predicament. This colonial legacy, among other things, encompasses the institution of the north-south divide, the emergence of a sectarian political structure, and the contribution of the Condominium in the Sudanese national identity crisis.

The study outlines the implications of such representations and portrayals and articulates some of the loci of the U.S. news media's analytical impoverishment with respect to reporting events on the African continent. Finally, the study makes some suggestions as to what the U.S. news media might do to improve the way they cover crises on the continent.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Sudan is one of the 53 African states that constitute the defunct Organization of the African Unity (OAU), and its later reincarnation, the new African Union (AU). It is geographically located in North Africa; it borders Egypt and Libya in the north; Chad and Central African Republic in the west; Kenya, Uganda, and Democratic Republic of Congo (the former Zaire) in the south; and Ethiopia and Eritrea in the east. It is a vast and open country; in fact, the Sudan is the largest country in the African continent, covering more than a million square miles in area, which is roughly equivalent to one-fourth the size of the United States (Woodward, 1979; Lesch, 1998; Kebbede, 1999; Edie, 2003; U.S. Department of State: Bureau of African Affairs, January 2008). According to the 2006 population estimate, Sudan is home to 41 million people (U.S. Department of State: Bureau of African Affairs, January 2008). Ethnically, Sudan is a land of extraordinary diversity; its population is among the world's most diverse. As common estimates suggest, it houses between 5-6 hundred ethnic groups (Middleton & O'Keefe, 2006; Lesch 1998).

As was the case with all (except Ethiopia & Liberia) African states, Sudan has gone through the historical trajectory of colonization and post-colonialism. First, it fell under Turco-Egyptian control from 1821-1885, and then, the Mahdists (politico-religious movement) rose up, defeating the Turco-Egyptian rule in 1885. Since the demise of the Turco-Egyptian regime up until 1898, the Mahdists ruled the Sudan. The British saw an independent Mahdi state as a threat to their plan of bringing the entire stretch of territory from Cairo to Cape Town under their control. As a result, the Mahdi state fell under the Anglo-Egyptian occupation forces in 1898 (Kebbede, 1999; Lesch 1998; Sidahmed, 1996;

Woodward, 1979; Anderson, 1999). Since 1898 up until 1956, Sudan was under Anglo-Egyptian control.

After the Second World War, nationalist movements intensified across the colonized world, seeking independence from the European colonial rule. Besides, several of the European colonial powers came to realize that maintaining the colonial status quo would no longer be tenable. As a result, many of them were, though grudgingly, willing to grant independence to their respective colonial subjects. In the case of the Sudan, these two conditions were ripe in the 1950s. Thus, on January 1, 1956, the Sudan gained its full independence from Britain through political diplomacy (Anderson, 1999; Edie, 2003; Sidahmed, 1996; Middleton & O’Keefe, 2006).

As the people of a new independent nation-state, one would expect that the Sudanese people had every reason to celebrate their new status as a free people; they had every reason to be euphoric and to be filled with hope and optimism as they were now the “masters” of their own destiny. Unfortunately, however, the euphoria of independence, the optimisms and the dreams that came with their perceived disconnect with the agonizing past, soon disappeared into thin air. A hard-won independence soon turned into a nightmare. On the eve of the independence, conflict over the southerners’ perceived sense of marginalization broke out between the south and the central government in the north, and it continued unabated until 1972. Then, a relative calm reigned for the next few years. But the conflict reignited in 1983 in a more coordinated manner and went on until January 9, 2005, when a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the central government and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The civil war is believed to have claimed close to 2 million lives and to have displaced not less than 4 million people, mainly

in the south (Middleton & O'Keefe, 2006). More recently (i.e., since 2003), another brutal civil war has broken out in the Darfur region in the West, and it is still raging on with no end in sight. In the East, the situation is not much different. Much of the fifty-plus years of Sudanese independence has, thus, been marked by instability, turmoil, and destruction caused by continued civil wars.

Why has the demise of colonialism and the dawn of independence brought civil wars, destruction and agony instead of ushering in a new era of peace, harmony, prosperity and development, as had been hoped for, in postcolonial Sudan? What are some of the central factors that are responsible for the rapture of civil wars in the Sudan? In search of answers to these puzzling questions, several scholars (Woodward, 1979; Sidahmed, 1996; Lesch, 1998; Anderson, 1999; Kebede, 1999; Suliman, 1999; Holt & Daly, 200; Prunier, 2005) who have worked on the Sudanese conflicts have often placed ethnic/racial and religious diversity of the Sudan as the primary source of its postindependence predicament. However, the recent conflicts that broke out in Darfur and the eastern part of the Sudan seem to have partly demystified the characterization of Sudan's civil wars as primarily ethno-religious, since the inhabitants of Darfur and eastern Sudan are also predominantly Muslims. As a result, scholars are beginning to look at an alternative narrative that can best explain the locus of Sudan's predicament.

The bulk of the available research, particularly on the southern Sudanese civil war, has so far been produced by political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, or historians, who approach the problem mainly from political, sociological, anthropological, or historical perspectives. Research that systematically addresses the role of communication and media as a factor in this socio-historical process is almost non-existent. At the same time, the media

have been instrumental in the diffusion and spreading of information or knowledge about the southern Sudanese civil war to the Western audience. No doubt that this information or knowledge made available by the media has an important role in shaping the understanding of the Western governments, including the U.S. government, about the southern Sudanese civil war. This understanding will, in turn, shape their policies towards the Sudan in general and its warring parties in particular. It is, thus, important to carry out research that examines how the U.S. media have discursively constructed knowledge about the southern Sudanese conflict, and whether such representations have been able to capture the complexities of the civil war in question; this is what this study aims to achieve.

It is often argued that media constitute a privileged site where a discursive struggle is waged in defining the world or a part of it in a particular way. As Gitlin (1980) notes "...the media name the world's parts, they certify reality *as* reality..." (p. 2). The prevailing definitions of the world produced by the media, in one way or another, guide our individual as well as our collective practices, and it is of paramount importance to understand how the media produce such definitions of the world. The principal purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how the U.S. press represented or discursively constructed knowledge about the southern Sudanese conflict in the last two decades and examine what such representations or constructions of knowledge excluded in a bid to fixing the meaning of the conflict in a particular way. The study also aims at mapping the relations between the United States and Khartoum's successive governments during the southern Sudanese conflict, which occurred at the height of the Cold War as well as the post-Cold War period, as a pertinent context to determine whether the U.S. press representations of the conflict concur with the nature of Washington's relations with the successive wartime Sudanese governments. On the basis of

such investigation, the study makes pertinent suggestions as to what the media can do to provide a better informed and a more comprehensive account of crises that take place in spatially and culturally distant societies.

It is common knowledge that any research undertaking is an attempt to ultimately produce a particular form of knowledge, and this project is no exception. But, as Said (1981/1997) notes, all knowledge about human society is historical knowledge, and, therefore, rests upon judgment and interpretation. Interpretation is not something that is externally imposed but depends on the willed intentional activity of the human mind. According to Said (1981/1997), such an activity

takes place performe in a specific time and place and is engaged in by a specifically located individual, with a specific background, in a specific situation, for a particular series of ends. Therefore, the interpretation of texts, which is what knowledge of other cultures is principally based on, neither takes place in a clinically secure laboratory nor pretends to objective results. (p. 164)

A particular location and background of the individual engaged in the process of interpretation or the production of knowledge has a bearing on the individual in terms of approaching the production of knowledge from a certain vantage point, which makes the whole enterprise 'interested.' As Said (1981/1997) rightfully asserts, "There is never interpretation, understanding, and then knowledge where there is no interest" (p. 165). This leads him (1981/1997) to conclude that "Every interpreter is a reader, and there is no such thing as a neutral or value-free reader. Every reader, in other words, is both a private ego and a member of a society, with affiliations of every sort linking him or her to that society" (p. 164).

If an interpretation or knowledge production in the social realm is an ‘interested’ phenomenon and never value-free, it is incumbent upon the individual who is engaged in the production of such a knowledge to exercise self-reflexivity and be candid about oneself and one’s role, and one’s position vis-à-vis the nature of knowledge he/she is producing.

I was born and grew up in the north-western part of Ethiopia bordering the Sudan. Communities on both sides of the border used to frequently cross each other’s border for trading purposes, and, hence, interaction between the two communities was very common. Due to the protracted civil war, there was a huge number of displaced southern Sudanese, and thousands of them lived in Ethiopia as refugees. As there had often been tensions between Ethiopia and the Sudan, many of the successive Sudanese governments were not popular among many Ethiopians. As I grew up and became mature, I started to become more informed about the destructive Sudanese civil war. In the meantime, I went to the United Kingdom in 1995 to pursue a graduate program. That was my first exposure to the Western world. While I was in the UK, I was shocked by the sheer magnitude of ignorance about Africa that others I met had. For many of these people, Africa appeared to be not a continent with various nation-states but just a country. It did not matter whether one was from Burundi, Zambia, or Ethiopia; for these people he/she was just an African. Besides such a monolithic view of Africa, many people I met viewed Africa as a failed and hopeless part of the world inhabited by timeless stone-age people. If there was anything about Africa in the media, it would be about a thatched roof, mud house, hunger, savage killing, Bushmen, and anything that was bizarre. Such frustrating experiences led me to question how such a hopeless and monolithic view of Africa came about among people-- many of whom had never set foot in

Africa. I then thought the likely source of such an image of Africa had to be the media. Since then, I started to look for an opportunity that would lead me to study communication.

When I arrived in the United States, what I encountered was not that much different from the experience I had in the UK. It was the time when the Darfur conflict broke out, and the media were engaged with the crisis, providing accounts of who was fighting whom, for what reasons, with what costs, and toward what end. For someone who is familiar with the Sudanese state, however, it was not difficult to recognize how the Darfur problem was much more complex than the media seemed to suggest. I then decided to do research on the U.S. media coverage of the Sudanese civil wars. Along the way, I became particularly interested in the southern conflict because of my geographic proximity to southern Sudan on the one hand and the protracted nature of the southern conflict on the other. It is out of my experience in the West that the present study is born. The principal objectives of this research are, therefore, to look into the ways the U.S. media symbolically represented the southern civil war, to examine the presences and absences in such representations, to provide possible rationales as to why the representations were they way they were and to suggest, if relevant, how the media can better represent civil wars as complex as that of the southern Sudan.

As is evident in the preceding accounts, my engagement in this study is not accidental, but a willed intentional activity. Being an African myself, who lived in close proximity to the conflict zone and having experienced the nature of knowledge a lot of people in the West have about Africa, I am quite cognizant of the role my location, my values and my perspectives could play in shaping the outcome of this study. I do not claim to produce an 'authentic' knowledge about the southern Sudanese civil war. But I do intend to produce a narrative that does not see the southern conflict in 'black and white' but as one that

recognizes the complexity of the problem and provides the missing link(s), if any, in the narrative ‘jigsaw’ the U.S. media have produced about the conflict. Working from the periphery or the margin, I hope to produce a narrative that is transformative in the sense that it can shed more light on the problem and thereby lead to more informed insights about the locus of the south Sudanese predicament. Thus, the project is not politically neutral, and readers should approach the study as such.

U.S.-Sudan Relations

The U.S. media have been covering Sudan’s civil wars for more than two decades now (the south conflict from 1983-2005, and particularly, the Darfur conflict from 2003 to date). Since media operate not in a vacuum, but in a politico-economic, social and cultural environment in which they have their abode, it is important to shed some light on U.S. relations with the Sudan.

The United States relations with African states could be said to have been shaped by two major factors: first, the Cold War geopolitical alliance and, second, the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. As is well known, following the Second World War, the world was divided into two competing and rival blocs: the Western bloc (capitalist-oriented) led by the United States of America and the Eastern bloc (communist-oriented) led by the former Soviet Union. The Soviet bloc was engaged in spreading communist ideology across the world, whereas the U.S. bloc was feverishly working to stop the spread of communism and advancing the adoption of capitalism through international campaigns for third world economic development. To this end, each group was actively engaged in courting various third world nations to come under its sphere of influence.

It happened that the overwhelming majority of African states gained their independence from European colonialism at the height of the Cold War and soon became a fertile ground for the superpower struggle. Since many African nationalists who waged independence movements against European colonialism were mostly inspired by Marxist thoughts, many of the new postcolonial African states, as one would imagine, tended to gravitate towards the Soviet bloc. In order to reverse or, at least, contain the trend, the Western bloc led by the United States had to work hard, as there was much at stake. One way of courting the third world nations was through the provision of aid, such as military, economic, or humanitarian aid. According to Fair (1992), as the role of the United States in international affairs has evolved and expanded, foreign assistance has become an integral part of U.S. foreign policy, used to court friends and spurn foes. The military, economic, or humanitarian aid the United States sent to Africa was no exception. In the 1980s, the type of assistance the United States committed to Africa was largely military; this, according to Fair (1992), reflects Washington's priority of protecting its security interests in the region. In the ideological environment of the 1980s, the U.S. media used the Cold War framework to present and interpret discourse about the United States engagement with Africa. As Fair (1992) noted, the East-West ideological battle served to define the limits of 'responsible' political discussion and pervaded the reporting of virtually every event that took place outside the borders of the United States, including Africa.

Relations between the United States and the Sudan during the Cold War are best understood by taking stock of the Cold War politics. Since its independence, the Sudan has been ruled by the military and by democratically elected civilian governments alternately. The relations between the United States and successive Sudanese regimes has been very

complex and ever changing. It oscillates between friendly relations to hostile relations, depending on the nature of the government that has come to power in the Sudan. Relations between the United States and the Sudan took a special turn in 1969 when general Nimeiri came into power through a coup d'état. Unlike its predecessor, the Nimeiri government was pro-United States and extended its support to the Camp David Accord. In return, the U.S. government generously provided economic, military, and political support to the Nimeiri regime, despite the fact that it was a military dictatorship that ruled its citizens with an iron-fist. Towards the end of its tenure, the Nimeiri government made a drastic change of policy with respect to south Sudan. It dissolved the southern regional assembly, brought the southern oilfields under the northern jurisdiction by redrawing the boundary, introduced the sharia law, and engaged in the project of Islamization. These measures triggered southern rebellion in 1983, culminating in the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Since then, up until the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the civil war raged unabated.

In 1985, a popular uprising dislodged the Nimeiri government while he was on an official visit in the United States. The demise of the Nimeiri government brought a democratically elected Sadik al-Mahdi government into power in 1986. As opposed to its predecessor, the al-Mahdi government chose nonalignment as its foreign policy, wanting to do business with both the Eastern and the Western blocs. Such redefinition of Sudan's foreign policy displeased the United States. However, it still continued to provide assistance to the al-Mahdi government although at gradually decreasing levels. In 1989, General Omar al-Bashir led a bloodless military coup against the al-Mahdi government and seized the reign of power. From its inception, the al-Bashir's National Islamic Front (NIF), which is now

called the National Congress Party (NCP), was a hard-line Islamic party committed to promoting the Islamic identity of the Sudan at any cost and, hence, was unwilling to pay any concession to the southern question. With the coming of general al-Bashir into power, U.S. relations with the Sudan started to go sharply downhill.

It is important to note that in 1989, the time al-Bashir came into power, the geopolitical situation of the world dramatically changed with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. With the former Soviet Union now gone, the Cold War officially came to an end leaving the United States of America as the only superpower in the world. Such a phenomenon necessitated that the United States reorient its foreign relations. As far as the Sudan is concerned, the United States' concern with the growing threat of Islamic fundamentalism and Sudan's alleged connection to and support for Islamic radicals has largely shaped the United States' relations with the country in the post-Cold War era. Consequently, in 1993, the U.S. government designated the Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism and suspended its embassy operation in Khartoum in 1996. In October, 1997, it imposed comprehensive economic, trade, and financial sanctions against the Sudan. In August 1998, in the wake of the East Africa U.S. embassy bombings, the United States launched a cruise-missile strike on a suspected al-Qaeda-linked pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. Generally, in the 1990s the relation between the two countries was hostile, and the U.S. policy toward Khartoum mainly revolved around calls for regime change.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, United States officials have sought Sudan's cooperation on counterterrorism efforts, and Khartoum's government has responded positively by sharing intelligence with its U.S. counterparts. Despite this, it still remains on the state sponsors of terrorism list. It is

within such a conflict-ridden political context that the U.S. media have been covering the crisis in the Sudan, and it is important to examine the bearing of the dynamic political trajectory between Washington and Khartoum on the U.S. press engagement with the southern Sudanese conflict.

Theoretical Framework: Media and the Production of Meaning; Postcolonial Theory

Media work representationally so as to produce meaning through discourse. In the meaning-making process, the media select certain aspects of an event over others and make some aspects of a perceived reality more salient than others. The media effect such a selection and salience through framing. In order to use ‘representation’ as a theoretical framework, it is hence important to look at it in tandem with discourse and framing. In the first part of this section, I discuss news as discourse, representation, and framing, as a package, under a general heading *Media and the production of Meaning*. In the second part of this section, I focus on postcolonial theory as the second theoretical framework that informs this study.

News as Discourse

In this section, I look at two important concepts which have a ubiquitous presence in the contemporary mass media landscape, and yet whose conceptualization often defies uniformity among those engaged in the study as well as the practice of the mass media. These key concepts are “news” and “discourse.” First, I describe what each one of these concepts means, and then I attempt to articulate media news with discourse.

News. It is not unusual to encounter journalists who struggle to define what news is, but who, at the same time, feel confident in asserting that they know whether something is news as soon as they see it (Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney, & Wise, 2006). So, what is

‘news’? Acknowledging the ambiguity in the notion of news, van Dijk (1988), makes a distinction between a general or commonsensical notion of news, which people commonly use to denote new information (as in, for example, ‘I have good news for you’), and the notion of news from the media and mass communication perspective (for example, as in ‘I have read news about the crises in the financial sector’). Although the meaning ‘new information’ is implied in the second example as well, the notion of news from the media and mass communication context is very different. According to van Dijk (1988), the notion of media news in everyday usage can imply either new information about events, things or persons; a program (TV or radio) type in which news items are presented; or a news item or news report such as a text in which new information is given about recent events. In the study and analysis of media news, van Dijk (1988) suggests the last of these three conceptualizations as more relevant.

On the other hand, various mass media textbooks (Grossberg et al., 2006; Campbell, Martin, and Fabos, 2008) do not often attempt to directly define what news is; rather, they tend to conceptualize news indirectly by listing a set of conventional criteria for determining newsworthiness, i.e., information most worthy of transformation into news stories. Such news criteria, among others, often include the attributes of timeliness, proximity, conflict, prominence, human interest, novelty, and so on. In practice, however, journalists do not give equal weight to all these attributes. According to Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2008), most issues and events that journalists select as news are timely or new. Despite the usefulness of the newsworthiness criteria for defining news, some mass media scholars (Campbell, Martin, and Fabos, 2008) are critical of such a conceptualization. One of the criticisms Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2008) make about defining news through the listing of attributes is that

such attributes do not reveal much about the cultural aspects of news. They argue that, as culture, news is both a product and a process. For Campbell, Martin, and Fabos (2008)

It is both the morning paper or evening newscast and a set of subtle values and shifting rituals that have been adapted to historical and social circumstances, such as the partisan press ideals of the 1700s and the information standards of the twentieth century. As culture, then, news in the twentieth century became the process of gathering information and making narrative reports—edited by individuals in for-profit news organizations—that offer selected frames of reference; with those frames, news helps the public make sense of prominent people, important events, and unusual happenings in everyday life. (p. 488)

The core arguments made here are that the specific attributes that are taken to characterize news are not fixed and immutable entities; rather, they are historically and culturally situated and amenable to change according to historical and cultural circumstances. What is more, news is information put in a narrative form, which offers selected lenses through which the public makes sense of the world. A news narrative is usually made up of two constituent elements. These are story and discourse. Story refers to the actions that occur in an event, that is, it describes what happened to whom in a particular event. On the other hand, discourse refers to the way one talks about such an event (Grossbeg et al, 2006; Campbell et al., 2008). But as complex a term as it is, one wonders if there is more to the term ‘discourse’ than the above conceptualization suggests.

Discourse. The term ‘discourse’ has been a ubiquitous term in academic texts and debates as well as in political domains. However, the way it is used in different domains has remained notoriously disjunctive and far from unitary. Owing to the disjunctive nature of the

conceptualization of the term, van Dijk (1998) argues how pointless an exercise it is to attempt to provide exact definitions of discourse, for the concept means different things for different people. However, he also acknowledges the need for one to indicate how he/she uses the term when dealing with the issue (I will return to this subject in Chapter Five). For the purpose at hand it suffices to outline a working conceptualization of the term ‘discourse’ in the domains of social and communication theorizing within the framework of the social constructionist paradigm and then articulate news with such a conceptualization of discourse.

As a poststructural social theorist, Foucault (1972) conceptualizes discourse in terms of a set of statements, which are relatively rule-bound, for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. For Foucault, discourse is not just linguistics but is both language and practice. Van Dijk (1998) on his part conceptualizes ‘discourse’ as a specific communicative event where people act and interact together to create an understanding of their environs. Although van Dijk acknowledges the complexity of such a communicative event, he limits the use of discourse to text and talks only and excludes other semiotic practices. Other communication scholars (Grossberg et al, 2006; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002/2004) see discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world”) (p. 1). For Laclau and Mouffe, (1985), discourse is nothing but a temporary fixation of meaning within a particular domain. What is common in these conceptualizations of discourse is the fact that discourse provides a framework for talking about the world; that the framework establishes the basis on which we determine what to include and what to exclude in talking about the world, and that within such a selective framework, we produce a particular knowledge about the world, which in turn guides our

social action. From such a perspective, what we hold as truth or knowledge about our world is, at least to a large extent, a discursive production.

If we accept discourse as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world or the way we produce knowledge about our world (which often occurs at the peril of alternative ways of seeing the same world), the link between discourse and news is hardly ambiguous. Media scholars (Elliott and Golding, 1974; Fair, 1992) emphasize the fact that news is not merely a collection of facts put together in narrative form. To produce the news, they contend that media professionals interpret the actions of people and events by selecting and emphasizing certain stories over others. Writing about newspapers, Lippmann (1922) observed that every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what positions they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, and what emphasis each shall have. According to him, there are no objective standards for determining these selections. What we have instead are just conventions. Such arguments stand at odds with the claims of media professionals who say they ‘report news as it is’ in a transparent way. The notion of the existence of a transparent reality waiting for the media to capture it does not have much currency in contemporary media scholarship. The argument, according to Gurevitch et al. (1982) is that,

News does not exist as external reality that can be objectively portrayed on the basis of ascertainable fact: for facts have to be selected and then situated, whether explicitly or implicitly, within a framework of understanding before they ‘speak for themselves’. This process of selection and interpretation is culturally encoded and social [ly] determined. Yet such constructions largely define our knowledge of the

external world of which we have no first-hand experience. This power of definition...is the basis of 'the power of the media. (p. 201)

The overarching point is that news reporting is not simply a matter of collecting facts, whether about this issue or that issue. As Braham (1982) rightly argues, facts do not exist on their own but are located within wide-ranging sets of assumptions, and which facts are thought to be relevant to a story depends on which sets of assumptions media professionals hold. These sets of assumptions constitute what is commonly known as news frameworks. Thus, as van Dijk (1988) concurs, news is not characterized as a picture of reality, which may be correct or biased, but as a frame through which the social world is routinely constructed. Reporters, hence, operate within a net, which is a strategic organizational device to draw upon news sources as effectively as possible. In the process, newsworthiness of events may be negotiated between members of media institutions and the organizations they cover. This also allows the newsmakers to manage the unexpected and to produce a fixed amount of news, independent of what really happens and within the constraints of deadlines or budget limitations. Understanding the discursive nature of news, therefore, is an important step in demystifying the claim that the mass media institutions serve as conduits for the transmission of nothing but facts, and thereby helping us see them rather as definers and shapers of reality.

Representation

Since the 'cultural turn' in the social and human sciences, particularly in cultural studies, the concept of representation has come to occupy a new and an important place. But what is meant by the term, representation? How does it work? What is its connection to meaning, language and culture? Examining these and other related questions is an important

first step in understanding the concept of this seemingly innocuous term. According to Hall (1997), “Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or represent, the world meaningfully, to other people” (p. 15). It is “...the production of meaning through language” (Hall, 1997, p. 16). As could be seen from the above quotes, the notion of meaning and language are central to the concept of representation. The term ‘culture’ is such a complex term that it means different things for different people. In this study, however, I use the term to refer to *a set of texts, learned social norms, structures, and practices that individuals use to make sense of themselves and their social world*. In the contemporary understanding of culture, there is a tendency to emphasize the importance of meaning. As Hall (1997) notes, “culture is not so much a set of *things*...as a process, a set of *practices*” (p. 2). Such social practices produce meanings, which are exchanged between members of a cultural group. Members of a cultural group are able to exchange meanings because they are able to interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and their feelings about the world in ways that are intelligible to each other. In the process of the production and exchange of meanings between members of a culture, representation undoubtedly plays a pivotal role. The meaning-production process involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things.

If representation is the production of meaning through language, the logical question one has to ask would be ‘the meaning of what?’ The meaning, here, is not of the referent, but of the concepts in our minds. As Hall (1997) argues, it is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. Here, one finds two processes or systems of representation at work. First, there is the ‘system’ which establishes a

correlation between all sorts of objects, people and events, and a set of concepts or mental representations which we carry around in our heads. Without such concepts, we could not interpret the world meaningfully at all. Thus, meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or 'represent' the world, enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads. In other words, meaning depends on the relationship between things in the world and the conceptual system, which can operate as mental representations of them. On the other hand, concepts are not a random collection of things or phenomena; rather, they are organized, arranged and classified into complex relations with one another.

In order to be able to communicate our interpretation of the world with each other, the interlocutors should be able to share broadly the same conceptual maps. As Hall (1997) points out, it is because of such shared conceptual maps that we, as a cultural group, are able to interpret the world in more or less similar ways. As a result of such shared interpretations of the world, we are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together. However, a shared conceptual map alone is not enough. Meanings and concepts must be represented or exchanged. This can only be done when we also have access to a shared language. That is why Hall (1997) regards language as the second system of representation involved in the overall process of constructing meaning. Our shared conceptual map must be translated into common language, so that we can establish a correlation between our concepts or ideas and certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images. According to Hall (1997), the general term we use for words, sounds or images which carry meaning is *signs*. These signs stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our heads, and together they

make up the meaning-systems of our culture. Signs, in turn, are organized into languages, and it is the existence of a common language which enables us to translate our thoughts or concepts into words, sounds or images, and then to use these, operating as a language, to express meanings and communicate thoughts to other people. Therefore, there are two ‘systems of representation’ that are at the center of the meaning production process in culture.

According to Hall (1997), the first of these systems enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things and our system of concepts--our conceptual maps. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between things, concepts and signs lies at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what Hall (1997) refers to as representation. But in order to complete the processes that lead to the concept of representation, the notion of ‘code’ should be brought into the picture. According to Grossberg et al. (2006), “A code is a systematic organization or structure of signs” (p.144). A code sets up the relation between the conceptual system and our language system; and in doing so, it constructs and temporarily fixes or stabilizes meaning. Having established the foundational relations between things, concepts, signs and codes, which in their totality build the concept of representation, I now turn to a brief examination of theories about how language is used to represent the world.

Theories of representation. Scholars working in the field of language and literary studies have often grappled with the issue of the locus of meaning. They debated over whether language simply reflects a meaning which already exists out there in the world of

objects, people and events; or whether language expresses only what the speaker or writer or painter wants to say; or whether meaning is constructed in and through language. To adequately respond to these questions, we need theory-based arguments. According to Hall (1997) and Nixon (1997), there are, broadly speaking, three approaches to explaining how representation of meaning through language works. These are the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist theoretical approaches. In the reflective approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world (Hall 1997). The intentional approach to meaning in representation holds the view that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. According to this approach, words mean what the author intends they should mean (Hall 1997).

On the other hand, the constructionist approach to meaning in language is the perspective which has had the most significant impact in contemporary cultural studies, and the theoretical approach to representation advanced in this study pays particular attention to this approach. The constructionist approach recognizes the public, social character of language. It acknowledges the fact that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. “Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* meaning, using representational systems—concepts and signs” (Hall, 1997, p. 25). Meaning is neither in the object or person or thing, nor in the word. It is people who, through the system of representation, fix the meaning so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable. Meaning is constructed and fixed by the codes that people employ. According to this approach, we must not confuse the *material* world, where things and people exist, and the *symbolic* practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language

operate. As Hall (1997) points out, constructionists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others. Language, in this sense, does not simply reflect or passively transmit meanings fixed or established elsewhere; rather, it functions as a structured system through which meaning is produced. Language is, therefore, socially constitutive (Philips and Jorgensen, 2002/2004). Since representation is the production of meaning through language, which is constitutive in such a production of meaning, it goes without saying that representation is constitutive, too.

The theoretical conceptualization of representation discussed so far, as important as it is, tends to gravitate more towards addressing the *how* of representation, i.e., how language produces meaning, which Hall (1997) refers to as the ‘poetics’ of representation. However, the ‘poetics’ of representation alone is inadequate for informing the issues this study set out to address; it should also cater for the effects and consequences of representation, i.e., it should also address what Hall (1997) calls the ‘politics’ of representation. In order to better address this issue, it seems important to consider Foucault’s conceptualization of representation. Foucault’s conceptualization of representation shifts the terrain of discussion from language to discourse. According to Hall (1997), Foucault studied not language but discourse as a system of representation. As Hall (1997) notes, by discourse, Foucault meant “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing

the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment...Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” (p. 44).

From Foucault’s point of view, as Hall (1997) records, discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. Discourse not only ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk or write, but also it ‘rules out,’ limits and restricts other ways of talking in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it. In short, Foucault’s conceptualization of discourse examines not only how language and representation produce meaning but also how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up for or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines how certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. He draws our attention to historical specificity in the way the representational practices operate. In light of the fact that this study intends to examine the interplay between politico-economic and socio-cultural forces in shaping the U.S. press coverage of the southern Sudanese civil war, Foucault’s focus on discourse, rather than language, in the formulation of his theory of representation is analytically and conceptually useful. Thus, in this study, the concept of representation is associated more with discourse rather than language per se. In other words, representation is understood as the production of knowledge through discourse.

Now that I have established the theoretical ground in relation to representation, it is important that I briefly discuss how the concepts work in the realm of the mass media. In explaining the constructionist approach to representation, I have noted earlier that meaning does not reside out there in the world. Things and events have to be represented through

discourse so as to make them *mean* something. In the same token, the media do not reflect a transparent reality waiting out there to be captured, but they have to construct reality. As Hall (1982) argues, reality could not be viewed as simply a given set of facts: it is the result of a particular way of constructing reality. The media define, not merely reproduce, reality. Definitions of reality are sustained and produced through discursive practices by means of which selective definitions of ‘the real’ are presented. And according to Hall (1982), “representation implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labor of *making things mean* [emphasis original]” (p. 64). This means that representation is a practice, a production of meaning, or a signifying practice. In this sense, the media are signifying agents.

Since the media do not reflect reality that is pre-given but they produce it, it is likely that the same event could be ascribed different kinds of meaning. Thus, in order for one meaning to be regularly produced, argues Hall (1982), it has to win a kind of credibility, legitimacy or taken-for-grantedness for itself. That involves marginalizing, down-grading or de-legitimizing alternative constructions. Power is implicated in this process. The power involved here is ideological power: the power to signify events in a particular way. And the power to signify, as Hall (1982) notes, “...is not a neutral force in society. Significations enter into controversial and conflicting social issues as a real and positive social force, affecting their outcomes” (p. 70). The signification or definition of events is part of what has to be struggled over, since it is the means by which collective social understandings are created. Thus, the mass media function as a site for the struggle over meaning. What meaning is sustained depends on the balance of power. Accordingly, the U.S. media engagement with

the southern Sudanese civil war is no exception. They are engaged in the practice of selection and organization of accounts in such a way that they define and represent the crisis in a particular way that shapes our understanding of the crisis.

Framing Theory

According to Pan & Kosicki (1993), framing is often traced back to roots in both psychology and sociology. The psychological origins of framing lie in experimental work by Kahneman & Tversky (1979, 1984). They examined how different presentations of essentially identical decision-making scenarios influenced people's choices and their evaluation of the various options presented to them. With respect to the sociological foundations of framing, most of the sources often refer to the American sociologist Erving Goffman, who wrote the book *Frame Analysis* in 1974. In his turn, Goffman attributed it to the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, who prior to Goffman, introduced the concept of 'frame' in his book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: A Revolutionary Approach to Man's Understanding of Himself*, written in 1972. But, as Van Gorp (2005) notes, it was Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) who introduced the notion of frames in communication research. Framing takes a prominent place in the apparatus for the inquiry into communication and the media, and numerous scholars have contributed to the theoretical development and empirical foundations of the paradigm.

In his book, Bateson (1972) used an example of the animal world, where a monkey has to learn whether a bite from another monkey is intended within the frame of playing or within the frame of fighting. He argues that a frame "gives the receiver instructions or aids in his attempt to understand the message included within the frame" (Bateson, 1972). Goffman (1974) argues that individuals cannot understand the world fully and constantly struggle to

interpret their life experiences and to make sense of the world around them. In order to efficiently process new information, Goffman (1974) asserts that individuals, therefore, apply “interpretive schemas or primary frameworks” (p. 24) to classify information and interpret it meaningfully. Accordingly, Goffman (1974) advanced the definition of frames as “principles of organization which govern the subjective meaning we assign to social events” (pp. 10-11). For Goffman (1974), a frame is a “schema of interpretation” that provides a context for understanding information and allows individuals or groups to “locate, perceive, identify and label” (p. 21). He stresses the important role our common sense knowledge plays in our everyday life and how our prior experience and knowledge serve as schemata of interpretation while processing new incoming information.

On the other hand, Van Gorp (2001) defines a frame as “an organizing principle transforming an incident into a structured and meaningful event, in which an evaluation is implicitly or explicitly enclosed” (p. 5). According to Entman (1993), frames indicate which elements become more meaningful and, consequently, in the case of a media message, can easily be noticed by the audience. This is possible, for example, by the placement of information, repetition of information, or by linking the frame(s) to familiar cultural symbols. Making certain aspects more salient than others in media content leads to different constructions of reality. Ultimately, framing has implications for the worldview of those exposed to it. “The mosaic or gestalt resulting from a frame can predispose the recipient of the framed message toward a particular line of reasoning or outcome” (McCombs & Ghanem, 2003, p. 77).

According to Entman (1993; 2007), fully developed frames typically perform four functions: defining a problem, stating a diagnosis, passing a judgment and reaching possible

solutions. In functioning as such, they serve as an organizing principle for transforming the otherwise fragmentary pieces of information into a structured and meaningful whole.

Framing also calls “attention to some aspects of reality obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions” (Entman, 1993, p. 55). This is usually achieved through the exercise of selectivity. As Entman (1993) argues, framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. Frames, then, *define problems* (determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values), *diagnose causes* (identify the forces creating the problem), *make moral judgments*, (evaluate causal agents and their effects) and *suggest remedies* (offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects).

In connection to media discourse, Tankard (2001) identifies three distinct ways the framing metaphor has been used in media content. First, a picture frame has a function of isolating certain material and drawing attention to it. Second, a picture frame provides a tone for viewing a picture. That is framing supplies the interpretive background by which the story is judged (Graber, 1993). Third, a picture frame as a metaphor also functions as an instrument of organizing ideas for a story. In tune with this function, Gamson (1989) sees a frame as “a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (p. 157).

The news media are an arena in which symbolic contests are carried out over the construction of reality and the public’s understanding of problems which are often shaped by

politics. As a result, journalists and policymakers are preoccupied with not only which problems will occupy their respective agendas, but also with how to define those problems. It is here where media or news frames become central. News frames are defined as “conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information” (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60). They “can draw attention toward and confer legitimacy upon particular aspects of reality while marginalizing other aspects” (Lawrence, 2000, p. 93). News frames centrally organize ideas for news content, which supplies contexts and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Tankard, 2001). As one of the most important characteristics of a news text, news frames provide a template that guides journalists in assembling facts, quotations, and other story elements into a news story, as well as orienting the interpretations of the audience (Entman, 1991; Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Media frames emerge within specific cultural contexts; Iyengar (1991) posits that to make stories intelligible, journalists draw on preexisting cultural frames to construct their narratives. According to Gitlin (1980), media frames, “largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (p. 7). As an organizing mechanism for media content, a media frame provides immediate context to the recipient of the frame through the selection, emphasis or exclusion of specific facts or ideas. In studying news discourse, it is important to examine how the media frame the issue at hand.

Postcolonial Theoretical Framework

This section provides a brief summary of a postcolonial conceptual frame and how such a frame can help us understand the importance of the past in making sense of the present, with particular reference to the Sudan.

Conceptualizing postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is a complex conceptual frame that defies a simple, straightforward and unitary definition and understanding. In recognition of this complexity, Diaz (2003), for example, contends that there are many definitions of postcolonial theory as there are postcolonial experiences and postcolonial scholars. Different people use the term “postcolonial” in various disjunctive ways. However, there are at least two conceptual threads that link the various interpretations of postcolonial theory. According to Diaz (2003, citing Quayson, 2000), these conceptual threads that run across the various definitions of postcolonial theory are the rejection of universalism and the significance attached to the discourse and ideology of colonialism as well as the material effects of subjugation under colonialism and after. On the other hand, Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2000) is of the opinion that postcolonialism is used in wide and diverse ways that include,

the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre-and post-independence nations and communities. While its use has tended to focus on the cultural production of such communities, it is becoming widely used in historical, political, sociological and

economic analyses, as these disciplines continue to engage with the impact of European imperialism upon world societies. (p.187)

As a conceptual frame, postcolonialism pays attention to the effects of colonization on cultures and societies that were once under colonial rule. In other words, it accounts for the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies. Thus, critics working within the premise of postcolonial theory usually focus on both the material effects of the historical condition of colonialism, as well as on its discursive power (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

What is more, postcolonialism as a theoretical construct can also be seen as a “theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 4). With respect to the notion of such revisiting and remembering of the colonial past, Bhabha (1994) stresses how memory is a necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge between colonialism and the question of cultural identity. Remembering, Bhabha (1994) writes, “is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the past” (p. 63) Without losing sight of the varied understandings of postcolonialism as a theoretical construct, for the purpose of this study, I subscribe, largely, to Mengara’s (2001) conceptualization of the term. According to Mengara (2001), the term ‘postcolonial’ refers to “all the continuities and discontinuities triggered in the colonized world from the very moment of colonization up to the present” (p. 301).

Independence-dependence conundrum. In postcolonial studies, the use of the prefix ‘post’ is very important, for it has a profound implication in terms of marking the

perceived departure of the colonial aftermath from the colonial past. According to Gandhi (1998), the colonial aftermath is marked by the range of ambivalent cultural moods and formations which accompany periods of transition and translation. It is, in the first place, a celebrated moment of arrival, which is charged with the rhetoric of independence and the creative euphoria of self-invention. But the colonial aftermath is also fraught by the anxieties and fears of failure which attend the need to satisfy the historical burden of expectation.

For Memmi (1968), the Tunisian anti-colonial revolutionary and intellectual, the colonial aftermath is fundamentally deluded in its hope that the architecture of a new world will magically emerge from the physical ruins of colonialism. Memmi (1968) maintains that the triumphant subjects of this aftermath inevitably underestimate the psychologically tenacious hold the colonial past has on the postcolonial present. In Memmi's (1968) words: "And the day oppression ceases, the new man is supposed to emerge before our eyes immediately. Now, I do not like to say so, but I must, since decolonization has demonstrated it: this is the way it happens. The colonized lives for a long time before we see that really new man" (p. 88).

