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FRAMING DARFUR: REPRESENTATIONS OF CONFLICT, PEOPLE, AND PLACE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST, 2004

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By

Joel Bryan Gruley

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ABSTRACT

FRAMING DARFUR: REPRESENTATIONS OF CONFLICT, PEOPLE, AND PLACE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST, 2004

By

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In this thesis, I examine how *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* newspapers represented the violence in Darfur, Sudan during 2004 – the first year that the crisis in Darfur gained the attention of both papers. Using a content analysis method called framing, I particularly focus on how these papers represented Darfur's violence, the people connected to it, and Darfur as a place. I argue that both papers offer two dominant representations – encapsulated in information-ordering devices called 'frames' – of Darfur's violence: 1) the violence stems from a chain of political issues and factors; and 2) the violence revolves around socio-cultural differences and concomitant tensions between 'Africans' and 'Arabs.' The thesis's focus is on showing how the latter 'frame' manifests itself in representations of alleged local-level social dynamics in Darfur that have played a role in fomenting the violence. Specifically, the violence is depicted as a tribal or ethnic war between Darfur-based 'Africans' and 'Arabs.' I show how people in Darfur were represented as 'Arab' or 'African,' and how sharp distinctions between them were produced in various ways. I contest these depictions of people in Darfur as 'Arabs' and 'Africans,' and representations of the violence as a tribal/ethnic conflict between them. I also reflect on the kinds of understandings of Darfur as a place that emerge from both papers' representations of violence and people involved in it. This thesis contributes to work in cultural geography informed by postmodern and postcolonial theories that has interrogated Western representations of places and peoples in the former colonized world.

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thesis, and for putting up with my constant complaining during the often-painful writing process. My father, in particular, deserves a huge thanks for reading and editing the entire thesis, and for making me a better writer over the years. A veteran of the newspaper industry himself, my dad expressed a keen interest in this project from its inception to its completion, and he also helped shed light on the news-making business and industry for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

In today's globalized information age, American news media represent important cultural sites where geographic knowledge about the world and its myriad peoples is regularly produced and disseminated to news-consuming masses. Specifically, a vast array of news media (e.g., televisual, Internet, print, and radio) perpetually feed Americans with descriptions, images, and understandings of foreign places, peoples, and events. News media representations of the world, however, do not constitute carbon-copy reflections of 'reality.' The act of representation is a highly subjective and political process to which U.S. news reporters, editors, and photographers are hardly immune. Their depictions of alien cultures and places, and events unfolding throughout the world, are inevitably refracted through and shaped by the specific cultures in which they are entangled. Thus, cultural presumptions and biases held about non-American places and peoples entrenched in American popular culture often color how U.S. newsmakers depict the world. This is significant when one considers that most Americans 'encounter' the rest of the world through news media, and that news media representations wield considerable influence in shaping Americans' impressions and understandings of foreign places and peoples (Entman, 1991; Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993; Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996; Sharp, 2000; Debrix, 2008).

The influence of cultural stereotypes in shaping news media representations of the world is perhaps most evident in U.S. news coverage of Africa. American news media have consistently portrayed Africa as having a backward and savage disposition. The alleged backwardness of Africa is especially prominent in coverage of violent conflicts on the continent, which typically have been represented as apolitical combustions of

irrational violence between primitive 'tribal' groups. Africa's negative media image is deeply problematic though, for it does not reflect any brute African 'reality,' but inaccurate and culturally biased representations of Africa established during European colonialism and perpetuated in contemporary European and American popular culture discourses. American news media representations of Africa have consequently produced distorted and damaging understandings of Africa and African societies for American news audiences.

The focus of this thesis is how two major U.S. newspapers – *The New York Times* (NYT) and *The Washington Post* (WP) – represented and produced meanings about the present crisis in Darfur, Sudan during 2004, the first year that the violence in the region gained the attention of the Western news media. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions displaced from their homes in Darfur (ICID, 2005; Prunier, 2007; United Nations, 2008). The unthinkable violence that has gripped the region demands explication and the NYT and the WP have sought to make sense of it, sending reporters to Darfur, bordering areas of Chad, Sudan's capital Khartoum, and the United Nations in New York in order to gather information, produce stories, and attempt to elucidate the crisis's root causes and motivations. In this thesis, I analyze how the NYT and the WP represented Darfur's violence and the people connected to it, and from these representations of violence and people, I examine how these newspapers represented Darfur as a particular type of place and society. Both newspapers' representations of Darfur's violence, of people implicated in it, and of Darfur as a place and society are placed in the context of dominant (mis)understandings held about Africa in the Western geographical imagination. Specifically, I reflect upon the influence of Western cultural