According to Gandhi (1998), Memmi's political pessimism delivers an account of postcoloniality as a historical condition marked by the visible apparatus of freedom and the concealed persistence of unfreedom. Referring to Memmi, Gandhi (1998) argues that the pathology of this colonial limbo between arrival and departure/independence and dependence has its source in the residual traces and memories of subordination. The perverse longevity of the colonized is nourished, in part, by persisting colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value which reinforce what Edward Said calls the "dreadful secondariness" of some peoples and cultures (Said 1989, p. 207 cited in Gandhi 1998, p. 7). So also the cosmic veneer of national

independence barely disguises the foundational economic, cultural and political damage inflicted by colonial occupation. Colonization, as Said (1989) argues, is, therefore, a “fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results” (p. 207). Such ambiguities of national independence led postcolonial scholars like Memmi and Said to insist that the colonial aftermath does not yield the end of colonialism (Gandhi 1998).

In a similar vein, Mengara (2001) feels that post-independence is not equivalent to postcoloniality; rather, post-independence is itself a result and part of the postcolonial condition, among other aspects. The guiding principle in Mengara’s interpretation is that the events and changes that were provoked by colonial contacts left an indelible mark on at least the colonized societies, and as a result, things could never be the same again for them, either before or after factual independence. In addition, because the effects of colonization are still felt today in the colonized world, independence did not mean a total suppression or disappearance of these effects after the departure of the empires. For Mengara (2001), all of these events and periods are therefore obviously part of the postcolonial condition. On the other hand, Ashcroft et al. (2000) also explains how the concept of “post-colonial state” has often been used as a synonym for “post-independence state.” Its formation after independence, argues Ashcroft et al. (2001), is the clearest signal of the separation of the colonized from the imperial power. The independence of that newly formed state is the *sine qua non* of the claim to have left the power of the colonizer behind. In reality, however, it simply reflects the desire of the new nation-state to forget the colonial past. As Gandhi (1998) stresses, this “will-to-forget” takes a number of forms and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations. Principally, postcolonial amnesia is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start by erasing painful memories

of colonial subordination (Gandhi, 1998). As it happens, “histories, much as families, cannot be freely chosen by a simple act of will, and newly emergent postcolonial nation-states are often deluded and unsuccessful in their attempts to disown the burdens of their colonial inheritance” (Gandhi 1998, p. 4).

Part of the reason why the postcolonial nation-states fail to escape the burdens of their colonial past is because, as Ashcroft et al. (2000) argues, the idea of the European concept of the nation was dominant in the minds of those who led the struggle for independence. This phenomenon often meant that the new postcolonial states were closely modeled on that of the former European powers; post-colonial nation-states have usually been coterminous with the boundaries of the colonial states administrative units. Examining the haphazard boundaries of the postcolonial African states bears witness to this fact.

It is a fact that the post-colonial nation-states were often created by a deliberate fusing or dividing of a number of already existing territories. In a similar pattern, the geopolitical boundaries of contemporary African nations, as Olaniyan (2000) notes, were determined solely by the exigencies of colonial conquest. They had very little to do with the demands or logics of indigenous ethnic, linguistic, or cultural communities, and everything to do with which colonizing country got first or with treaties of whatever kind signed among them. As a result, the modern African political entities bear only a notional relationship to the pre-colonial entities now incorporated as modern, post-colonial nation-states. Understandably, such arbitrary forging of territories has created serious problems for the newly independent African states. These problems appear to have both geopolitical and national dimensions.

Geopolitically, the haphazard and arbitrary creation of national territories has led to countless cross-boundary clashes, exacerbated by the fact of the principle of sovereignty of

modern nation-states a far more puritanical conception- and therefore, uncompromising policy of geopolitical orders and boundaries than ever before. Perhaps such remorseless marking may have been less problematic where the lines follow entrenched cultural communities, but, as Olaniyan (2000) emphasizes “colonialism created African countries as *states first, then nations if ever possible*” (p. 271). This unusual backward mode of formation implies force, coercion, and arbitrariness as norm. From the national angle, it posed the problem of forging common national identity since no single, undisputed, national pre-colonial tradition could adequately represent the multiplicity of ethnicities and differences that made up the new post-colonial state. According to Olaniyan (2000), there is a legacy even more fundamental than the awkward boundaries, ethnic chauvinism, or absence of national cohesion. That legacy is the perpetual crisis and instability of the African state. For Olaniyan (2000), “the seven or so decades of colonial rule remain the most destructive, even more than the centuries of trans-Atlantic slavery, in African history; they are the source of contemporary African underdevelopment” (p. 271).

Thus, part of the contemporary crisis of the African state has its origin in the colonial past. There is no denying the fact that the past is partly responsible for the new independent nation’s inability to forge a nation from its awkwardly thrown together constituent parts, parts that were routinely manipulated into fierce competition and set off against one another by the colonizers during the colonial rule. This does not, however, mean that the various ethnic groups in pre-colonial Africa were necessarily immune from distrust of each other; it is rather to emphasize the fact that colonialism, in binding diverse regions artificially together in an unprecedented tight manner, greatly exacerbated and more substantively formalized whatever problems might have existed before they were lumped together. What is more, in

many of the postcolonial African states, the antagonism--basically originating from the problematics of resource exploration and allocation within the nation--has led to the enthronement of an atavistic ethnic consciousness, civil wars, and an epidemic of coup d'états.

In addition to the devastating effects of the arbitrary formations of the geopolitical boundaries of the colonial state, another important area where the colonial ghost still has a strong hold on the postcolonial nation-states is in the area of political culture, accountability and structure. Olaniyan (2000) argues that colonial political community was constituted by a hierarchy of European officials who dispensed absolute power through a myriad of local chiefs, "traditional" or created, who themselves ruled the "natives" with closed fists.

No doubt that the colonial state was, in description and practice, an imposed, dictatorial state, which often relied on the institutional uses of force and coercion. It was a conquest state and not a product of a changing autonomous history of the people. As a conquest state, it was accountable only to the colonial office in the metropolis, never to the people it governed in the colonies. As a result, the colonial state had no structures of representation; it ruled more by force than by consent, had absolute control of economic resources, created a bureaucracy with an extraverted mentality, and established a rural-urban divide that has been the nemesis of even well-meaning development programs. These features still define postcolonial African states today, military or civilian.

On the other hand, the nationalists who opposed the colonial state on behalf of the African masses were themselves the creation of colonial society. Their claim to legitimacy was based more on a mastery of colonial language and civilization than on their representativeness within the indigenous society. The nationalists' vision, according to

Olaniyan (2000), rarely went beyond the capture or, more expressively, the deracialization of the colonial state and its apparatuses. But deracialization is not democratization. As a consequence, the epidemic of tyrannical rules has bedeviled the African continent following the end of the colonial rule.

In addition to its reliance on the institutional use of force and coercion, colonialism also enacted another kind of violence by instituting what Prakash (1995, cited in Ghandi 1998) calls “enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges” (p. 15). These phenomena were often expressed through dichotomous and polemic terms, such as the colonizer and the colonized, the Occidental and the Oriental, the civilized and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the developing, the mature and immature, the progressive and primitive, and so on. Colonialism used the discourse that emphasized such rigid oppositions as a way of rationalizing itself. As Gandhi (1998) argues, particularly the perception of the colonized as fundamentally childish feeds into the logic of the colonial “civilization mission” which is fashioned, quite self-consciously, as a form of tutelage or a disinterested project concerned with bringing the colonized to maturity.

As argued earlier, the main difference between the nationalists who opposed colonialism and the colonized masses was that the former had the privilege of mastering the colonial language and civilization. After the demise of colonialism, it was these nationalist elites who controlled the political power in the postcolonial African states. Unfortunately, however, the legacy of dividing the society in those hierarchically-based polemic terms remained functional in the socio-political fabric of the newly independent nation-states. This time, the polemics, instead of functioning to distinguish the colonizers from the colonized (as

had been the case during the colonial period) served to set off the more privileged ethnic group from the less fortunate ones within the postcolonial nation-states.

What is clear in the foregoing discussion is the fact that although colonialism had officially ended, the postcolonial nation-states are far from enjoying a disconnect from their colonial past. The material effect of colonialism on the new independent nation-states is still profound. In that sense, colonialism is as potent in its absence as it was in its presence. In analyzing the predicaments of postcolonial African states like the Sudan, therefore, one cannot afford to ignore examining the role of structural legacies of the colonial past in the postcolonial present. It is particularly of paramount importance to examine critically the role of structures instituted during the colonial period in exacerbating the predicaments of the postcolonial Sudan in its effort to build the new nation-state out of the ruins of colonialism.

An Overview of the Study

In addition to this chapter, there are seven chapters that constitute this dissertation. Here, I provide an overview of each of these chapters by outlining the central issues each chapter addresses. Chapters 2 & 3 provide context for the study, but from different angles. Civil wars make news events but such events do not just happen. There are always contexts that give birth to events. In order to understand events properly, it is imperative that one situates these events in their proper context. With this in mind, Chapter 2 situates the southern Sudanese civil war in its historical context, assessing the genesis of the conflict and discussing the principal factors that gave birth to the re-igniting and further escalation of the conflict as well as its final resolution.

Chapter 3 focuses on U.S. foreign policy towards Khartoum during the period of the southern Sudanese civil war. The United States had to deal with three successive Sudanese

administrations that were in charge of Sudan during the civil war period. In line with its national interest priorities, The United States pursued different foreign policy agendas with the three successive Sudanese administrations. The policies the U.S. administration pursued in relation to Khartoum have had implications for either the prolonging or the eventual resolution of the southern conflict, and Chapter 3 discusses this phenomenon.

Chapter 4 summarizes literatures pertinent to the study. The first section of the chapter deals with the way Euro-Americans have historically produced knowledge about Africa. It traces the production of images of Africa in Euro-American works of art, literature, science, cinema, and the media from pre-modern time all the way to the twentieth century and how the contemporary images of Africa are nothing but reinforcements of the images that were around the Euro-American public domain for centuries. This section also addresses the U.S. media images of Arabs/Islam, and how these images are increasingly becoming disturbing in the post-9/11 world. The second half of Chapter 4 examines outside influences on media institutions and media institutions' influence on public policy. This section explicates the symbiotic relationship between political and economic institutions on the one hand and media institutions on the other. In a capitalist society, political and economic institutions exert influence on media institutions, while media institutions influence political and economic institutions by setting the agenda for the public on important issues, which might lead to the mobilization of public opinion that can, in turn, affect public policy on the issues.

Chapter 5 addresses methodological orientations. It outlines philosophical assumptions consistent with a constructionist approach to discourse analysis. In line with such philosophical assumptions, the chapter introduces and evaluates three theoretical and

methodological approaches to discourse analysis. In light of the specific research questions the study aims to address, the chapter adopts the basic framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis as a relevant methodological model for the study. It also outlines specific steps in research design and identifies analytical strategies relevant to answering the research questions posed.

Chapter 6 presents the analysis of the textual data in light of the research questions the study poses. This analysis chapter first examines how the news narratives in the selected print news media outlets framed the southern Sudanese civil war during the tenures of the three successive war-time Sudanese administrations. It then determines whether or not there was an observable difference in the framing and representation of the news narratives accounts of the civil war among the three periods represented by the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese regimes. In so doing, the chapter answers the first two of the three research questions the study poses. On the other hand, Chapter 7 focuses on what was unsaid in the news narratives account of the civil war. As what was unsaid was as important as what was said in the news narratives for the overall understanding of the civil war, the chapter provides a missing link in the news discourse in the whole trajectory of the southern civil war. Thus, Chapter 7 provides an answer to the third research question.

Finally, Chapter 8 summarizes the findings of the study, discusses the implications of the findings, and provides signposts as to how the U.S. media could improve their engagement with Africa in general and their reporting of crises in the continent in particular.

CHAPTER TWO

SUDAN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to scholars (Collins, 1984; Holt & Daly, 2000; Lesch, 1998; Sidahmed, 1996), the name ‘Sudan’ was coined by the Medieval Muslim geographers to mean *Bilad al-Sudan*, “the land of the Blacks.” The original designation included the land that extended across Africa from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, between Arab and African cultures. Originally, the Sudan had not been part of the classical Islamic Order, or of the Ottoman Empire (Sidahmed, 1996). Instead independent kingdoms and sultanates controlled varying amounts of territory and engaged in trade, cultural interchange, and military conflict. According to Sidahmed (1996), the northern and western parts of present-day Sudan became Arabinised and Islamized through a lengthy process of missionary activities, commercial contacts, demographic movements and large-scale acculturation. Nubians are a case in point. As Lesch (1998) writes, Nubian peoples traditionally lived along the upper reaches of the Nile River, extending into Egypt. Nubia comprised independent Christian Kingdoms prior to the Muslim conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D. In fact, Lesch (1998) records the fact that Christian Kingdoms in Nubia lasted until the fourteenth century, but gave way to gradual Islamization and Arabization through immigrants from Egypt. Eventually many Arabized Nubian groups even claimed descent from the prophet’s uncle Abbas. On the other hand, some of the northern riverine peoples traveled west in response to political pressure or economic opportunity. They then married Nuba and Beja women, engaged in cattle and camel breeding, and traveled up the White Nile and into Bahr al-Ghazal (one of the provinces in today’s southern Sudan) in search of ivory and slaves.

According to Lesch (1998), the south has had a greater variety of peoples than the north. However, as Wai (1981) notes, the southerners were racially akin to tropical Africa. Of the many tribes that inhabited the south, three tribes- Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk- constituted the bulk of the population. In the 16th century one of these tribes, ostensibly the Shilluk, moved north and united Nubia forming the Kingdom of Sinnar, dominating much of the Sudanese Nile Valley until the mid-nineteenth century, when they were pushed south by the better-armed Turco-Egyptian forces. The Funj sultans quickly converted to Islam and that religion steadily took root. Thus, as Lesch (1998) argues, the “black sultanate” of Funj (1504-1821) at Sinnar contributed to the Arabization and Islamization of the indigenous peoples.

Moreover, the Beja in the Red Sea hills maintained a distinct culture even as they converted to Islam and intermarried with Arab immigrants. Some descendants, according to Lesch (1998), claimed Arab pedigree through such “adoptive ancestors.” During the 17th century, another political system that also held allegiance to Islam arose. This was known as the Fur Sultanate of Darfur (1600-1916), which dominated much of today’s western Sudan. The Fur controlled major desert trade routes and intermingled for centuries with migrants from West Africa, Arab traders, and other indigenous peoples. According to Sidahmed (1996), the structures of both the Funj and Fur Sultanates were essentially based on pre-Islamic political and ideological institutions; but their allegiance to Islam together with a host of complex socio-economic and political changes had led to an accelerated Islamisation and rapid acculturation (adoption of Arabic-Islamic culture) of northern and western Sudan. And the process reached maturity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These disparate kingdoms and Sultanates that had controlled “the land of the Blacks” for centuries melted

away with the coming of colonial powers in early nineteenth century, resulting in the shaping of the modern-day Sudan.

Turco-Egyptian Conquest (1821-1885)

According to Holt and Daly (2000), initially the conquest of Sudan was a private venture by Muhammad Ali Pasha, who was an autonomous viceroy of Egypt. Several reasons motivated Ali to undertake the invasion of the Sudan. Of these, the primary motive was political. In his early days of rule over Egypt, argues Holt and Daly (2000), Ali's most dangerous opponents had been the Mamluks. These were the survivors of the military and governing elite whose chiefs had been, in the previous century, the real masters of Egypt. By massacre and proscription, Ali had succeeded in 1811 in breaking Mamluks' power in Egypt, but their remnants had escaped beyond his control and established themselves in the west bank of the Nile. By recruiting slaves into their army, the Mamluks began to strengthen their power. This caused anxiety to the viceroy of Egypt. The second motive for Ali's invasion of the Sudan was commercial. By the time, there had been political disorder on the middle Nile. This disorder had almost jeopardized the previous trade relationship with Egypt. Hence, Ali's desire to revive commerce served as another impetus for the invasion. The third principal reason for the conquest of the Sudan was slave-trade. As Holt and Daly (2000) contend, Ali thought that the conquest of the Nilotic Sudan would bring under his control a principal channel of the slave-trade. He was specifically very much interested in acquiring a well-trained, docile, and loyal slave-army to strengthen his military power. Another motive of the invasion had involved the exploitation of Sudanese natural resources. The region was rich in natural resources, especially gold; and Ali thought that Sudan's fabled gold mines, if located and exploited, would provide him with the means to assure his position in Egypt and his

independence of the Sultan. In order to realize these goals, Ali mobilized his force and conquered the Sudan in 1821.

According to Holt and Daly (2000), the parties involved in the 1821 conquest found it difficult to come up with a convenient designation for the conquest. It was obvious that the conquest was planned in Egypt by the ruler of Egypt. Yet to speak of “the Egyptian conquest” would imply Egypt as a nation-state. But the Arabic-speaking Egyptian nation-state with its national army did not then exist, i.e., the government of the Ottoman province of Egypt was in the hands of Turkish-speaking Ottoman subjects, a ruling elite linked by a complicated web of ties to the Arabic-speaking population. On the other hand, to speak of “the Ottoman conquest” is equally unsatisfactory. It was a private venture by Muhammad Ali. Notwithstanding the fact that after the invasion the new provinces were governed by the same Turkish-speaking elite that ruled Egypt, and the Ottoman suzerainty was recognized, the sultan’s power was even more tenuous in the Sudan than in Egypt itself. Thus, the clumsy adjective “Turco-Egyptian” might have been thought to best describe both the conquest and the administration that followed. Whatever the semantic might be, however, to the Sudanese the invaders and the new rulers were *al-Turk*, “the Turks” and their regime was *al-Turkiyya*, the “Turkish regime.” The Turco-Egyptian rule lasted until 1885, when the Mahdists overthrew the regime.

Mahdist Rule (1885-1898)

According to Holt and Daly (2000), the Mahdia takes its name from its leader, Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah. In June 1881, he dispatched letter from the island of Aba in the White Nile informing the notables of the Sudan that he was the Expected Mahdi, the divine leader chosen by God at the end of time to fill the earth with justice and equity, even

as it had been filled with oppression and wrong. Muhammad Ahmad had lived at Aba and gained an increasing reputation for holiness and supernatural powers among the surrounding tribes. Muhammad Ahmad claimed that he was sent to establish the Faith and the Custom of the Prophet, i.e., the normative ideals of Islam. He believed that he was the one who “would purify and guide the believers and uproot the corrupt, oppressive Turks” (Lesch, 1998, p. 28). At the time, there was a deep-rooted resentment on the part of the subjects under the Turco-Egyptian rule resulting out of the Ottoman-Egyptian exploitation and maladministration. Such unhealthy relationship between the governed and the governors created a fertile ground for the Mahdist to mobilize the Sudanese masses under a nationalist slogan. This nationalist revolt, led by the Mahdi (Muhammad Ahmad), forced the surrender of the governors of Kordofan and Dar Fur in 1883, the surrender of Bahr al-Ghazal in April 1884 and the eventual fall of Khartoum in January 26, 1885, marking the end of the Ottoman-Egyptian rule (Lesch 1998).

The Mahdist victory over the hitherto alien colonizing forces brought together a diverse mix of pious disciples, merchants, and nomads. Soon after this successful revolution, however, the Mahdi died in June 1885. Following the death of the Mahdi, Khalifa ‘Abdallahi became the successor. The earlier stage of Khalifa ‘Abdallahi’s rule was infested with internal rivalries and power struggles. Khalifa prevented the northern Sudan from relapsing into anarchy after the Mahdi’s death. He was successful in establishing a firm control over the territory under his rule, which to a certain degree, reflected a measure of the strength of his personality and administrative talent. But, according to Holt and Daly (2000), Abdallahi, who permanently resided in Omdurman, was never fully in control of his provisional officials. A sustained military character of the regime prevented a genuine resettlement of the

country. The Mahdi regime finally came to an end with the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of the Sudan in 1898.

Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956)

Since 1882, Egypt fell under British domination. In spite of Britain's apparent domination of Egypt, however, she ruled with the collaboration of the Khedive and Pashas (the Egyptian monarchy). According to Woodward (1979), Lord Cromer, the British consul-general insisted that Egyptian opinion would be offended if the demonstration by her army did not include a measure of territorial re-conquest, and suggested an advance as far as Dongola (in north Nile). This alleged concern for the Egyptian opinion became the basis for engaging the Mahdist regime and re-conquering the Sudan. But the true motive of the Anglo-Egyptian re-conquest of the Sudan was quite a different one. As scholars (Collins, 1984; Lesch, 1998) argue, Britain sought control over the Sudan for imperial strategic reasons that were largely related to preventing other European powers from seizing the sources of the Nile and gaining footholds along the Red Sea from which they could threaten the sea route to India. Besides, as Kebede (1999) notes, the British saw the existence of an independent Mahdi state as a threat to their plan to bring the entire stretch of the territory from Cairo to Cape Town (south Africa) under the British rule. The official justification presented by London, which had been the de facto ruler of Egypt since 1882, as the restoration of Turco-Egyptian sovereignty was simply a cover. The Anglo-Egyptian forces overwhelmed the Mahdi forces and re-conquered the Sudan in 1898.

The re-conquest was not an end in itself—that is having re-conquered the Sudan the British now had to administer it. But the administration of this vast land was complicated by the legal and diplomatic problems which had accompanied the conquest. As already noted

earlier, the Sudan campaigns had been undertaken by the British to protect their imperial position as well as the Nile waters. As Collins (1984) notes, however, the Egyptian treasury had borne the greater part of the expense and the Egyptian troops had far outnumbered those of Britain in the Anglo-Egyptian Army. The British did not simply want to hand the Sudan over to Egypt because the victory made them feel that they had to maintain their privileges in the Sudan. Besides, the British believed that the Mahdist regime was the result of over sixty years of oppressive Egyptian rule in the Sudan. Hence, they were not prepared to hand the Sudanese back to a form of administration against which they had once revolted.

On the other hand, annexing the Sudan outright to the British Empire might have been an appealing alternative, but such an alternative was undesirable for it could have had serious repercussions. As Collins (1984) and Woodward (1979) argue, the idea of annexation would have been regarded as provocative by other European powers. What is more, it would have been regarded by the Egyptians as a shocking violation of their historic claims to the Sudan. As a solution to these problems, Lord Cromer (the British representative in Egypt) came up with the idea of a 'hybrid form of government' which appeared both to honor Egyptian claims and safeguard British interests. This solution was embodied in the Anglo-Egyptian conventions of 1899, which came to be known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (Lesch, 1998; Collins, 1984; Woodward, 1979; Holt and Daly 2000). The Condominium created a theoretically joint Anglo-Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan. The British claims were openly based on the right of conquest, while Egypt's were defined by reference to certain provinces in the Sudan which were in rebellion against the authority of His Highness the Khedive. The agreement stipulated the following: that the Egyptian and British flags should be flown side by side in the Sudan; the claims of neither the Ottoman

sultan nor the European privileges should be entertained and that Egyptian legislation should not be applied in the Sudan. Instead the government of the Sudan was to be invested in a governor-general who would be appointed by the Khedive (the Egyptian monarchy) upon the recommendation of the British government. The proclamations of the governor-general were to be notified to the Egyptian and British governments (Holt and Daly, 2000; Woodward, 1979; Collins, 1984).

Despite these overt stipulations, argues Collins (1984), the whole notion of Condominium was simply bogus because joint sovereignty is a contradiction as sovereignty, in principle, cannot be shared, and in reality there was no equal partnership between Britain and Egypt. This was because Egypt itself had been under the British domination since 1882. This means that in practice, the British were the dominant forces when it came to retaining effective control over the Sudan. Such disparity of power relationship between the two parties is an indicative of the fact that in practice the Condominium was never meant to be an exercise in joint rule. In fact, from the very beginning, said Collins (1984), the British dominated the Condominium, leaving the Egyptians with feelings of bitter humiliation at supposedly being maneuvered out of their historic rights by a clever legal agreement. According to Holt and Daly (2000), the Condominium, thus, became a bone of contention between Britain and Egypt. The contention became more pronounced after the First World War when Egyptian nationalists openly attacked the agreement as a sham devised to deny Egyptian rights while paying lip service to them. As Holt and Daly (2000) contend, even the Sudan government itself came to view the Condominium status as a lever by which Britain could manipulate affairs in Egypt, sometimes to the disadvantage of the interests of the Sudan, and often pressed for a more definitive British control.

Soon after their military victory over the Sudan and the formation of the Condominium, the British were determined to rapidly establish an effective administration in the north because of the fear of the potential resurrection of Mahdism. They were cognizant of the fact that the messianic nature of the Mahdiyya had been the major factor for the rebellion which had previously overthrown the Turco-Egyptian administration in 1885. Unless they established an effective administration as soon as possible, the followers of the Mahdi could pose a serious threat to the Condominium. They erected an administrative structure where the governor-general held absolute civil and military authority. Below the governor-general, the country was divided into provinces, and each province into districts. Each province was the responsibility of a British governor and each district that of a British officer with an Egyptian or Sudanese assistant and a small clerical staff and police force (Collins, 1984).

At first the British staff consisted of British officers seconded from the Egyptian Army, but civilians were recruited as early as 1900, mostly from Oxford and Cambridge universities, to supplement and replace military men. According to Collins (1984), these civilian administrators soon evolved into small elite known as the Sudan Political Service, which played a pivotal role in ruling the Sudan. Perhaps one of the cleverest moves the British took with respect to tackling the potential problem of opposition to their rule was their effort to cultivate close relations with the leaders of the principal Islamic religious orders. According to Lesch (1998), the most important of these were, first the leaders of the *Khatmiyya*, and later, the *Ansar* (the followers of the Mahdi), both of which eventually evolved in powerful political forces in the Sudan.

In the southern Sudan, the British approach was different in comparison to that of the northern Sudan. The two previous regimes (Turco-Egyptian and the Mahdiyya) had not established any meaningful control over the southern Sudan as had been the case with the northern Sudan. According to Collins (1984), before the British could occupy the southern provinces, they had to clear the Nile and its tributaries of matted vegetation called the *sudd*. By 1901, the British, after Herculean effort, had been able to open the river routes to the south. Once the river was open, an Anglo-Egyptian expedition was rushed into the south so as to extend the British administration. The British officers established a network of posts throughout the province. But exerting their power over the vast reaches of the countryside surrounding the isolated stations became a monumental challenge. This was because at first the southern Sudanese regarded the British as just another invader who would undoubtedly attempt to suppress their independence and exploit their human and natural resources. However, as Collins (1984) notes, “By cajolery, gifts and peaceful displays of force, and at other times by offers of protection, threats and even the use of punitive military expeditions, the British officers gradually overcame the Southerners’...suspicious...” (p. 12). And for the first twenty-five years of the British rule in southern Sudan (unlike that of the north), the district officials were invariably military officers.

On the other front, the already rocky relation between Britain and Egypt began to deteriorate more following Britain’s unilateral declaration of a protectorate over Egypt in 1914 (Woodward, 1979). The establishment of the protectorate was an affront to Egyptian feelings, and nationalist feelings ran high among the Egyptians. Pressured by the Egyptians’ nationalist campaign, the British unilaterally declared that Egypt be granted her independence in 1922. But the declaration stipulated that Britain would reserve her major

interests, including the maintenance of British troops for the defense of the Suez Canal, and the retention of a Condominium in the Sudan. Egypt welcomed her independence, but she categorically rejected Britain's right of reservation (Woodward, 1979).

The Egyptian nationalist campaign and the resultant declaration of independence reverberated in the Sudan and added fuel to nationalist movement among the Sudanese. As Woodward (1979) argues, "...the birth of modern Sudanese nationalism was a reflex of the climax of the national movement in Cairo" (p. 6). The British judged the Sudanese nationalism as something confined to a small element of the urban population, many of whom were believed to have been inspired by Egyptians. Hence, they ruled out making any political concessions and went on taking measures that would alienate the Sudanese elites from engaging in the political and administrative activities of the colonial administration. The best way to effect this notion of alienating the Sudanese elites was by vigorously pursuing the promotion of the tribal organizations to serve the political as well as the administrative requirements of the political service. Native administration was to be pursued with the aim of strengthening tribal structures and decentralizing the government. Such structural change implied that the presence of government officials in many areas would be reduced, and wise old men promoted at the expense of brash youngsters (Woodward, 1979). This phenomenon alarmed the educated elites who had careers in the central administration and who envisioned an eventual transfer of power from British colonial authorities to their class.

With respect to the southern Sudanese, "the British shared the perception...that the peoples in the south were primitive and pagan. Southern peoples required moral guidance that could be provided by Christian missionaries from Europe" (Lesch, 1998, p. 31).

Subsequently, the British instituted what was known as the ‘Southern Policy’ in 1922 which sanctioned the sealing off of the south from the north in order to “protect” the south from Muslim influence. From 1922-1947, the British implemented a separate system of administration in the south. As Kebede (1999) contends, “The ‘Southern Policy’ severed virtually all relations between the northern and southern regions” (p. 12). The northern Sudanese nationalists saw the ‘Southern Policy’ as a typical Machiavellian plot by which the British were to divide and rule, and endanger the eventual survival of the Sudan as a unified nation. As a result, they strongly opposed such policy of segregation.

The policy continued for decades, but the Sudanese nationalist movement intensified. A decade before Sudan gained its independence, the British reversed the ‘Southern Policy’, owing to a relentless pressure from the Sudanese nationalist movement. According to Kebede (1999), the British nullified all restrictions imposed to separate the southern region from the north and met the northerners’ demands for a united Sudan. However, the reversal of the policy did not resonate well with the southerners. In fact, the southerners opposed the reversal. They felt that the reversal of the policy would jeopardize their cultural and political rights. Despite such opposition, however, the decision of nullifying the ‘Southern Policy’ prevailed. In February 1953, Britain and Egypt concluded an agreement providing for Sudanese selfgovernment and selfdetermination. The transitional period toward independence began with the inauguration of the first parliament in 1954. With the consent of the British and Egyptian governments, Sudan achieved independence on January 01, 1956.

From the very start of the independence, the new Sudan was impregnated with serious problems, which would later define the future of the nation. The problems and challenges that bedeviled the postcolonial Sudan could not be fully accounted for without taking a stock

of its colonial history, for colonization is partly accountable for its present predicaments. Although the Turco-Egyptian colonial rule over the Sudan had its own impact on the modern Sudan, it was the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium that has had a profound impact on the postcolonial Sudan. This is because it was under the Anglo-Egyptian rule that most of the country's border was defined; it was during this time that nearly all the territory of today's Sudan came under the firm control of a colonial power (Kebbede, 1999).

Sudan's North-South Conflict in Context

When one talks about the civil war between north and south Sudan, it is often the civil war which reignited in 1983 that often comes to people's minds. In reality, however, the conflict that broke out in 1983 and went on until 2005 was the second phase of the civil war experienced between the north and the south. The first phase of the civil war started before independence and continued sixteen years after, ending in 1972. In this section, I provide an overview of the historical context of Sudan's Southern civil war by identifying some of the principal factors that contributed to the genesis and the resumption of the crisis in question.

As briefly noted earlier, after the conquest, the British administered south Sudan and north Sudan as two separate regions. Upon the institution of the north-south geographical division, the British adopted a separate system of administration in Sudan's southern region, which constituted the provinces of Equatoria, Bahr el-Ghazal, and Upper Nile up until 1947. According to Kebbede (1999), the Southern Policy instituted by the British "severed virtually all relations between the northern and southern regions" (p. 12). For the native southerners, travel to the north or seeking employment in the north was prohibited. The prohibition also included the promotion of Islam and the Arabic language. What was encouraged instead was the spread of Christianity and the English language. When it comes to the northerners, the

law barred them from entering or living in the south. What is more, even those southern Sudanese, particularly Arab merchants, who had resided in the south for years were forced to leave (Deng and Gifford, 1987; Anderson, 1999).

In the beginning, the British had no intention of keeping the south and the north under a united Sudan. In fact, the British, as Nelson (1983) notes, were preparing the southern region for its “eventual integration with British East African” federation (p. 40). However, a decade or so before the formal granting of independence to Sudan, the British reversed the Southern Policy, owing to a growing Sudanese nationalist movement in the north. The two areas were brought together to form a single administration under a united Sudan. This was all done without proper consultation with the southerners. Following the nullification of all restrictions imposed to separate the two areas, the northerners flocked to the south to take up administrative positions; Arabic became the only official language of administration; Arabic was also introduced as a school subject. As Kebede (1999) points out, the northern Arabs overwhelmed the south within a brief period of time.

As expected, the southerners vociferously opposed the reversal of the ‘Southern Policy,’ seeing the measure as a license for the reimposition of the northern domination upon them. To the southerners’ dismay, Khartoum ordered the southern soldiers to transfer to the north in 1955. Unwilling to leave families and possessions, the Equatoria Corps in Torit mutinied and killed a number of northerners, including officers (Kebede, 1999). As Anderson (1999) documents, eight thousand northern troops were then airlifted to the south by the British to put down the rebellion. This mutiny of the southern soldiers, which took place in 1955 (a few months before independence), marked the beginning of a secessionist armed struggle. Following independence in 1956, the northern elite leaders of the newly

independent Sudan vigorously pursued the process of Arabization and Islamization of southern Sudan with little or no regard to the interests of the non-Arab and non-Islamic peoples of the region. As Kebede (1999) argues, the central government kept on adopting and putting in practice policies that undermined the identity, cultures, and customs of the south. The government denigrated indigenous beliefs and cultural practices and took forceful actions to suffocate them. On the other hand, it consciously elevated the Islamic and Arab identity of Sudan, into which others should be assimilated.

In early 1960s, the Sudan African National Union organized a guerrilla army known as the Anyanya and intensified the secessionist armed struggle in the south. The Anyanya guerrilla forces spread the war throughout the southern region. In the late 1960s, a former lieutenant, by the name Joseph Lagu, brought disparate guerrilla groups together to form a credible armed front known as the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (Kebede, 1999). The civil war escalated, and neither the civilian nor the military governments could stop it. It was hoped that the civilian government of the 1960s would resolve the southern question, but it failed miserably to live up to the expectation. The inability and unwillingness of the civilian regime to solve the political crisis in the south together with their failure to effectively address the country's economic problems resulted in the growing discontent of the populace. This was more than enough pretext for the army to seize the political power once again. In May 1969, a small contingent of young officers led by Colonel Jaafar Nimeiri took over power in a bloodless coup and constituted itself as the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). According to Kurita, 1994), the Nimeiri regime embraced the Communist Party and the trade unions, and "portrayed itself as a government of the progressive forces, whose ultimate goal was the liberation of Sudan from dependency, and the adoption of the

non-capitalist path of development” or ‘Sudanese Socialism.’ (p. 210). It dissolved all traditional political parties, including the sectarian political parties. The regime moved the country into the Soviet orbit and adopted a pro-Soviet alignment at the United Nations and other international forums. The Soviet Union reciprocated by supplying the Khartoum regime with weapons and instructors (Kebbede, 1999).

The honeymoon, however, did not last long. In July 1971, the communists with whom Nimeiri allied joined hands with discontented army officers and attempted to overthrow him in a coup that nearly succeeded. This attempted coup led Nimeiri to purge the communists and their sympathizers from his government by mercilessly incarcerating or executing many of them. Soon after, he took a sharp turn in his ideological orientation and abandoned his so-called socialist path of development and embraced the free enterprise system. He came to realize that neither the government nor the guerrillas were able to win the civil war. He also understood that continuing the war with such a weak political base could make his administration vulnerable. Hence, he decided to end the civil war through dialogue and negotiation with the southern guerrillas. In 1972, high-level delegates from both the Sudanese government and the guerrilla forces met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. After a series of negotiations mediated by the World Council of Churches and the All-Africa Council of Churches with the support of the Organization of African Unity and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, the two parties agreed to end the war. As Kebbede (1999) notes,

The Addis Ababa agreement gave the South a large measure of regional autonomy, allowing the region to have its own elected assembly and executive body that would be responsible for most matters, except external affairs,

national defense and national planning. It stipulated that the southern boundaries be 'as they stood' the day Sudan became independent. (p. 15)

The agreement also recognized the southern religious beliefs, languages and traditional laws, putting Islam, Christianity and indigenous traditional beliefs in par as religions of the peoples of Sudan. According to Deng (1987), the agreement also pledged to re-integrate the Anyanya guerrilla fighters into the national defense forces, to resettle and rehabilitate people displaced by the war, and to create better conditions for development opportunities. The agreement was held as an important landmark in the North-South relations. The Addis Ababa agreement brought more than a decade of peace and stability for the Sudanese people. However, instead of working for the implementation of the terms of the accord, Nimeiri continued marginalizing the southerners from the central decision making processes. Poverty, disease, and illiteracy still remained the lot of the vast majority of the southern population, as the regime failed to pay significant attention to the social and economic development needs of the region. In the meantime, Nimeiri was preoccupied with consolidating his power through manipulating competing elements. Gradually, his support from both the North and the South dwindled. Realizing the deteriorating situation, Nimeiri sought to make alliance with northern opposition parties and the powerful Muslim Brothers, who were bitterly opposed to the southern Sudanese demand for self-determination. Such opportunistic political maneuvering of Nimeiri further alienated the southerners and contributed to the escalation of tensions between the two parties.

To further complicate the already complicated political environment between the North and the South, oil discovery came into the picture. In 1979, the U.S.-based Chevron Company discovered significant oil reserves in the south (Mawson, 1984). Once the

discovery was known, the Nimeiri regime did not waste time in denying the southerners ownership of this crucial resource. In contravention to the Addis Ababa agreement, the government tried to redraw the boundaries between North and South so as to incorporate the oil reserves within the territorial jurisdiction of the North (Bennet, 1987). When this attempt did not materialize, the government came up with a plan to refine the crude oil at a different site in the north than where the oil was found. As one would expect, the South vehemently opposed the plan. It became obvious to the southerners that the central government was bent on plundering the newly discovered oil reserves for the benefit of the historically privileged North at the expense of the South. This phenomenon further eroded the southerners' confidence in the Khartoum government.

In May 1983, Nimeiri dissolved the legally elected southern regional government and assembly; he passed a decree that subdivided the hitherto single autonomous region into three political regions, each with a Nimeiri-appointed governor (Anderson, 1999; Kebede, 1999). The decree also stipulated that, henceforth, Arabic would be the exclusive official language of the whole Sudan. Worst of all, Nimeiri imposed the Shari'a Laws on the entire country indiscriminately. These measures were in complete contravention to the Addis Ababa agreement. Such draconian measures generated stiff opposition from the southerners. In order to suppress the growing opposition to the central government, Nimeiri dispatched government troops to major Southern cities and garrison towns. As more government troops were brought to the South, argues Kebede (1999), disparate armed uprising broke out in various parts of the South. As per the 1972 agreement, thousands (6, 000) of the Anyanya guerrillas were absorbed into the national army and stationed in the South. Following the uprising, Nimeiri feared that these Southern troops might defect and join the growing

uprising and pose a serious threat to his rule. In order to preempt a potential nightmare, he ordered the transfer of the Southern troops to the North, which further exacerbated the crisis.

In 1983, opposition forces in the region converged to form a unified front against the Khartoum regime. To this end, they rallied around Colonel John Garang, who was a Dinka, to form the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and its military wing the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/A). The formation of the SPLM/A marked the beginning of the second civil war, which tore the country apart for more than two decades (Anderson, 1999; Kebede, 1999).