stereotypes pertaining to Africa in shaping both newspapers' representations of the harrowing situation in Darfur.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into four body chapters and a conclusion. It begins with a literature review that harnesses insights from postmodern and postcolonial social theory on representations of people and places to establish the origins and contours of Africa's predominant media image in the United States, which sets the historical, political, and cultural context for representations of Darfur in the NYT and the WP. The second chapter describes the methods I employed to analyze the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur, specifically a content analysis methodology called framing. The third chapter delineates the geographical, historical, and political context of Darfur's present violence using information drawn from scholarly sources. In the fourth chapter, I present how both newspapers represented Darfur's violence and the people involved in it. I draw upon information from the scholarly literature on Darfur presented in the previous chapter in order to problematize and contest aspects of both newspapers' representations of violence and people. In the conclusion, I summarize my findings, discuss some important ramifications of the NYT's and the WP's representations of violence and people in Darfur – including what kinds of understandings of Darfur as a place and society these representations yield – and situate both newspapers' representations of Darfur within the context of the West's dominant ways of representing and producing knowledge about Africa.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Cultural Geography and Postmodern Representations

Representation sits at the heart of this thesis's focus and analysis – it is the production and concomitant communication of meanings that aim to reflect and describe some aspect of 'reality' (Duncan, 2000). Representation has always been fundamental to the discipline of geography. Since the age of European exploration and continuing into the present, geographers have concerned themselves with representing and interpreting elements of the earth's surface – such as the biophysical environment, human societies and cultures, and human-environment relationships – through various media, with writing and cartography paramount among them (Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Jarosz, 1992: 105-6; Johnston & Sidaway, 2004). The literal meaning of geography is, after all, 'earth-writing.' Recently, however, much work in cultural geography has strayed from merely attempting to represent and explain places and peoples and has instead focused on how these mainstays of cultural geographic inquiry are socially produced through representational practices (Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Johnston & Sidaway, 2004: 279). This radically different approach to representation is attributed to the profound influence of postmodern philosophy on the outlook of cultural geography.

Postmodernism has at its foundation a repudiation of the Enlightenment belief in a given, *a priori* 'reality' that can be known universally through the application of human reason. Postmodernists have instead maintained that our understandings of 'reality' are refracted through and heavily influenced by the social milieu in which we are enmeshed, thus, our knowledge of the world is always relative, differing according to temporal, geographical, cultural, and political circumstances (Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Johnston &

Sidaway, 2004: 271-9). Nuance and plurality are therefore stressed over universality in postmodern perspectives on human understandings of 'reality' (Ley, 2000; Johnston & Sidaway, 2004: 273).

Over the last couple of decades, the influence of postmodernism on the orientation of cultural geography has been significant (Johnston & Sidaway, 2004: 267). As a result, many cultural geographers have begun to question and challenge claims put forth by their geographer peers and others that the world – particularly places and peoples – can be represented objectively and mimetically, precipitating a so-called 'crisis in representation' in geography (Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Duncan & Ley, 1993; Duncan & Sharp, 1993). Harnessing postmodern ideas on the contingent and heterogeneous nature of human knowledge, cultural geographers have argued that impartial and mimetic representations are impossible because the social context in which representations are made comes to bear significantly on their final character (Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Duncan & Ley, 1993; Duncan & Sharp, 1993). Consequently, representations often reveal more about the cultures and historical-political positions of those doing the representing than the actual objects being represented.

Guided by a postmodern understanding of representations, cultural geographers have argued that because representations cannot perfectly reflect 'reality,' they actually help to *constitute* it – that is, representations serve as important locations where places and peoples are effectively made and conjured into being (Duncan, 2000; Johnston & Sidaway, 2004: 279). Places and peoples are 'made' in the sense that those doing the representing literally *impose* certain meanings and traits informed by their own social

positions upon the places and peoples they seek to represent, which influences how they are ultimately perceived (Cosgrove & Domosh, 1993).

Fundamental to the social production of places and peoples is the *language* employed in representations.[1] Language is crucial to the construction and transmission of meanings embodied in representations, and the specific words, phrases, metaphors, and statements used to describe places and peoples imbue them with a distinct disposition and visibility that profoundly affects how they are envisioned and understood (Tuan, 1991; Barnes & Duncan, 1992). The language encapsulated in representations is of course never entirely neutral, for it is forged within the crucible of the social positionality of the 'makers' of places and peoples and is consequently shaped by relations of power (Barnes & Duncan, 1992; Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Duncan & Gregory, 1999). The idea that language is a productive force that possesses the power to bring places and peoples into being, and the idea that the language used to convey meanings about places and peoples is fundamentally shaped by power relations arises from the work of Michel Foucault, a French philosopher whose ideas have been pivotal to postmodern thinking.

Foucault was interested in how knowledge about certain 'objects' (in his case, objects like madness, homosexuality, and delinquency) is produced through a system of representation he called *discourse* (Hall, 2001). By discourse, Foucault meant a discrete group of words, statements, and narratives that provide a meaningful language for representing knowledge about objects (Duncan, 1993b: 233; Hall, 2001: 72). He argued that discourses give meaning to objects by governing the way in which they can be reasonably talked, written, and thought about, thus discourses are simultaneously

[1] Images – such as photographs, paintings, and political cartoons – are also critical in the making of places and peoples (for example, see Lutz & Collins, 1993).

enabling and constraining (Barnes & Duncan, 1992: 8; Hall, 2001: 72). In creating knowledge about objects and establishing bounds on what is considered acceptable and intelligible when communicating knowledge about them, discourses actually *produce* the objects of their focus – that is, objects do not exist meaningfully in themselves, but only within the discourses about them (Hall, 2001: 73). Furthermore, Foucault maintained that discourses are not confined solely to linguistic signification, but also entail practice – the meanings bestowed to objects through discourses affect our conduct toward them (Hall, 2001: 72).

Foucault also asserted that *power* is central to the manner in which discourses construct knowledge about objects (1980). One of Foucault's most important arguments is that knowledge, which is produced through discourse, represents a critical form of power – it is constituted under relations of power and is wielded to advance powerful needs and interests (1980: 93-101). "The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980: 52). Thus, those who hold power produce discourses that represent knowledge about objects in specific ways so as to reinforce and augment their power. Moreover, Foucault contended that because knowledge is intimately linked to power, it comes to assume the authority of 'truth,' and the powerful interests that shape the character of knowledge are consequently hidden beneath a veneer that appears disinterested and natural (Hall, 2001: 76).

Within cultural geography, and other related social science disciplines, work informed from a postcolonial perspective, in particular, has drawn on and incorporated postmodern ideas on the social contingency of human understandings of 'reality' and

Foucault's arguments on the disciplining nature of discourse and the centrality of power to the discursive production of knowledge in thinking critically about Western representations of non-Western places and peoples (Nash, 2004). Thus, it is to postcolonial scholarship that I turn next, particularly the influential work of Edward Said.

1.2 Postcolonial Studies – Representing the 'Other'

Postcolonialism is an interdisciplinary field variously informed by feminist, Marxist, and postmodern perspectives that has as its focus of analysis the practices, discourses, impacts, and legacies of Western colonialism (Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Sidaway, 2000; Johnston & Sidaway, 2004: 292-7; Gregory, 2004; Nash, 2004). A fundamental concern of postcolonial scholarship is how European societies preceding and during colonialism produced knowledge about and represented the non-European places and peoples they colonized (Nash, 2004). Postcolonial scholars have demonstrated that the way in which European societies represented non-European places and peoples facilitated and legitimated European colonialism in places like the Middle East and Africa (Said, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988; Pieterse, 1992; Duncan, 1993a). Specifically, European representations of the world and its peoples during the ages of European exploration and imperialism were informed by European understandings of themselves as culturally and morally superior to the rest of mankind. Europeans regarded Europe as the most advanced civilization on Earth and their representations of the world reflected this belief as non-European places and peoples were invariably depicted as inferior and primitive (Blaut, 1993; Duncan, 1993a; Gregory, 1995; Agnew, 2003: 15-48). An enlightened and superior Europe juxtaposed with a rudimentary and inferior non-Europe helped to rationalize European colonial intervention, which would purportedly bring the

fruits of civilization that non-Europeans supposedly lacked (Blaut, 1993; Duncan, 1993a; Agnew, 2003: 30). Consequently, knowledge produced about non-European places and peoples as backward and uncivilized became inseparable from apparatuses of European imperial power and codified in colonial discourses that were employed to justify, advance, and maintain European political, economic, and cultural domination in the non-European world (Said, 1978; Blaut, 1993; Spurr, 1993; Butlin, 1995).