As can be understood from the preceding discussion, modern day Sudan is largely the product of colonial conquests. The Turco-Egyptian occupation, the Mahdist revolt against the brutal Turco-Egyptian rule, and the subsequent Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of the Sudan have not only shaped Sudan as a nation-state but also contributed immensely to the polarization of the Sudanese society. Particularly, a poisonous and divisive Anglo-Egyptian rule served as a recipe for the spark of the first civil war between the south and the north on the eve of Sudan's independence. Furthermore, postindependence Sudanese political elites have consistently manipulated such differences among the Sudanese society in order to secure their hold onto power. These political machinations, in turn, have created endless cycles of civil wars since independence, and the southern Sudanese civil war was a part of the scenario.

CHAPTER THREE

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SUDAN DURING SOUTH SUDAN'S CIVIL WAR

This chapter overviews the foreign policy positions of the U.S. administration with respect to Sudan over the entire stretch of the southern Sudanese civil war. It examines the nature of Washington's policies towards Khartoum during the tenures of the three war-time governments of Sudan and how these policies impacted the southern Sudanese civil war.

For several decades, U.S. policy towards Africa was shackled by the Cold War ideological divide. Geopolitical considerations determined Africa's place on the U.S. foreign policy agenda throughout the Cold War. Interest in the continent ebbed and flowed with shifts in perceptions of the potential impact of African events on the global interests of the United States. According to Clough (1992), from the end of World War II until late 1984, Washington's interest in the continent fluctuated with changing estimates of the threat posed by real or imagined Soviet gains. As a result, American policymakers defined their options narrowly; they seldom gave priority to initiatives that did not serve U.S. strategic interests. This phenomenon brought about a policy that was fundamentally at odds with the expressed commitment of the United States to democracy and development. U.S. officials often turned a blind eye to human suffering in countries that seemed to them to have no strategic value (Clough, 1992). U.S. policy towards Sudan during the Cold War was no exception.

In the early stages of Sudan's independence, Washington's relation with Khartoum was no different from its relation with many of the other newly independent African states, as the continent as a whole was not on Washington's foreign policy priority list. But its relation with Sudan faced a serious challenge following the 1967 Israeli-Arab war. In the aftermath of

the Six Day War in 1967 and throughout the Cold War, the relationship between the two countries went through numerous political oscillations (Woodward, 2006). As solidarity with other Arab countries had been a feature of Sudan's foreign policy, the lightning strike by Israel against Egypt and the Six-Day War of June 1967 infuriated the Sudanese government. Egypt accused the United States and Britain of complicity with Israel, and Khartoum broke diplomatic relations with Washington and London in solidarity with Egypt's President Nasir. The Sudanese regime then cultivated its cooperation with the Soviet Union (Anderson, 1999). Colonel Nimeiri came into power in 1969, and Sudan's relations with the Soviet Union prospered. The Eastern bloc sent 2,000 advisors to Sudan, took 25 percent of Sudanese exports, and furnished 18 percent of imports (Anderson, 1999).

The cozy relationship between the Soviet Union and Sudan and the propensity of the Horn of Africa states towards the Soviet Union soon became a source of concern for Washington's foreign policy establishment. U.S. officials were worried that trends in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, if ignored or mishandled, would benefit the Soviet Union (Clough, 1992). But President Nimeiri's friendship with the Soviet Union did not last long. In July 1971, the Sudanese Communist Party (a partner in Nimeiri's government) attempted to overthrow President Nimeiri, and Nimeiri suspected Soviet involvement. His sense of betrayal caused a dramatic shift to courting the United States. As politically weak as he was, Nimeiri also took measures to end the first southern Sudan's civil war in 1972 by signing the Addis Ababa peace agreement, which granted autonomy to the south. Washington responded with \$18 million for resettlement of refugees of the newly resolved civil war and rehabilitation of the ravaged south. Relations between the two countries hence resumed in July 1972, after almost five years of diplomatic blackout (Anderson, 1999).

The new U.S. ambassador, Cleo Noel, arrived in Khartoum in early 1973. Before he could present credentials and officially take up his duties, he and his deputy, Curtis Moore, were murdered by Palestinian terrorists, along with a Belgian diplomat, on March 1, 1973 (Anderson, 1999; U.S. Department of State, 2008). The Black September Organization, a clandestine arm of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), committed this act after taking the diplomats hostage at the Saudi Embassy (Anderson, 1999). According to Anderson (1999), the terrorists demanded the release of Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's assassin, plus Palestinians held in Jordan and Israel. The Sudanese government was not involved in the murders. In fact it arrested, tried, and convicted the eight terrorists and sentenced them to life in prison. As Anderson (1999) writes, in view of Khartoum's firm action, Washington dispatched a new ambassador to Khartoum. However, in June 1974, Nimeiri, bowing to Arab and domestic pressures, commuted the terrorists' sentences to seven years and turned them over to the PLO in Cairo to serve out their terms. As this amounted to freeing the terrorists, the United States withdrew its new Ambassador in protest and again suspended assistance. Months later, even after the Ambassador was returned to Khartoum, relations still remained strained.

Nimeiri, wishing to cultivate further his country's relationship with the United States, mediated the release of ten American hostages held by Eritrean rebels. He also granted licenses for oil prospecting to an American company, Chevron, in 1974, followed by other contracts with U.S. firms. Particularly notable gestures Nimeiri made that cemented further Khartoum's relation with Washington came after 1973. Humiliated and embittered by defeat they suffered at Israeli hands in the Six Day War of 1967, Arab nations joined hands and went to war (usually known as Yom Kippur war) with Israel in October 1973. However, the

war did not result in victory for the Arabs, and it complicated the international politics. Following the Yom Kippur War, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and other Arab states imposed the oil embargo against the West for its support of Israel. This situation changed the nature of the international oil industry forever. One result was that it forced Western oil companies to more aggressively search for opportunities for exploration of petroleum resources outside the borders of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and Nimeiri made that opportunity available to Chevron (Patey, 2007). The warming trend of relations between the two countries continued as President Ford received Nimeiri in Washington during an unofficial visit in 1976, after which U.S. aid resumed (Anderson, 1999). What is more, following the 1973 war, Egypt's president, Anwar Sadat, developed close relations with the United States, fostered by U.S. peace efforts in the wake of the conflict. In turn U.S.-Sudanese relations warmed when Nimeiri, oriented toward Egypt, supported the Camp David agreement, signed between Egypt and Israel with the help of President Jimmy Carter in March 1979 (Anderson, 1999).

In return, the Carter administration decided to supply arms to the Nimeiri government and make it the principal African beneficiary of U.S. foreign assistance. During the Carter administration, Nimeiri received C-130 transport aircrafts, U.S. tanks and F-5 aircraft (Anderson, 1999). According to Clough (1992), the decision to supply Khartoum with arms was motivated by a perceived need to counter growing Soviet influence in Ethiopia and, more important, a desire to ensure that Khartoum would support U.S.-Egyptian initiatives in the Middle East. U.S. support for Nimeiri's regime was strengthened further during 1980-1981 by Nimeiri's willingness to grant the U.S. military access to his strategically located country in order to facilitate the development of a Persian Gulf rapid deployment force

intended to block Soviet threats to Persian Gulf oil. Equipment and supplies for this purpose were prepositioned in Port Sudan on the Red Sea, which was within ready access of the Gulf (Clough, 1992; Anderson, 1999). Nimeiri's hostility towards Libyan leader Mu'ammarr Qadhafi and his acquiescence in a secret U.S.-backed airlift of Ethiopian Jews via Sudan to Israel also earned him favor from the U.S. administration.

When Reagan came to power, his administration appreciated Nimeiri's manifest hostility towards the Libyan president, Mu'ammarr Qadhafi, whom Washington regarded as its archenemy, and stepped up military assistance. In April 1983, Assistant Secretary of State Crocker summed up U.S. relations with the Nimeiri government when he declared that the United States had become "Sudan's closest Western friend" (Clough, 1992, p.88).

Emboldened by the new-found relationship, U.S. officials and the Nimeiri government echoed each other's arguments that the main threats to the Sudan were Ethiopia and Libya. In late 1981, following the assassination of Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat and claims by Nimeiri that Qadhafi was intensifying efforts to subvert the Khartoum government, the Reagan administration increased military aid to the Sudan substantially. Referring to a statement made by an anonymous official in the Reagan administration, Clough (1992) writes, "We obviously have a security interest in Sudan...We are going to do whatever we can to make them [the Nimeiri government] feel more comfortable, more secure" (p. 88). By the early 1980s, Sudan was the sixth largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world, and by the mid-1980s, Sudan was the single largest recipient of U.S. development and military assistance in sub-Saharan Africa (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

While the U.S. military and development assistance to Nimeiri's regime was at its peak, political and economic situations in Sudan were deteriorating fast. Having received the

support he needed from the U.S. administration, Nimeiri's regime felt confident that it could provoke the south by changing the internal boundaries between the north and the south regions and violate the Addis Ababa agreement (Ziada, 2007). Nimeiri thus went on taking most of what Clough (1992) calls "... worst domestic blunders..." (p. 88) after securing assurances from his powerful Western ally. As Ziada (2007) argues, president Nimeiri first announced a plan to change the borders between the southern and northern provinces. This plan divided the southern region into three states, creating the Unity state around Bentiu where the oil rich areas were located. On the basis of this division plan, the Unity state became part of the north. However, southern leaders rejected this. The leaders of the south perceived the division plan as an attempt by the central government to control the oil areas and deprive the south of the oil revenues. Instead of continuing to search for ways to defuse internal conflicts, Nimeiri also alienated substantial segments of the population by unilaterally abrogating the Addis Ababa accords in June 1983 and imposing Islamic law (Sharia) on the country in September 1983. These actions rekindled the war in the south, which went on unabated for more than two decades (Clough, 1992).

The eruption of the civil war made it impossible for the foreign companies to continue operating in Sudan as the security situation was deteriorating. The southern forces targeted the oil fields in order to prevent the Sudanese government from exploiting the oil resources. In 1984 they attacked the oil fields in the south abducting and killing three Chevron workers. This incident forced Chevron to suspend its operations in Sudan after investing \$1 billion (Ziada, 2007). In the eyes of many in the south, Chevron was clearly an ally of a repressive northern government (Patey, 2007). The ongoing civil war and the deteriorating economic condition put the Nimeiri regime on shaky ground. Nimeiri then went

to Washington to ask the Reagan administration to bail him out. On April 1, 1985, after a meeting between Nimeiri and Reagan in Washington, the White House announced that \$67 million would be released to alleviate Sudan's economic problems (Clough, 1992). This action came too late to help the Sudanese leader. Five days after his meeting with President Reagan, Nimeiri was deposed, while still in Washington, by the army (Clough, 1992).

U.S. policy towards Sudan during president Nimeiri's tenure was a complete disaster. Filtered through the Cold War ideological prism, U.S. policy contributed to the reigniting of the southern Sudanese civil war, the economic crisis in Sudan, and the eventual downfall of the very regime Washington wanted to keep in power. As Clough (1992) contends, Washington unwittingly brought the demise of Nimeiri's regime by rewarding him for focusing on external enemies such as Libya's Mu'ammar Qadafi and by encouraging him to believe that he could count on Washington's aid to bail him out of his internal political and economic difficulties.

In short, the singular focus the U.S. administration paid toward containing the influence of the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa and for protecting its geostrategic interest in the Middle East led Washington to provide unqualified support for its important allies, such as Nimeiri. In doing so, U.S. officials, as Clough, 1992) argues, "Overlooked and often excused repression, injustice, corruption, and economic mismanagement in such African countries as Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Zaire that were willing to oppose Moscow" (p. 1). Apportioning responsibility to the United States' policy with respect to what went wrong in some parts of Africa during the Cold War, Clough (1992) emphasizes that "no other great power is as responsible as the United States for what happened in Liberia, Sudan, and Zaire. Washington readily chose to take the lead in supporting and protecting Doe in Liberia,

Nimeiri in Sudan, and Mobutu in Zaire” (p. 79). He contends that without U.S. support, these African dictators--Doe, Nimeiri and Mobutu-- would not have survived as long as they did.

After the removal of Nimeiri in April 1985, a transitional administration governed Sudan for one year. The transitional period was followed by parliamentary elections, and Sadiq Al-Mahdi became Prime minister in May 1986. Learning from the experience of the pro-Western foreign policy of Nimeiri and the devastation it brought to Sudan, the new government of Sadiq Al-Mahdi adopted a foreign policy that was neutral and nonalignment-oriented. According to Sadiq, alignment meant adherence to policies of the great powers that were not beneficial to Sudan. Alignment with one provoked hostility of the rival and of Sudan’s neighbors. Thus, taking sides with the United States in regional disputes elicited outside interference by those hostile to the United States, such as Ethiopia and the USSR. Nonalignment, on the other hand, allowed Sudan to cultivate economic ties with the West without harming relations with the East. Regional cooperation against outside strategies would also become possible, since Sudan’s relations with neighbors would be harmonious (Anderson, 1992).

However, the United States did not welcome such an independent foreign policy, which would undercut its influence over Sudan (Ziada, 2007). As a result, the United States started reducing its economic support to Sudan in order to show its displeasure of the new government’s foreign policy direction (Ziada, 2007). Sadiq’s government also received sharply reduced U.S. aid for the military. In fact, U.S. military assistance shrank to \$5 million during Sadiq’s first year, and reduced even further in the subsequent years (Anderson, 1999).

Prime Minister Sadiq Al-Mahdi, on his part, was not happy with the way the U.S. administration was treating his democratically elected government in comparison to the way it had treated the military dictatorship of Nimeiri. Prime Minister Al-Mahdi's frustration was obvious during his meeting with the new U.S. ambassador to Sudan. During this meeting, Sadiq noted, "The United States had been more favorably disposed toward Nimeiri's despotism than toward the current democracy. Nimeiri was a 'butcher' but had been shored up to the last by the United States. The United States now treated democracy "almost indifferently". The United States had much public relations work to do to erase its negative image acquired by supporting the 'thug' Numayri" (Anderson, 1999). On another occasion, Sadiq also remarked, "Numayri...had introduced the worst practice of Islam. This U.S. ally brought in mutilations, prison, and hangings for apostasy, plus renewed war in the South. America nevertheless lavished aid on him. The dictator had been in Washington receiving honors when overthrown" (Anderson, 1992, p. 171).

As discussed earlier, Nimeiri provided a base at Port Sudan for an American rapid deployment force that was intended to block Soviet threats to Persian Gulf oil. Equipment and supplies for this purpose were prepositioned within ready access of the Gulf. Sadiq took more seriously his nonalignment stance. He saw any U.S. military presence as an obstacle to improving relations with the USSR, Libya, and Ethiopia. In January 1987, Sadiq requested the United States to remove its equipment from Port Sudan. Sadiq explained that he did not wish to interfere with relations, but the arrangement was incompatible with Sudan's nonaligned stance (Anderson, 1999). The U.S. administration complied with the demand, but the measure further strained Washington's relation with Khartoum.

Prime minister Al-Mahdi decided to engage the southern forces so as to find a way to end the civil war. For such an attempt to materialize, he believed that it was important to normalize relations with Russia, Libya and Ethiopia, who had been supporting the southern forces. Washington saw such a move as against its interests. However, it chose not to completely disengage with Khartoum out of fear that Sadiq could end up in the Soviet sphere of influence. Sadiq met with Garang, the leader of the southern forces, and discussed a way to bring an end to the conflict. The meeting created initial optimism from both sides. In the meantime, southern forces stepped up their military offensive and made major advances. Sadiq's coalition government did not speak in the same voice when it came to engaging the southern forces with dialogue, and the military offensive launched by the southern forces exacerbated differences among the parties within the coalition government. Diminishing aid and military assistance from Washington put the Prime Minister at odds with the military. What is more, the deteriorating economic situation coupled with the devastating famine the country faced gathered a perfect storm against Sadiq's regime. Finally, Sadiq was deposed in June 1989 by the military coup, which was led by al-Bashir (Anderson, 1992).

The National Islamic Front (NIF) (which is now called National Congress Party—NCP) led by al-Bashir came into power with a strong Islamic stance. Following its ascent to power, the regime reimposed Sharia law on the country with the exception of the southern region. Sudan adopted an open-door policy to Islamic militant groups including the U.S. nemesis Osama bin Laden. The Sudanese regime adopted policies that opposed the U.S. hegemony in the region. Sudan stood with Iraq against the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 1991 and started to develop its relations with Libya, Iran, and China (Ziada, 2007). Considering these policies as being against the American interests in the region, the United States adopted

an aggressive policy of isolation, containment and destabilization against the Sudanese regime with the aim of forcing the Sudanese regime to comply with the United States agenda. This approach was adopted and put into effect by the Clinton administration (Ziada, 2007).

The Clinton administration intensified its accusation of the Khartoum government by citing the regime's support of international terrorism and Islamic fundamentalist extremism, its suppressing of religious freedom, and its abuse of human rights. The administration also accused Khartoum of having links with the World Trade Center bombings in New York in 1993 and an attempted assassination of Egyptian president Mubarak in Addis Ababa two years later (Woodward, 2006). These and other factors led the U.S. government to take a series of measures intended to isolate the Khartoum regime. Accordingly, the Clinton Administration listed Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism in August 1993. Sudan Joined Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria and Cuba on the U.S. state sponsor of terrorism list (Hoile, 2000). In 1996, the U.S. administration sponsored UN Security Council resolution 1054 which imposed diplomatic sanctions on Sudan, and in 1997, Washington imposed comprehensive trade sanctions on Sudan. These aggressive policies culminated in August 1998, when the United States bombed the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum (Ziada, 2007). According to Hoile (2000), President Clinton's cruise missile attack on the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum was justified as an attempt to destroy an alleged chemical weapons facility owned by Osama bin-Laden. However, it later turned out to be a disastrous intelligence failure. As Hoile (2000) argues, the factory was owned by a Sudanese businessman Mr. Saleh Idris. When later the administration learned that Mr. Saleh Idris owned the factory, the U.S. Treasury Department froze more than US\$ 24 million of Idris' assets. These assets had been held in Bank of America

accounts. On 26 February 1999, Mr. Idris filed an action in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, for the release of his assets, claiming that the government's actions had been unlawful. On 4 May 1999, the deadline by which the government had to file a defense in court, the Clinton Administration backed down and had to authorize the full and unconditional release of his assets.

The U.S. administration also switched sides and started to support the rebel movement in the south. The Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) had an early flirtation with Marxism under the tutelage of the Soviet-allied military regime in Ethiopia (Young, 2003). At the beginning of the civil war, the SPLA received military support from Libya and Ethiopia, who were on the side of the Soviet Union, as the SPLA was seen to be fighting against a regime who was a client of the United States (Ziada, 2007). Hence, U.S. support for the SPLM/A had been unthinkable before the National Islamic Front (NIF) ascension to power. With respect to the civil war, time appeared to be on the side of the new Sudanese government following the SPLA's loss of rear-bases in Ethiopia when the Mengistu regime (Washington's foe) fell in 1991 and the SPLA fragmented into factions. However, the war was reinvigorated by the Clinton administration's support for the SPLA faction led by John Garang, and by Washington's encouragement of several of Sudan's neighbors to assist the rebels (Hoile, 2000). As Ziada (2007) notes, in 1996, for example, the U.S. government provided its new regional allies Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda with \$20 million for military equipment in order to help the SPLA. In short, following the coming of the National Islamic Front (NIF) to power, Washington embraced the SPLA.

The United States was also involved through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which is a very effective instrument in U.S. foreign

policy as it promotes the U.S. political agenda through humanitarian work. The USAID was very active in the south Sudan region exclusively and paved the way for direct relations between the United States and the SPLA. In addition to embracing the southern rebels, the Clinton administration, as Hoile (2000,) notes, was also instrumental in temporarily unifying the Sudanese opposition, bringing a variety of groups together with the creation of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Eritrea in June 1995. Groups within this new entity included northern opposition parties such as the Umma party, the Democratic Unionist Party and the Sudanese Communist Party, as well as the SPLA. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) was in effect to form the NDA's military wing with John Garang as the NDA's military supreme. The National Democratic Alliance established a politico-military committee, committing the organization to the violent overthrow of the Sudanese government. Through the complementary roles of the United States regional allies and the USAID, the Sudanese rebel forces became heavily dependent on the United States (Ziada, 2007).

Washington's hostile policy towards al-Bashir's regime was openly criticized by former president Jimmy Carter. Carter, for example, bluntly stated that the Clinton administration's US\$20 million grant in military aid to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda aimed at helping the southern rebels was counterproductive. He was quoted as saying that such assistance was "a tacit demonstration of support for the overthrow of the Khartoum government" (Hoile, 2000, p.59). Carter also believed Clinton's support had a negative effect on the SPLA's interest in negotiating a political settlement: "I think Garang now feels he doesn't need to negotiate because he anticipates a victory brought about by increasing support from his immediate neighbors, and also from the United States and indirectly from

other countries.”(Hoile, 2000, p.59). As cited in Hoile (2000), Carter remarked the following in 1999:

The people in Sudan want to resolve the conflict. The biggest obstacle is U.S. government policy. The U.S. is committed to overthrowing the government in Khartoum. Any sort of peace effort is aborted, basically by policies of the United States. Instead of working for peace in Sudan, the US government has basically promoted a continuation of the war” (Hoile, 2000, pp.58-59)...If the United States would be reasonably objective in Sudan, I think that we at the Carter Center and the Africans who live in the area could bring peace to Sudan. But the United States government has a policy of trying to overthrow the government in Sudan. So whenever there’s a peace initiative, unfortunately our government puts up whatever obstruction it can. (pp. 58-59).

Since al-Bashir took power in 1989 up until 2000, Washington’s policy towards Khartoum was aimed at isolating and destabilizing the Sudanese regime in order to pressure it to comply with U.S. regional interests. Despite the immeasurable suffering it caused to ordinary people and the prolonging of the civil war, the policy did not achieve its target. The successful exploitation of oil emboldened the Sudanese regime as it was able to generate substantial amount of revenue from oil proceeds. The exploitation of oil shifted the balance of military power in favor of the Khartoum regime. More importantly, U.S. oil companies were unable to take advantage of Sudan’s growing oil business as a result of the economic sanctions Washington imposed on Sudan. Following September 11, 2001, the war on terror became the driving force of U.S. foreign policy, and it was considered important that

Khartoum cooperate with Washington in the new war against international terrorism. This confluence of factors necessitated re-thinking Washington's approach to Khartoum.

The Africa Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies sponsored a Task Force on U.S.-Sudan policy from July 2000 until February 2001. It was aimed at revitalizing debate on Sudan and generating pragmatic recommendations for the new administration (Joint Hearing, 2001). The task force members' conclusion showed that they shared "both a deep frustration that the U.S. policy has failed to generate any meaningful results and a conviction that a new approach is urgently needed that reaches beyond unilateral efforts to contain and isolate Sudan" (Joint Hearing, 2001, p.44). The task force suggested the importance of re-thinking a realistic way forward. It recommended that the Bush administration concentrate its policy on the objective of ending Sudan's war on the basis of the Inter- Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)--the East African body- - Declaration of Principles. And to do so, the Bush administration should resume full diplomatic relations with Sudan and appoint a high-level fully empowered envoy (Joint Hearing, 2001). The Bush Administration implemented these recommendations by assigning Senator John Danforth as the president's envoy for peace in Sudan (Ziada, 2007).

Per the task force's recommendation, the Bush administration aggressively pursued the road to ending the civil war by exerting pressure on the warring parties. Under pressure from the Bush administration, the Sudanese government and the SPLA signed the Machacos protocol in July 2002. In October 2002, the U.S. president signed the Sudan Peace Act, which threatened the Sudanese government with punitive measures if it obstructed the negotiations, did not negotiate in good faith, or if it was not in compliance with the terms of a permanent peace agreement. The act also pledges \$ 100 million assistance for each of the

years 2003, 2004, and 2005 to areas outside the Sudanese government's control (Ziada, 2007). According to Ziada (2007), the terms of a permanent peace agreement were set up by the United States. The Act makes it clear that the United States wanted the Sudanese government to sign the agreement that the United States wanted. In effect that meant the agreement should guarantee the right of self determination of the south which would pave the way for the separation. The U.S. government succeeded in forcing the Sudanese government to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 09 January 2005 on the basis of which the south has the right to self determination through a referendum that will be held in 2011. The policy of the United States towards Sudan during the Bush administration was a continuation of the policy of his predecessor Clinton; though the tactics were different, the objectives remained the same. In the end, the United States managed in forcing the Sudanese Government to comply with its interests (Ziada, 2007).

What is evident in the foregoing discussion is that U.S. policy towards Sudan during the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese administrations (Nimeiri, al-Mahdi and al-Bashir) was conspicuously different. The Cold War geopolitical considerations shaped U.S. relations with the Nimeiri regime. The Nimeiri regime's willingness to participate in the anti-Soviet Union coalition with the United States enabled Washington to embrace Nimeiri as a strong ally worthy of U.S. support. As a result, the U.S. government provided Nimeiri with unqualified military, financial, and political support despite the fact that Nimeiri was a military dictator who ruled Sudan with an iron-fist. Emboldened by overwhelming support from the U.S., Nimeiri was able to take drastic measures that reignited the southern Sudanese civil war and the regime's eventual downfall. On the other hand, Washington's policy towards al-Mahdi's democratic government was replete with uncertainty and/or indifference

as a result of al-Mahdi's refusal to be Washington's point-man--as had been the case with his predecessor--in that part of the world. The result was that Sudan's democracy became a casualty as the military deposed the democratically elected government of al-Mahdi after only three years in power. With the ascendance of al-Bashir's National Islamic Front (NIF) to power, Washington's policy towards Sudan became increasingly hostile. As part of its policy to isolate, destabilize and, if possible, effect regime change, Washington (among other things) switched sides and supported the southern rebels. In so doing, it contributed to the prolonging of the civil war. However, with the Bush administration, Washington made some tactical (not strategic) changes in its policy towards Sudan and decided that ending the southern civil war was its primary goal. Washington achieved this goal by forcing the warring parties to sign a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 09 January 2005. In sum, Washington's policy towards Sudan over the period of the civil war had, in one way or another, contributed to both the prolonging and the eventual resolution of the war.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the review of relevant literature is summarized under two broad sections. In the first section, attention is paid to the way Euro-Americans have historically produced knowledge about Africa and the Arab-Islamic world. This is followed by how such a knowledge is largely reinforced in the contemporary U.S. media portrayals of Africa and the Arab-Islamic world. In the second section, particular emphasis is made on the dialectical relationship between media institutions and other institutions in influencing each other's operations in the context of a capitalist society. On the basis such a review, the chapter makes a case as to the significance of conducting research on the way the U.S. media discursively represented the southern Sudanese civil war.

Producing Knowledge about Africa/Sudan

In this section, I summarize pertinent literature that chronicles how Euro-American literary and artistic works produced knowledge about Africa, and how modern Euro-American media appropriated such knowledge and produced images of Africa, which in many ways reinforced the pre-modern Euro-American image of Africa. It should, however, be conceded that literature that particularly deals with U.S. (or for that matter, European) media images of Sudan as a nation-state and/or the Sudanese people is scarce. Such paucity of literature is hardly surprising given the general perception of the West with regards to Africa; in other words, there seems to exist a general tendency in the West to see Africa and talk about it not as a continent constituting fifty-three separate countries but just as one country like Britain or Canada. Thus, in this section of the chapter, the literature reviewed focuses broadly on how Euro-Americans have historically produced knowledge about the

African continent and the resultant image(s) that such knowledge has constructed about the continent and its inhabitants, and situate Sudan within the broader context of such discursive formation.

Africa's image in Euro-American media. According to Itandala (2001, citing Stanley, 1878 and 1890), many Europeans and Americans are familiar only with the nineteenth-century European image of Africa as “the darkest continent,” (p. 61) which was popularized by late nineteenth-century travel literature. This image of Africa was, however, partly derived from earlier European images of the continent and partly from nineteenth-century European attitudes and factors. Therefore, in order to understand how this modern European image of Africa came into being in the late nineteenth century, it is necessary to trace the development and nature of earlier European images from earlier European contacts with Africans.

Pre-modern European image of Africa. Itandala (2001) identified people from the Mediterranean world, namely the Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Romans to be among the earliest visitors to Africa. Some of these classical Europeans documented what they saw and heard about the areas they visited. However, their descriptions of Africans living to the south of Egypt were generally brief, fragmentary, and tended consistently to emphasize the strange, the shocking and the degrading qualities of the peoples and cultures they dealt with. They depicted Africa as a mysterious region in which strange human beings and animals intermingled. For Itandala (2001), this negative characterization of Africans and their cultures by classical writers was not only a result of limited data on which it was based but perhaps more particularly a result of deliberate selection of data which concurred with their biases and prejudices.

The root of these biases and prejudices of ancient classical Greeks and Romans against Africans was ethnocentrism. The ethnocentric attitudes that valorized one's own and denigrated other's amplified the gulf between the so-called civilized and primitive worlds. According to Itandala (2001), the ancient Greeks, and later the Roman inheritors of their culture, employed the concepts of civilization and barbarism for distinguishing themselves from the rest of humanity. They understood the peoples of the world as made up of two groups, namely, Greeks (and later Greco-Romans) and others like them, who were civilized, and barbarians, who were uncivilized and primitive. What constituted civilization for them was their urban culture and way of life; they considered this culture and way of life to be more advanced in every respect and therefore superior. On the other hand, barbarism to them stood for non-Greek or non-Greco-Roman rural culture and way of life and they considered such culture and way of life as representing a low stage of development and therefore inferior. In the eyes of Greco-Roman writers, therefore, sub-Saharan Africans constituted "the worst kind of barbarians" (Itandala, 2001). As argued by Itandala (2001), the general classical consensus appears to have been that the peoples living in sub-Saharan Africa lacked not only civilization as their Mediterranean European counterparts but also were devoid of every good human attribute. In fact, the most remote among them from the Mediterranean littoral and the Red Sea coast were often denied even the possession of a truly human form and were said to have lived like wild beasts.

The tragedy is that the classical European image of Africa and its peoples did not end with the fall of the Roman Empire in fifth century A.D. As Itandala (2001) asserts, most of its aspects were retained and passed on to the Middle Ages by Roman and Christian writers of the Dark Ages (400-800). These writers, for example, presented a Christian view of the

world abounding in fabulous stories of strange peoples and animals and Christian legends. This style of writing about Africa and other parts of the non-European world became very characteristic of the Middle Ages (between nine-thirteen centuries). The nature of European attitudes on Africa and its peoples in the Middle Ages was determined partly by the limited and indirect nature of contacts which Europe had with most of Africa during this period and partly by the Christian world view which medieval Europeans held.

During this period, many European artists were engaged in painting portraits of Africans whom they had seen in Europe, serving as slaves and domestic servants, or used as adornment and as playthings in aristocratic families. Most of the representations which these artists made portrayed Africans as exotic playthings or as comical objects. In other words, Africans in the medieval European art were made to appear as their masters and the artists wanted them to appear, that is, as stereotypes (Itandala, 2001).

What painters and sculptors did was also done in literature by novelists, poets and playwrights (particularly Englishmen) during the same period perhaps even more dramatically. These literary personnel had no direct contact with Africans yet, but they had probably heard a lot about them from crusaders and merchants returning from the Middle East and Southern Europe where people were already acquainted with them. By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their poetry, drama and common speech was already displaying all kinds of negative attitudes towards Africans. Such attitudes, as Itandala (2001) notes, appear to have developed before the English people saw any Africans in person. What seems to have made them feel uneasy about Africans even before they set their eyes on them was their skin color. As noted earlier, medieval Europeans (especially Englishmen) had developed a religious view of the world. Such worldview in turn led to the emergence of a specific

“framework of assumptions” concerning foreigners in general. This means that as Christians who took their religion seriously, medieval Englishmen acquired a “Bible-centered model of the world” with Jerusalem as its center or focal point (Itandala, 2001, citing Hunter, 1964).

This image of the world was clearly portrayed in the medieval map of the world, which centered Jerusalem as the center of the Christian world because it represents “the natural hub of Christian experience which spreads out from this center to the fringe of circumambient waters...where Pagans live, close to Leviathan...together with Negroes, apes, semi-hominess and others whose distance from full humanity could be measured by their geographical distance from that area where humanity had been most fully realized in the life of Christ” (Itandala, 2001, pp. 69-70, citing Hunter, 1964, p. 38). Thus, according to the images conveyed by this map, Africans and other non-Christian peoples formed part of the strange world on the fringes of the Christian scheme of things. In fact, it is interesting to note that Africa was not only shown as a continent of “strange peoples and creatures and many wonders, but also as the land in the middle of which Hell was supposed to be located” (Itandala, 2001, pp. 69-70, citing Hunter, 1964, p. 39 & 246).

According to Itandala (2001), from the imprecise knowledge of Africa and Africans which medieval and renaissance Europeans obtained from poetry, drama and religious bias, they came to associate them with evil and the devil presumably because to them black color or blackness stood for evil. Hence, the imaginary African or black man was identified, in medieval and renaissance European minds, with evil personified in the form of the devil. It was not until the second half of the sixteenth century that Englishmen and other northern Europeans began to travel overseas and establish direct contact with Africans and other non-European peoples in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Americas through commerce and

explorations. However, argues Itandala (2001), these contacts and the information which became available as a result of them, do not seem to have led to a better understanding of these peoples or to the production of objective knowledge about them in later centuries. In the case of Africa, for instance, the published accounts of voyages and land travel, which started appearing towards the end of the sixteenth century, did not change very much the fabulous ideas and fancies which people in England and other parts of Europe had before they became available. On the contrary, they seem to have confirmed most of the old notions and fancies because often they were written in such a way as to reinforce old images and stereotypes of individual Africans and their communities or to create new ones.

It goes without saying that, given the way it was presented, the new information on Africans made available by European travelers, merchants and sailors in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could not have done anything other than to reinforce the classical-medieval European image of them. As Itandala (2001, citing Hunter, 1964) contends, the establishment of contacts between peoples and the availability of information about them cannot change old attitudes and existing knowledge in a given society as long as the “framework of assumptions” remains unchanged. One of such framework of assumptions was the perception that legitimized the categorization of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa at the bottom of humanity. As Mengara (2001) notes, this is certainly to be found in the way their decentralized structures of sociopolitical organization and absence of private land-ownership were perceived by the Europeans. By this perception, “progress” was conceived only in terms of an evolution away from common land ownership towards private ownership of land. Whereas common land ownership was here viewed as accompanied inevitably by sexual promiscuity, female power, and natural chaos, private ownership of land was

perceived as accompanied by the “western virtues” of good agricultural practice, monogamy, and patriarchy (Mengara, 2001).

Such a view of progress was conditioned by multifarious stereotypes which, century after century, came to deform, invalidate and misconstrue the African universe, burying it under layers of historical fallacies that explorers, missionaries and eighteenth century scholars and thinkers consecrated as historical truths in their attempts to denigrate the non-west in general, and Africans in particular. At the same time, they undertook to elevate western civilization to a level of specificity and superiority that sought to recognize none of the contributions from a non-western world and forcefully reduced them to a simple existentialism that equated primitivism with evil and animality (Mengara, 2001).

What is more, in addition to its connotation of evil in the then Christian worldview, the black color issue was not only used for placing Africans at the bottom of the human social scale but also for justifying their use as slaves in the Americas, for example. Apparently in order to justify the use of African slave labor in the Americas during the Renaissance, slave owners and their intellectual supporters started claiming that the Africans were black and inferior because they were the descendants of the cursed Ham as the *Genesis* part of the *Bible* says, while Europeans were white and superior because they were the descendants of one of the blessed sons of Noah called Japhet (*Genesis*, 9: 22-23). For this reason, the Europeans felt that they were not violating any law against humanity by enslaving Africans (Itandala, 2001). However, neither *Genesis* nor any part of the Bible suggests in any way that the so-called descendants of Ham are black and that those of Shem and Japhet are white. It seems that the Genesis story was picked up and popularized because it appeared to be a reasonable explanation for the peopling of the world by different human races (Itandala,

2001). In view of the kind of attitudes and distortions which Euro-Americans received about Africa and Africans from their classical-medieval based literary and travel accounts of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is perhaps understandable why their image of them became uglier in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than before.

Nineteen century Euro-American images of Africa. According to Hultman (1992), from the earliest days of the republic, Americans have viewed Africa as a continent of savages and wild beasts. The reading public was alternately fascinated and repelled by accounts like those of reporter Henry Morton Stanley. Sent by *The New York Herald* in 1866 to find the British missionary and explorer David Livingstone, Stanley regaled audiences with front page accounts of his journeys. His later books about his African travels, including *Through the Dark Continent* in 1897 and *In Darkest Africa* in 1890, shaped opinions in Europe and North America (Hultman, 1992). In a similar vein, Jones (2001) considers Stanley's *In Darkest Africa* (1890) as one of the most influential texts on the image of Africa ever produced in the nineteenth century. This piece of work introduced the Western world to an Africa filled with strange tribes and exotic landscapes. Contributing to the existing plethora of travel narratives on Africa, Stanley's book enjoyed acclaim in the Victorian Era.

From Jones' (2001) point of view, of particular fascination for Stanley was the "primeval forest", specifically the forests of Central Africa. His description of the Central African forest brought into light many tropes associated with "Darkest Africa". He drew his audience into a world of "venom, fury, voracity, and activity" (Jones, 2001, citing Stanley, 1890, p. 70). The forest is the site of a Darwinian struggle between man and nature, where death from wounds, sickness, decay, hereditary disease and old age, and various accidents thin the forest, removing the unfit, the weakly, and the inadaptable, as among humanity

(Jones, 2001, citing Stanley, 1890). Stanley's description of the African jungle depicted a place whose barely suppressed danger emanated from its darkness and impenetrability. This ruthless forest was filled with venomous flora and insects, savage men, and dangerous animals (Jones, 2001).

On the other hand, McCarthy (1983), in his book *Dark Continent: Africa as Seen by Americans*, argues that the Western explorers' images of Africa were widely accepted not only by white Americans but also by black Americans. McCarthy (1983) notes, "a majority of black Americans subscribed either consciously or unconsciously to the dangerous and fallacious idea of African inferiority" (p. 146). These very images were used to explain and justify the subordination of peoples of African descent in America. In McCarthy's (1983) own words, "The case against black people in America was advanced by showing that their African ancestors had failed to develop a fully civilized way of life" (p. 28). If Africans could not do it in their own homeland, there was no way their progeny could possibly do any better in America.

As far as Africa is concerned, the nineteenth-century could be seen as a period of not only Western *imperial* expansionism but also Western *intellectual* expansionism and, therefore, cannot be dissociated from the colonial enterprise and its slavery-based imperialism. The so-called 'great' European 'scholars' of the time were not ashamed of formulating racist theories about Africans as primitive peoples who, according to Mengara, (2001): had no history and, therefore, could not claim to know themselves and had to be told who they were by Europeans; who were cultural children shaped by sexual lust, immorality and degeneration;

who could not rule themselves because of their primitive irresponsibility and who needed enlightened masters to show them the ways of superior civilization and deliver them from ignorance; who could not claim ownership of Africa or even of their lands since they were incapable of cultivating and managing them; who had no right to human justice, being sub-humans; and who had no religion and therefore needed the light of Christianity if they were to be freed from their chaotic state of nature and from animism.