The idea that the manner in which Europeans produced knowledge about the places and peoples they colonized facilitated the colonization process and justified colonial rule is a central theme in literary scholar Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978), a quintessential postcolonial work. In particular, Said examined how the British and French represented the Near East, or 'Orient,' in a wide array of written texts – such as, newspapers, travel writing, academic treatises, government documents, and especially literature – between the early nineteenth century and World War II. Said argued that running through the many and disparate texts he investigated were recurring commonalities in the ways that the British and French represented the Orient. Specifically, the Orient was consistently described as being everything that Europe was supposedly not – backward, childlike, irrational, depraved, immoral, and so on. Influenced by Foucault, Said understood this dominant way of representing the Orient as constituting a *discourse*, which he called 'Orientalism.'

Orientalism, Said maintained, could be thought of as constituting Foucault's notion of a discourse in three instances. First, Orientalism limited what could reasonably be said, written, and thought about the Orient. "Orientalism is [best] grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought" (Said, 1978: 42). Representations that

strayed from the Orient-as-inferior-to-Europe discourse, consequently, were repressed and held little if any currency among Europeans.

Second, Orientalism helped to simultaneously constitute two coherent socio-geographical entities – the 'Orient' and 'Europe.' European representations of the Orient imparted to it meanings and characteristics that Said claimed had no empirical basis in reality. The Orient was effectively *created* within the discourse of Orientalism and its image that Europeans carried in their heads was merely a product of their culture's geographical imagination. Intimately related to the social production of the Orient was the articulation of a distinctly 'European' space and identity. By designating the Orient as a primitive and uncivilized space, Europe constructed a reference point for itself against which it could fashion its own sense of a morally and culturally superior 'European' identity. Identity construction is not simply achieved by defining what one is, but more importantly, through defining what one is *not*. As Agnew says, "societies can exist only by defining themselves against an external standard – an Other without which the Self could not see itself as distinctive" (2003: 23). Characteristics, sentiments, and behaviors regarded as antithetical to the idealized image that Europe held of itself were projected onto the Orient, which helped to define and reinforce Europe's understanding of itself as the most sophisticated civilization on earth. The Orient was thus discursively produced as Europe's 'Other,' an imaginative geographical space that represented everything that Europe was not.

Third, Orientalism was bound within relations of power and employed to advance powerful interests. Said argued that although Orientalism was not created for the express purpose of dominating the Orient, it was appropriated by the imperial apparatuses of the

British and French states and used for that very purpose. The unequal status between Europe and the Orient that Orientalism posited was used to rationalize British and French colonization of the Orient.

The discourse of the 'Other' and the asymmetrical relations of power between Europe and the non-European world that it helped foster and vindicate were not solely confined to European representations of the Orient. 'Othering' was perhaps most pronounced and at its most hyperbolic within European representations of Africa and Africans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following the example of Said (1978), I turn next to highlighting nineteenth century European representations of Africa while thinking critically about how those representations produced and fixed a certain image of Africa in the European geographical imagination and how the character of that image became inextricably bound within grids of power and used to further that power.

1.3 Representing Africa – The Myth of the 'Dark Continent'

During the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans hitherto active primarily in trading and slaving activities on Africa's coasts began to travel substantially inward, penetrating the continent's largely unknown interior (Brantlinger, 1985). As a diverse group of Europeans – including explorers, anthropologists, missionaries, journalists, hunters, speculators, and government representatives – made incursions into those lands marked *terra incognita* on their maps, a distinct discourse on and concomitant image of Africa and Africans emerged within their writings, pictures, and speeches. Africa was depicted as a 'dark' and forbidding place without history, lacking sophisticated institutions of governance, art, culture, and technology, and inhabited by 'savages'

devoid of rationality and intelligence (Achebe, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988; Jarosz, 1992; Pieterse, 1992; Duncan, 1993a; Spurr, 1993). Travel writers and social scientists working and living on the continent during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, in particular, participated in producing and propagating this negative image of Africa and Africans.

The 'discovery' of Africa by Europeans during the nineteenth century piqued an intense fascination on the European continent with this new and unfamiliar place. A strong demand consequently emerged among Europeans for images and information on Africa and explorer writers and novelists who participated in the initial explorations and the so-called 'opening-up' of the continent largely filled it as it was principally through the writings of explorers like Henry Morton Stanley and literary authors like Joseph Conrad that understandings of Africa and its inhabitants were initially presented to Europeans (Brantlinger, 1985; Pratt, 1985; Terrell, 1989: 136-42; Pieterse, 1992: 64-5). The dominant image of Africa Europeans encountered within the pages of these travel writing accounts was of a pre-historic land shrouded in literal and moral darkness and teeming with sub-human savages (Achebe, 1978; Brantlinger, 1985; Spurr, 1993). Travel writers often spun sensational tales of heroic European males battling bloodthirsty savages and a hostile environment for European audiences back home eager for titillating stories from an unknown and exotic land (Brantlinger, 1985; Pratt, 1985; Jarosz, 1992; Pieterse, 1992: 64-5; Duncan, 1993a: 50). Moreover, disparaging metaphors such as the 'dark continent' and the 'white man's grave' frequently peppered travel writers' accounts, reinforcing the negative image of Africa (Brantlinger, 1985; Jarosz, 1992). In marking 'darkest Africa' with a primitive disposition, travel writers delineated a distinct

boundary between a superior European space and an inferior African space, thus discursively producing Africa, much like Said's Orient, as Europe's antithetical 'Other' (Achebe, 1978; Mudimbe, 1988; Duncan, 1993a: 50; Spurr, 1993: 76-8).

The primitive image of Africa and Africans that emerged within this discourse of the 'Other' was given an air of 'scientific' respectability through the writings and classification schemes of social scientists, particularly anthropologists and geographers, studying and working on the continent during this period. In the late nineteenth century, the discipline of anthropology was principally concerned with documenting and explaining putative 'racial' and 'civilizational' differences between human societies occupying differing geographical locales (Brantlinger, 1985; Mudimbe, 1988; Lewis, 1991: 611-12). Anthropologists during this period relied heavily on Darwinian evolutionary theories posited by the natural sciences for interpreting assumed differences between human societies. Specifically, all human beings were argued to follow the same path of cultural, intellectual, and moral development, a path that was marked by a hierarchy of gradually advancing stages (Brantlinger, 1985: 182-4; Mudimbe, 1988; Duncan, 1993a). European society was represented as the zenith of this evolutionary hierarchy, while African societies were placed at its very bottom (Mudimbe, 1988: 17-19; Duncan, 1993a; Spurr, 1993: 62-71). Anthropologists in fact argued that Africans represented Europe's 'contemporary ancestors' (Pieterse, 1992: 37). Africa, then, constituted not only a culturally, intellectually, and morally inferior space than Europe, but also a *temporally* different space, for a journey to Africa represented not just "a journey in space," but also a "journey [backwards] in time" (Duncan, 1993a: 40). Anthropologists' crude theories of human evolution had the effect of naturalizing posited

differences between European and African societies, as Africa's 'inferior' status was interpreted as merely the product of nature's laws working themselves out (Duncan, 1993a; Spurr, 1993: 156-61).

The discipline of geography also offered 'scientific' explanations for Africans' supposed inferior state vis-à-vis Europeans during this period. Particularly, geographers maintained that the biophysical environment, especially the climate, unilaterally determined the state of social development in human societies. More specific, tropical climates – like those found in Africa – were argued to retard cultural, intellectual, and moral improvement, whereas more temperate climates – such as those found in Europe – were asserted to have just the opposite effect (Jarosz, 1992: 106-7; Butlin, 1995: 179). According to this theory of 'environmental determinism,' Africans' supposedly primitive state was therefore a geographical and environmental inevitability (Butlin, 1995).