Since the very beginning of European colonial expansion, works claiming to be anthropological had been published by questionable missionaries, explorers and administrators who, in order to justify their conquest of the continent, had to present the continent as a land of civilizational devastation that needed European enlightenment if it were to be saved from its spiritual obscurity and its continental darkness (Mengara, 2001, citing Deschamps, 1971; Sevry, 1991). In their scramble for Africa, the European imperial powers were, thus, morally empowered by such impoverished and perverted knowledge about Africa produced by their intellectual ‘gurus’ so as to dismember the African universe. Referring to Sala-Molins (1992), Mengara (2001) argues, then, that these judgments formulated by European thinkers on the human inadequacy of black Africans served several functions. First it served as a justification for not only the territorial occupation of Africa, but also the enslavement of Africa. Secondly, it served a purpose for the fabrication of multifarious images of Africa that would permanently justify its violent exploitation and enslavement on the basis of the God-given right to conquer those who need God’s salvation and the light of Christian “humanism.”

The contents of a plethora of European writings about Africa were reified by producing powerful accompanying imageries through cinematic and photographic works as

well as through the scenes in “naturalistic” museums. As Eitzen (1995) argues, all these imageries whether fictional or “realistic” were modes of representations that inevitably depended on selections tainted by subjectivities, and were in no way reflections of things African. As is well known, Africa has been imagined and re-presented on the white screen since the very beginning of Western cinema’s history. As Rahier (2001) points out, Western cinema, and particularly the white Hollywood industry, has usually represented sub-Saharan Africa as a place of safari-like adventures and/or missionaries’ enterprises for white heroes revolving among savage people and beasts. The American film industry has undoubtedly contributed to the construction of the deformed image of Africa as popular and public images of the continent. As Jones (2001) rightly argues, the U.S. film industry’s portrayals of Africa were often sensationalistic and ahistoric.

What is more, visual images of Africa circulated in America had promoted the idea of Africa as a land of affliction. While there certainly was disease in Africa as elsewhere in the world, sickness was selected as a defining trait of the continent and its people. Such representation was a part of the general tendency in the West to see in Africa only those features which necessitated help. According to Levin (2001), “to diagnose Africa as sick was to establish the need for medical care and to offer a rationale for colonial intervention” (p. 237). As a classic example of Africa’s image as a sick continent, Levin (2001) cited the photographs of Dr. Albert Schweitzer and his patients in Lambarene, which gave visual expression to the idea of an ailing Africa in desperate need of medical attention.

Naturalistic museum exhibits had also been complicit in aiding the projection of the deformed image of Africa. These exhibits seduced the public with the myth of “Darkest Africa” As Jones (2002) reiterated, naturalistic approach to Africa promoted by Euro-

American museums was fraught with images that echoed that of those associated with “Darkest Africa” and colonialism, which emphasized the “naturalness” of Africa and the “White Man’s Burden” to bring order to nature. Describing Africa as “natural” was synonymous with characterizing it as “primitive” and “uncivilized,” since in the Western thought the mark of civilization is the ability to subdue and conquer nature.

As has been highlighted so far, both the popular and scientific discourses on Africa have produced knowledge about Africa that consistently depicted Africa as a timeless, unchanged land--a place where modernity and civilization had not yet triumphed and a place that held within its borders mysterious beasts, exotic flora, and “primitive men”-- all the symbols of a past long gone. The “primitive men” were so much a part of the static image of Africa. The discourses chronicle Africa’s civilizational deficiencies and the incomprehensible strangeness and otherness of its inhabitants. There seems to be a profound truth in Itandala’s (2001) assertion that the nineteenth-century European as well as North American image of Africa was mainly based on earlier European attitudes and prejudices which are traceable from antiquity to the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, Africa was regarded by Europeans and North Americans as “the dark continent” and Africans as “fallen men” who were incapable of development on their own and were inferior to white people in every respect, providing a legitimizing impetus to Europeans in the late nineteenth century to assume the self-appointed duty or burden of helping their unfortunate African brethren by colonizing them in the view to putting them back on the road to “progress” and “civilization.”

U.S. Media coverage of Africa. It could be argued that the U.S. media engagement with Africa is a phenomenon which started in early twentieth century. It has particularly

gained its momentum after World War II, precipitated partly by the intensification of the continent's struggle for independence from European colonialism following the War. It is a truism that the past informs the present as well as the future. When the U.S. media ventured out to cover events in Africa in the early twentieth century, they obviously would not have started their job with a clean slate of mind. The images of Africa and Africans created by Western explorers, missionaries, anthropologists, and literary scholars from the classical period right through the nineteenth century were still ingrained in the minds of the American public, and those who were working in the media institutions were no exceptions. The media coverage of Africa was not meant to demystify this distorted images of Africa; rather it was meant to reinforce the already existing images and create new ones that would easily fit those widely held images of Africa and Africans by the U.S. public.

When it comes to media coverage, Africa as a whole stands as one of the most seldom covered regions of the world, if not the least covered regions by the Western media (Ebo, 1992; Maloba, 1992; Keim, 1999). According to Ebo (1992), African countries ordinarily do not command high and sustained attention from the U.S. media. As an evidence to his assertion, Ebo (1992) argues how the geographic distribution of correspondents by the U.S. media reflects a de-emphasis of African news stories. Referring to a 1986 *Presstime* survey, Ebo (1992) notes that in the 1980s, 31 percent of American newspaper correspondents were, for example, stationed in Europe, 23 percent in Latin America, 18 percent in Asia, 12 percent in the Middle East, eight percent in Canada, and only eight percent in the entire African continent.

Hultman's (1992) study also confirms the marginalization of the continent with respect to media coverage. For his article on African coverage, Hultman (1992) interviewed

several dozen editors, producers, and reporters from major print and broadcast media in the United States. One of the interviewees was David Gergen, communications director in the Reagan White House and later editor for *U.S. News and World Report*. Gergen was quoted by Hultman (1992) as saying, “The history of American media has been one of general inattention to Africa, except when there’s has been major famine or conflict” (p. 224). According to Gergen, “parachute journalism”--a quick in-and-out during crisis situations--has been the most common response to African events. Similarly, from the point of view of the then *Washington Post*’s associate editor, Jim Hoagland, the African continent has gotten short shrift in the media for a long time. Hoagland, as quoted by Hultman (1992), notes “I was foreign editor and assistant managing editor [at the *Post*] for about eight years. And I would have to be honest in saying that Africa weighed relatively lightly on the scales of newsworthiness. As a former correspondent in Africa, I regret that” (p. 224). Generally, it is prudent to argue that the U.S. media looks at Africa as an area of peripheral interest when it comes to coverage.

Perhaps what is worse than its rare appearance in the Western media is the nature of the coverage it often receives. As study after study (Nwosu, 1987; Hawk, 1992; Fair, 1993; Ogundim & Fair, 1997) reveals, when Western media, including the U.S. media, do cover African countries and peoples, stories are often conceived with a narrow focus and little reference to historical context. Stories are largely event-based and crisis-oriented. Most commonly, media coverage of Africa represents an Africa enmeshed in a series of imbroglios stemming from ethnic or tribal violence. According to Ebo (1992), the overall negative portrayal of Africa by the U.S. media is not accidental; rather, it is a deliberate and systematic process that is created and sustained by the bias in the way the U.S. media select

foreign news stories. In determining which nations and which foreign news events are newsworthy, the U.S. media often depend on the commercial, political, and sociocultural criteria. These criteria invariably work against the African continent's chance of being a likely candidate for U.S. media attention. In order to understand the rationale behind the U.S. media engagement with Africa the way it is, it is important that one closely examines commercial, political, and sociocultural factors.

Commercial factors. Ebo (1992) asserts that a better understanding of the forces that shaped global news substance and flow and the allocation of media resources entails situating the analytical lens in the larger context of the world capitalist system. Referring to Harris (1974), Ebo (1992) asserts that the production and distribution of news stories in the present international arena is the production and distribution of commodity, i.e., information, within an international system whose base lies in a free trade concept of a market society and economy. Despite the U.S. media claim of presenting news as an objective and unbiased account of events in society, in reality news is a commodity, and like other commodities, is open to the imposition of commercial imperatives. Thus, profit maximization influences not only the determination of events as newsworthy by the U.S. media but also the media institution's allocation of resources across the world. Ebo (1992) emphasizes money making as the primary goal of the U.S. media. Such profit orientation forces those in the media business to select and present news stories in ways that make their institutions commercially viable. The point, therefore, is that the profit maximization motive prescribes a market concept of news, where the choices of news markets and media investments are calculated to maximize profits.

Paterson (1992) laments that the nature of African news is often dictated by what editors in Britain and the United States think their clients, who are primarily U.S. and European broadcasters, will buy. When Paterson (1992) interviewed a Western TV news producer, Tony Liddell, based in Harare, the interviewee was blunt in his response, “You fly into town, you spend five minutes on the ground, you shoot the shit out of everything that moves, you cobble together a story that’s a minute and a half long, and you get out. You don’t have the time to get into what is really happening, what is really going on” (p. 182). Critics of Western media often point to this practice of “fireman” journalism where journalists are constrained to develop the understanding required to report stories accurately, or spend the time to look for the underlying causes of a story. Paterson (1992) points out that although the Western reporters often recognize the limitations of the ‘firearm’ approach, and the news agencies and networks are alert to the criticism, they have done little to end the practice mainly for economic reasons. Paterson (1992) records the frustrations of African officials with regards to Western media’s inherent economic limitations on their reporting of Africa. The African officials often argue that Western media make their news decisions on the basis of what will make money for the news company, not through any objective journalistic wisdom.

One of the major implications of the market concept of news, according to Ebo (1992), is that it forces the U.S. as well as other Western media correspondents in Africa to look for news stories that are not only easy and convenient to gather but also appealing to U.S. and European consumers. As a result, these correspondents are readily attracted to exceptional and aberrational news stories. There is a general acknowledgement on the part of Western media practitioners that the dominant formula of journalism in the world is a

journalism of exception. As Smith (1980) notes, “Foreign correspondents... are very often under pressure to cover stories which emphasize the exceptional...[because] the foreign correspondent only really gets his or her chance to publish stories of major prominence in a paper when revolution or major change is taking place in the observed society” (p. 102). The market concept of news, therefore, partly explains why the U.S. media prefer to emphasize coups and earthquake news stories and why the Tarzan and jungle image of Africa is so appealing to American media. Referring to a 1986 *Presstime* survey, Ebo (1992) concludes that Africa is underrepresented in media coverage as well as in the global allocations of media resources because African news does not generate attractive revenues.

Political factors. The political significance of a country or a geographical region to the U.S. raises the newsworthiness of that country or region and provides political incentive for the U.S. media to allocate media resources and attention to that country or region (Ebo, 1992). The U.S. media give superficial coverage to Africa because Africa is not considered an important player in global politics. The only time Africa gets attention from the U.S. media is when major political events that threaten the U.S. political interests are taking place in Africa (Ebo, 1992). As soon as the temporary political significance of the crisis dies down, the country loses its limelight in the news. As Smith (1980) points out, “There is an acknowledged tendency among Western media...to devote the greatest attention to the Third World in times of disaster, crisis and confrontations” (p. 90). Even in those times, the conflicts are usually reported as trivial tribal conflicts. According to Ebo (1992), the stories are not given historical context so as to avoid linking the West to the problem. After all, much of the political strife in Africa, Ebo (1992) believes, results from the collision of distinct cultural groups arbitrarily thrown into political entities by colonizers in their

scramble for Africa. He further stresses that in some cases, the sparse coverage Africa gets from the U.S. media is slanted to support the political agenda of the U.S. and other Western governments.

Referring to Larson's (1988) study of television's relationship to foreign policy, Paterson (1992) quotes, "perhaps the most striking overall pattern in network television's coverage of international news is its congruence with the foreign policy priorities of the U.S. government....Television, like other major media, gives heavy coverage to a small number of nations that somehow directly involve American interests" (p. 189). Quoting the former ABC reporter Bill Blakemore, Paterson (1992) continues, "We most often follow what Washington and, in particular, the President and the State Department say is important...We rarely have an adversarial or even critical relationship with Washington" (p. 189). Paterson (1992) also interviewed the then Zambia's Director of Information Daniel Kapaya, "Developing countries look at the Western press as biased because they follow the policies of their state in which they operate" (p. 189).

As a typical example of such phenomena, Ebo (1992) cites the U.S. media coverage of "black-on-black" violence in apartheid South Africa. During this coverage, the U.S. television was often filled with horrible images of South Africa blacks killing each other while at the same time they were agitating for a dominant role in the government. Underlying these images, of course, was a subtle message that these black people could not run a country when they were having a difficult time running their lives. However, the U.S. media did not discuss the fact that much of the 'black-on-black' violence in apartheid South Africa was encouraged by the South African government to give that very impression. On the other hand, more than the paucity and lack of sophistication of the U.S. media coverage of African

affairs, Breslau (1987) finds more troubling how that sparse coverage has been shaped and used by various U.S. administrations to further specific political agendas. In order to illustrate this point, Schechter (1987) examined the U.S. media coverage of South Africa during the Reagan administration. Much of that coverage essentially reflected the position of that administration. Schechter (1987) points out, “Just as the Reagan administration buys the South African line that the African National Congress (ANC) is a communist front, so much of the media uncritically parrots the same view” (p. 6). The African National Congress (ANC) was invariably described as ‘pro-Soviet’ or Marxist. Yet, other groups were rarely called ‘capitalist’, ‘racist’ or ‘pro-American.’ Indeed, the perspective of apartheid generally presented in the U.S. media was usually slanted in ways that did not compromise the U.S. interest. The stories did not show how the U.S. and the Western economies benefited from the economic exploitation of blacks by the apartheid system. Instead, apartheid was presented as a system of racial discrimination and not economic domination.

Discussing the U.S. network media coverage of the Southern African countries in the 1980s, Paterson (1992), on his part, argues that the networks consistently portrayed countries in the Southern Africa--which he called frontline states-- as poor Marxist counties, which in some cases were at war with U.S. friends, who were the forces of democracy. Although such an image borders on fantasy, argues Paterson (1992), television continued to present it to an audience assumed to be uninterested in African realities. According to Paterson, (1992) U.S “television has, since its inception, delivered to its viewers such distorted and simplistic view [sic] of Africa that American ignorance of African geography, politics, and culture is hardly as bewildering as African visitors often find it” (p. 176). The U.S. media coverage of the Angolan war in the 1980s was another example of the convergence of the U.S. media with

the U.S. government. Paterson (1992) stresses how the networks' tendency to follow the U.S. government agenda was exemplified by the fact that Angola's U.S.-backed rebel leader, Jonas Savimbi, was interviewed by U.S. television more than any other prominent regional figure. What is more, the U.S. media covered the Angolan war purely from the perspective of the U.S.-backed resistance army, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

According to Windrich (1992), the U.S. media played an important role in promoting the image of Jonas Savimbi, leader of the UNITA, as "freedom fighter" worthy of American support. However, this image did not originate with the media; rather, it originated with the government. According to Windrich (1992), Savimbi was an essential element of South Africa's propaganda war to win the U.S. acceptance of its policy of destabilizing the black-ruled states on its borders, particularly those led by left-wing movements such as the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). This had been the Pretoria regime's strategy since its abortive invasion of Angola on the eve of that country's independence in 1975. South Africa had carried out the aborted invasion of Angola with the approval of the U.S. government. Later the Carter administration was faced by opposition at home to a secret war collaboration with an apartheid regime, resulting in prohibiting any future military intervention in Angola. In the meantime, various conservative organizations were doing their best to keep Savimbi's case alive, until Reagan came in 1980. As Windrich (1992) argues, these organizations invited Savimbi to the United States in 1979. Although the Carter administration refused to meet with Savimbi, the media took notice of him. Since these organizations had also been promoting a Reagan presidency, and many of their members were to obtain senior positions in the Reagan administration, Savimbi was assured of the

official support that would enable him to attract media attention. This outcome, as Windrich (1992) notes, was already evident in the 1980 election campaign, when Reagan as candidate promised American military assistance to Savimbi and his “freedom fighters” in Angola, a pledge that was renewed by Reagan as president two months after taking office.

According to Windrich (1992), with the adoption of Savimbi as part of the Reagan administration’s strategy of destabilizing Third World governments that were supported by the Soviet Union, the media began to take an interest in this recruit to the international camp of “freedom fighters.” Referring to Hertsgaard (1988), Windrich (1992) quotes, “...the tendency of the media to follow the agenda set by the government, whether on domestic or foreign policy matters, was nowhere more evident than during the years of the Reagan presidency” (p. 195). Savimbi’s case certainly illustrated this tendency, since there was virtually no popular interest in the subject that would have generated media coverage. On the other hand, as Ebo (1992) notes, African political groups and guerrilla movements which do not subscribe to Washington’s policy are rarely given media coverage by the U.S. media organizations. In fact, African political groups are even delegitimized at times by the U.S. media if they have a different political orientation from the United States. It is evident in the above discussion that the U.S. government’s political imperatives have a significant bearing on the way the U.S. media engage with the African continent.

Sociocultural factors. Ebo (1992) attributes the U.S. foreign correspondents’ tendency to analyze African news events from an American sociological mind-set as another important factor for the negative and superficial portrayal of Africa in the U.S. media. According to Ebo (1992), the U.S. correspondents are generally not sensitive to cultural nuances in African countries because they do not have the necessary training or background

to explain the historical and cultural significance of African social events to the U.S. news consumers. The result is that the U.S. foreign correspondents deculturalize news from Africa by stripping it off its social relevance and value. The reason why traditional coups and earthquake stories become prime targets for foreign correspondents is because the correspondents can go in and write such stories and disappear, until another coup or earthquake takes place. The result is that the U.S. media consistently shun more meaningful stories that need commitment to cultural knowledge about Africa, and the patience of explanation to the audience. The U.S. foreign correspondents do not have the cultural sensitivity or time to understand the social relevance of such stories.

The U.S. media's perception of Africa as an area of peripheral interest also contributes to their inclination to report only those stories that are dramatic and graphic, such as violent demonstrations or hunger and starvation. Such coverage, according to Maloba (1992), reinforces the myth of Africa as a land of violence and brutality and of Africans as helpless beings who cannot look after themselves. Maloba (1992) further notes that the U.S. media go to the extent of reserving certain terms, such as tribe and tribalism, for Africa alone. Any time there is political upheaval or demonstration in Africa, the U.S. media attribute it to tribalism. For Maloba (1992), this is not the case when similar incidents are reported in the United States, Europe, or even the former Soviet Union. Such representation in the end reinforces the myth that Africans are irrational and their political struggles are not guided by nationalism, ideological strife, or class struggles, but by blind forces rooted in tribalism. In doing so, the media clearly make it impossible for the U.S. audience to understand the complexity of African nationalism, its ideological content, and the lingering legacy of colonialism.

Another point worth mention in relation to the socio-cultural factor has to do with the use of sources by the Western and/or U.S. media outlets. As Paterson (1992) argues, considerable evidence points to the tendency of the U.S. media to rely on American and European, usually white, sources for interviews, regardless of their degree of knowledge, instead of using interviews with Africans. For Paterson (1992), this tendency, regardless of the views expressed by the white, Western, interview subjects, demonstrates an Anglo-American bias--that is, a bias against delivering information to the Western public from African sources. It is a bias maintained not in the field, but at the editorial level either in New York or London. Because news managers in the West deem Western sources more palatable to their audience, field producers are forced to distort and even misreport their stories to include those friendly faces. This choice of interview subjects reinforces comfortable stereotypes: the image of the benevolent American or European helping the miserable African; the image of a Western world that is stable and filled with knowledge and a Third World in chaos; and the image of a world where white is superior to blacks. These factors, according to Paterson (1992), do indicate that some degree of racism inheres in the process of U.S. media reporting of Africa. Sudan being one of the sub-Saharan African countries, the U.S. media engagement with this particular country would not be an exception. The commercial, political, and socio-cultural criteria the U.S. media employ to determine the newsworthiness of events in Africa and the resultant images of Africa that accrue from such determination would have similar hallmarks with respect to Sudan.

U.S. media and Arabs/Islam. Although Sudan is one of the sub-Saharan African countries, there is no doubt that it has a special feature that most sub-Saharan African countries do not. This special feature of Sudan has to do with its identity. As Lesch (1998)

notes, Sudan's identity as a nation is problematic. Unlike many other African nation-states, Sudan has dual identities: African and Arab. This duality of identity could be seen from its association with two distinct groupings in the Afro-Arabian world. As a part of Africa, it is a member of the African Union. As a part of the Arab world, it is also a member of the Arab League. In terms of religion, it is a predominantly Islamic country, although it inhabits a significant number of citizens practicing religions other than Islam. Sudanese political elites have often emphasized their Arab descent, and as a result, have historically gravitated towards taking the country into the folds of Arab cultural identity, although a large proportion of Sudan's population do see themselves as Africans. Such duality of identity calls for the examination of the U.S. media engagement with Sudan, where Sudan is taken not only as an African country but also as an Arab country.

In this section, I do not intend to provide an extensive discussion of the wealth of literature on the historical evolution of the construction of the image of Arabs and Islam in the U.S. media. Rather, the purpose of the section is to provide a brief summary of the U.S. media portrayal of Arabs and Islam, and thereby set a stage for a later analysis of the extent to which such U.S. media image of Arabs and Islam, coupled with the U.S. media image of Africa, might have played a role in the way the U.S. press covered the civil war in Southern Sudan.

Orientalist discourse and the Arab-Islamic world. The construction of the images of Arabs and Islam by the West can not be dissociated from the way the West historically produced knowledge about the non-West in general and the Arab-Islamic world in particular in an asymmetrical power relationship that has been punctuated by perpetual domination and control. The inexplicable relationship between knowledge and power was unequivocally

brought into light by Edward Said in his landmark study known as *Orientalism*, first published in 1978. *Orientalism* is an overarching study that traces the various phases of the relationship from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, through the main colonial period and the rise of modern Orientalist scholarship in Europe during the nineteenth century, up to the end of British and French imperial hegemony in the Orient after World War II and the Emergence then and there of American dominance (Said. (1997).

In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) pays particular attention to the interplay between the "Occident" and the "Orient." The Occident is his term for the West (England, France, and the United States), and the Orient is the term for the romantic and misunderstood Middle East and Far East. In a similar manner as the West has manufactured knowledge about Africa and Africans, which had little resemblance to the African reality, the West has created a dichotomy between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the "Orient." According to Said (1978), the West sees the Middle East, which includes the Arab-Islamic world, and Asia with prejudice and racism. In Western eyes, the people in the Arab-Islamic world are backward and unaware of their own history and culture. In order to fill this vacuum, the West has produced a culture, history, and future promise for the Orient. On this framework rests not only the study of the Orient, but also the political imperialism of the West in the East. To this end, Oriental Studies became an area of academic study in the 19th century, and the Western scholars became the first Orientalists.

These Orientalists translated the writings of 'the Orient' into English, based on the assumption that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered peoples. Through the power of knowing the Orient, the West finally came to own it. The Orient, as Said (1978) noted, became the studied, the seen, the observed, the object; the

students became the Orientalist scholars. For Said (1978), *Orientalism* is more an indicator of the power the West holds over the Orient than about the Orient itself. Creating an image of the Orient and a body of knowledge about the Orient and subjecting it to systematic study became the prototype for taking control of the Orient. By taking control of the scholarship, the West also took political and economic control of the Orient. The Orient being on the receiving end, the Western Orientalists, with their legitimizing title of an ‘expert,’ situated themselves in a commanding position in producing deformed, distorted and misleading knowledge about the Arab-Islamic world with no one to challenge them. Time after time, these perspectives, assumptions, and rationales have been reinforced historically through the work of Western political, educational, literary, scientific and military institutions. There is no doubt that the media feed off the already available institutionalized knowledge about the Arab-Islamic world, build upon such knowledge in their engagement with the Arab-Islamic world, and contribute to the flattening, and alternately contemptuous and fearful, discourse concerning Arabs and Muslims that continues to be hegemonic (Karim, 2000).

U.S. media image of Arabs/Islam. Discussing the Western media portrayal of Arabs, First (2002, citing Agha, 2000) has documented how ingrained a distorted image of the Arab people is becoming in Western culture. Research has well documented the narrow, essentialized characterizations of Arabs and Muslims in the Hollywood films (Shaheen, 2001) and in other U.S. media, typically conflated as a monolithic quasi-ethnic community in public discourse (Naber, 2000). The media “describe the Arabs as terrorists, their society as violent, and their religion, Islam, as radical” (First 2002, p. 175, citing Shaheen, 1985). With reference to the common media image of the Arabs in the minds of the U.S. audience, First (2002) contends that it is probably the bluntest. According to First (2002), “Americans

view... Arabs as slave traders, terrorists, greedy men, and like to refer to them as... bombers” (p. 175). Thus, the U.S. media portrayal of Arabs is one of increased negativity and one-sidedness (First 2002, citing Kang & Kapoor, 1996). According to Wilkins & Downing (2002, citing Edward Said, 1978), there is a stunning historical continuity in Western discourses that depict Islam and the Middle East as “unitary, absolutist, fatalistic, patriarchal, unreasoning, obsessional, antimodern, and punitive” (p. 420). Moreover, these discourses depict Muslim Arabs as culturally and psychologically primitive, prisoners of their emotions, trapped in a patriarchal vise, and locked into “jihad.” These problematic portrayals are entrenched in a Euro-American ideological perspective rooted in a historical context of conquest and domination (Said, 1978).

The Euro-American media coverage of Islam is also, to a certain degree, replete with expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural, and even racial animosity. In trying to make sense of such attitude, Said (1978) brings the Occident’s fear of Islam to the center of his argument. For the largely Judeo-Christian West, no religion has ever posed as serious a challenge as Islam has done. Although the West considers the Arab-Islamic world an inferior part of the world, they recognize the fact that it has always been endowed both with greater size and with a greater potential for usually destructive power than the West. According to Said (1997), insofar as Islam has always been seen as belonging to the Arab-Islamic world, no doubt that it will trigger hostility and fear on the part of the West. Various religious, psychological, and political reasons exist for this, but all of the reasons derive from a sense that “so far the West is concerned, Islam represents not only a formidable competitor but also a late coming challenge to Christianity” (Said, 1997, pp. 4-5). Said (1997) further notes the fact that Islam has always been seen as presenting a particular menace to the West. Of no

other religion or cultural grouping can it be said so assertively as it is now said of Islam that it represents a threat to Western civilization.

The way such a challenge is perceived by the West has never been intense as it has been since the creation of Israel as a nation-state in 1948. Since the creation of the Jewish state, Arab-Israeli hostility has spiraled beyond imagination. Any effort made by the international community on various occasions to try to resolve the problem has proved notoriously elusive, with each side ever hardening its position and none of the contending forces willing to make any compromise. On the other hand, the Western media (including the U.S.) coverage of Arabs in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict has gone through several phases. Prior to the creation of Israel, Arabs were seen as exotic. The ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict has added to the “backward, fanatic, dishonest” image of the Arab, the dimension of corrupt leadership, fanatic mobs, and international terrorism” (First, 2002, p. 175, citing Ghareeb, 1979). The various conflicts and wars taking place in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Palestinian territories, Lebanon, and others are mostly between the West and the alleged Islamic extremists, and the situation appears to lend itself well for the media to engage in caricaturing the Arab-Islamic world. As Baker (2003) points out, in the Western media, representations of the global Islamic threat fell into comfortable, well-established grooves. The luxuriant legacy of European derogation of Islam, the adaptations of the Orientalist discourse to serve the American interests in a bipolar world, and the refurbishment of the Islamic threat for the post-Cold war era all served to create an abundant reservoir of hostility to Islam (Baker, 2003).

Thus, the U.S. media discourse about the Arab-Islamic world has created a single image of Arab Muslims; it has made a sweeping generalization and a stereotype that crosses

countless cultural and national boundaries. The basic content of the representation is static and unanimous. The Arab Muslim is comfortably portrayed as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, and sensual. Its alleged tendency towards despotism and its remoteness from progress and modernity is uniformly emphasized. Its progress and values are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior. According to Wilkins and Downing (2002), the Orientalist discourse (which the media often appropriates) that perpetuates and legitimates the construction of Arabs and Muslims as culturally predisposed to terrorism systematically warps our understanding of approximately one-sixth of the human race, and worse, perpetuates a climate of discrimination against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. The fact that Sudan has an Arab identity and an alleged “fundamentalist” religious orientation would undoubtedly have its ramifications in terms of how the U.S. media would engage with this particular country.

Media Influence; Outside Influence on Media Coverage

Political economy of media. In any historical period, media exist in a particular socio-economic and political arrangement. As is the case with any social institution that exist in any historical period, media institutions not only interact with other institutions but also such an interaction makes them susceptible to the influence of the socio-economic and political environment in which they have their abode. When it comes to the analysis of the nature of the relationship between the politico-economic institutions and the institutions of media, it should be conceded that there is a considerable lack of unanimity among scholars who espouse cultural approach and those who emphasize political economy approach to the analysis of the mass media. Despite such a lack of consensus, however, a growing number of scholars, (see Murdock, 1989b; Garnham, 1986; Kellner, 1990; Schiller, 2000; McChesney,

2003; Willis, 1991; Mosco, 1996), still strongly argue the importance of putting the analysis of macro-institutional structures at the heart of mass media studies

Since the contemporary dominant theories of communication that fall under the rubric of ‘critical theories,’ in one way or another, have their roots in Marxist thoughts, and it is these same thoughts that have become a point of dissent among scholars with Marxist bent, it is important to start with the key arguments advanced in Marxist theorizing in relation to society, economy, and culture. According to Marx and Engels (1976),

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force.

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. (p. 38)

Thus, Marxism argues that the economic base of society constitutes the forces and relations of production in which culture and ideology (belonging to the superstructure) are constructed to help secure the dominance of ruling social groups. In this view, the cultural ideas of an epoch serve the interests of the ruling class by providing ideologies that legitimize class domination. Culture was seen by Marx as something that elites freely manipulated to mislead average people and encourage them to act against their own interests.

Successive scholars, both non-Marxist and those who have been inspired by the Marxist thought, have often accused Marx of attributing primacy to the economic structure over the superstructure in his theorizing of the development of human history. As a result, they have called his theory as ‘economic reductionist’ and even as ‘vulgar Marxism.’ Despite its economic determinism thesis, however, his theory has generated a wealth of scholarship

in intellectual circles both from left and right. Hence, the contribution of Marx's theory in understanding society is undeniably profound. In the realm of communication, one of the most important contributions of Marx's conceptualization of society is the notion that culture always arises in specific historical situations, serving particular socio-economic interests and carrying out important social functions. There is no doubt that the contemporary advocates of the political economy approach to the analysis of the mass media, to some extent, pay homage to the intellectual legacies of Marxism.

Before making a case as to the relevance of a political economy approach to the analysis of the mass media it is important for the purpose of clarity, to elaborate on what the phrase 'political economy' means as it applies to culture. As can obviously be seen, the phrase is made up of two words: 'political' and 'economy.' The references to the terms 'political' and 'economy' call attention to the fact that the production and distribution of culture takes place within a specific economic system, constituted by relations between the state, the economy, the media, social institutions and practices, culture, and everyday life. Political economy hence encompasses economics and politics and the relations between them and the other central dimensions of society and culture

The study of media that subscribes to the political economy perspective pays particular attention to the examination of the relationship between the media and the institutional structures and interests in their environment. In other words, such a study is interested in the scrutiny of the relationship between media institutions and the political and economic institutions of society. The political economy perspective sees the media as "being locked into the power structure, and consequently as acting largely in tandem with the dominant institutions in society" (Curran, et al., 1982, p.21). As a result of this, the media are

said to reproduce “the viewpoints of dominant institutions not as one among a number of alternative perspectives, but as the central and ‘obvious’ or ‘natural’ perspective” (Curran, et al., 1982, p.21).

In the context of a capitalist society, for instance, cultural production is largely shaped by the imperatives of profit and market orientations, since the dominant mode of production in a capitalist society calls for commodification and capital accumulation. As Kellner (1990) argues, the forces of cultural production are deployed according to dominant relations of production which are important in determining what sort of cultural products are produced, how they are distributed and consumed. The system of production often constrains what sorts of cultural artifacts will be produced, the nature of structural limits to be placed with respect to what can and cannot be said and shown, and what sort of audience expectations and usage the text may generate.

On the other hand, we recognize the existence of a symbiotic relationship between institutions of culture production, such as mass media organizations and their environment, which includes powerful sources of information (Curran et al., 1982; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Grossberg et al., 2006). Such symbiosis is necessitated by economic imperatives and the reciprocity of interest. According to Curran et al. (1982), mass media institutions draw on such a relationship not only for their economic sustenance but also for the ‘raw materials’ of which their contents are made. For instance, the mass media need a consistent and dependable flow of the raw materials of news. They have daily news demands, and it is imperative that they meet these news schedules. But as Herman and Chomsky (1988) note, the mass media cannot afford to have news crews at all places where important stories may break. They have to make a choice as to where they should mobilize their limited resources.

Consequently, “they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988, pp. 18-19). Such sites are usually political institutions, military institutions, business corporations and trade groups. Such bureaucratic institutions make available a large volume of material that meets the demands of news organizations for dependable and timely flows. What is more, by virtue of their status and prestige, sources from such institutions have the privilege of being recognizable and credible. The appearance of such recognizability and credibility of the sources is important to the mass media. The rationale, as Fishman (1980) observes, is that

Newswriters are predisposed to treat bureaucratic accounts as factual because news personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in the society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know... In particular, a newswriter will recognize an official’s claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge. This amounts to a moral division of labor: officials have and give the facts; reporters merely get them. (p. 143)

The media’s reliance on official sources, and their use of these sources as the basis for legitimate news reporting serves a utilitarian purpose for the media organizations because it makes news fairly easy and inexpensive to cover since all the media organizations have to do is merely put reporters where official sources congregate and comfortably report what these sources have to say. However, the limitations of such reliance upon official sources are self-evident. As McChesney (2003) stresses, such practice gives those in political office-- and, to a lesser extent, in business--considerable power to set the news agenda by what they speak

about and, just as important, by what they keep quiet about. According to McChesney (2003), if one wants to know why a story is getting covered and why it is getting covered the way it is, looking at sources will turn up a good answer a high percentage of the time. It is not about whether a story will be covered at all but how much attention a story will get and the tone of the coverage. He further argues that in view of the fact that legitimate sources tend to be restricted to political and economic elites, this bias sometimes makes journalists appear to be stenographers to those in power.

The central argument is that the interaction between media professionals and the authorized institutional knowers serving as news sources shapes what ultimately qualifies as news. In other words, it is at the interface between the media and the institutions that supply the raw materials that news is generated and shaped. As Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott (1982) rightly point out, such contact at the interface constitutes a critical part of the production process and an important area for investigating the ways in which external inputs into the production process are managed.

Several scholars (see Inglis, 1990; Thompson, 1990; Fairclough, 1995; Mosco, 1996) are of the opinion that the economics of an institution is an important factor that affects its practices and its texts. The funding system of the media institution can, for instance, constrain the extent of the media's engagement with a particular issue and thereby shape the interactions between media professionals and the objects of the reporting, and this in turn can shape the texts that are produced. Similarly, the intensely competitive commercial environment that the contemporary media operate in have a bearing on media practices and texts (Inglis, 1990; Thompson, 1990).

A cursory look at the press and commercial broadcasting in the contemporary capitalist society easily affirms the fact that they are pre-eminently profit-making organizations; they make their profits by selling audiences to advertisers, and they do this by achieving the highest possible readerships or listener/ viewer ratings for the lowest possible financial outlay. As Fairclough (1995) argues, media texts and programs are, from this perspective, symbolic, cultural commodities, produced in what is effectively a culture industry, which circulate for profit within a market, and they are susceptible to the effects of commercial pressures. For example, the ratings battle among media institutions often leads to an increase in types of programming with high audience appeal. This typically involves, in broad terms, increasing emphasis on making programs entertaining. When it comes to news, this means to systematically avoid complex storylines in favor of simple and uncomplicated narratives, despite the fact that such dilution of news might have serious repercussions when it comes to enabling the audience to fully understand the issue under consideration.

In the contemporary world of unprecedented corporate mergers and consolidations, the issue of media ownership is another area that demands serious examination, since patterns of media ownership is an important element in exerting influence upon media discourse. By virtue of the fact that ownership is increasingly in the hands of large conglomerates whose business is the culture industry, Fairclough (1995) thinks that the media become more fully integrated with ownership interests in the national and international economy, intensifying their association with capitalist class interests. According to him, this manifests itself in various ways, including the manner in which media organizations are structured to ensure that the dominant voices are those of the political and social establishment.

As demonstrated in the preceding discussions, there are legitimate reasons as to why the political economy approach can have resonance in understanding how the mass media operate in the contemporary capitalist society. The critical cultural studies exclusive focus on audience reception studies and the over-romanticizing of audience agency as well as the overemphasis on ideology, as I see it, has left the field grotesquely disproportionate. In my view, the way critical cultural studies is currently practiced is inadequate for providing a comprehensive understanding of how the mass media work in the contemporary capitalist society. It seems naïve to me for critical cultural studies to keep on making a blanket charge of economic reductionism to justify its continued disengagement with political economy. I believe that there is a legitimate need to articulate cultural studies with political economy. It should be clear here that I am not implying that there is no attempt at all on the part of cultural studies scholars to articulate cultural studies with political economy. At least Hall (1980) in his encoding/decoding theory has attempted to ground cultural studies in a Marxian model of the circuits of capital (production-distribution-consumption-production). In his theory, Hall (1980) begins cultural studies with production and recommends traversing through the circuits of capital. What I am arguing is that there is a conspicuous lack of consistent articulation of cultural studies with political economy in such a way that one sees significant number of cultural studies scholars deploying political economy in their works; the works of even those (such as Hall) who tend to recognize the importance of considering political economy in the mass media critique still remains overwhelmingly audience reception centered.

In order to avoid its current shortcomings, therefore, cultural studies should develop what Kellner (1992) calls a “multiperspectival” approach which includes an investigation of

a wide range of artifacts interrogating relationships in the following three dimensions: the production and political economy of culture, textual analysis and critique of its artifacts, and study of audience reception (consumption) and the uses of media/cultural products. Such a multiperspectival approach could enable cultural studies scholars to get at culture from perspectives of political economy and production, text analysis, and audience reception (consumption), and thereby make the convergence of the perspectives a norm rather than an optional extra.

Agenda-setting function of the mass media. Agenda-setting theory is one of important mass communication theories that explain the relationship between the mass media, the public, and the political institutions in influencing issues that could end up occupying a prominent position in the public discourse, and thereby shape the nature of response to the issues raised. In the section that follows, I attempt to provide an overview of how the agenda-setting theory works in a social context.

In discussing the political economy of the mass media, I have made a case as to how media organizations exist in a symbiotic relationship with their environment. The mass media depend on their environment (other institutions) not only for their economic sustenance but also for the ‘raw materials’ of which their contents are made. These other institutions on their part need the mass media to disseminate their views to the wider public. In dealing with the agenda-setting function of the mass media, therefore, we need to examine the reciprocal role that the mass media institutions and other institutions play in setting the agenda. Ball-Rokeach (1985), for example, stressed the importance of examining the structural dependency organizing the relationship between the political system and the media, which she describes as “cooperation based on mutuality of central dependencies” (pp. 492-

493). Research (Cohen, 1965) has, for example, highlighted the influence of mass media agenda on U.S. foreign policy. As Cohen (1965) stated:

the press functions in the political process like the blood stream in the human body, enabling the [foreign policy] process that we are familiar with today to continue on, by linking up all the widely-scattered parts, putting them in touch with one another, and supplying them with political and intellectual nourishment. (p.196)

The mass media can set the agenda for policy makers by repeatedly bringing a certain issue to the public's attention. When the public learns about the issue from the media, they may be inclined to pressure the policy makers to do something about it. As public sentiment is important in a democratic society, policy makers cannot afford to ignore it, and hence, they will be forced to act accordingly. This does not mean that it always takes the pressure of the public for the policy makers to act on a certain issue. Sometimes, the policy makers may decide to respond to an issue raised by the media before the public pressure builds up. One of the strategies the mass media use to set an agenda is through priming. As Fiske and Taylor (1984) argue, priming addresses the importance of both the mass media agenda and mass media semantic content in affecting public attitudes. If the mass media agenda primes readers and viewers by giving salience to certain events, these events are not merely made more salient to the audience. The mass media focuses on specific issues raised by a news event in the journalistic search for explanation. This selectivity forces these issues, not just the event, to the forefront of mass media coverage and, perhaps, of personal consideration. Moreover, these issues are prominently publicized by the media, not in an impartial way, but rather with positive or negative valences. The phenomenon can affect public opinion as well as the policy makers' reactions.

Rogers and Dearing (1988) cited the 1984 Ethiopian famine as an example of how the mass media influenced the U.S. policy makers' agenda, despite the U.S. government's loathe of the Ethiopian government for its pro-Soviet policy. In the case of the Ethiopian drought, film report of a refugee camp at Korem by Mohamed Amin was shown by the BBC and then by NBC in October 1984. Immediately, other U. S. mass media began to feature this disaster as a major news issue, and rather quickly the public considered the Ethiopian drought an important issue. Relief activities by the U. S. government and by rock musicians soon followed (Rogers and Dearing, 1988, in Graber, 2000). Lang and Lang (1983) also cited Watergate scandal as another example where the mass media exerted influence on U.S. political elites. Lang and Lang (1983) found that Watergate was an issue that required months of news coverage before it got onto the public agenda. Then, finally, Watergate became an agenda issue for action by U.S. governmental official. In this particular case of policy-agenda-setting, public agenda-setting by the mass media led to government action, and then the policy formation. Lang and Lang (1983) observed that the media's influence upon policy-makers might be expected to be greater for quick-onset issues when the media have priority access to information.

The other aspect of the structural dependency of the mass media with political institutions is often manifested in the mass media's dependence on the political elites for their 'raw materials' or information. Such dependency gives an edge to the political elites to influence the media agenda. In his study of national news production, for example, Gans (1979) gives close attention to the relationship between sources and journalists, describing it as a dance, with sources doing the leading more often than not. Molotch and Lester (1974) share this source-centric view of news production, suggesting that powerful sources largely

determine news by promoting “occurrences” into “events.” It is obvious that the news sources most often are government officials and other elites—that is, the powerful. Gans (1979) notes that although sources can potentially include anyone, their recruitment and their access to journalists reflect the hierarchies of nation and society. He finds that network news and national newsmagazines are dominated by the “knowns,” over half of which are government officials.

An example of policy agenda-setting research that illustrates the impact of policy elite agendas upon media agendas is Walker’s (1977) study of setting the agenda in the U.S. Senate. He commented:

Once a new problem begins to attract attention and is debated seriously by other senators, it takes on a heightened significance in the mass media, and its sponsors, beyond the satisfaction of advancing the public interest as they see it, also receive important political rewards that come from greatly increased national exposure. (p. 426)

In so doing, the mass media softly but firmly present the perspective of the ruling elite to their audiences. The result is consent and support (Schudson, 1986). This result is not a conscious objective of the media. Qualter (1985) stated:

The media are far from being the sinister manipulators of the popular mind suggested by some conspiracy theories. Their major functions seem to support the system, to uphold conformity, to provide reassurances, and to protect the members of society from excessively disturbing, distracting, or dysfunctional information. (pp. x-xi).

These media functions are perpetuated through recruitment and the socialization of media elites, editors, and journalists. In this way, the traditions, practices, and values of media

professionals shape the news agenda (Rogers and Dearing, 1988, in Graber 2000). With respect to the phenomenon where political elites dictate the mass media agenda, Lang and Lang (1983) concluded that when policy elites control the information sources, they might be expected to set the media agenda. In sum, the preceding discussion highlights the importance of the agenda-setting role of the mass media; and the study that seeks to investigate the U.S. press coverage of the southern Sudanese conflict cannot afford to not to take stock of the agenda-setting role of the target media.

Significance of the Study

Having summarized literature relevant to the study, I now turn to making a case as to why this study needs to be done and what the significance or the contribution of the study might be with respect to war reporting, especially when the war being reported is taking place from a spatially and culturally distant land. As I noted in the introductory chapter, research that addresses the southern Sudanese conflict from communication or media perspectives is, at least to my knowledge, non-existent. The only exception to this is an article (synthesized from a previous dissertation work) written by Reta (2002) on the effects of ambiguous policies on media coverage of foreign conflicts in the 1980s and early 1990s, taking Eritrea and southern Sudan as an example. According to Reta (2002), the United States was uncertain about what policy position to take with respect to both the Eritrean and the southern Sudanese rebel movements because Washington was not quite clear as to the possible implications of Eritrean as well as southern Sudanese independence. Hence, it chose to be on the sidelines in both cases. Reta (2002) then wanted to find out what impact such U.S. policy uncertainty might have on the U.S. media coverage of the two conflicts. His quantitative analysis showed that U.S. policy uncertainty towards both the Eritrean and the

southern Sudanese rebel movements had no statistically significant effect on the way the U.S. press covered both conflicts.

I want to point out a few problematic issues in Reta's study. The study assumed that both the Eritrean and the southern Sudanese rebel movements were secessionist. This assumption was only partly true because it was only the Eritrean movement that was secessionist from its inception, but that was not the case with the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). Since its formation in 1983, SPLM's position on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan was clear and consistent (with the exception of some minor splinter groups in the movement). It never sought independence from the Sudan; its struggle was to build a new Sudan where the rights of the various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups would equally be respected; a country where a certain ethnic group would not be hegemonic and marginalize other ethnic groups; a country that would embrace pluralism and territorial nationalism as opposed to ethnic nationalism.

Another point worthy of mentioning is the issue of U.S. policy uncertainty with respect to the two rebel movements. It is to be recalled that following the end of European colonialism in Africa and the subsequent granting of independence to the former colonies, there was an agreement to respect the colonial borders by the new independent states. This agreement was ratified by the UN General Assembly as well as the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its member states. Since then, the colonial boundaries have been accorded legitimacy in the international system. The foreign policy of the United States with respect to the Eritrean and the southern Sudanese rebel movements wouldn't have been any different from the norm accepted by the international community--that is, respect for the territorial integrity of nation-states. Having a foreign policy that backed secessionist

aspirations was not an option for the United States, especially in the Cold-War context.

Hence, raising the issue of U.S. foreign policy uncertainty in the face of the arguments made above is problematic and difficult to defend.

Owing to such paucity of media-based research on the southern Sudanese conflict, the review of literature summarized in the chapter is more generic and deals with how the U.S. media have historically engaged with the African continent and, to a lesser extent, with the Arab-Islamic world. Hence, its application to the Sudanese context is indirect and by way of extrapolation. To make things worse, the very identity of the Sudan renders the idea of such extrapolation even more tenuous. In other words, the narrative about the southern Sudanese civil war was not just an African story; it was also an Arab story. This is because Sudan is an embodiment of Afro-Arab identity. To extrapolate the literature on the U.S. media engagement with both the African continent and the Arab-Islamic world to the Sudanese context is to assume, to a certain extent, that Sudan's identity is the sum-total of African and Arab identities. The reality is that Sudan's identity is more than the sum-total of African and Arab identities, as the two identities are articulated to each other in this case. This study is needed, therefore, to directly and empirically test how this generic information we have--on the way the U.S. media deals with the African as well as the Arab-Islamic 'universes'--plays out in its (the media's) engagement with the southern Sudanese conflict.

The study aims to produce a body of knowledge that will contribute to a better understanding of a web of complex factors that have immensely contributed to the predicament of southern Sudan. Important among these factors are legacies of colonialism. There is a general tendency in the Western media to assume that the colonial chapter has long ended and to treat African states as free and independent states. As a result, when a crisis

occurs in the continent, the media focus on the crisis per se and hardly make an attempt to articulate the crisis to historical factors. Such a practice is often misleading. It is true that colonialism has formally ended and political power has been transferred to indigenous elites. However, structures instituted for decades by colonial powers have not gone away with the departure of colonial powers. Instead they have become central in tearing apart African political communities. The Rwandan genocide, the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the war that has dismantled the Somali state and the crisis in Zimbabwe are a few current examples whose problem-roots can easily be traced back to colonialism.

Understanding the complexity of the crisis in southern Sudan can have implications beyond Sudanese borders for media professionals and policy makers. It will help journalists revisit their practices in reporting crises on the African continent by better informing them to be sensitive to context and to be reminded of the interconnection between conflicts and colonial institutional structures and thereby help them do a well-informed reporting. It will also help policy makers, particularly in the West, to be more understanding and to be cautious about rushing to the condemnation of a party in the conflict and taking coercive measures, which will likely produce negative backlashes and thereby further exacerbate the situation.

CHAPTER FIVE

METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS

Methodology is not just about a method or methods; it is also about a worldview, or a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide an inquiry. As Saukko (2003) argues, the difference between methodology and method as made by Greek epithet ‘logos’ (knowledge) is that, “whereas methods refer to practical ‘tools’ to make sense of empirical reality, methodology refers to the wider package of both tools and philosophical and political commitments that come with a particular research ‘approach’” (p. 8). In this chapter, I lay out some basic philosophical assumptions within the overarching theoretical paradigm that inform the study; I also identify a relevant methodological approach or model that shares similar or common philosophical assumptions. Finally, I provide a description of concrete steps I intend to take in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in a bid to answering the research questions about U.S. press framing and representations of the southern Sudanese conflict that this study sets out to address.

The Notion of Discourse Analysis

This study employs a critical discourse analytic approach. However, different people often conceptualize the term ‘discourse analysis’ differently and disjunctively. The looseness of the way the concept is being used has led some people to regard it as a ‘free-floating’ signifier. In a view to minimize the vagueness in the way the concept of ‘discourse analysis’ is often employed, I briefly discuss the basic philosophical premises that guide the theoretical and methodological orientation of the concept as used in this particular study and identify and briefly touch upon three approaches to discourse analysis, all of which have a critical bent, and, then, focus on particular model which best suits this study.

Philosophical assumptions. As Phillips & Jorgensen (2002/2004) contend, in discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined, and researchers must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to use discourse analysis as their method of empirical analysis. The first of the basic philosophical premises shared by all social constructionist approaches to discourse analysis calls attention to *a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge*. According to this premise, our knowledge of the world should not be treated as objective truth. Reality is only accessible to us through categories, and these categories are not pre-given or self-evident. In other words, social reality does not exist out there as an objective entity waiting for us (humans) to discover. As Bruner (1986) points out, "...contrary to common-sense, there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language" (p. 95). Human beings do not find and discover reality or knowledge so much as they construct or make it (Schwandt, 1998). The categories that help us understand the world are socially constructed. Hence, our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality 'out there' but are products of our ways of categorizing the world, or, in discursive analytical terms are, "products of discourse" (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 5, citing Burr 1995, p. 5; Gergen 1985, pp. 266-267).

The second basic assumption of the social constructionist approach to discourse analysis is the notion of *historical and cultural specificity of knowledge*. As Phillips & Jorgensen (2002, citing Gergen, 1985) note, we human beings are fundamentally historical and cultural beings and our views of, and knowledge about, the world are not immutable and timeless accounts; rather, they are products of historically situated interchanges among people. As a result, the ways in which we understand and represent the world are historically

and culturally specific and contingent. Our knowledge about a certain phenomenon at one particular historical and cultural context can generate a different knowledge at another and different historical and cultural context. Our worldviews and our identities could have been different, and they can change over time as a result of different sets of historical and cultural circumstances. Far from being fixed and transcendental, which is determined by external conditions, our knowledge of the world is contingent and transitory.

What is more, the notion of the *link between knowledge and social processes* is the third core assumption that guides the inquiries of those who subscribe to the social constructionist approach to discourse analysis. As Phillips & Jorgensen (2002/2004) argue, knowledge does not emanate out of the blue; it is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false. Thus, our ways of understanding the world are created and maintained by social processes. Finally, the *link between knowledge and social action* is the fourth philosophical assumption shared by those who adhere to the social constructionist approach to discourse analysis. As a society, we produce and generate knowledge through social interaction; and this knowledge regulates and guides our social action with regards to what is appropriate or acceptable and what is not in a particular context. As Phillips & Jorgensen (2002/2004) point out, within a particular worldview, some forms of action become natural, others unthinkable. Different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and, therefore, the social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences.

Approaches to Discourse Analysis

In this sub-section, I briefly summarize three approaches to discourses analysis, all of which subscribe to the basic philosophical assumptions summarized above. These approaches are Discourse Theory, Discursive Psychology, and Critical Discourse Analysis.

Discourse theory. The term ‘Discourse theory’ is an abbreviated name for Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s discourse theory. Drawing mainly on Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) principal work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) discuss discourse theory, and I attempt to provide an overview of some of the key arguments or tenets advanced in this theoretical frame as documented by Phillips and Jorgensen. According to Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004), discourse theory is the product of the combination and modification of two major theoretical traditions, Marxism and structuralism, where the former provides a starting point for thinking about the social, and the latter provides a theory of meaning. By fusing these traditions into a single poststructuralist theory, Laclau and Mouffe created a frame whereby the whole social field is understood as a web of processes in which meaning is created. According to Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004), discourse theory aims at an understanding of the social as a discursive construction whereby, in principle, all social phenomena can be analyzed using discourse analytical tools. From the perspective of discourse theory, the social world is a product of discursive practice, and since language is fundamentally unstable, meaning can never be permanently fixed. As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) note, no discourse is a closed entity; instead a discourse is constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses. Hence, *discursive struggle* is a keyword in discourse theory. The point is that different discourses representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world are engaged in a constant

struggle with one another to achieve hegemony—that is, to fix the meanings of language in their own way.

Laclau and Mouffe’s conceptualization of discourse introduces certain important concepts, of which “nodal points” and “the field of discursivity” are a few. For Laclau and Mouffe, discourse is the fixation of meaning within a particular domain, and a discourse, thus, is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain *nodal points* (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002/2004 citing Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). A nodal point is a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point. As an example of this, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) cite ‘democracy’ as a nodal point in political discourses. On the other hand, a discourse is established as a totality in which each sign is fixed as a moment through its relations to other signs. According to Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004), this is done by the *exclusion* of all other possible meanings that the signs could have had. Thus, a discourse is a reduction of possibilities, which aims at creating a unified system of meaning. All the possibilities that the discourse excludes constitute what Laclau and Mouffe call “*the field of discursivity*” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111). In other words, the field of discursivity is a reservoir for the ‘surplus of meaning’ produced by the articulatory practice, but this surplus of meaning is excluded by a specific discourse so as to create a unity of meaning. In providing an example, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) note that medical discourse is constituted through the exclusion of discourses about alternative methods of treatment.

However, Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory claims that discourse is fully constitutive of our world. It sees every social practice as exclusively discursive and should be analyzed as such. It regards discourse itself as material and considers entities such as the

economy, the infrastructure and institutions as parts of discourse. Discourse theory de-emphasizes structural issues since it focuses so much on contingency in the sense that it tends to regard everything as in flux and all possibilities as open. What is more, because discourse theory pays much emphasis on discourse and sees no possibility of stepping outside of discourse, it does not see any point in engaging in the issue of ideology. On the other hand, as Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) note, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory provides the fewest tools for empirical analysis in comparison to discursive psychology and critical discourse analysis.

Discourse theory provides important and useful conceptual frames for understanding our social world. However, I am not prepared to subscribe to the notion that discourse is fully constitutive of our world and every social practice should be seen as exclusively discursive. Earlier in Chapter One, I argued the fact that discursive practice is one dimension or moment of every social practice that is in a dialectical relationship with other dimensions of a social practice. And the discursive dimension and other dimensions of social practice constitute our world. Also, unlike Laclau and Mouffe, I maintain that ideology is an important concept in cultural analysis. Owing to such theoretical difference and the lack of specific tools for the empirical analysis of discourse in discourse theory, the approach does not seem to fit my research agenda well. This does not, however, mean that there are no concepts in discourse theory that could be useful as analytical tools for this study. In fact, I intend to use theoretical concepts such as 'field of discursivity' as part of my analytical tools.

Discursive psychology. The development of discursive psychology is largely attributed to Potter and Wetherell's work, of which *Discourse and Social Psychology* (1987) and *Mapping the Language of Racism* (1992) have been most important ones. According to

Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004), discursive psychology conceptualizes discourse as language use in everyday text and talk. It takes the view that discourse is a dynamic form of social practice which constructs the social world, individual selves and identity. An individual constructs self through the internalization of social dialogues. People do not have one fixed identity; rather, they have several, flexible identities which are constructed on the basis of different discourses. Power functions through the individual's positioning in particular discursive categories. In discursive psychology, discourse is best viewed not as abstract system but as 'situated' language use in the context in which it takes place. The approach claims that people use discourse rhetorically in order to accomplish forms of social action in particular contexts of interaction. Language use is, in this sense, "occasioned." The focus of analysis, then, is not on the linguistic or discursive organization of texts and talks but on the rhetorical organization of texts and talks.

Although discursive psychology does not clearly distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices, it claims both that discourse is fully constitutive and that it is embedded in historical and social practices, which are not fully discursive (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Discursive psychology puts empirical focus on specific instances of language use in social interaction. But its aim is not so much to analyze the changes in society's 'large-scale discourses,' which concrete language use can bring about, as to investigate how people use the available discourses in creating and negotiating representations of the world and identities in talk-in-interaction and to analyze the social consequences of this. Discursive psychology places stress on individuals both as products of discourse and as producers of discourse in specific contexts of interaction (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002/2004).

The theoretical positions advanced in discursive psychology do not seem to have much divergence from my own theoretical position with respect to discourse and our social world. The difference appears to be one of focus. Discursive psychology's primary concern tends to be on individuals' flexible use of interpretative repertoires in particular contexts of interaction rather than on analyzing changes in society's large-scale discourses. This means that it engages in micro-level analysis as opposed to macro-level analysis. Secondly, it focuses on rhetorical strategy rather than linguistic or discursive strategy in its approach to a communicative text. In my study, I intend to establish a link between a situated micro-level textual analysis with macro-level institutional factors. Besides, as a component part of textual analysis, focus on the linguistic features of texts or discursive practices is an important element in this study. Thus, discursive psychology seems an unlikely candidate for using as a theoretical and methodological model for the study.

Critical discourse analysis. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach presented here is a theoretical and methodological approach advanced by Norman Fairclough for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains. It is the framework I intend to maintain in analyzing the data in this study. Some of the common features that characterize critical discourse analysis include the fact that the approach regards the character of social and cultural processes and structures as partly 'linguistic-discursive.' It views discursive practices as an important form of social practice which contributes to the *constitution* of the social world including social identities and social relations. The social and cultural reproduction and change are partly seen as effected through everyday discursive practices. This implies that not all social phenomena are regarded as having 'linguistic-discursive' character. But

critical discourse analysis aims at shedding light particularly on the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena.

Critical discourse analysis holds the view that discourse is both constitutive of and constituted by the social world. Fairclough (1992) sees discourse as an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations. At the same time it is also shaped by other social practices and structures. Discourse is, thus, in a dialectical relationship with other social dimensions, and both the discursive and the non-discursive practices constitute our social world. As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) note, a central area of interest in Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is the investigation of *change*. The understanding is that concrete language use always draws on earlier discursive structures as language users build on already established meanings. In order to explicate this, the approach focuses on the concept of *intertextuality* -- that is, how an individual text draws on elements and discourses of other texts.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysis makes the empirical analysis of language use in its social context as an important component of its theoretical orientation. Consequently, critical discourse analysis calls for an engagement in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction. Critical discourse analysis also claims that discourse functions ideologically. Discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups, and the asymmetrical power relations constructed and reproduced in the discursive practices are ideological effects. The approach takes the unmasking of the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world as its aim. The approach also commits itself to contributing to social change along the lines of more equal power relations in communication processes and society in general. As a

result, critical discourse analysis understands itself not as politically neutral but as a critical enterprise that is politically committed to social transformation.

Fairclough's Model for Discourse Analysis

Fairclough has developed a three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis. The model is meant to serve as an analytical framework for empirical research on communication and society. According to Fairclough (1995), critical discourse analysis of a communicative event is the analysis of relationships between three dimensions or facets of that event, which he calls *text*, *discourse practice*, and *sociocultural practice*. As Fairclough (1995) argues, the analysis of the text focuses on the linguistic features of the text, which covers the analysis of vocabulary and semantics, the grammar of sentences and smaller units, the sound and writing systems. It also includes analysis of the organization and the overall structure of the text. Analysis of texts is also concerned with both their meanings and their forms. In the analysis of texts, the analyst is often sensitive to absences as well as presences in texts. In other words, the analyst is sensitive to representations, categories of participant, constructions of participant identity or participant relations which are not found in a text (Fairclough, 1995). However, Fairclough (1992) cautions that the analysis of the linguistic features of the text inevitably will involve analysis of the discourse practice, and vice versa; hence, text and discourse practice should not be seen as watertight compartments.

With reference to the discourse practice dimension of the communicative event, Fairclough (1995) argues that it involves aspects of the processes of text production and text consumption. The analysis of discourse practice usually focuses on how authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text, and how receivers of texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of the texts

(Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002/2004). Some of the aspects of the processes of text production and text consumption, argues Fairclough (1995), have a more institutional character, whereas others are discourse processes in a narrow sense. To illustrate the point in connection to mass media communication, Fairclough (1995), for instance, refers to institutional routines such as editorial procedures involved in producing media texts; he also refers to discourse processes in the narrow sense in discussing the transformations which texts undergo in production and consumption. He, then, calls these processes “institutional processes” and “discourse processes,” respectively (Fairclough, 1995, p. 59).

Sociocultural practice is the last element in the ‘trinity’ in Fairclough’s three dimensional model. According to Fairclough (1995), the analysis of the sociocultural practice dimension of a communicative event may be at different levels of abstraction from the particular event. The analysis may, for example, involve its more immediate situational context, the wider context of institutional practices the event is embedded within, or the yet wider frame of the society and the culture. Attending to all of these layers may be relevant to understanding a particular event. Among the many aspects of sociocultural practice that may enter into critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (1995) believes it useful to broadly differentiate between economic, political (concerned with issues of power and ideology), and cultural (concerned with questions of value and identity) components.

When Fairclough first developed his three-dimensional model, a communicative event was thought to have three dimensions (text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice). Critical discourse analysis of a communicative event was, thus, seen as the analysis of the relationship between these three dimensions or facets of that particular event. But Foucault’s introduction of the concept of ‘order of discourse’ has led Fairclough to revisit his

model and have a room for incorporating the concept of the ‘order of discourse’ in his framework. Fairclough (1995) then considered the communicative event and the order of discourse as twin, complementary, but not alternative, perspectives within a critical discourse analysis of the media; and the analysis of any particular type of discourse involves an alternation and shifting between these twin, complementary focuses, which are based on the same data. According to Fairclough (1995), the critical discourse analysis approach thinks of the discursive practices of a community, i.e., its normal way of using language, in terms of networks which he calls “orders of discourse” (p. 55). According to Fairclough (1995), the order of discourse of a social institution or social domain “is constituted by all the discursive types which are used there” (p. 55). The point of the concept of “order of discourse” is to highlight the relationships between different types in such a set (e.g. in the case of a school, the discursive types of the classroom and of the playground), or highlight relationships between different orders of discourse, an example of which could be the discourse of the school and that of the home. These relationships are instrumental in either reproducing or transforming the order of discourse.

Arguing along the same line, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) see the order of discourse as “the sum total of all the genres and discourses which are in use within a specific social domain” (p. 72). The relationship between the communicative event and the order of discourse is dialectical in the sense that communicative events not only produce orders of discourse, but can also change or transform them through creative use of language. In order to illustrate this point, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) note that when a public relations officer at a certain hospital uses a consumer discourse, the person draws on a system or an order of discourse, but in so doing, the same person also takes part in constituting or shaping

the system or the order of discourse. On the other hand, when a journalist draws on a discourse which is routinely used within the media, he/she also plays a part in the reproduction of the media system or the order of discourse of the media.

Research Design and Methods

In this section, I outline the design of the research and the methods I employ in executing the study. Owing to the philosophical convergence and the relative methodological soundness of Fairclough's approach, this study remains within the general framework of his three dimensional model for critical discourse analysis. However, I do not intend to use all the components Fairclough has suggested in his model or framework in this study; nor do I intend to use his methods in the exact same way. I agree with Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004) that it is not necessary to use all the methods Fairclough's model stipulates or to use them in exactly the same way in specific research projects. For Phillips and Jorgensen (2002/2004), "The selection and application of the tools depends on the research questions and the scope of the project" (p. 76). They further note that "for the majority of discourse analytical approaches...and for qualitative research in general...there is no fixed procedure for the production of material or for analysis: the research design should be tailored to match the special characteristics of the project" (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002/2004, p. 76).

Research questions. The objective of a particular research undertaking is usually realized through the formulation and execution of specific and pertinent research questions. The overarching research question that guides this study is as follows: How did the U.S. press represent the Southern Sudanese conflict? This general guiding question is followed by specific sub-questions that emanate from this broader-level question. Below, I outline the research questions that direct this study:

1. How did the U.S. press frame the southern Sudanese civil war during the tenures of the three Sudanese governments who presided over the civil war?
 - a. How did the U.S. press define the southern Sudanese civil war?
 - b. What causal explanation did the U.S. press provide for the southern Sudanese civil war?
 - c. What moral evaluation did the U.S. press make with reference to the parties engaged in the southern Sudanese civil war?
 - d. What remedy did the U.S. press suggest or recommend for resolving the southern Sudanese civil war?
2. How did the framing and representation of the U.S. press accounts of the southern Sudanese civil war differ among the three periods/events represented by the tenures of the three consecutive war-time Sudanese administrations?
3. What aspect (s) of information was/were excluded in the U.S. press coverage of the southern Sudanese civil war?

Media text selection. The type of news media considered for this study was the U.S. print media. However, since a plethora of print news media exist in the United States, it was either practically impossible or logically not useful to attempt to use all the print news media in such a study. Thus, I initially decided to look at certain mainstream as well as alternative print news media outlets. As the search for the print news media outlets progressed, however, it became clear that for the alternative print news media, it was difficult to find data on the southern Sudanese civil war. Hence, I directed my attention exclusively to mainstream print news media outlets for the data. Accordingly, I selected the following six mainstream (three newspapers and three news magazines, in that order) print news media: *The New York Times*,

The Washington Post, The Christian Science Monitor, Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report. While examining the availability of news articles on the southern Sudanese civil war, the electronic data base at my disposal did not have news article data on the civil war for *Time* news magazine. As a result, I dropped *Time* news magazine from the print media outlets selected for the study. Thus, the remaining five (three newspapers and two news magazines) print news media outlets were used for the study.

During the selection of the print news media outlets, the following factors were taken into consideration: reputation for international news coverage, circulation among the U.S. political elites, relative prominence among U.S. mainstream print news media, and accessibility. Reputation for international news coverage was taken as an important factor because international news coverage is the subject of the study. Newspaper circulation among the U.S. political elites was an important factor because it is political elites who set the nation's foreign policy agenda, and the media and the political elites have a symbiotic relationship. The print news media's relative standing (in terms of reputation) among other news media was also a relevant factor because prominent news media wield more power in shaping the news agenda for other less prominent news media outlets. Finally, the issue of accessibility was seen as another important element in the equation because the more accessible the electronic print news data base was to the researcher, the more it would minimize potential financial and time constraints.

For accessing the news articles pertaining to the southern Sudanese civil war published in the selected print news media outlets over the duration of the conflict period (1983-2005), I used the LexisNexis electronic data base. By employing LexisNexis as a search tool, the search for the news articles was carried out using search words such as

‘Sudan,’ ‘south Sudan,’ ‘civil war,’ and ‘conflict.’ The search yielded a combined output of 1243 news articles for the five selected print news media outlets. Of these news articles, *The New York Times* had 594, *The Washington Post* had 317, *The Christian Science Monitor* had 246, *U.S. News & World Report* had 56, and *Newsweek* had 30. Since the search pulled out any article that contains any of the key words, all the articles the search yielded were not necessarily on the southern Sudanese civil war. In order to differentiate those articles particularly focused on the southern Sudanese civil war and those news articles whose primary focus was on other conflicts (Sudanese or other African), but tangentially mentioned the southern Sudanese civil war, I adopted two strategies. First, I eliminated articles whose titles had nothing to do with the Sudanese civil war. Second, I went through the contents of all the remaining news articles whose titles had to do with the Sudanese civil war. Since there were other civil wars (Darfur and the eastern region) going on in the Sudan, looking into the contents of the articles was necessary in order to distinguish those articles which focused particularly on the southern civil war from those whose central concerns were either the eastern or the Darfur conflict. After going through the contents of the articles, I identified a total of 345 news articles that were directly related to the southern Sudanese civil war. Of these, 149 were from *The New York Times*, 86 were from *The Christian Science Monitor*, 75 were from *The Washington Post*, 18 were from *Newsweek*, and 17 were from *U.S. News & World Report*. These 345 news articles were used for the analysis of the southern civil war.

Time frame. The southern Sudanese civil war was one of the most protracted civil wars on the African continent. It went on unabated for more than two decades (from 1983-2005). This study covers the entire conflict period that stretched from 1983-2005. During the conflict period, Khartoum had three successive governments: President Nimeiri, Prime

minister al-Mahdi and president al-Bashir. The three presidents advanced different foreign policy agendas during their respective tenures, and as a result, they related to Washington differently. For the Khartoum governments' differing relation to Washington as well as for analytical purposes, therefore, the entire stretch of the conflict period was divided into three periods that concurred with the duration of each of the three governments' stay in power. The division of the three periods included 1983-April 1985 (Nimeiri's period after the start of the civil war), 1986-June 30, 1989 (al-Mahdi's period), and 1989-January 09, 2005 (al-Bashir's period until the official end of the civil war).

Analytical tools. Although Fairclough has designed a three-dimensional framework, with comprehensive orientation to communicative events, for critical discourse analysis, he acknowledges the fact that all the components of the model should not necessarily be used in every research project, as the nature of the research questions and the scope of the research vary from one research project to another. Hence, he notes that "The framework... is compatible with various different emphases" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 62). This indicates the flexibility the model provides for the analyst to focus on one or two aspects of the framework, depending on the nature of a particular research project. According to Fairclough (1995), "One might, for instance, choose to focus on discourse practice, either on processes of text production, or on processes of text consumption. One might alternatively choose to focus on text..." (p. 62). He, however, stresses the importance of maintaining the comprehensive orientation to communicative events which are built into the framework, even if an analyst is concentrating upon only certain aspects of them in his/her analysis. In this study, I do not intend to examine the production and consumption of the media texts directly, as this is beyond the scope of the study. This means that I will not be dealing with the

‘discourse practice’ dimension of Fairclough’s model directly. Instead, my analytical focus will mainly be on the ‘text’ and the ‘sociocultural’ dimensions of Fairclough’s framework.

In this section, I identify and describe specific analytical tools or concepts that are relevant to addressing the specific research questions I have outlined in the chapter. In doing so, I also import “field of discursivity” as a tool or a concept from Laclau and Mouffe (1985), and the concept of frame analysis as an analytical strategy from Entman (1991, 1993, 2007). As Fairclough’s framework is still a work-in-progress, I believe that these imported tools or concepts will not violate the overall spirit of his model; rather, they will enrich and complement his model.

Frame. As noted in Chapter One, news frames organize and structure ideas for news content and, by so doing, guide the interpretation of the news discourse. According to Van Gorp (2007), each frame that is applied in the news can be presented as a *frame package*, a cluster of logically organized *framing devices* and *reasoning devices*. First, a frame manifests itself by means of various *framing devices* such as word choice, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, arguments, and visual images (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). All conceivable framing devices that point at the same core idea constitute the manifest part of a frame package. These devices are held together under the heading of a central, organizing theme that provides the frame package with a coherent structure. Second, the *reasoning devices* are other essential components of a frame package, which complete the frame package itself. These are the components that deal with justifications, causes, and consequences in a temporal order. The reasoning devices are related to four framing functions, namely the promotion of a particular definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). In that way, the media provide the public not only with

information on the news events itself but also on how it should be interpreted. Critical media theorists argue that frames are never value-neutral and that they typically reproduce the ideological orientation of the larger sociopolitical system (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980, Tuchman, 1978).

For the study of media discourse, especially the study of war coverage, which this study is concerned with, framing is a useful concept. It will help us explicate how the media structure and organize the news narratives on the southern Sudanese conflict into a coherent whole, and it will give us an insight into what aspects of issues about the conflict the media amplify and what other issues they silence in the framing process.

In this study, when it comes to the analysis of the text, I do not intend to engage in detailed analysis of linguistic features, as Fairclough usually does, for two principal reasons. The first principal reason is that Fairclough often focuses on few or limited textual data, which enables him to conduct an in-depth analysis of various linguistic features. However, this study looks at a large corpus of textual data that covers more than two decades. The volume of textual data I am dealing with in this study makes it practically difficult to conduct detailed analyses of linguistic features in the texts. The second principal reason is that the major focus of this study is not the formal linguistic analysis of the text as it is in the way language is used discursively as discussed in Chapter One. With this in mind, I use frame analysis as an analytical strategy while engaging in textual analysis. This strategy will be instrumental in addressing the research questions related to the print media framing of the southern Sudanese conflict and the portrayal of the various stake-holders in the conflict. In addressing the media framing of the southern conflict and the portrayal of stake-holders, I focused on the framing devices such as word choice, metaphors, descriptions and arguments

in the selected media texts in order to identify the central frames or characterizations used in the news discourse of the conflict in question. Using such framing devices, I particularly examined the way the U.S. press defined the southern conflict, what diagnosis it stated about the conflict, what moral judgments it passed, and what remedies it suggested vis-à-vis the southern Sudanese conflict.

Order of discourse/field of discursivity. Discussing about the sociocultural practice in Fairclough's three-dimensional model earlier in the chapter, I have talked about various important aspects of the practice that are subject to critical discourse analysis. These include economic, political (which includes issues of power and ideology), and cultural (which includes questions of values and identities) practices. In the analysis of the sociocultural practice, I would be particularly looking at the political dimension, i.e., the way political relations between Washington and Khartoum might have affected the media coverage of the conflict during the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese administrations. Another important facet in the analysis of the sociocultural practice is Fairclough's concept of "order of discourse." I have noted earlier that the order of discourse refers to different discourses that compete in the same domain. It is a complex configuration of discourses and genres within the same social field or institution. It denotes different discourses that partly cover the same terrain, a terrain which each discourse competes to fill with meaning in its own way.

However, discourses that appear in the same domain do not necessarily compete for fixing meaning in their own way. Sometimes there are situations whereby a discourse becomes so colonizing that it becomes a sole voice by either obliterating other rival discourses or turning other discourses to act as 'cheerleaders' complementing the hegemonic discourse. In such situations, the concept of order of discourse, as used by Fairclough, may

not be of much use analytically. In order to address such apparent weakness, I believe that Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of "field of discursivity" can be a useful analytical concept. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), the field of discursivity is understood as "everything outside the discourse, all that the discourse excludes" (p. 111). It is the meanings that other discourses have had, but which are excluded by a specific colonizing discourse in its bid to creating a unity of meaning. Thus, I employed Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) concept of the field of discursivity to address alternative meanings that the colonizing discourse of the selected news media excluded or marginalized in their discursive construction of the southern Sudanese conflict. This analytical tool is specifically relevant to answering the research question regarding aspects of information about the conflict that the news discourse excluded.

However, since what is excluded in the news discourse cannot be supplied from the media texts under consideration, one has to appeal to other sources. To this end, I consulted literature as a source for excavating socio-political factors that might be missing in the U.S. press narratives of the southern Sudanese conflict. Finally, on the basis of the analyses of the text and sociocultural practice, the implications of such discursive practices for the overall understanding of the southern Sudanese conflict are discussed. The study suggests how U.S. media should engage in reporting wars, particularly wars in the African continent, in the future, as their reporting has serious policy implication in the way the United States engages with African states.

CHAPTER SIX

OVERARCHING NEWS FRAME(S); REPRESENTATION OF WARRING PARTIES

This chapter examines how the five selected newspapers and news magazines organized and structured the news discourse on the southern Sudanese civil war, and how these print news media framed and represented the civil war to the readers. In doing so, the chapter focuses on what is included or what is present in the news narratives. The first part of the chapter pays particular attention to identifying major news frames the selected newspapers and news magazines discursively constructed, so as to guide the way the readers should look at or approach the southern Sudanese civil war. The second part of the chapter examines if or whether there was a shift of narratives in the newspapers and the news magazines' framing and representation of the civil war across the tenures of the three successive war-time Sudanese administrations. To this end, the narratives of the news reports published in the selected print news outlets over a period of a little more than twenty years (from 1983 to 2005) were carefully and closely examined.

In covering a war, media can employ various frames in isolation or in combination so as to structure the narratives of the war. According to Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007), the media can, among others, focus on one or more of the following: anti-war protest frame, human interest frame, prognostic frame, military technology frame, and violence of war frame. This being the case, however, the analysis of the data for the study shows that there was one overarching or predominant frame that served as a nodal point around which the news discourse of the southern Sudanese civil war was structured. This frame is what could be referred to as an ethno/racial-religious frame.

The Ethno/Racial-Religious Frame

The news narratives primarily defined the southern Sudanese problem as an ethno/racial-religious conflict taking place between two contending forces: the southern forces and the Sudanese government in the north. Of these two antagonistic forces, the southern forces were described as representing the predominantly Christian and animist black African south, whereas the Sudanese government was cast as from the predominantly Arab-Islamic north. In so doing, the news discourse packaged the conflict as a cosmic war between two rival groups with different ethnic/racial and religious orientations, and groups who were almost neatly divided by geography. The following excerpts from the news narratives illustrate this argument:

Underscoring the ethnic/racial and religious dimensions of the southern civil war, *Monitor*'s Wayne wrote, "The civil war pits the rebels from the largely black and Christian or animist South of Sudan against the government in the mostly Arab and Islamic North (*The Christian Science Monitor*, November 28, 1988, p. 1). Along a similar line, *Times*' Perlez noted, "The civil war in the Sudan is between the northern Arab and Islamic fundamentalist Government in Khartoum and a southern based African rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, whose members are mostly Christian or animist" (*The New York Times*, March 18, 1992, p. 9). In describing the historical trajectory of the southern civil war and its human cost, a reporter for the *Post* stated,

This...conflict has strong ethnic and religious overtones. Since independence in 1956, the Arab north has tried to control the "African" south. Until limited autonomy was granted the south in 1972, a brutal civil war was believed to have taken the lives of several hundred thousand people. When the south lost

its autonomous status in 1983, the war began again. (*The Washington Post*, November 29, 1988, p. A25)

Stressing an enormous toll the north-south civil war has taken on the civilian population caught in the fire, *Times'* Perlez argued,

The conflict, between the predominantly Muslim and Arab north and the largely Christian and animist African south, has resulted in 200,000 deaths from killings and starvation in the last five years and the exodus of 1.5 million people from the south, a diplomat here said. The losses are all the more staggering because most of the victims are members of one big southern tribe, the Dinka. (*The New York Times*, October 19, 1988, p. 10)

Providing a tragic account of the civil war in terms of death and suffering it inflicted upon the civilian population, Rosenblatt from the *U.S. News* cast the civil war along ethno-religious fault-lines as follows: "In the civil war in the Sudan between the Moslem and Arab North and the largely Christian and animist African Sudan, hundreds of thousands are dead, and hundreds of thousands that survive trek across the country into Ethiopia, thus escaping one war zone by entering another" (*U.S. News & World Report*, October 31, 1988, p. 8).

What is more, the news narratives continue the north-south divide as central in defining the ethno-religious dimension of the civil war. To this end, Bartholet & Berger stressed,

Sudan is a country with a deeply split personality. Arab in the north, African in the south. For decades southerners, mostly Christians and animists, have chafed under the far-from-benevolent rule of an Arab government in Khartoum, dominated now by fundamentalist Muslims. During nine years of civil war more than 1.5 million southerners have been displaced, fleeing atrocities committed by all sides. Seven

months ago, with arms supplied by Iran and China, the government launched an offensive, capturing more than a dozen towns from the SPLA. The main rebel faction, led by John Garang, is now trying to recoup by seizing Juba, where about 300,000 people are trapped in the siege. (*Newsweek*, October 12, 1992, p. 49)

Explaining how the southern civil war functioned as a magnet in terms of luring the neighboring states, *Monitor's* Peterson emphasized the ubiquitous frame in the following words: "Sudan's 11-year civil war is both a religious and ethnic conflict. It pits Arab Islamic fundamentalists against Christian and animist black Africans. And it's cranking up a notch as both sides draw in neighboring countries to gain military advantage." (*The Christian Science Monitor*, December 7, 1994, p. 2)

Once the civil war is defined along the line of difference in ethnic/racial and religious orientations, it might appear that difference is the sole cause for the conflict. However, experience has shown us that difference does not automatically result in conflict or war. Difference becomes a flashpoint only when it is perceived to have been articulated and deployed by agents in a particular way that privileges one group and deprives the other. When difference is tied to conflict in this manner, the situation demands causal explanations in order to understand the factors that generate the deterioration of difference into conflict or war. The news narratives of the selected print media outlets invariably attributed the reigniting of the north-south civil war in 1983 to president Nimeiri's dissolution of the southern regional administration, his decision to divide the southern region into three distinct provinces, and, more importantly, his imposition of Islamic law or *Sharia* on the entire country, including the southern region. The following excerpts from the news narratives would corroborate this claim:

Newsweek's Young & Colton, for instance, noted,

A campaign by President Jaafar Nimeiry to impose *sharia*, or Islamic law, has inflamed Christian and animist minorities....In southern Sudan, Nimeiry faces a thornier problem....The president thought that he had solved his difficulties with the Christians and animists in the south in 1972, when he negotiated an end to the 17-year rebellion there. But in 1983 he imposed Islamic law and tried to strip the southern provinces of their measure of self-rule. (*Newsweek*, February 4, 1985, p. 39)

In explaining the roots of the turmoil in Sudan, a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report* argued, "Arab Moslems of the north and non-Arab Christians of the south are fighting again. Last time that happened was 1955-1972. The struggle finally ended when Nimeiri granted autonomy to the southerners....Not long ago, Nimeiri dissolved the southern government, imposed Islamic law. That rekindled rebellion, and fighting has spread fast" (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 26, 1984, p. 29). On the other hand, the *Post's* David B. Ottaway wrote, "In early June, Nimeiri reversed his policy toward the south. Then in September he imposed Islamic sharia law on the south as part of a nationwide reform, stirring further resentment among the Christians there (*The Washington Post*, November 18, 1983, p. A31). According to Robert M. Press, "In 1972, after 17 years of civil war, the south gained greater autonomy in an agreement with the government. But that autonomy eventually eroded, and in 1983 civil war broke out again, following revocation of the south's semiautonomous status and imposition of Sharia" (*The Christian Science Monitor*, September 22, 1987, p. 11).

Concurring with the preceding narratives, Judith Miller of *New York Times* echoed,

The civil war between the largely Moslem north and the Christian and animist south resumed in 1983 after an 11-year hiatus and had weakened President Nimeiry'

Government....Many southerners viewed Mr. Nimeiry's redivision of the south into three subregions in June 1983 as an effort to dilute the region's autonomy. As such, it fueled a renewed rebellion. His efforts to impose Islamic law on the non-Moslem south...also contributed to the unrest. (*The New York Times*, April 10, 1985, p 3)

According to Entman's (1993; 2007) framing model, once a news frame clearly defines the problem and offers diagnosis or provides causal explanations with respect to the identified problem, it also implicitly or explicitly makes a moral evaluation of the causal agents and their effects. A closer look at the news narratives of the selected print news media outlets reveals the presence of such a moral evaluation embedded in the news narratives. In order to bring to light the nature of the moral evaluations enclosed in the news narratives, it is vital to examine how the selected newspapers and news magazines represented or portrayed the civil war as well as the two principal actors in the conflict, namely, the Sudanese government and the southern forces.

The moral lens through which the news narratives couched the discourse of the civil war could best be summarized as having two different dimensions in the historical trajectory of the civil war. Broadly speaking, the civil war period that stretched until the demise of President Nimeiri in early 1985 received one set of moral evaluations, whereas the post-Nimeiri period received a different set of moral evaluations. From the time the civil war reignited in 1983 up until the removal of president Nimeiri, whose presidency was responsible for the resumption of the civil war, the news narratives tended to depict the war as a secessionist or separatist ploy that was hatched by Marxist governments who were bent on destabilizing an important U.S.-ally in the continent.

Describing an account of a military operation of the southern Sudanese forces against the government forces, for example, a writer noted the following in *Times*,

Separatist guerrillas ambushed a Nile River steamship carrying military personnel near the southern town of Bor Sunday night...anti-Government guerrillas said their forces had ambushed two steamships and a Government convoy in the Upper Nile region in the last four days....The rebels, who want a separate nation in the south, said in a radio broadcast...that one steamship was ambushed Friday and another Sunday, both between Juba and Malakal, 450 miles south of Khartoum. (*The New York Times*, December 4, 1984, p. A5).

Along the same line, the *U.S. News* carried an article in which it stated, "...Nimeiri has declared a unilateral truce in the lengthy civil war against Libyan-backed secessionists in the south" (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 18, 1985, p. 35). In providing an account of how Nimeiri had, for long, grappled with a relentless rebellion sponsored by his hostile neighbors, a writer for the *U.S. News* noted, "...In the 16 years since he seized power, Nimeiri has surmounted...a rebellion in the south egged on by neighboring Libya" (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 4, 1985, p. 13). With a highlight on the threat the civil war posed to Nimeiri's hold onto power and a reminder of a friendly relationship Khartoum had with Washington, another reporter for the *U.S. News* stated how Sudan had become a convenient prey for her radical and Marxist neighbors in these words, "Fresh outbreak of civil war in Sudan is threatening President Nimeiri's grip on power. U.S. weighs rushing emergency aid to Khartoum...Washington considers Sudan a friend—an ally of Egypt, a moderate in Arab world. It has long been target of radical Libya, Marxist Ethiopia" (*U.S. News & World Report*, 1984, March 26, p. 29).

In explaining the nature of support the southern forces secured from such hostile neighbors and the implication of such a relationship between the southern forces and their supporters, Colin Legum looked at the case of the neighboring Ethiopia and had the following to say, “Ethiopia allows Colonel Garang [SPLA leader] to train his army on Ethiopian soil and to maintain SPLA headquarters near Addis Ababa....This connection between the ‘Marxist’ regime in Ethiopia and Garang prompts suspicion that the SPLA is part of a communist conspiracy....” (*The Christian Science Monitor*, September 5, 1986, p. 14). Owing to its alleged clientele relationship with the neighboring states, the SPLA was depicted as an obstacle to peace in the news narratives. For example, *Times* reporter Robert O. Boorstin, arguing about the behavior of the SPLA leadership, said this, “Backed by the neighboring Marxist Government of Ethiopia, Mr. Garang [SPLA leader] in May rejected a cease-fire offer made by the Government...” (*The New York Times*, August 18, 1986, p. A4). The reason for such a rejection of the peace overture made by the Khartoum government, according to Blaine Harden, was that “...the SPLA, which receives funding, arms and sanctuary from bordering Ethiopia, is heavily influenced by the Marxist government there” (*The Washington Post*, August 28, 1986, p. A1).

Before identifying the manifest or latent moral judgment enclosed in the news discourse of the selected print news media outlets with respect to the legitimacy of the southern civil war, as conducted by the southern forces, it is important to understand what the terms “secession” and “Marxist” signified in the context of the Cold War, particularly as applied to the African context. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a scramble for Africa among European colonial powers. In the process, they carved the continent into several territorial enclaves and divided these enclaves among themselves. As

the territorial boundaries were drawn arbitrarily and did not follow any entrenched cultural as well as indigenous settlement boundaries, several communities ended up being spread across various colonial territories. When the decolonization of the continent accelerated in the 1960s, the newly independent African states were faced with one fundamental challenge. This challenge had to do with how to deal with the colonial boundaries, which effectively split communities and placed them in separate territorial enclaves. There were two options to address this serious problem. The first option was to try to redraw the colonial boundaries in a manner that could accommodate the long-separated communities. But this option could trigger a serious conflict and chaos between both the newly independent states as well as between various ethnic groups within a particular state. The second option was to have a binding agreement among all the newly independent African states to recognize and respect the colonial boundaries and exercise their sovereignty within the limits of these boundaries. It is clear that this option could not remove all potential problems, but it would definitely postpone such problems until a later time. When potential risks involved in adopting the two options were compared, therefore, it was believed that the second option was less risky than the first option. Accordingly, the then Organization of African Unity (OAU), the continental organization that came into being in 1963, gave recognition to the colonial boundaries. The United Nations followed suit and gave its blessing to the OAU's decision. Since then, the decision has largely become the *modus operandi* in mediating border relations between African states.

During the Cold War, if there was anything that the two Superpowers had a tacit policy convergence with respect to the African continent, it was perhaps the position they held against the fragmentation of African states into numerous mini-states, which could have

created a monumental challenge for the maintenance of stability in the continent. Chaos in that part of the world was not in the best interest of the two superpowers. Hence, any movement that was considered as secessionist or separatist was not seen in a positive light in the geopolitical climate of the Cold War. The selected print news media narratives' reference to the SPLA's struggle as a secessionist or separatist struggle was a veiled expression of disapproval as far as the legitimacy of the objective of the southern forces' rebellion against president Nimeiri's government was concerned.

On the other hand, revolutionary Marxist-oriented governments across the world were generally cast as the natural allies of the Soviet Union, which was the archenemy of the West led by the United States of America. In the cosmic superpower struggle between the West and the East, the classification of states as allies or enemies was seen as simple and transparent as black and white. The 'us' versus 'them' and 'with us' or 'against us' frame of thinking was the colonizing political discourse during the Cold War. Given this context, the juxtaposition of the alleged radical/revolutionary Libya and Marxist Ethiopia along with the southern Sudanese forces was an insinuation of the fact that the SPLA was not a legitimate liberation front struggling against injustice, but was an agent or a proxy-force used by the Soviet clients to destabilize Nimeiri's regime, which was a reliable ally to the West in general and to Washington in particular. Thus, the news narratives' association of the southern forces with Marxism and/or radical and revolutionary Marxist states, such as Libya and Ethiopia, was an indirect way of delegitimizing the very mission of the southern Sudanese forces in their struggle against the Nimeiri regime. It is safe to argue that in the Orwellian moral universe of the Cold War, the legitimacy of any collective action exercised by one group against the other was mainly filtered through the prevailing ideological prism

of the time. Taken together, the news narratives of the selected print media outlets generally appeared to have cast an unfavorable light on the motive of the southern forces' struggle against the Nimeiri regime, and by doing so, they (the narratives) apparently delegitimized the mission of the group.

Interestingly enough, however, following the demise of the Nimeiri regime, the news discourse about what the southern forces were fighting for began to depart markedly from the standard discursive angle the selected print news media had maintained throughout the tenure of President Nimeiri's administration with reference to the southern cause. The purpose of the struggle of the southern forces against the Khartoum government was no more represented as secession or separation from Sudan's political community; rather, it was depicted as one that was aimed at securing autonomy for the southerners within the framework of a united Sudan, as could be seen from the following news excerpts:

Citing outstanding grievances the southerners had against successive northern regimes and the perceived benefit of striking a sustainable peace between Nimeiri's successor and the southern forces, *Monitor's* Robert I. Rotberg had the following to say:

The southerners have innumerable grievances. Once enslaved by northerners, and later ruled and misruled by them, they claim to have borne the brunt of racism and purposeful underdevelopment. Fortunately, the insurgents of the south seek autonomy, not independence. They are not secessionists in the full sense, and Sudan risks reorganization, not dismemberment, if Garang and Mahdi talk about a permanent peace (*Christian Science Monitor*, May 12, 1989, p. 18).

According to Rotberg, given the litany of historic grievances the southerners had vis-à-vis their northern rulers, it would not have been surprising if the southern forces had opted for a

full independence from Khartoum. The fact that the southerners' demand was limited to the exercise of autonomy, and not the establishment of a sovereign state, provides an opportunity the Mahdi government should seize so as to strike a lasting peace accord with the south. Emphasizing a similar point that the southern forces' question was mainly centered around achieving regional autonomy, a *Times* reporter noted, "The Sudan is officially an Islamic state, but most of those in the south are Christians and animists, who are demanding autonomy, but not independence, from the north" (*New York Times*, October 30, 1997, page 17).

What is more, the news narratives consistently tied the centrality of the southerners' quest for autonomy with equitable development, fair political representation, and ending the Islamic jurisprudence imposed by Khartoum, as achieving autonomy was seen as a precursor for realizing these goals. Along this line, *Post's* reporter Harden wrote, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army, a rebel force that now claims 20, 000 men in uniform and controls most of southern Sudan outside the major towns, wants regional autonomy for the south. Its most immediate demand is an end to northern imposition of much-hated Islamic law, or sharia" (*The Washington Post*, August 28, 1986, p. A1). Reiterating the same central argument, *Monitor's* Press noted the following: "John Garang's rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is seeking greater autonomy in a unified Sudan, more development programs for the south and other areas far from the central capital, Khartoum, and an end to sharia (Islamic laws)" (*Christian Science Monitor*, June 8, 1989, p. 4).

As could be seen from the foregoing excerpts, the post-Nimeiri discourse of the news narratives first emphasized the southerners' grievances, which emanated from alleged marginalization and underdevelopment they suffered at the hands of successive Sudanese

regimes. Second, the news narratives also highlighted the objective of the southerners' struggle as one geared towards achieving regional autonomy, which could potentially end their marginalization. Through such emphasis and highlighting, the news narratives of the selected print news media outlets implicitly struck a sympathetic tone with reference to the southern cause and thereby accorded a degree of moral legitimacy to their struggle against the central government.

What is clear from the foregoing analysis is that there were two contradictory moral evaluations enclosed in the news narratives with respect to the objective or purpose of the southern forces' struggle against the central government. During the tenure of president Nimeiri, the news narratives cast a negative light on what the southern forces were fighting for, since their objective was rhetorically defined as secession or separation from the Sudan, and they were portrayed as a proxy for neighboring radical Marxist regimes. However, the moral evaluation shifts from negative to positive following the demise of the Nimeiri government and remained the same throughout the tenures of the two successive post-Nimeiri governments. The positive moral evaluation was justified because the motive of the southern struggle was defined in terms of the pursuit of achieving regional autonomy, where autonomy was seen as a means to ending the alleged southern marginalization and underdevelopment.

The mission of Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) had been consistent since its birth in 1983 up until it signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the central government in Khartoum in 2005. The SPLA/M claimed that it was fighting for a secular government that did not discriminate against the various Sudanese societies on the basis of race, ethnicity, or religion. It claims that it has been seeking a system of

government that is inclusive and respects the racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity of the Sudan; a system that promotes a peaceful coexistence of the various groups and one that guarantees them their rightful place in a single and united Sudan. Given this context, an important question one has to address is ‘how could one plausibly explain the contradictory nature of the moral evaluation enclosed in the news narratives with reference to the objective of the southerners’ struggle against the central government in Khartoum?’ ‘What does one make of the shift of the news discourse on the target of the southerners’ struggle from the issue of secession to the issue of regional autonomy?’

It is certainly difficult to convincingly explain such a contradiction in enclosing the moral evaluation on the objective of the SPLA’s struggle as advanced by the discourse of the news narratives by arguing that the journalists reporting about the civil war for their respective print media outlets were not well informed about the southern Sudanese civil war during the tenure of Nimeiri’s government as well as they did during the tenures of the two successive post-Nimeiri Sudanese regimes. In order to make a plausible explanation about such moral judgment, one has to bring into equation the geopolitical situation of the Cold War on the one hand, and the end of the Cold War and/or the post-Cold War geopolitics on the other.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the U.S. foreign policy towards Africa as well as the Middle East (as was the case with other regions of the world) during the Cold War was predicated primarily on containing the spread of Communism, minimizing the influence of the Soviet Union, and recruiting its own client states in order to increase its own influence and advance its strategic interests in that part of the world. Sudan is strategically located and serves as a bridge between Africa and the Arab world. During the Cold War, it happens that

many of its neighbors had left-leaning governments and were friendly with the Soviet Union. However, president Nimeiri, unlike his neighbors, showed interest in befriending the United States. Washington responded positively and forged an alliance. Sudan became a vocal critic of her neighbors, supported the Camp David agreement alongside Egypt, and provided the United States with a military base. Washington reciprocated with political, economic, and military support to Khartoum. This strategic convergence made Washington a staunch ally of the Nimeiri regime. In the polarizing ideological struggle of the Cold War, the old adage ‘a friend in need is a fiend indeed’ seems to have more currency. The motive of an ally against a perceived enemy was rarely questioned; an enmity with an ally was hardly condoned. In such a political climate, the media were not passive observers but active participants in maintaining ideological coherence. In doing so, the media appears to have sacrificed maintaining their supposed objectivity lens on the altar of ideological loyalty. The negative moral evaluation the news narratives accorded to the objective of the southern forces’ struggle against the Nimeiri government cannot be separated from Washington’s foreign policy priority with respect to the Nimeiri government and the spill-over of political discourse into media discourse.

On the other hand, following the ousting of president Nimeiri’s government, a democratically elected al-Mahdi government came into power in 1986. The new government formulated a non-alignment oriented foreign policy, refusing to maintain the relationship the previous government had with Washington. The assertive and non-compliant behavior of the new administration did not please Washington. Due to both internal and external tensions, the al-Mahdi government did not last long. After only three years in power, the al-Mahdi government was deposed and general al-Bashir took the rein of power. With the National

Islamic Front (NIF) consolidating its power, the relationship between Washington and Khartoum deteriorated further, leading Washington to accuse Khartoum of spreading Islamic fundamentalism. With the threat of Communism gone and the supremacy of a capitalism system reassured, filtering relationships through the Cold War ideological prism no longer carried much currency. What is more, Khartoum's alleged support of Islamic fundamentalism made it imperative for Washington to reevaluate its position towards the southern forces, resulting in U.S. support for the southern cause. The news narratives' positive moral evaluation of the aspiration of the southern forces in their struggle against Khartoum was, therefore, consistent with Washington's policy towards Khartoum in the post-Nimeiri period. What we see here is again a reflection of a symbiotic relationship the media and the government had, particularly with matters pertaining to foreign policy concerns.

Portrayal of the Warring Parties

The second angle from which we could examine the moral evaluation embedded in the news narratives of the selected print media outlets is by a careful scrutiny of the ways the two parties, engaged in the civil war, were discursively represented or depicted in the news narratives. In the section that follows, I present an analysis of the ways the southern forces and the Sudanese government, located in the north, were portrayed in the news narratives.

Southern forces. Throughout the armed struggle (except during occasional splits), the southern forces collectively identified themselves as the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). In spite of their avowed name, however, the news narratives' portrayal of the group was far from monolithic. In the early stages of the civil war, the southern forces were represented as secessionists or separatists who were bent on breaking

away from Khartoum and establishing their own sovereign state. Describing the civil war between the south and the north, a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report* noted, “The black and largely Christian tribes of the country’s non-Arab South had been trying to throw off the rule from Khartoum and set up an independent black African state of their own” (*U.S. News & World report*, January 12, 1976, p. 62). A reporter from the *Times* also wrote, “Separatist guerrillas ambushed a Nile River steamship carrying military personnel near the southern town of Bor Sunday night but were driven off by army reinforcements, a military spokesman said today.... The rebels, who want a separate nation in the south, said in a radio broadcast monitored in Nairobi that one steamship was ambushed Friday and another Sunday, both between Juba and Malakal, 450 miles south of Khartoum” (*New York times*, December 4, 1984, p. 5). In an apparent criticism of president Nimeiri’s unilateral declaration of a ceasefire against the southern forces, a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report* had this to say, “Note gambles just taken by Sudan’s pro-Western President Nimeiri, survivor of many attempted coups, in a bid to hold power. Pretty risky. First, Nimeiri has declared a unilateral truce in the lengthy civil war against Libyan-backed secessionists in the south. The rebels were on the run before the cease-fire. Now they’ll have time to regroup...” (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 18, 1985, P. 35).

During the Cold War, it was a common practice in the West to disparagingly associate any armed group that was opposed to a central government that was seen to be a reliable ally of the West as Marxist zealots or as a proxy of Marxist-oriented regimes. Likewise, the southern forces were frequently labeled as Marxists and/or the proxy of Marxist regimes who were friends with the Soviet Union, i.e., the West’s enemy. In explaining the alleged alliance between the southern forces and a left-leaning Ethiopian

government, for example, *Monitor*'s Colin Legum argued that "Ethiopia allows Colonel Garang to train his army on Ethiopian soil and to maintain SPLA headquarters near Addis Ababa, because Ethiopia's rulers believe Sudan supports rebels operating in northeastern Ethiopia.... This connection between the Marxist regime in Ethiopia and Garang prompts suspicion that the SPLA is part of a communist conspiracy...." (*Christian Science Monitor*, September 5, 1986, p. 14). Along the same line, *Times* reporter Clifford D. May looked into the nexus between the southern forces, Ethiopian, Libya, and the Soviet Union, and the extent of leverage these countries had over the southern forces, and registered his observation in the following words:

But it is the Garang rebel group that poses the most serious threat to the Khartoum leadership. Military experts describe it as a well-trained fighting force of 15,000 to 20,000, more than adequately supplied and supported by the Sudan's neighbors, Ethiopia and Libya. Some believe the Soviet Union is also providing arms and money.... Western diplomats say there is a major rebel training camp and base in southwestern Ethiopia, near the city of Gambela. Rebel leaders live as guests of the Ethiopian Government in and around Addis Ababa.... Some Sudanese officials and Western diplomats believe that the price the Ethiopian Government exacts for its hospitality is substantial influence - some would even say control - over Colonel Garang and his forces. (*The New York Times*, August 26, 1985, p. 5)

Consonant with the preceding assessment and in an acknowledgement of an apparent sign of tension between the two ideological foes over the southern Sudanese civil war, *Newsweek*'s Young and Colton also wrote, "The rebels [the southern forces] get support from such Soviet-backed states as Libya and Ethiopia, both sworn enemies of Nimeiry and his

regime. Nimeiry can claim some powerful allies of his own, chief among them being the United States and Egypt” (*Newsweek*, February 4, 1985, p. 39). In the context of the Cold War, expressions such as “Marxist orientation”, “Communism”, “Revolution” and the like, were part of the powerful symbolic arsenals the West deployed so as to stigmatize the East. In light of such a phenomenon, the news narratives’ portrayal of the southern forces as Marxist zealots and/or stooges of Marxist regimes was hardly an innocent and dispassionate characterization; rather, it was part and parcel of the colonizing ideological discourse that reigned supreme during the time.

The news narratives about the southern civil war also invariably depicted the southern forces as rebels and/or rebellious guerrillas. In reporting about the military skirmish between the southern forces and the government forces, and the alleged damage the southern forces inflicted upon the government forces, a *Times* correspondent wrote, “. . . anti-Government guerrillas said their forces had ambushed two steamships and a Government convoy in the Upper Nile region in the last four days, killing scores of Government soldiers and capturing 103. . . Maj. Gen. Babiker Abdul-Rahim told the Sudan News Agency that the steamship was ambushed by rebels after it steamed out of Bor, 100 miles north of the provincial capital of Juba” (*New York Times*, December 4, 1984, p. 5). In an apparent assessment of the relative balance of power between the southern forces and the government forces, Young and Colton had the following to say, “At their current strength, the guerrillas cannot mount a serious challenge to the Army, but they cannot be wiped out easily either. To keep the conflict to a minimum, the Army will likely continue to stick to the barracks and towns” (*Newsweek*, February 4, 1985, p. 39). What is more, *Monitor*’s Willis joined the chorus by noting that “Colonel Garang [leader of the southern forces] is leading a rebellion in the southern and

predominantly Christian and animist part of Sudan from a base across the border in Gambela, Ethiopia” (*Christian Science Monitor*, May 10, 1985, p. 1). In connection to a coup leader’s statement which apparently recognized the centrality of the imposition of the Islamic jurisprudence in fueling the civil war, *Times*’ Cowell gave a similar portrayal of the southern forces in the following words:

The southern rebels have fought a bitter and increasingly successful war against Government forces to back their opposition to sharia, or Islamic law, which provides for punishments including amputation and floggings. It was first imposed in recent times by ex-President Gaafar al-Nimeiry in 1983....In a broadcast tonight, Brigadier Bashir referred to "the clashes and struggle concerning the issue of sharia and any other issue at the heart of the conflict.".... It was unclear how the rebellious Sudan People's Liberation Army in the south would react to the announcement. (*New York Times*, July 2, 1989, p. 10)

The terms rebels/rebellious and guerrillas used in the news narratives to describe the southern forces are loaded terms. According to Microsoft Word’s thesaurus, the words rebel and guerrilla stand for more or less similar meanings, such as insurgent, mutineer, radical, revolutionary, insurrectionary, or dissenter. They signify the act of defying authority, being unyielding or disobedient to an authority figure, all of which are frequently considered negative.

Furthermore, the news narratives described the leadership of the southern forces as renegade, enigmatic, and callous. For instance, with reference to an overture reportedly made by an incoming al-Mahdi government and the alleged rejection of such an overture by the leadership of the southern forces, a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report* wrote,

“Efforts at conciliation with the mostly Christian rebels -- including a tempering of the harsh sharia or Islamic law imposed by Nimeiri and an offer of amnesty -- have been rebuffed by John Garang, a renegade Sudanese Army colonel who is leader of the SPLA” (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 31, 1986, p. 28). *Times*’ Boorstin also described the southern forces’ leadership in the following words: “... Mr. Garang is an enigmatic figure, a former colonel in the Sudanese Army who holds a doctorate in economics from Iowa State University and has asserted his claim to rebel leadership since a decade of north-south peace ended in 1982” (*New York Times*, August 18, 1986, p. 4). On the other hand, Lovgren, highlighting the insensitivity of Garang [the leader of the southern forces] towards the suffering of the very people he claims to have been fighting for, noted, “Uganda, for its part, supports the SPLA and its leader, John Garang, who demands autonomy for the South. But critics say Garang... has grown callous to the suffering of his Dinka tribesmen” (*U.S. News & World Report*, September 14, 1998, p. 38). According to Microsoft Word’s thesaurus, the term ‘renegade’ means traitor, betrayer, defector, or deserter; On the other hand, the word ‘callous’ means heartless, uncaring, insensitive, or unsympathetic; whereas, ‘enigmatic’ means mysterious or unknowable. Thus, the key qualifiers used in the news narratives to describe Garang hardly shed any positive light on the character of the leadership of the southern forces.

What is so far common in the news narratives’ portrayal of the southern forces, as demonstrated in the preceding analysis, is the fact that they all shed negative light on the southern group. However, such a negative moral evaluation of the group appears to have changed in the news discourse of the civil war as the civil war entered its later phase (i.e., the phase presided over by the incumbent Sudanese regime). On what appears to be a dramatic shift of perception, the news narratives of the selected print media outlets, which hardly

referred to the southern forces as ‘Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLM)’ before, began to represent the southern forces as ‘liberators’ or ‘freedom fighters’ for the first time during the reign of al-Bashir. In explaining as to why the southern forces were engaging the Khartoum regime, *Times*’ Chris Hedges noted, “The liberation army opposes what it calls domination by the Muslims, and is seeking greater autonomy for the mostly Christian and animist south. Hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese have died in the fighting, many from famine caused by war” (*The New York Times*, June 1, 1992, p. 6). Referring to a Christian minister working in southern Sudan, *Monitor*’s Turnbridge also had this to say: “The liberators - the SPLA - have captured this place, and there is now peace of mind here. It’s a gift of God. The people are coming back home...hundreds of families have begun returning from refugee camps in neighboring Uganda” (*Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 1997, p. 7). What is even more interesting is that *Monitor*’s Rotberg went on-record to acknowledge the futility of continuing to deny (as was the standard during the Cold War) the fact that African forces, such as the SPLA, were freedom fighters, as he put it in the following words, “.....Throughout the cold war, the US backed the regime of Ge. Jaafar Nimeiry, and thus refused to help Col. John Garang’s Sudan People’s Liberation Army. Now, after the cold war and after Somalia, the claims of some of Africa’s most desperate freedom fighters are hard to deny” (*The Christian Science Monitor*, March 19, 1993, p. 19).

One might wonder what triggered the transformation of the image of the southern forces from secessionists/separatists, Marxist zealots, and stooges of neighboring Marxist regimes into liberators and freedom fighters. One cannot help but ask whether the southern forces had undergone any qualitative change during the course of their struggle. Part of the answer to such queries could be found in the following statement made by *Monitor*’s

Matloff, “The SPLA - once reviled by some Western countries during the cold war for its ties to leftist regimes - is mustering greater support as the international community increasingly rejects Khartoum” (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 20, 1996, p. 10). It would appear, when considering the broader context, that what triggered the shift in the tone of the news narratives and the concomitant moral evaluation with respect to the southern forces had less to do with the southern forces and more to do with the end of the Cold War and the changing climate in U.S.-Sudan relations. The end of the Cold War, which was precipitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union, removed the notion of ideological convergence as a basis for classifying friends and enemies. What is more, the Islamic government of president al-Bashir, which came into being at the end of the Cold War, pursued its own course and refused to operate under the U.S. sphere of influence. This put Khartoum at odds with Washington. As a means of containing al-Bashir’s government, Washington embraced the southern forces, resulting in a positive reversal of fortune for the SPLA, where the news narratives turned what had been “Marxist zealots” into “freedom fighters.”

The Sudanese Governments. Since its 1983 birth, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) has militarily engaged three successive war-time Sudanese administrations. These were president Nimeiri’s administration, prime minister al-Mahdi’s administration, and president al-Bashir’s administration. In order to examine the moral evaluations enclosed in the news narratives with respect to these three administrations, it is advisable to look at them individually rather than as a group. In the section below, I analyze how the news narratives portrayed each one of these administrations and what moral evaluations the news narratives made vis-à-vis the three administrations concerned.

The Administration of President Nimeiri. Nimeiri came to power in 1969 and ruled Sudan until 1985. As has already been noted earlier, the southern Sudanese civil war reignited during Nimeiri's administration and continued unabated for more than two decades. During Nimeiri's tenure, the news narratives discursively represented him in various ways but primarily as a peacemaker, both internally and externally. In celebration of Nimeiri's commitment for peace in the Middle East and his role in bringing an end to the southern Sudanese civil war (the first phase of the civil war), a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report* had the following to say:

Sudan's President Gaafar Mohamed El Nimeri is an Army officer who got part of his own training in the United States.... President Nimeri is all out for peace in the Middle-East, believing as he does that a settlement between Arabs and Israelis will clear the way for a dramatic takeoff from poverty for the Arab countries, including Sudan. As a result, he firmly backs the policies of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat in dealing with Israel....President Nimeri came to power in 1969, in a bloodless military coup. Three years later, he brought an end to a civil war that had been raging inside Sudan for 17 years and had sent an estimated 1 million Sudanese fleeing to other countries for refuge. (*U.S. News & World Report*, January 12, 1976, p. 62)

Along the same line, Jaynes from *Times* enumerated Nimeiri's commendable peace-centered efforts in the Middle East as well as within Sudan as follows:

Sudan, the largest nation in Africa and as disparate in cultures and topography as any, with 1,009 spoken languages, a vast southern region that is really Central Africa and a vaster north that is really a turnstile to the Middle East, has a President who has gone after reconciliation and unity with extraordinary zeal. He recently announced a policy

of decentralization that Western diplomats see as courageous. The process was born of necessity in 1972, a year after the President was first elected....Mr. Nimeiry settled a 17-year civil war between the largely Moslem north and the Christian and animist south. Five million southerners were given considerable autonomy, with their own elected 110-member assembly. The assembly elects a president of its high executive council; he appoints 14 members to his cabinet.... It is a stable Government, according to Western diplomats, only because of Mr. Nimeiry's come-one, come-all policy. But by extending this policy to the provinces, in the form of semiautonomy, it is widely held that he is gambling dangerously. (*New York Times*, December 28, 1980, p. 2)

In spite of acknowledging growing problems in the areas of economy and infrastructure, which could pose a threat to Nimeiri's regime, another *Times*' reporter was also quick to praise Nimeiri's governing style in the following words: "President Nimeiry seeks to rule by consensus; the various power centers that could, potentially, challenge him are now cooperating in -- or at least co-opted into -- his Government. It is a fragile consensus, however, threatened at all levels by an economic downturn and a crumbling infrastructure whose problems are exacerbated by the Sudan's vast dimensions" (*New York Times*, December 20, 1981, p. 38).

It is true that Nimeiri was instrumental in ending a protracted first southern civil war between the central government and Ananya forces by signing the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement, which granted the south autonomy. Nimeiri was also one of a few Arab government officials who supported the Camp David Accord of 1978 sponsored by President Jimmy Carter, which was aimed at bringing peace in the Middle East. What the news

narratives did not tell us, however, is how Nimeiri ended up taking and supporting these peace efforts. As discussed in Chapter Three, Nimeiri started off as an ally of the Soviet Union. However, members of Sudan's Communist Party (a coalition partner in the government) attempted a coup against Nimeiri in 1971. He accused the Soviet Union of being behind the coup attempt. Nimeiri executed suspected coup leaders, expelled Soviet advisors from Sudan, severed Khartoum's relation with Moscow, and embraced the United States. In such an uncertain political climate, Nimeiri might have realized that continuing the civil war with the south could make him politically more vulnerable. Hence, he quickly moved to take measures to end the southern civil war. On the other hand, Nimeiri now had to rely on U.S. support, having abandoned his former ally. In order to secure continued and reliable U.S. support, Nimeiri himself had to render support for U.S. geostrategic interests in the Middle East, part of which were contained in the Arab-Israel peace initiative. Hence, the support Nimeiri gave to the Camp David Accord cannot be separated from these contextual factors. It could, therefore, be argued that the much hailed peace efforts exerted by Nimeiri were driven by political expediency rather than solely by an intrinsic urge for the promotion of peace, particularly when one sees how Nimeiri later became responsible for reigniting the very civil war he had helped to bring to an end.

The news narratives also hailed president Nimeiri as a pragmatist who was more interested in solving problems or getting things done than in maintaining ideological allegiance. In light of a serious step Nimeiri took to end more than a decade and a half long north-south war, a *Times*' reporter noted, "He seized power in a 1969 coup and prospered on a pragmatic course. He ended a civil war by unifying the Moslem North and non-Moslem South" (*The New York Times*, April 9, 1985, p. 28). Furthermore, while assessing the nature

of Nimeiri's leadership throughout his long tenure, Gwertzman, towards the end of Nimeiri's political career, wrote the following about him: "One American official said Mr. Nimeiry was a pragmatist who apparently had run out of ideas for keeping his Government afloat. Several praised him for his help in allowing humanitarian aid to the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian refugees who came into the Sudan and for allowing the evacuation of Ethiopian Jews to Israel" (*The New York Times*, April 7, 1985, p. 12).

The complex political trajectory that Nimeiri had gone through and how he overcame numerous obstacles took center stage in the news discourse about Nimeiri. The narratives portrayed Nimeiri as a survivor and politically astute. Referring to numerous attempted coups and how Nimeiri managed to surmount them all, David wrote, "Nimeiri, 53, is a proven master of his nation's intrigue-laden politics and during 14 years in power has survived a dozen coup attempts through courage, toughness and an acute sense of the prevailing political winds" (*The Washington Post*, February 19, 1983, p. A1). Emphasizing the same overcoming spirit of Nimeiri, *Newsweek's* Guttenplan added, "But Nimeiry has always been a shrewd survivor.....The escalating tensions underscored Nimeiry's vulnerability. But he has managed to stave off 15 coup attempts since seizing power in 1969. For the moment he has American AWACS to guard against external enemies -- real or imagined" (*Newsweek*, April 2, 1984, p. 50). Along the same line, another reporter had this to say:

In the 16 years since he seized power, Nimeiri has surmounted countercoups, assassination plots and a rebellion in the south egged on by neighboring Libya. He endured 72 hours of captivity at the hands of leftist insurgents in 1971, got rescued and had the rebels promptly put to death....Such challenges might daunt others, but not Nimeiri. Go-ahead determination has been his watchword since he bounced back

from a childhood soccer injury that left him in a coma for three months. Active after World War II in the movement to free Sudan from British rule, Nimeiri jeopardized a promising military career by challenging the regime formed when independence came in 1956. He made a comeback after dismissal from the Army and arrest and earned a master's degree at the U.S. Command and General Staff College before leading a bloodless coup in 1969. (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 4, 1985, p. 13)

The news narratives of the selected print media outlets almost invariably chronicled Nimeiri's political smartness and his successful outwitting of his countless enemies. In doing so, the narratives almost lionized Nimeiri.

More importantly, the depiction of Nimeiri as a moderate leader and a reliable U.S. ally was another focus of the news discourse. Concerned about Libya's threat to the stability of the Nimeiri regime, for instance, Wilkinson observed, "The Kaddafi scare first went up early this month when Washington's CIA source warned that Kaddafi was planning a coup attempt against the Sudan's moderate president, Jaafar Nimeiry, on Feb. 18. Kaddafi had already begun laying the groundwork by filtering Sudanese dissidents into Khartoum through neighboring Chad" (*Newsweek*, February 28, 1983, p. 26). According to a reporter for the *U.S. News & World Report*, "Fate has treated President Jafar Nimeiri more kindly. The strong man of sun-scorched Sudan is...a nettlesome but valued U.S. ally. Above all, he is a survivor....In dealings with Washington, Nimeiri is buttressed by the political facts of life. Sudan can offer important air and naval links in any rapid deployment of American forces in the Mideast. U.S. officials know that a successor to Nimeiri might be far less accommodating" (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 4, 1985, p. 13).

With respect to the critical role Sudan had hitherto played in realizing the U.S. Middle East policy priorities and the uncertainties that loomed for the United States following the removal of president Nimeiri, a reporter for *U.S. News* recorded:

Despite recurring instability, the largest of the African states traditionally has been a U.S. friend and a linchpin in America's Middle East strategy. Wedged between Marxist Ethiopia and radical Libya, the country forms a pro-Western buffer for Egypt and guards Persian Gulf shipping lanes to Mideast oil fields. The outlook turned unpredictable in 1985 when Jafar Nimeiri, a U.S. ally, was toppled by a civilian-backed military coup. The new government of Gen. Abdul Rahman Sewar El Dahab began "reviewing" U.S. ties while moving to better relations with Libya and the Soviet Union. (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 31, 1986, p. 28)

Similarly, lamenting the removal of the Nimeiri regime and the installation of a new less friendly regime in Khartoum, *Monitor's* Wayne wrote, "In the Sudan, pro-Western President Jafaar Nimeiry has been replaced by a fractious democratic regime that Western diplomats privately call "inept and incompetent." Sudan's north-south civil war has worsened, and Sudan is now receiving military aid from Libya" (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 1989, p. 7). It is clear from the preceding excerpts that the news narratives unequivocally rendered a stunningly positive evaluation of the Nimeiri regime, irrespective of the fact that the regime was criticized for its brutal dictatorship, for ruining the Sudanese economy, for reigniting the north-south civil war, and for introducing a perverted form of Islamic sharia law that enabled Nimeiri to liquidate his perceived political enemies.

The al-Mahdi Government. After the overthrow of the Nimeiri regime, a transitional council ruled Sudan for a year and organized a democratic election, which ushered prime

Minister al-Mahdi into power in 1986. Compared to the other two, al-Mahdi's government was short-lived; it was in power only for three years. During this short tenure, al-Mahdi's government took its fair share of media scrutiny. Soon after al-Mahdi's ascension to power, the narratives of the selected print media outlets portrayed his government as indecisive. In the very early stages of the new administration, *Post's* Randal accused al-Mahdi of failure to quickly act on important policy issues in the following word:

Indecisiveness was noticeable as far back as May, a month after the elections, when Mahdi had to ask the transitional military regime to stay on for another 10 days to allow him more time to patch together a Cabinet... Since their [transitional military regime] departure, however, and Mahdi's assumption of power, his government has been marked by a failure to act on a wide range of policy matters or even to spell out its program for an increasingly querulous public, which had expected quick and decisive action amid the postelection elation. (*The Washington Post*, July 7, 1986, p. A13)

A little less than two years into his premiership, Harden also dismissed al-Mahdi as an indecisive leader by writing that "After a year and a half in power, however, the 51-year-old al-Mahdi has proved himself an indecisive leader, in the view of a number of Sudanese politicians, analysts and western diplomats. For the most part, he has been unable to convert his eloquence into action... as the months passed, Mahdi proved far more adept at talking about than acting on Sudan's problems. He traveled widely, and spoke publicly about mediating the war between Iran and Iraq" (*The Washington Post*, November, 21, 1987, p. A14). In justifying why al-Mahdi allegedly turned out to be a 'talk-nice' and 'do-nothing' or

‘appease-everyone’ and ‘upset-no one’ leader, *Post*’s Harden turned to al-Turabi, a political enemy of al-Mahdi, to note the following:

Sadiq has always wanted to pose as everything to everybody....He is part fundamentalist, part liberal, part socialist, part capitalist. He has tried to win the sympathy of Iran and the Arabs, of Libya and Egypt, of the United States and Russia. He wants to be both an imam and to appeal to secular western opinion....He dreams of being the Mahdi for the world. The Mahdi in Islam is supposed to fill the earth with justice. He is a guide who teaches people and leads them in every way. Sadiq is not deceitful. But he is not consistent. (*The Washington Post*, July 7, 1986, p. A13)

Furthermore, the news narratives also depicted the al-Mahdi regime as fractious, inept and incompetent. Lamenting the demise of the pro-Western regime of Nimeiri and unimpressed with the new democratic al-Mahdi government, *Monitor*’s Wayne had the following to say: “In the Sudan, pro-Western President Jafaar Nimeiry has been replaced by a fractious democratic regime that Western diplomats privately call "inept and incompetent." Sudan’s north-south civil war has worsened, and Sudan is now receiving military aid from Libya (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 3, 1989, p. 7). On the other hand, writing on the same day the al-Mahdi regime was deposed, *Post*’s Henry listed a litany of alleged complex problems the al-Mahdi government had faced during its tenure and how these problems had contributed to the fragility and ineffectiveness of the regime. In Henry’s words,

Today's coup brought a sudden end to a government that was beset by economic problems, political factionalism and military failure in its protracted civil war against rebels in southern Sudan. During Mahdi's rule, Sudan was ravaged by a host of natural disasters that included floods, locusts and drought. But the greatest calamities

appeared to be man-made: the six-year-old civil war that has produced millions of refugees, and the war-exacerbated famine that killed at least 250,000 southerners last year and remains a threat today....Mahdi, 52, had led four different coalition governments since he came to power in a national election in 1986. Observers have generally agreed that each of those coalitions proved fragile and ineffective. (*The Washington Post*, July 1, 1989, p. A1)

Long after the military removed al-Mahdi's government and it was replaced by al-Bashir's Islamist regime, a reporter from the *U.S. News* even posthumously emphasized the theme of incompetence with reference to the al-Mahdi administration in these terms, "A cabal of officers seized power in 1989 from a democratically elected but incompetent government (*U.S. News & World Report*, August 30, 1993, p. 43). It is clear in the preceding analysis that the news narratives in the selected print media outlets portrayed the al-Mahdi government unfavorably and enclosed a moral evaluation that bordered on disapproval of the regime.

It might be difficult to successfully refute the notion that the al-Mahdi government fell short of delivering for the Sudanese society, which was desperate to see the improvement of their lot, and that there were internal political bickerings. But putting the blame on the al-Mahdi regime seems to be tantamount to being intellectually dishonest, as it ignores the complexities of both internal and external factors that effectively crippled the al-Mahdi government. First, close to a two-decade long rule or misrule of Nimeiri had devastated Sudan with choking foreign debt; the economic sectors were virtually paralyzed with the costly civil war sucking meager resources. The al-Mahdi government inherited all these problems from his predecessor. More importantly, the al-Mahdi government came to the realization that Sudan's alignment with the U.S. had created enmity with its neighbors,

giving them an excuse to support the SPLA to destabilize Khartoum. The government recognized that the only way Sudan could get out of this predicament was by improving relations with its hostile neighbors and seeking their support in finding a lasting solution for the southern problem.

Achieving these goals of improving relations with the neighbors was predicated on the reassessment of Sudan's foreign policy. In line with its new objectives, the al-Mahdi government adopted a non-alignment-orientated foreign policy, which could apparently give Sudan the chance to do business with all parties. Unfortunately, al-Mahdi's more pragmatic and less ideological foreign policy direction put Sudan at odds with Washington, which feared that Sudan's improved relations with countries, such as the Soviet Union, Libya, Ethiopia and other Islamic nations could jeopardize its geostrategic interests. Washington expressed its displeasure with the new Sudanese administration's foreign policy direction, but al-Mahdi refused to budge. As a result, Washington sharply reduced its economic support to the al-Mahdi government. Above all, Washington's military support to Sudan plummeted to an insignificant level. The military began to sustain heavy casualties in the battlefields, owing to the deteriorating situations in supplying the military with the necessary resources to fight the war. Out of sheer frustration, the military gave al-Mahdi an ultimatum either to find an urgent solution to the crises or to step down. As there was no magic solution to solving the crises, the military stepped in and deposed the al-Mahdi government and took power. Given such contextual factors, it can fairly be argued that the way Washington treated the new Sudanese administration obviously contributed to the failure of al-Mahdi's democratic experimentation in the post-Nimeiri Sudan.

The al-Bashir Government. The military coup that removed the al-Mahdi regime brought al-Bashir's government into power in 1989, the time punctuated by the end of the Cold War. The news narratives of the selected print media outlets constructed a coherent picture of the new administration. To this end, the news narratives portrayed al-Bashir's regime primarily as Islamic fundamentalist/extremist. In an apparent comparison of the incumbent Sudanese administration with the preceding administrations, *Post's* Winter and Prendergast wrote:

Successive Sudanese governments, until recently, have been important geostrategic allies for the United States. However, the current Islamic fundamentalist military regime in its year and a half in power has set new standards for aberrant action. It has regularly bombed civilian targets in its war against the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army; detained more political prisoners than any other country in Africa during the past year; banned all political parties, newspapers, unions and professional associations; cut off food to civilians in many areas; robbed women of most of their rights; and demonstrated no interest in ending Sudan's seven-year civil war. (*The Washington Post*, October 31, 1990, p. A19)

Attributing the perennial famine that was devastating the Sudanese society to the protracted civil war, a reporter from the *New York Times* noted, "The famine is the result of a long-running civil war between the fundamentalist Islamic Government and a southern rebel group. It has reached a new intensity in recent months as the Government has made new gains and practiced scorched-earth policies against civilians (*The New York Times*, September 16, 1992, p. 1). Along the same line, *Monitor's* Choharis, describing the heavy-

handedness of the Sudanese government vis-à-vis the southerners, wrote, “Strengthened by arms shipments from Libya, Iran, and China, the fundamentalist Islamic government has nearly wiped out the Christian and animist opposition forces in the south. Tens of thousands of others have starved, as the government purposely withholds food. In the north, the junta has imprisoned, tortured, and in some cases executed” (*Christian Science Monitor*, September 8, 1992, p. 18).

Observing an emerging new trend in Sudan’s political experience along with the ascendance of al-Bashir’s government into power, a reporter from *U.S. News* also added:

Islam is the glue that holds together the uneasy alliance of military officers and mullahs that rules Sudan. A cabal of officers seized power in 1989 from a democratically elected but incompetent government; the state is formally headed by Lt. Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his 10-member Revolutionary Command Council. But military officers and followers of the fundamentalist National Islamic Front (NIF), which alone among Sudan’ 30-odd banned political parties emerged from the coup with followers in key posts, differ over the pace of Islamization and sometimes engage in bare-knuckled maneuvering for power. Military men and mullahs, however, agree that Sudan is now an Islamic state like Iran. (*U.S. News & World Report*, August 30, 1993, p. 43)

With reference to the Sudanese regime’s alleged indiscriminate war against the southerners, *Monitor*’s Mackenzie argued, “Simply put, the Islamic fundamentalist government in the north turned up the heat in its fight against the Christian south. Stalemated on the battlefield with the rebel southern Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), the government of

Sudan is waging war on the civilian population in the south “(*Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1998, p. 11).

Furthermore, the news narratives also depicted al-Bashir’s regime as dictatorial, repressive and intolerant. In describing Sudan and the Sudanese regime, *Post*’s Lippman, for example, noted:

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is an impoverished, thinly populated land ravaged by war, disease and drought. Its government -- a military dictatorship dominated by Islamic militants and allied with Iran -- has been branded a supporter of international terrorism by the State Department. Clinton's national security adviser, Anthony Lake, recently added it to his list of "reactionary backlash states." (*The Washington Post*, May 31, 1994, p. A13)

In what appears to be a veiled criticism of the European Union’s move to show willingness to engage with al-Bashir’s government in an apparent view of making it possible for European firms to take part in exploiting Sudan’s oil resources, despite the economic embargo Washington had imposed on Sudan, a reporter for the *Post* wrote:

Few Governments are bloodier than Sudan’s. The Islamist dictatorship in Khartoum routinely abuses human rights; it condones slavery; it has sought to impose Sharia law on the non-Islamic south, deepening a civil war that has claimed 2 million lives since fighting broke out in 1983. Yet not everybody supports the United States' embargo of Sudan. Last week a European Union delegation was in Khartoum, claiming to have seen "some encouraging action" on human rights. Meanwhile European firms are anxious to join Canadian, Malaysian and Chinese rivals in exploiting Sudan’s oil resources. (*The Washington Post*, November 15, 1999, p. A22)

Along a similar line, another reporter from the *Post* noted, “Sudan’s government in Khartoum is authoritarian, intolerant of dissent and a sponsor of terrorism, according to the U.S. State Department. The government represents the largely Muslim population of the north; it has for more than a decade been fighting a civil war against the largely Christian population of the south. Many southern Christians have been kidnapped into slavery” (*The Washington Post*, January 04, 1999, p. A18).

What is more, a *Times*’ reporter made an even more graphic and scathing description of the Khartoum leadership in the following terms:

Khartoum's National Islamic Front deserves little sympathy. It is a cynical gang of generals and theocrats who have plundered Sudan since seizing power in a coup in 1989. The threat it poses for the rest of the world through terrorism pales in comparison to the terror it inflicts on its own population, from purges and torture to state-induced famine. Khartoum's war aim is to perpetuate a long tradition of northern Arab subjugation of the predominantly Christian and animist south, not least so as to exploit the development of southern oil deposits. (*The New York Times*, December 6, 1999, p. 30)

Coterminous with the *Times*’ description of the Sudanese regime, *Monitor*’s Matloff wrote, “Sudan has one of most repressive, extremist regimes in the region. The secret police are feared. Press freedom is curtailed. Political parties are banned. Foreigners need special government permits to travel beyond the capital, Khartoum” (*Christian Science Monitor*, March 20, 1996, p. 11).

The news narratives demonstrate that al-Bashir’s regime received the brunt of a scathingly negative portrayal that was far worse than that of the al-Mahdi government from

the selected print media outlets. The news narratives' unanimous and strong negative depiction of the al-Bashir regime directly or indirectly deprives the regime of any moral legitimacy in the way it dealt with the southern forces.

According to Entman's (1993; 207) framing model, the last thing a fully developed news frame does is suggest remedies--that is, offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. A close examination of the news narratives of the selected print media outlets reveals that there was a conspicuous absence of substantive news discourse that aims at suggesting a viable solution to solving the southern Sudanese civil war. The majority of the selected outlets (three out of five) never attempted to provide a workable remedy for the crisis in the southern Sudan. The remaining two media outlets attempted to make a few brief and vague suggestions as to how to deal with the crisis in question. To this end, *Monitor's* Willis, for example suggested the following remedy:

Despite the pressure on Garang [SPLA leader], a political settlement to the civil war between north and south in Sudan seems no closer. Analysts in London say it will be extremely difficult for the new Khartoum government, made up of northern Muslims, to impose a "national identity" on the south, which is Christian and animist... One solution, these analysts say, would be a federal one, dividing Sudan into five areas, each with considerable autonomy. Muslim areas would retain Islamic law and the south would have its own legal system. But there are no signs the new government is interested in such radical reform. (*Christian Science Monitor*, May 21, 1985, p. 1)

Even after recommending a federal system as a possible solution to resolving the civil war, the reporter seems to be skeptical about the willingness of Khartoum's regime to consider such federal arrangements for Sudan. On the other hand, a reporter from the *Post* espoused

granting equal religious rights for all the Sudanese citizens as the right way to silence guns in Sudan: “Peace will only be secured with justice that gives recognition to the religious rights of Christians and followers of traditional African religions. Peace will be secured when those who reject Khartoum's radical Islamic ideology are no longer deemed "infidels" and taken into slavery or slaughtered” (*The Washington Post*, January 20, 1999, p. A26).

The question one might rightfully ask here is why the selected print news media chose to either ignore completely or provide a brief and passing remark with respect to putting forth possible solutions for resolving the civil war. One possible explanation might be that there was an implicit acknowledgement, on the part of the selected media outlets, of the complexity of the Southern Sudanese civil war and, hence, the problem of coming up with a silver bullet that could put an end to the crisis. In fact, *Post's* Winter seems to support this argument when he wrote, “The ethnic conflict is deep and not easily resolvable. Political solutions will require long and careful negotiations” (*The Washington Post*, November 29, 1988, p. A25). Another possible scenario might be that it was journalistically expedient for correspondents of the selected media outlets to just focus on the crisis and ignore the solution aspect, which might have required unearthing more contextual factors.

Comparison of the News Framing and Representation across the Three Sudanese Regimes

The second part of this chapter focuses on examining how the news framing and representation of the selected print news media outlets' accounts of the southern Sudanese conflict differed among the three periods/events represented by the tenures of the three consecutive war-time Sudanese administrations. As has already been noted, the Southern Sudanese civil war continued over a time span that encompassed the tenures of three

successive Sudanese regimes: president Nimeiri (1983-1985), prime Minister al-Mahdi (1986-1989), and president al-Bashir (1989-2005). The analysis in this section pays particular attention to finding out whether or not the news narratives' framing of the civil war differed or remained the same when one war-time Sudanese regime was replaced by another war-time regime, and attempt to account for such shifts or lack of shifts in the framing of the war. Another area of analytical focus in this section has to do with the examination of the way the warring parties (the Sudanese government and the southern forces) were represented or portrayed across the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese regimes. In other words, the analysis aims at finding out whether the nature of the news narratives' representation or portrayal of the two warring parties shifts from one war-time Sudanese regime to another or whether it remains unaffected by the change of regimes, and to account for such changes or lack of changes in the representation.

As noted in the first part of the chapter, the narratives of the selected print news media outlets framed the southern Sudanese civil war as ethno/racial-religious war taking place between the Arab Islamic government in the north and the black African southerners who are Christians and animists. This frame remained the same throughout the entire conflict period and it seems that the change of the Sudanese regimes and the ideological orientations of the regimes did not have a bearing on the overall framing of the southern Sudanese civil war. Across the tenures of the three successive war-time Sudanese regimes, the ethno/racial-religious dimension of the civil war remained the colonizing frame which pervaded the news narratives. The only observable difference that seems to have been affected by regime change was the news narratives' discursive construction of the goal of the southern forces' struggle against the Khartoum government. As discussed earlier, during the tenure of the Nimeiri

administration, the news narratives discursively constructed the mission of the struggle of the southern forces as securing secession or separation from Khartoum, whereas during the post-Nimeiri administrations, the news narratives made a dramatic shift and defined the eventual goal of the SPLA as seeking autonomy within a united Sudan rather than effecting secession.

I argued earlier that this shift of narratives from secession/separation to autonomy could plausibly be explained only if one takes into account the context of the change of relations between Washington and Khartoum. But a more important question one has to answer here is why the change of the war-time Sudanese regimes, and their differing foreign policy orientations with respect to Khartoum's relation with Washington, did not seem to affect the overall framing of the civil war. In order to adequately respond to such a fundamental question, it is quite important to recall the argument I made in Chapter Four while discussing how the U.S. media have historically covered Africa. For centuries, Europeans, through their literary, artistic, and anthropological pieces of work, had managed to produce a totalizing image of Africa that essentially reduced Africans as tribal and ethnic-based groups with little or no national orientation. So pervasive was such a knowledge in the Western mind, it has often served as a useful explanatory frame for understanding events on the Africa continent. Both the U.S. media and their audience undoubtedly feed off such age-old historical narratives about the African scene. In fact, as Maloba (1992) argues, the U.S. media often go to the extent that they reserve certain terms, like tribe and ethnicity, for Africa alone. What is more, as the U.S. media often pay attention to Africa mainly during the time of crises, such imbroglios are often presented as stemming from deep-rooted tribal and ethnic hatreds (Ebo, 1992). The southern Sudanese civil war appears to comfortably fit with the

already existing myth about the primordial sentiment that apparently characterizes relations among the African society.

Unlike the news framing, a significant shift of the news narratives occurred during the tenures of the three successive war-time Sudanese regimes in relation to the representation and portrayal of the warring parties in the southern civil war. During the Nimeiri regime, for instance, the selected print media outlets discursively represented the southern forces as secessionists or separatists bent on breaking away from the Khartoum government; the news narratives also portrayed them as Marxist guerrillas serving as a proxy for the neighboring hostile and radical Marxist regimes, who were at loggerheads with a Western-friendly regime in Khartoum. In doing so, the news narratives apparently marginalized and delegitimized the southern cause. However, following the demise of the Nimeiri regime and the coming to power of a democratically elected al-Mahdi government, the tone of the news discourse began to be sympathetic towards the southern forces and grew to be more sympathetic with the ascent to power of al-Bashir's Islamic government. In the post-Nimeiri regimes, the media image of the southern forces went through metamorphosis. As a result, those who had been identified as secessionist or separatists, Marxist guerrillas, and agents of hostile and radical regimes became liberators and freedom fighters. In the process, the news discourse surprisingly accorded legitimacy to the southern cause, the very cause it had apparently marginalized and delegitimized earlier.

With respect to the representation and portrayal of the war-time Sudanese regimes, a similar trend is observed in terms of the shift of narratives. The news discourse cast the Nimeiri regime as a peacemaker, pragmatist, moderate, survivor, and above all, reliable U.S. ally. Whatever its shortcomings might be in the polarizing ideological battle of the Cold War,

the media image of the Nimeiri administration was well packaged. On the other hand, the democratically elected al-Mahdi government that took power after the forced removal of the Nimeiri administration did not fare well with the media. The news narratives consistently depicted the al-Mahdi government as fractious, indecisive, inept, and incompetent. When the short-lived al-Mahdi regime was replaced by al-Bashir-led Islamic government, the portrayal sharply deteriorated. The news narratives scathingly depicted the al-Bashir regime as Islamic fundamentalist/extremist, dictatorial/autocratic, and intolerant regime that was at war with its own people. What we see from the analysis is that while the media image of the southern forces evolved from negative to positive as it moved from the Nimeiri era to the post-Nimeiri era, the representation of the Khartoum governments went from good to bad and, then, to worst as the narratives progressed from Nimeiri to al-Mahdi and, then, to al-Bashir, respectively. As noted in the first part of the chapter, the news narratives' representation and portrayal of both the warring parties appears to be consistent with Washington's policy towards Khartoum over the tenures of the three Sudanese regimes. What is interesting, though, is that while Washington's foreign policy priorities seem to have no observable impact on the overall news framing of the civil war, it appears that they had a bearing on the media's portrayal of the warring parties.

Problematizing the News Frame

As the analysis reveals, the news media discursively framed the southern Sudanese civil war as an ethno/racial-religious war between the Arab-Muslim north and the African-Christian and animist south. The ethno/racial-religious dichotomy was represented in geographical terms as a north-south divide, as if the two groups were neatly and unproblematically separated along ethnic/racial, religious, and geographical lines. The

question one has to address correctly is if the southern civil war was, in fact, primarily an ethno/racial-religious conflict, or if ethnicity/race and religion were used to serve as the outward manifestations of all that is contested in the Sudan. To this end, it is important to look at the ethnic/racial and religious composition of the Sudan and make a case so as to demonstrate how the ethno/racial-religious frame could not help us understand well the underlying factors that unleashed the southern Sudanese crisis.

As Jok (2007) argues, Sudan is a nation of more than 40 million people, which is made up of over 500 ethnic groups with a staggering cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. According to the CIA World Facebook (www.cia.gov), ethnically, the Sudanese society is 52% black, 39% Arab, 6% Beja, 2% foreigners, and 1% other. Of these, 70% are Sunni Muslim, 5% Christian, and 25% indigenous beliefs. With reference to the religious composition of north versus south Sudan, Jok (2007) notes, “Currently, it is estimated that 30 percent of the south’s 8 million people profess Christianity, 5 percent are Muslims and 65 percent followers of various systems of worship indigenous to the region. The north is over 90 percent Muslim, but 2 million of the displaced southerners reside in Khartoum and are mostly Christians” (p. 158).

Since 1956 independence, power has resided in the hands of a small group of riverain Arab elites situated in the north along the Nile valley. These power elites have vociferously tried to shape the identity of the Sudan after the Arab-Islamic cultural molds. In the process, they conspicuously excluded the majority of the Sudanese society from equitable participation in the socio-economic, political, and cultural affairs of the nation. As the marginalized group demanded their rightful place in the affairs of the nation, the Arab elites saw it as a threat to their monopoly of power. The ruling Arab elites, seeking to consolidate

their hold on power, began to effectively apply the racial and religious differences as the criteria for choosing to ally themselves with some groups against others (Jok 2007). This choice of allies had to be made carefully so as to avoid a backlash. Since the Arabs are a minority in comparison to the non-Arabs, who make up the overwhelming majority of the Sudanese society, casting the conflict publicly as “racial” would work against them in mobilizing the non-Arab Muslims to ally behind their cause. On the other hand, as Muslims make up 70% of Sudanese society, it was politically sound and expedient for the Arab elites to define the conflict with religious overtones. Casting the southern civil war as a Muslim versus Christian confrontation served important purposes both domestically and beyond the boundaries of the Sudan. Domestically, the religious perspective of the conflict enabled the Arab elites who controlled power to state at various forums that the insurgency in the south was driven by anti-Islamic sentiments held by southerners, and therefore a war against it was not only legitimate, but also sanctioned by Islamic Jihad or holy war (Jok 2007). The invocation of the legitimacy of the holy war would essentially make dissent difficult among Muslims, as any opposition to defending the Islamic faith against alleged anti-Islamic forces could lead one to be labeled as a bad Muslim or even be accused of apostasy. Beyond the boundaries of the Sudan, the Muslim-Christian frame served the purpose of mobilizing sympathy and support from fellow Muslims around the world, by linking the southern insurgency as a Western neocolonial and Christian conspiracy directed at undermining the Islamic identity of the Sudan as well as jeopardizing the unity of the Sudan.

As far as the southern forces were concerned, there seems to be a recognition of the fact that the southern Sudanese are ethnically, linguistically, and culturally very complex, with often competing interests and visions. Mobilizing such a complex society to rally behind

a common cause against a perceived common enemy would not be easy. Thus, it was imperative to define their struggle in a way that would transcend their ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences. That might have led them to frame the conflict in racial terms--that is, the northern Arab elites as marginalizing the black African south. What is more, emphasizing the racial dimension of the conflict would help the southern cause to win foreign support and sympathy. Speaking of the south, Jok (2007), for example, is of the opinion that the SPLA had gained a high international standing by characterizing the southern plight in the simplified terms that had proved so effective in winning foreign sympathy for the south. According to Jok (2007), the 'African' label played well to international audiences on the issue of the south, especially in the 1990s.

Notwithstanding the normative racial, ethnic, tribal, and religious discourse that has historically shaped the Western media conceptualization of things African, the description of the southern conflict as between the Arab Muslim north and the Christian African south is mainly attributable to statements made by both the warring parties to achieve their political objectives. These concepts were comfortably picked and used in the media and elsewhere without the explanation of their meanings or how they operate. They have since emerged as powerful factors in the search for easy and uncomplicated explication of the conflict, but with serious implications. As Jok (2007) rightly captures,

...journalism usually sets itself up to be pandered by the warring factions, as each side vies for sympathy of the audience—reader, viewer, and listener. Journalism seeks to capture the stories of suffering from a perspective that looks for shock effect and entertainment aspects over informative ones. The result is that the depth of the

story is often missed in favor of spectacle, and the potential for misrepresentation is frequently present. (p. 29)

It seems that this was exactly what happened with the news media framing of the southern civil war, in which the ethno/racial-religious dimension took the center stage. One should, however, recognize that this is not to argue that race and religion did not have a role in the southern Sudanese civil war. On the contrary, race and religion have been the most important and clear manifestations of other types of conflicts. In other words, the conflict is, among other things, over the distribution of power and resources, but race and religion have become the tools with which the confrontation is fought out. Race and religion have become the national guide for development plans, service provision, maintenance of security, as well as how the marginalized explain their subjugation. As Jok (2007) rightly observes,

Racial and religious differences are never sufficient cause for conflict, but rather are the tools for achievement of other ends. What accounts for this bitter divide in Sudan is also a matter of basic political, cultural, economic, and social choice where race and religion have acted as a manifestation of the conflict over basic needs. It is a situation where the dominant groups have attempted to use racial and religious indoctrination as a condiment to neutralize the bitter taste of history. (pp. 246-247)

It is precisely the account of this 'bitter taste of history' that was missing in the news narratives of the selected print media outlets. And this 'bitter taste of history' cannot be fully understood without taking stock of the enduring damages colonialism had inflicted upon the Sudan and without addressing how colonial legacies have still continued to tear apart the social fabric of the Sudanese society. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ABSENCES IN THE NEWS FRAMING AND REPRESENTATION OF THE SOUTHERN CIVIL WAR

In news narratives, what is excluded or what is absent is as important as what is included or what is present. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) contend, a discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain nodal points, and such a fixation of meaning is usually achieved through the exclusion of all other possible meanings that the signs could have had. But before talking about what is excluded or what is absent in the news narratives, it is important to determine the overarching discourse constructed by the selected news media outlets with respect to the southern Sudanese conflict. A close examination of the narratives of the selected news media outlets indicates that the *discourse of civil war* is the colonizing discourse that structures the news narratives. The news narratives constructed the discourse of civil war around an ethno/racial-religious fault line. In other words, the ethno/racial-religious fault line served as a nodal point or privileged sign around which the civil war discourse was articulated. By doing so, the discourse narrowed the terrain and effectively excluded other equally important nodal points that could constitute the discourse. One such nodal point the discourse excluded is the perspective of the legacy of colonialism. With respect to the issue of absence, therefore, this chapter focuses on the enduring legacy of European colonialism and its detrimental impact on the post-independence Sudanese polity.

While articulating the relevance of the past in making sense of the present and the future, Hart (1998, citing McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, pp. 74-75) once asserted that we “look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future” (p. 1). It means that we see the present through the window of the past; we march into the past to propel us

into the future. The past is never self-contained, but is often porous. The present experience is never an autonomous one. It is an experience that is informed and shaped by the experiences of the past. In the same token, the aftermath of European colonialism never erased or did away with the experiences of colonialism in the lives of the postcolonial African societies. Rather, the postcolonial African societies' encounter with colonialism has left profound and lasting effects on these societies long after the departure of the colonial powers. The political, economic, and socio-cultural structures put in place by the colonial powers have still continued to frustrate the postcolonial African societies' efforts to build viable political communities, and the postcolonial Sudanese state is no exception. Thus, the southern Sudanese predicament can only be comprehensively understood by going beyond the ethno/racial-religious frame and by articulating the crisis to the enduring legacy of colonialism. Within the rubric of this colonial legacy, this chapter pays particular attention to the north-south divide, its attendant socio-economic and political development disparities, and its national identity crisis, and argues how these factors have been partly responsible for the southern Sudanese civil war.

The Institution of the North-South Division

Following the 1898 Anglo-Egyptian occupation of the Sudan, the occupying forces, mainly the British, administered the Sudan as two separate entities, where the north and the south were made to have virtually nothing in common except their shared colonial experience. The colonial policy that legitimized the geographical and administrative separation between the north and the south was commonly known as the 'Southern Policy.' On the basis of this policy, the British adopted a separate system of administration in Sudan's southern region, i.e., the provinces of Equatoria, Bahr el-Ghazal, and Upper Nile. As

(Sidahmed, 1996) notes, the colonial government soon made the ‘Southern Policy’ official by declaring the south a ‘closed district’ for northerners.

According to various scholars (Deng and Gifford, 1987; Lesch, 1998; Sidahmed, 1996; Kebede, 1999), based on the provisions of the ‘Southern Policy’, the northern Sudanese were barred from entering or living in the south; even those northerners, especially Arab merchants, who had lived in the region for years were forced to leave. Native southerners were also prohibited to travel or seek employment in the north. The spread of the Arabic language and Islam was disallowed in the region, while Christianity and English language were encouraged.

Apart from the an unarticulated colonial goal of divide-and-rule, the British rationalized this isolationist policy by emphasizing the fact that the southern societies needed to be protected from the Muslim north, whose traders it claimed had preyed upon the south in the nineteenth-century slave trade (Sanderson and Sanderson, 1981). From the very beginning, the British were generally trying to keep the Arab and Islamic influence out of East Africa, which was supposed to fall under the sway of English values and Christianity. Since the British plan (until late in the Condominium, which means joint government) was to annex the southern Sudan and incorporate it into the British East Africa region, the ‘Southern Policy’ was supposed to help the south to prepare well for its presumed eventual integration into this great region (Kebede, 1999). Such a scheme undoubtedly reified the north-south divide and made national integration extremely difficult at independence. More importantly, the colonial policy brought about asymmetrical economic, educational, and administrative development between the north and the south. As argued below, such an unequal

development fostered by the colonial policy, later became a powerful and destructive source of contention between the north and the south once independence was achieved.

Economic disparity. According to Sidahmed (1996), the colonial regime brought radical economic and socio-political transformations in the Sudan, and the impact of such transformations outlived the colonial period itself. For Sidahmed (1996), it was these transformations that formed the genesis and background of contemporary Sudanese policies and society. Significant determinants in these transformations were the mechanisms set in motion as a result of the colonial state's policies and ventures in various economic, social, political and administrative spheres. Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of the colonial policies was a conspicuous economic development disparity between the north and the south.

According to Sidahmed (1996), economic development in the north was an important area of the colonial administration's innovation. Notwithstanding the conventional colonial resource exploitation objectives, the administration was cognizant of the fact that it needed to expand and maintain regular revenue for its budget. Such recognition led the administration to take measures that would enhance economic development. The first of these measures was tackling the land tenure system, since the country's potential was considered to lay primarily in agriculture. Accordingly, the land tenure issue was taken care of by passing a series of ordinances which vigorously revised the extant systems. As Sidahmed (1996) records, the laws recognized three types of land holdings: government, tribal/village and private.

The administration also passed another piece of legislation in the economic field pertaining to the requiring of private investors in obtaining licenses for their activities in the fields of trade, agriculture and industry. Such measures facilitated taking economic ventures

that were geared towards market-oriented production. The biggest and most important venture that the colonial administration undertook in this regard was what was known as the 'Gazira scheme.' It was a scheme that was based on a system of crop sharing between the farmer, the government and the Sudan Plantation Syndicate--the company which implemented the scheme (Sidahmed, 1996). What is more, the administration also introduced modern techniques in the field of irrigation and plantation to enhance private agricultural ventures. The most important of these was the introduction of pump irrigation along the Nile Valley (Northern, Khartoum, and the Blue Nile provinces) for the growth of cotton and other crops. At a later stage, the administration also introduced mechanized farming. In connection with the export commodities, limited industries also grew in the region.

Alongside the introduction of economic development initiatives, the colonial administration saw it as imperative to develop a reliable transport and communication system, as effective control of the country and its resources would be inconceivable without a good transportation and communication network. Thus, the colonial government aggressively pursued the development of transport and communication networks. Accordingly, the administration expanded on the railway, which was first introduced during the conquest, to connect the various regions with the capital city in the north and a sea port. This network facilitated import-export activities and increased domestic commerce, especially in the north. Thanks to these economic development and innovation efforts of the colonial administration, the northern Sudanese became beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the situation in the south was quite different. As Collins (1984) argues, from the outset the aim of the colonial administration in the north was to modernize, not just to pacify. Unlike in the north, the colonial regime's overriding concern in the south

was not development but an obsession with pacification. When the British went into the south, their primary goal was pacification of the unwelcoming and hostile southerners, who had experienced, first hand exploitation and abuse from previous invaders. After the British achieved pacification in the south through the exercise of both soft and hard power, they focused on maintaining such stability and gave little or no attention to development in the region. The irony was that at least theoretically, one of the main justifications made for the ‘Southern Policy’ was that southern Sudan was supposed to follow a separate course of development from the north. As Sidahmed (1996) points out, however, in reality, no development of whatever sort was followed in the region until late in the Condominium era.

Soon after they achieved pacifying the southern region, the British began to see the southerners differently. As Lesch (1998) notes, the British were of the perception “...that the peoples in the south were primitive and pagan. Southern peoples required moral guidance that could be provided by Christian missionaries from Europe” (p. 32). Such a perception might have impacted the colonial regime’s decision in exerting no effort for bringing about any observable economic development in the south. As a consequence, Sidahmed (1996) argues, the south remained as one of the Sudan regions that was conspicuous by the lack of any significant colonial economic innovations. Apart from establishing law and order, and opening the region to Christian missionary activities, the colonial government was happy to ‘preserve’ the southern Sudan almost intact in aspects of its economic life. Rather than promoting economic development, the colonial policy became an obstacle in fostering economic and social development in the south, and thereby widened the already substantial gap with the north. As Lesch (1998) contends, key British officials blocked government and private development efforts in the south, arguing that the indigenous population had no desire

to improve its economic welfare. As a result, economic and social development in the south lagged significantly behind the north by the time the Sudan gained independence in 1956. This disparity became a source of anger and fueled rebellion against the perceived injustice, and thereby hardened southerners' feelings towards successive postindependence Sudanese regimes, as the actions of these regimes revealed that the central government was more inclined to maintaining the status quo than bridging the disparity.

Educational disparity. As was the case with the economic policy, the British instituted two distinct and uneven educational policies in the north and south Sudan. This distinction and unevenness of the educational policies was reflected in both the type of educational leadership in whose hands the education of the north and the south was placed and the nature of education in both regions. As history shows, it was a common experience for the British to rely on Christian missionary schools to groom young men for employment in most of their African territories. However, Sharkey (2003) contends that since the British authorities in northern Sudan were anxious not to offend Muslim public opinion, having recently ousted the staunchly Islamic Mahdist state, they placed the government in charge of education. According to Sharkey (2003), in view of addressing the colonial regime's need for clerks, accountants, teachers, engineers, and *qadis* (Muslim court judges), the British authorities founded Gordon College in 1902 in the north. As Sharkey (2003) argues, the British administrators wanted Gordon College to be an elite institution along the lines of a British public school. This meant that educational opportunities were open only for the privileged group. In recruiting for the school, therefore, "authorities favored young men of high status backgrounds. Above all, they enrolled students from Arabic-speaking, Muslim

families that claimed Arab genealogies and hailed from the central riverain North” (Sharkey, 2003, p. 8).

Parallel to a modern and elite education offered at Gordon College, the colonial government also designed other routes to education in northern Sudan. The most important of such routes was the one that gave recognition to Islamic education. The colonial regime allowed the studying of the Islamic sciences independently or in small classes with learned *shaykhs*. This gave a symbolic significance for and an obvious recognition of the role of Islamic religious leaders in the education of the northerners. But still education by *shaykhs* was far from offering equal advantages as did the Gordon College. According to Sharkey (2003),

The Gordon College provided direct access to jobs in colonial government, often at the highest level open to the northern Sudanese. It also gave its students a strong literary education in both Arabic and English, and introduced new communications technologies such as typing and printing in classrooms and in extracurricular contexts. Finally, the college promoted an ethos of self-sufficiency and group spirit, on playing fields and in lecture rooms alike. The result was a set of graduates who possessed both the knowledge and confidence to articulate and disseminate nationalist ideologies. (p. 8)

Unlike the northerners, young men with homes in the south could not attend Gordon College as a matter of British policy (Sanderson and Sanderson, 1981). Believing that Southern societies needed to be protected from the Islamic influence, the colonial regime applied isolationist policies. For instance, the colonial government directed educational development in the north, while comparatively underfunded Christian missionary groups had

free rein over education in the south. What is more, the colonial government formalized a language policy whereby Arabic remained the main language of instruction and administration in the north, whereas English or local vernaculars served the same purpose in the south. Arabic was excluded from schools and government offices.

Catholic and protestant missionaries opened schools where Muslim schools, mosques, and preachers were banned (Lesch 1998). According to Bermingham & Collins (1984), from the inception of the Condominium the task of education in the southern Sudan had been entrusted for reasons of finance and faith to the missionary societies. The missionary societies were in the southern Sudan to evangelize and to convert the Africans to Christianity. So long as the missions bore the full cost of instruction, the British authorities in the Sudan could hardly complain. As Bermingham & Collins (1984) notes, the teaching in Christian Missionary Schools was by native teachers who had no training. They were left to their own resources without any experience and in some cases not even completing a full elementary course. The missionaries had little sense of what was going on in the classes. They did not devote time and attention to the organization of the teacher's work. Almost all the mission schools were religious and often, the gospel was enough to learn (Bermingham & Collins, 1984). The limited number of these missionary schools did not meet the population's need to train technicians, soldiers, teachers, and clerks. There were no government secondary schools in the entire south until after World War II (Lesch, 1998).

In summarizing the educational legacy of colonialism in the Sudan, Sharkey (2003) identified three outstanding points. First, by selecting students along lines of language, ethnicity, religion, class, and gender, British authorities at Gordon College reinforced the social power structures of the preconquest period (Sharkey, 2003). Second, by concentrating

government resources on northern education, and by entrusting southern education, unsupervised, to missionary groups of limited means, colonial policies pushed the south and southerners into a deeper rut of underdevelopment vis-à-vis the north and northerners. Sudan's educational policies, as in other parts of the British Empire, fostered uneven development among regions and social groups. This discriminatory and asymmetrical education policy created and/or aggravated linguistic and cultural barriers with and educated manpower disparity between the north and the south and reified the divide between the two regions, making reconciliation at independence more difficult (Spaulding and Kapteijns, 1991). Finally, by privileging Arabic-speaking, northern riverain Muslims for the most advanced colonial education available, the Sudan's educational policies produced an ethnically specific nationalist elite (Sharkey, 2003). This specificity helped to confirm patterns of exclusionary ethnic politics in the postcolonial era (Young, 1976).

Emergence of Sectarian Political Structure

From the very beginning, the colonial administration in the north adopted a very cautious attitude towards Islamic religion. As noted earlier, the traditional religious (*khalwa*) education continued throughout northern Sudan. Not only that, the Islamic *shari'a* law was also allowed to function in the north, although it was confined to matters that pertain to personal affairs such as marriage, divorces, and inheritance. To this effect, argues Sidahmed (1996), special courts were allocated, and the training of orthodox '*alma*', '*qadis*' and '*muftis*' (jurists, judges and interpreters, respectively) was pursued under the auspices of the colonial state. In the administrative field, the colonial state sustained the authority of the tribal chieftains and eventually integrated this authority within a system of *indirect rule* commonly known as the 'native administration.'

Especially after it became clear to the colonial regime that the northern educated elites posed a threat to its rule, it shifted its focus, more than ever before, towards the tribal and religious leaders and attempted to turn away from the intelligentsia. For insuring its sustained survival and continuity, the colonial regime now found it expedient to seek the support of traditional leaders and structures, such as the tribal, but more crucially, the religious leaders. Consequently, material and social benefits were extended to these leaders in return for their loyalty and that of their followers. According to Sidahmed (1996), this process, among other things, resulted in the rise of what came to be known as 'sectarianism'. Sectarianism arose on the foundations of established religious support on the one hand, and on the support and encouragement of the colonial state on the other. Prominent among the sectarian leaders were the Mirghanists, descendants of Muhammad 'Uthman al-Mirghani who headed the *Khatmiyya tariqa*, and the descendents of al-Mahdi and leaders of his followers, the *Ansar* (Sidahmed, 1996).

The role of World War I for the rise in prominence of the *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar* is particularly worth mentioning. When World War I broke out, the British administration called upon the leaders of popular Islam to utilize their influence to pacify the populace. The heads of the two major religious sects, *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar*, responded positively to the call. In return, the colonial administration accorded sectarian heads (especially the *Khatmiyya* and *Ansar*) with both material and moral awards that enhanced their social prestige, economic position, and their political influence. What is more, the alleged disloyalty of the educated class (as demonstrated in the 1924 rebellion) to colonial rule and the resultant strategic shift of alliance by the latter towards the religious leaders resulted in the elevation of the status of the leaders of the two religious sects. Under the Condominium, both the

Ansar and *Khatmiyya* were transformed into prominent capitalists and landowners while retaining the loyalty of their traditional followers. Thus, by virtue of their economic might, their traditional authority, and the support of the colonial state, the leaders of *Ansar* and *Khatmiyya* emerged as the most outstanding representatives of popular Islam in the twentieth century Sudan (Sidahmed, 1996). Following independence, the *Ansar* sect formed the Umma Party whereas the *Khatmiyya* sect formed the National Unionist Party (NUP), which later became the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). These and other late-coming sectarian political parties, such as the National Islamic Front (NIF)—which was the off-shoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood—have dominated the political landscape in contemporary Sudan. From their inception, these sectarian parties have historically been known for their rivalry despite the fact that Islam was the central element around which the movement of the parties revolved. Generally speaking, the colonial administration's nurturing of the sectarian groups for strategic reasons and the failure of creating a viable secular political structure in the colonial Sudan has undoubtedly contributed to the reign of sectarian politics and the preponderance of complex problems in modern-day Sudan.

Contribution of the Condominium in the Sudanese National Identity Crisis

The colonial state was a dictatorial state formed by force and coercion; it did not grow out of the organic process of the development of the constituent cultural members that made up the state. Disparate peoples and cultural groups with little or no commonly shared historical and cultural narratives were often awkwardly thrown together to form a state, hoping that they would gradually forge a common national identity. But as Miller (1995), a political theorist, points out, "It is incompatible with nationality to think of the members of the nation as people who merely happen to have been thrown together in one place and

forced to share a common fate, in the way that the occupants of a life boat, say, have been accidentally thrown together” (p. 25). Sudan as a nation-state never existed until the twentieth century. For several hundred years, the people of the modern-day Sudan had lived under separate and distinct sultanates and kingdoms until the onslaught of the European imperial powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In their scramble for Africa, the European powers partitioned the continent among themselves based on their own economic and territorial imperatives and with no regard for the peoples that inhabited the continent.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British under the Condominium administration established the geopolitical territories of modern-day Sudan, which houses a plethora of disparate ethnic groups. It is true that as identity is not fixed and immutable, it is not impossible for such disparate peoples forced to form a state to develop a common national identity in the long run through a conscious effort of constructing national symbols and mythologies. The problem with the Sudan was that the British, after the conquest, ruled the Sudan not as one entity but as two separate entities. Soon after the conquest, they instituted what was known as the “Southern Policy”, which virtually cut off the south from the north with the aim of shielding the south from Islamic and Arab influence. This separation, as discussed earlier, resulted in an uneven development in the two regions. As noted earlier, owing to the colonial educational policy that solely favored a narrow group of northern riverain Arabs, a small group of Arabic-speaking and Muslim northerners became beneficiaries of advanced education. Relative to the population, these educated northern Sudanese were strikingly homogenous. In other words, the colonial policy gave birth to the rise of modern educated classes who were often drawn from uniform ethnic and

social backgrounds. In the long run, it was these elites who mustered the power to define national values and, later, to preside over national politics.

On the other hand, during more than a quarter century of isolation, the southerners were taught English in place of Arabic and Christianity in place of Islam. The northerners were presented for the southerners as slave traders and oppressors. The southerners were made conscious of their differences from the north. What is more, the British administrators in the south encouraged the southerners to associate with Africans from the British East Africa by participating in meetings and by sending the southerners to schools there. As already noted earlier, the colonial governors in the north took care of the northern Sudanese separately. Islam and Arabic were cultivated in the north. The northerners were allowed to interact with their neighboring Arab nations. The objective behind this tactic was that the British, at least in the earlier stages, were planning to annex southern Sudan to their British East African Federation. The northern Sudanese bitterly resented the British separation of the south. The pressure from the northern nationalists kept building up for the reversal of the southern policy and the restoration of the Sudan as one united country. Finally, the British suddenly nullified all restrictions imposed to separate the southern region from the north and met the northerners' demands for a united Sudan. As Kebede (1999) notes,

Movement between the two regions was allowed. Northerners were permitted to return to their administrative posts in the south. Arabic was imposed as the only official language of administration, replacing English. Arabic was also introduced as a school subject. The interdiction against Muslim preaching in the south was annulled. Within a brief period of time, the northern Arabs overwhelmed the region.

They managed to monopolize all the major institutions then existing in the south, such as the civil service, finance and banking, education, and security. (p. 13)

Understandably, the southerners opposed the reversal of this policy, which they thought would jeopardize their cultural and political rights. This was a challenging phenomenon for the new Sudan. The long-awaited independence had come, but this independence brought with it the responsibility for the Sudan to determine its self-identity. As Woodward (1979) argues, the Sudanese attitude towards the Middle East and Africa became more than a question of foreign relations; this attitude involved the most difficult problem of her own self-identity. The possibility of union with Egypt had encouraged the country's awareness of its attachments to the Arab world. This in itself was a concern to the southerners, for it could compromise their African identity. But for the northerners, African identity for the Sudan was unthinkable, for they believed that their Arab culture was superior to the 'primitive' African culture. For the northerners, the peoples of the south are 'the lost brothers' snatched away by the British. They maintained that, without the artificial division imposed by the British, the diffusion of Arabic and Islam would have led to the disappearance of southern cultural specificities.

The northerners argued that the successful nationalist movement they waged against the colonial administration was inspired by Muslim-Arab identity. Thus, they believed that undoing the damage done by the British to fellow southerners should be achieved through cultivating Muslim-Arab identity. The assimilation of the southerners into the dominant Muslim-Arab cultural identity of the north, therefore, became the policy of the northern political elites. Along this line, Sharkey (2003) wrote:

Centered in Khartoum and dominated by riverain Northerners, successive Sudanese governments—the democratically elected and the dictatorial alike—have maintained the ideals of the early Northern nationalists, who as a narrow elite, sought to construct a nation in their own cultural image. Their political heirs have therefore asserted that the Sudan is and must be defined by Arabic and Islam, and have believed that cultural homogeneity, not plurality, is required of the twentieth century, like their nationalist predecessors a half century earlier, saw assimilation, through the spread of Arabic and Islam, as imperative. (p.134)

However, after decades of separation, the southerners' sense of difference had already been solidified, and they were not prepared for assimilation into a mainstream cultural identity. Unfortunately, however, the balance of power was not in their favor. As economically, politically, and educationally dominant they were, the northerners did not see the legitimacy of consulting with their African siblings in determining the identity of the new Sudan. According to Lesch (1998), the northerners assumed that non-Arabs and non-Muslim peoples lacked cultural, much less national, identities of their own and should be absorbed and assimilated into the Arab-Islamic ethos. Those who objected must be suppressed as illegitimate. For the northern nationalist elites, Arabic and Islam were their nation's cultural bulwark. Hence, they unapologetically used the power of the central government to aggressively promote their narrow cultural vision. The failure to adopt a pluralist model and the insistence on a narrow Muslim-Arab identity of the Sudan widened the south-north differences and led to an endless armed conflict. The postindependence Sudan identity crisis is, thus, partly attributable to the polarizing policies instituted by the colonial state.

In summary, the damage colonialism inflicted upon the Sudan by sowing the seeds of division, instituting socio-economic and cultural disparities, and introducing sectarian political structure has outlived the colonial regime and manifested itself through violence in the postindependence Sudan, as the various Sudanese societies struggled to catch up and demanded their rightful place in the modern Sudanese political community. Kebede (1999, citing Garang, 1985,) well summed up the state of affairs of the south at independence when he writes that after 58 years of British rule, the south entered independence having only five university graduates, five junior administrative officers, and no doctors, engineers, agronomists, or other experts; and no industries, trade, or economic projects. With the northern elites turning into new indigenous masters, the political climate became poisonous. Under such a polarizing circumstance, however, the two parties seem to find a point of convergence: blaming the colonial regime, albeit for different reasons, for their postindependence predicament. Anderson (1999), for example, has documented how both the northerners and the southerners, to this day, blame the British, the former blaming them for their contribution to national fracture through the separation of the south from the north, and the latter, for leaving the south economically and politically backward and unprepared for self-government. The impact of colonialism on the postindependence Sudanese societies is not just an academic argument but a material fact. Thus, any serious analysis that intends to comprehensively capture the Sudanese postindependence predicament cannot afford to ignore examining the enduring legacy of colonialism and articulating it to the present Sudanese crisis.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The overriding purpose of this study was to examine the U.S. press representation of the southern Sudanese civil war, evaluate the extent to which such a representation has been able to capture the complexity of the civil war, and suggest a mechanism that would improve the U.S. media engagement with distant civil wars, especially those in the African continent. In this chapter, I provide the summary of the findings of the study, discuss the implications of these findings, and suggest some pointers as to what the U.S. media might do to improve the way it covers civil wars in the continent.

Summary of the Findings

As noted above, the principal question this study set out to address revolves around the central issue of how the U.S. press represented the southern Sudanese civil war. Within the rubric of this general question, the study addressed how the U.S. press framed the southern Sudanese civil war during the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese governments, how the representation and framing of the U.S. press accounts of the civil war differed among the three periods represented by the tenures of the three consecutive war-time Sudanese administrations, and what aspect (s) of information the U.S. press coverage of the civil war excluded. The study reveals that the narratives of the selected print media outlets framed the southern Sudanese civil war as an ethno/racial-religious war taking place between the Arab Islamic government in the north and the Christian and animist Africans in the south. The news narratives attributed the reigniting of the 1983 north-south conflict to policy measures the Nimeiri government took that ostensibly undermined the southern autonomy.

With respect to the moral evaluation enclosed in the narratives, two distinct features were observed. During the tenure of the Nimeiri regime, the news narratives constructed the southern forces as secessionists bent on breaking away from Khartoum in a bid to establishing their own independent state. They were portrayed as colluding with hostile Marxist states neighboring the Sudan in order to materialize their secessionist agenda. In doing so, the news narratives delegitimized the struggle of the southern forces. On the other hand, the news narratives depicted the Nimeiri government as one defending the integrity of the Sudanese state from forces determined to dismember the Sudan with the support of neighboring radical and Marxist regimes, and, hence, legitimizing the action of the Nimeiri regime. In the post-Nimeiri period, however, the moral evaluation enclosed in the news narratives turned out to be the reverse. During this period, the news narratives portrayed the struggle of the southern forces as one rooted in the desire to achieve autonomy, but not secession, for the southern region within the framework of a united Sudan. The claim was that the southerners had suffered from oppression, exploitation, and marginalization in the hands of successive riverain Arab regimes from the north. Hence, the news narratives accorded moral high ground for the southern cause. On the contrary, the news narratives in the post-Nimeiri period cast the two Sudanese regimes (al-Mahdi and al-Bashir regimes) as insensitive and indifferent to the plight of the southern people. In doing so, the news narratives delegitimized the behaviors of these regimes. With respect to suggesting solutions to the southern crisis, the analysis reveals that there was a conspicuous absence of substantive news discourse that was geared towards suggesting a viable solution to solving the southern Sudanese civil war.

The study also reveals that there was no shift of narratives in terms of the ethno/racial-religious dimension of the southern Sudanese civil war over the tenures of the three successive war-time Sudanese regimes. Throughout the entire conflict period, the ethno/racial-religious frame has remained the colonizing frame constructed by the news narratives. The only narrative shift observed was with respect to the media representation or portrayal of the warring parties: the three successive Sudanese governments and the southern forces. As far as the southern forces were concerned, their media image evolved from negative to positive. During the tenure of the Nimeiri government, the news narratives portrayed the southern forces as Marxists and secessionists collaborating with radical states which were under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. In the post-Nimeiri period, however, the news narratives shifted their discursive lens and depicted them as liberators and freedom fighters who were standing up to fundamentalist regimes in Khartoum.

Unlike that of the southern forces, the media images of the three successive war-time Sudanese regimes sharply deteriorated as they went from Nimeiri to al-Bashir. The news narratives hailed Nimeiri as a pragmatist and as a reliable Western ally. But they portrayed Nimeiri's successor al-Mahdi as inept and indecisive. The deterioration of the media image of the Sudanese regimes became complete with the al-Bashir government. The news narratives cast the al-Bashir regime as Islamic fundamentalist that is intolerant of cultural pluralism.

What is clear from the study is that while the change of the Sudanese regimes and the ideological and/or foreign policy orientations of the regimes vis-à-vis Washington did not have a bearing on the ethno/racial-religious discursive angle the news media took in talking about the southern Sudanese civil war, it did significantly affect the portrayal of the warring

parties. It is observed that the news narratives' shifting representation or portrayal of the warring parties appears to be consistent with the foreign policy position Washington held toward each of the three war-time Sudanese regimes.

The discourse of the civil war as constructed through the news narratives focused exclusively on the ethno/racial-religious dimension in explaining the locus of the southern Sudanese civil war. In so doing, it excluded the role of colonial legacy, which could have shared the same discursive terrain, as an important explanatory factor for the southern Sudanese predicament. This colonial legacy, among other things, encompasses the institution of the north-south divide, the emergence of a sectarian political structure, and the contribution of the Condominium in the Sudanese national identity crisis. What is more, although the ethno/racial-religious frame, at the macro level, is the colonizing frame the news narratives constructed with respect to the southern Sudanese civil war, it was the discursive constructions of the warring parties that turned out to be analytically more useful. In the same token, with regards to the theoretical frames used to explain the southern civil war, the postcolonial theoretical lens appears to be more profound in making sense of the dynamics of the southern civil war.

Implications of the Findings

The news narratives' framing of the southern Sudanese civil war in terms of ethno/racial-religious differences has serious implications. First of all, such framing projects a totalizing view of the Sudanese society. It takes ethnicity/race and religion as the primary dividing line between the northern and the southern Sudanese people. The ethnic/racial and religious discourse gives the impression that each of the two geographic categories (north and south) is inhabited by a relatively ethnically/racially and religiously homogenous and

less differentiated people; it implies that both northern and southern Sudanese people are more or less monolithic societies who exhibit a striking similarity in the way they think and behave politically. In doing so, the dominant news frame obscures the ethnic/racial and religious complexity of the Sudanese society and their internal struggles in terms of forming alliances across ethno/racial-religious lines in pursuit of their political agendas.

As extensively discussed in the preceding chapters, the Sudanese society (both the north and the south) is one of the most ethnically/racially and religiously complex societies in the African continent. It houses more than 500 ethno-linguistic groups that practice Islam, Christianity, and a plethora of indigenous beliefs. Inter-ethnic marriages as well as conversion from one faith to another are not an uncommon practice in the Sudanese society. In the north, there have always been moderates and secularists who oppose Islamists and, at times, have aligned themselves with the southern opposition forces against the ruling elites in Khartoum. In the south, the situation is even more complex. The multiplicities of ethnic groups that inhabit the south have had the history of inter-ethnic competition and rivalry over power, resources, and territory. The interests of the various politico-military groups of the south have not always matched. Their political visions for the south have been far from singular and unitary. As a result, the southerners have fought against one another as much as they have fought against the central government. What is more, some of the southern groups have often formed alliances with the central government and joined hands with Khartoum in the fight against fellow southerners. Therefore, the unproblematic description of the southern civil war as an orderly war between the Arab-Islamic north and the African-Christian south not only fails miserably in accounting for what is a complex politics of difference, but also is grossly totalizing and obfuscating. Its somewhat simplistic conception of ethno/racial-

religious difference does not do justice to a political struggle as complex and fluid as that of the Sudan's, and hence, the news frame is not only analytically impoverished but also grossly misleading.

Secondly, the framing of the southern Sudanese conflict in ethno/racial-religious terms comfortably carries a primordialist and essentialist overtone (particularly the ethnic/racial component of the frame), and thereby implies the sense of unavailability, inevitability, and inalterability of such a conflict. There is nothing essential and biologically rooted in the constitution of ethnic as well as religious identities. These are identities constructed socially in relation to other collective identities and often expressed in the form of conflicted social boundaries (Allen and Seaton, 1999). When one assumes an essentialism and fixity of ethnic difference, he/she risks a slippage of the *description* of such a difference into an *explanation* of difference, which further leads to an antagonistic expression of ethnic difference (Banks and Murray, 1999). As Seaton (1999) argues, nowadays, 'ethnic' conflicts are described, all too often, as more or less inevitable and more or less intractable, because they are perceived to be the consequence of qualities inherent in the character of the communities involved. It is telling that while we have come to recognize that famines and natural disasters have causes, and hence, are not inevitable, we have also come to regard civil wars as 'ethnic' conflicts that are unavoidable and irresolvable (Seaton, 1999).

Ethnicity cannot be a sufficient explanation for conflict between groups, as conflict or war is not the product of natural differences between groups but is a product of social processes. This is not to argue that ethnicity does not have an important role in inter-group conflict or war-- quite the contrary. In fact, as Allen and Seaton (1999) stress, it would be foolish to suggest that ethnicity does not influence behavior in conflict situations. Once

violence starts, ethnic identities become social facts; they are quickly ascribed to people whether or not they want to have them, and many protagonists will not hesitate in giving highly essentialist ethnic explanations for what they are doing. Along the same line, Carruthers (2004), in acknowledging the potency of ethnicity, describes it as “a manipulable resource—a rich and renewable seam of energy to be mined—in struggles over power and privilege, representation, and resources” (p. 164). Hence, the potency of ethnicity in conflict is undeniable. However, it often comes into the equation as an instrument of mobilization of support by contending groups in a bid to advance and defend their respective cause(s). Ethnic difference is hardly a sufficient explanation for understanding the locus of the conflict.

The discourse of conflict or war as emanating from essentialized ethnic differences, or as Robinson (2001) puts it, the explosion of “ancient ethnic hatreds” (p. 943) between groups, deceptively obscures from scrutiny the real causes of the conflict. According to Allen and Seaton (1999), “Modern conflicts...are political and have real histories. Responsibilities can be determined....Ethnic mythologizing by protagonists and by journalists is precisely a means of taking the politics and the history out of wars, and reducing them to fantastic emanations” (p. 4). The ethno/racial-religious frame the news narratives used to define the southern conflict does exactly this: it removes political economy and history out of the conflict. As the analysis of the narratives of the selected print media outlets reveal, there is a conspicuous and ubiquitous elevation of ethno/racial-religious frame as a way of explaining the origins of the southern civil war. Such a discursive strategy is a misleading one in the sense that reducing the social, political and economic realities, and the complex historical causes, that underlie and prolong the southern war to ‘ethnicity’ and/or ‘religion’ de-politicizes these complex factors. What such an explanation does is simply collude with

protagonists' nationalistic, mythologized interpretations of history that form part of the ideological battle that accompanies the conflict.

For one who carefully examines the political history of the Sudan, locating the source of the southern predicament requires going beyond the ethno-religious cliché. In fact, one of the primary causes of the southern Sudanese conflict is the political and economic marginalization of the south. The monopolistic control of political and economic power by a few powerful riverain elites in the north has subjected the majority of the Sudanese people to live in perpetual poverty and backwardness. Such appalling life conditions forced some groups (in this case the southern Sudanese) to organize themselves militarily to demand their rightful place in the Sudanese polity. Achieving this goal was predicated on the movement's ability to articulate their marginalization in such a way that it would achieve an efficient and sustainable mobilization of its constituents. Thus, ethnicity/race became a nodal point around which disparate groups in the south coalesced and defined themselves against the north. On the other hand, the riverain elites in the north recognized the seriousness of the challenge to their minority rule. They knew well that if the marginalized Sudanese people were to forge class alliance, their rule would never be sustained. In order to undercut the possibility of class alliance across the polity, they defined the conflict in terms of religion (accentuating Arab pedigree) to effectively divide the power of the marginalized. The Arab-Islamic identity that has become the trade mark of the dominant ruling class in Khartoum has, by default, legitimized the political exclusion of others while simultaneously encouraging the organization of opposition along ethnic lines. In a country as vast as the Sudan, which has limited resources, having adequate military force to effectively control the territory is a serious challenge. The situation wouldn't be easier for the southern opposition either. As

Keen (1999) argues, “Particularly where states – or rebel movements – have lacked the resources that might allow a disciplined military force, mobilizing ethnic militias has represented a practical and cheap means of mobilizing (revolutionary or reactionary) violence” (p. 83). In the name of ethno/racial-religious identity, the contending groups, especially the Khartoum government, have manipulated their ordinary citizens into fighting each other. As Keen (1999) rightly observes:

...economic grievances that have threatened a particular political economy have often been deflected by using a restive group as militias against a rebellious third party....In modern day Sudan, the deflection of potential class tension into ethnic conflict has been noted: warfare has been used as a means of manipulating the resentment of the potentially rebellious (and economically marginalized) Baggara group by turning them against politically marginalized southern Sudanese who were blocking Khartoum’s access to oil in the south. (p. 88)

As the north is mostly a barren desert, there is obviously scarcity of resources. The scarcity particularly affects the northern poor, whose living conditions are not that much different from those of the marginalized southerners. But the northern ruling elites exploited their predicament and used them to engage in a Darwinian struggle against their compatriots in the south. Describing the Khartoum regime’s manipulative use of the ethno/racial-religious ‘card,’ Keen (1999) notes, “In Sudan, oil, water and grazing land were critical scarce resources, and economically marginalized herders in the north were encouraged to use violence to secure access to the resources of the south as a remedy for their own scarcities” (p. 89).

Another important implication of the media's ethno/racial-religious frame in talking about the southern civil war is that it effectively obliterates the West's culpability in the crisis. As discussed in the previous chapters, the southern Sudanese civil war was partly the product of the enduring legacy of European colonialism. It is also noted that the geopolitics of the Cold War as well as the post-Cold War U.S. policy towards the Sudan has contributed its share to the crisis in the south. This being the case, however, the focus on the ethno/racial-religious discourse as an explanatory frame for the conflict makes the West 'disappear' from the equation. Describing the duplicity of the ethno/racial-religious interpretation of the conflict, Seaton (1999) argues that "...these media-based interpretations also, perhaps comfortingly for the outside world, obliterate the origins of conflicts in the politics of the Cold War and the colonial past and serve to conceal the impact of recent political decisions" (p. 44). In critiquing the Western media's fascination with the elevation of ethnicity and tribalism to explanatory primacy in accounting for civil wars in Africa, Robinson (2001) argues that such an ethnocentric media discourse effectively hides the West's own implication in the roots of African state failure, economic collapse, and societal disintegration. Along a similar line, Atkinson (1999) contends that the news media's preoccupation with primordial ethnic identity as an explanation for African civil wars, with its apparent manifestations in savagery and brutality, not only helps to obscure critical political and economic factors driving the violence but also "...contributes to increasingly popular misconceptions of African wars as being fought for primitive causes beyond the understanding or influence of the West" (p. 192).

If African civil wars, such as the southern Sudan's, are to be understood well, it is important that we bring the West back into the equation. The first step to do this is to

recognize the necessity of excavating the colonial roots of the current crisis. But as Carruthers (2004) cautions, “historical correctives must not occlude the constant influence in (and over) Africa of Western institutions, whose structural violence is displaced and implicitly disavowed by fetishizing the grotesquery of African barbarism” (pp. 168-169). An emphasis on colonial distortions without taking stock of the contemporary and constant Western involvement in African affairs may serve to suggest that wholesale Western influence ended with the onset of formal independence. By extension, this means that Africans have no one to blame but themselves for their perennial failure and chaos. But it is obvious that institutions at the heart of the global neo-liberal project have not dropped Africa from their grips. As Carruthers (2004) notes, “Africa has certainly not been immune from the dislocating processes of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ that characterizes the ‘new imperialism’” (p. 169). And Carruthers (2004) goes on to argue that,

More generally, local struggles over resources—which may become similarly “ethnicized”—must be understood as occurring within larger frameworks of global markets, IMF interventions, international arms trading, and crossborder cultural circuits....By heeding such phenomena we may begin to insert the West into accounts of Africa’s predicament, and Africa into our understandings of how the West sustains more than merely its humane self-conception. (p. 169)

These features of the global markets have clearly been prevalent in the context of the Sudan, and have contributed immensely to the exacerbation of the southern civil war.

A further implication of the ethno/racial-religious discursive angle in accounting for the southern conflict is that it has consequences for conflict resolution and peace keeping. The media are a key factor in conflict resolution efforts. They can help mobilize or

demobilize public opinion by its potential to set public agenda with respect to a particular conflict. It is important to recognize how crucial it is for the media to “get it right” before public opinion is created and authorities are compelled to do something. The discursive angle the media would adopt in relation to a conflict would be critical in affecting the nature of action to be taken. As Wolfsfeld (1997) observed: “The very fact that policy makers and citizens are encouraged to think about some challenges rather than others is, by itself, likely to affect the allocation of public resources and how people relate to the political world” (p. 13). The deployment of an ethnic frame as an explanation to African conflict, for instance, not only conceals the West’s own implication in the roots of African crisis but also has profound consequences for what types of action—or inaction—become thinkable in response (Carruthers, 2004). Writing along the same line, Carruthers (2004) further notes that,

If conflict is represented as irremediable—embedded in the genetic make-up of tribes—then wary Westerners may well believe that their interpositions could at best but mitigate the aftermath of violent tribalism. Peacekeeping forces might conceivably hold aroused ethnic enmities in abeyance, but unless they remain permanently present such situations will always threaten to collapse back into barbarism. So why “go there” when intervention promises to be protracted, or, if temporary, then recurrently required to staunch the inevitable reanimation of murderous passion? (p. 167)

On the other hand, Robinson (2001) argues that when media use “empathy framed coverage” which “tends to focus on the suffering of individuals, identifying them as victims in need of ‘outside’ help,” the news may be more likely to generate (inter)governmental action than “distance framing” that “tends to minimize pressure for intervention” by emphasizing the

roots of catastrophe in “ancient ethnic hatreds” (p. 943). Robinson (2001) cites war lordism in Somalia as an example of the former and the Genocide in Rwanda as an example of the latter.

Many Africanists condemn the primacy the Western media often accord to ethnicity in explaining the cause of conflicts in the continent. For some of these scholars, “the problem is that ethnicized explanations mandate Western neglect of situations attributed to endemic animosities”; for others it is that “such flimsy conceits legitimize self-interested interventions with unavoidably injurious consequences” (Carruthers, 2004, p. 163). Particularly, for those who connect ethnicized explanations and Western neglect, the argument is that once the conflict is defined as rooted in ethnic differences between parties, it can easily give rise to the idea that the West can play no positive role in helping Africans with their local and historical conflicts. Disengagement is seen as the only sensible strategy, and perhaps the offering of humanitarian aid through the non-committal channel of NGOs (Atkinson, 1999). It is no wonder that the southern civil war continued unabated for more than two decades without any serious conflict resolution or peacemaking effort by Western powers until after the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist act, which gave a sense of urgency for the U.S. government and other Western powers to resolve the southern crisis. It cannot be stressed enough that a media analysis of a conflict, which is based on a detailed understanding of why the conflict followed particular trajectories and why the violence has taken particular forms, is crucial for ensuring that policy-makers are properly informed of the realities of the conflict and can base their decisions on facts rather than perceptions or assumptions.

It should be understood, however, that groups use ethnicity not because of its essential characteristics; it is because of its manipulable potential for mobilization of support

for achieving a political goal. As Fardon, 1999) notes, “Ethnic relations...are *really* the ideological fancy dress of perfectly comprehensible self-interest. Ethnicity is a folkloristic garment claiming rustic authenticity but *actually* available locally in your branch of that global player Ethnic Identities plc. In *truth*, ethnic identities are made up, and their fast-and-loose attitude to history is not difficult to demonstrate” (p. 71). As Pieterse (1997, cited in Carruthers, 2004, p. 165) puts it “Ethnicity... is not an explanation [for conflict] but rather that which is to be explained. The terminology of ethnicity is part of the conflict and cannot serve as the language of analysis” (p. 71).

Apart from the ethno/racial-religious frame the news narratives constructed to define the southern conflict, another important finding is the consistency between the media’s portrayal or representation of the warring parties and the U.S. foreign policy directions during the tenures of the three war-time Sudanese regimes. The news narratives’ legitimization and delegitimization of the behaviors and actions of the warring parties throughout the conflict period tend to coincide with the foreign policy positions Washington has held vis-à-vis the three war-time Khartoum regimes. Such an apparent collusion between the government and the media has serious implications. Obviously, such convergence generates a credibility gap, especially for those living beyond the national borders. In liberal democracies, the media are accorded the status of a fourth estate. Their role is generally accepted as critical and informative, serving as a watchdog over their elected government and holding their leadership accountable for their actions and/or inactions. It is understandable that the media’s watchdog role over the functioning of the government is not confined to their national borders but spans beyond their territorial boundaries. When the media ostensibly fail to live up to this ideal, they lose their moral authority over their perceived

hypocrisy and double standard. Particularly in regions where the colonial experience has left a painful mark, a perceived bias of the Western media, no matter how minor it may be, could easily generate a backlash and undermine the objectivity ‘myth’ the Western media ascribe to themselves. This perceived credibility gap can be further manipulated by authoritarian African leaders as a comfortable justification to dismiss off hand any critical reports of their actions or inactions by the Western media and continue their abuse of power against their people with impunity.

More Thematic and Less Episodic News Reporting as a Precursor for Better Informed Reporting

Now that I have outlined some of the implications of the media’s adoption of the ethno/racial-religious frame in reporting civil wars in the African continent, it is time to turn to a search for ways that could improve the analytically impoverished U.S. media reporting of African affairs. But in order to do so, one should first put forth a plausible argument as to the roots of this explanatory impoverishment. In other words, one should probe as to why Western journalism in general and U.S. journalism in particular so routinely “get Africa wrong” The answer to this fundamental question could be approached from two crucial angles: 1) from the media’s overarching structural problem and broader ideological situatedness; and 2) from professional as well as procedural shortcomings within media institutions. With reference to the former, the global media institutions that define the world are predominantly Western based, functioning within a capitalist economic order. As a result, the flow of information is overwhelmingly from north to south, and, hence, mostly unidirectional. And Western media professionals work within the bounds of such asymmetrical power relations between the north and the south. The context of such unequal

relations of power can undoubtedly have a bearing on the way they shape the discourse about events in the south. Thus, decontextualization and excessive ethicization in news reporting can partly result from the media's structural position within a set of such an unequal power relations, and they play an important role in simultaneously normalizing and obscuring the current global order (Carruthers, 2004).

Improving the Western media's coverage of the south entails leveling the playing field between the West and the rest. One way of leveling the playing field would be ensuring structural pluralism of the global media, since this is considered "a sine qua non of content pluralism" (Tehrani, 2004, p. 241). According to Tehrani (2004), to achieve a free and balanced flow of news and information around the globe, a serious attempt at closing the digital divide must be made. For a critical and nuanced journalism to take on a sustained life, the voiceless in global communication must be empowered. For Tehrani (2004), to do so takes more than pious ethical codes or perfunctory international declarations. Major resources must be allocated to the development of the global information infrastructure. The establishment of a Global Media Development Bank (GMDB) as a UN-specialized agency may be considered the first step in this direction. (p. 241)

However, effecting such a measure is a complex process and is unlikely to materialize in the near future. Hence, suggesting ways for improving the U.S. media coverage of events on the African continent does not presuppose the tackling of a wider structural problem of the media; rather, it takes the professional journalistic shortcomings and procedural problems as a starting point. In other words, even though there are entrenched structural and ideological problems that constrain the Western media engagement with Africa, I believe that even

within such constraints it is still possible for the U.S. media to improve their coverage of events on the continent by addressing professional and procedural shortcomings.

Within the framework of such shortcomings, critics attribute the shallow and distorted coverage of African events by the Western media to the long-term erosion of foreign news services, which has hit Africa severely since agency staffers and permanent correspondents were already so over-stretched and thinly spread. As a result of this depletion of accumulated knowledge, the argument goes, more news organizations rely--at least for crises coverage--on “parachute” journalism: star reporters simply airlifted into and out of the latest location of humanitarian disaster (Pedelty, 1995). “Wholly ignorant of local conditions, and harried by over-abundant deadlines ...these parachutists predictably plunder a stock of well-worn clichés, stereotypes, and pre-scripted storylines: of African tribalism, implacable enmities, unspeakable evil, maniacs with machetes, and benefactors in blue berets” (Carruthers, 2004, p. 165). Since in such a context, the reporter’s focus is undoubtedly going to be on the event or the crisis itself, he/she is bound to employ episodic framing rather than thematic framing. According to Iyengar’s (1991) typology, episodic and thematic news frames are two types of generic news frames. For Iyengar (1991) episodic news frames are references to isolated news events, focusing on discrete cases or episodes, while thematic frames provide broader societal context to issues and events. Unlike an episodic frame, a thematic frame includes the prognostic and diagnostic frame. According to Iyengar (1991), the prognostic frame discusses the consequences of actions or events, while the diagnostic frame provides background on the causes for actions or events.

As the analysis of the narratives of the selected print news media reveals, the framing of the southern Sudanese civil war was highly episodic, which focused largely on the crisis

and the immediate parties involved in the conflict. As the reporting of the conflict was event-centered, detached, and focused on ethnic/racial and religious identities of the parties involved in the conflict, the frame was built on polemic identities. The news media engaged in ethnic and religious reductionism and thereby failed to provide broader historical background, political, and economic contexts that have shaped the southern Sudanese civil war. Such reductionism and essentialism pitfalls can be avoided by U.S. media professionals by consciously adopting more thematic framing in their coverage of events on the continent. The adoption of a thematic framing will give media professionals ample opportunity to emphasize broader trends or backgrounds about issues, provide more in-depth, interpretive analysis, and depict issues more broadly and abstractly by placing them in some appropriate context—historical, politico-economic, geographical, or otherwise (Iyengar, 1996). Accentuation on thematic news framing by journalists will also create a conducive environment for constructing news stories that provide readers with more than bare-bone facts and explain news events in a larger context, which in turn can help news consumers get more comprehensive information and enable them to make their evaluation of individuals and groups on a more informed and educated basis (Nacos and Torres-Reyna, 2003).

The current proliferation of information technology provides a rare opportunity for media organizations for embracing thematic news framing over episodic framing. Among the conventional reasons for news organizations' de-emphasis on embracing thematic news framing in the coverage of events beyond their national borders include the challenge for a "parachute-journalist" understanding of complex background information on a foreign conflict and the constraints of newspaper space for publishing lengthy narratives, which contextual reporting often demands. Owing to the diffusion of Internet technology, the

conventional format for news reporting is changing. News publishing is increasingly going online as more people are using Internet for news consumption than buying newspapers in their traditional hard copy format, and the trend seems to continue. This change frees news organizations from the constraints of space, as news writers can produce lengthy news articles for online publication. It can also create an opportunity for abandoning the practice of 'parachute-journalism' in favor of employing an indigenous journalist versed in the history, culture, and politics of the region where conflict is going on, as long as he/she has Internet access. While familiarity with the intricacies of the local history, culture, and politics can help the writer to provide a broader and more nuanced picture of the event, the relative freedom from the constraints of space can make extensive reporting possible. Such informed reporting can produce a more informed audience, which could be instrumental in creating an atmosphere of broader cultural understanding between peoples as well as in shaping policy direction with respect to the target region.

Limitations

As is the case with any research undertaking, this study is not devoid of its own limitations. First of all, the data were collected from mainstream newspapers. The effort I made in including some alternative newspapers was not successful, as it was difficult to find an accessible electronic data base for the alternative media outlets on the subject of the study. It would have been interesting to see the degree of convergence or divergence the perspectives of alternative media coverage of the southern Sudanese civil war might have had vis-à-vis the mainstream media coverage. Secondly, the study was purely dependent on textual data, owing to the constraints of time and resources. I would have liked to visit the target country and interview some members of both parties involved in the conflict to obtain

first-hand information. The field information would have enriched the arguments made in the study. Finally, the study did not take into account the sources of the news the media outlets used in their constructions of the news narratives. As the diversity or the lack thereof of the news sources would either enable or constrain multivocality, examining the range and composition of the news sources could have brought to light the extent of multivocality reflected in the news narratives.

Direction of Future Study

Future study should focus on examining the U.S. media coverage of the Darfur conflict and compare that coverage with that of the southern Sudanese conflict. This is important because Darfurians are predominantly Muslims, and adopting the religious frame for the conflict would be out of question in this case. Such a comparison would help to demystify the media's obsession with religion as an explanatory frame for the Sudanese civil wars, and thereby help us search for alternative explanatory frames with respect to the true locus of the civil wars in the Sudan.

Despite the shortcomings noted above, the study brings to light the complexities of the southern Sudanese civil war and the confluence of both internal and external factors in shaping the conduct and the resolution of the civil war. As our actions are often guided by our understanding of the phenomenon of interest, the body of knowledge the study has produced will be of importance to media practitioners as well as to policy makers in dealing with civil wars that take place in culturally and geographically distant locations in general and on the African continent in particular.

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