The discourse on Africa as Europe's 'Other' produced during the nineteenth century by European travel writers and social scientists alike was instrumental to facilitating and legitimating European colonialism in Africa, which formally began in the late nineteenth century. In particular, Europeans who espoused colonization in Africa maintained that because Europe occupied a purportedly superior cultural, intellectual, and moral position compared to Africa, it was Europe's moral duty – the so-called 'white man's burden' – to bring and foster social betterment there (Brantlinger, 1985; Jarosz, 1992; Duncan, 1993a; Spurr, 1993: 109-11). Europeans thus asserted that colonization would benevolently bring 'light' to Africa's 'darkness,' beating back the continent's 'wickedness' and 'savagery' with the enlightened gifts of European society, such as capitalism, Enlightenment science, and Christianity (Brantlinger, 1985; Mudimbe, 1988;

Jarosz, 1992; Pieterse, 1992; Duncan, 1993a; Spurr, 1993). However, the discourse of the 'Other' applied to Africa and the 'civilizing' justification for colonialism that it inspired served as incredibly powerful pretexts for eventual European colonial policies and practices that primarily enriched and benefited Europeans at the expense of Africans through the (often violent) appropriation of land, labor, and natural resources, and the abrogation of cultural, economic, and political autonomy (Mudimbe, 1988; Jarosz, 1992; Hochschild, 1998; Cooper, 2002). European colonial apparatuses employed the discourse on Africa as Europe's 'Other' in order to promote powerful European political and commercial interests, thus illustrating the great importance of knowledge production and representational practices to engendering unequal relations of power between Europe and Africa.

1.4 Colonialism's Legacies

While very much interested in the colonial past, as the two examples above attest, postcolonial scholarship is also *contemporary* in its focus. European colonial discourses, the distorted representations of non-European places and peoples that they yield, and the unequal relations of power they wrought between Europe and the rest of the world did not suddenly disappear with the formal end of colonialism following the Second World War. In fact, colonialism's discourses, representations, and impacts persist and inhere in the present, and postcolonial scholars have consequently sought to expose, deconstruct, and counter the lingering presences and legacies of colonialism (Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Sidaway, 2000; Gregory, 2004; Nash, 2004). Colonialism's tenacity has been illustrated, for example, in development discourses peddled by powerful Western institutions like the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (Escobar,

1995; Peet & Watts, 1996b; Mitchell, 2002). Specifically, inaccurate and culturally biased representations of non-Western places and peoples as ignorant and backward established during colonialism are continually reproduced in development discourses to justify Western interventions that will purportedly pull non-Western places and peoples out of their 'undeveloped' state. Development interventions, however, have been argued to extend and deepen Western political and economic domination over the non-Western world begun during colonialism, for example, by opening up non-Western markets to Western goods and by providing Western multinational corporations with exclusive access to lucrative natural resources found in non-Western locales (Escobar, 1995; Peet & Watts, 1996b; Mitchell, 2002). In another example of colonial discourses and practices reworking themselves in the present, Gregory (2004) maintains that the discourse of Orientalism has been reactivated in United States representations of the Middle East, especially following the events of September 11, 2001. In particular, the Middle East has recently been produced as the U.S.' barbaric 'Other' in need of civilizational rectification provided by the U.S. in the form of imposed democracy, neo-liberal capitalism, and the ever-ambiguous 'freedom.' Gregory argues that the Orientalizing discourse of the 'Other' reinvigorated by the U.S. helped facilitate and justify the U.S.' wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and also its unswerving support for Israel's policies carried out in the Palestinian territories.

As the two examples provided above demonstrate, colonial discourses on non-Western places and peoples that reside in the present often have profound political, economic, and cultural consequences as forms of domination and inequality created between the West and non-West during colonialism are perpetuated and strengthened.

Moreover, colonial discourses and representational practices when applied in the present have the pernicious effect of creating unrealistic perceptions of non-Western places and peoples in the minds of Westerners (Fair, 1993; Myers et al., 1996; Said, 1997). This is all the more problematic when one considers that these warped understandings of the non-Western world have over time become naturalized and now seem to constitute 'common sense' in the West (Duncan & Sharp, 1993; Gregory, 2004: 3-9). Work informed from a postcolonial perspective has argued that *Western news media*, in particular, have participated in the perpetuation and normalization of distorted colonial representations of non-Western places and peoples (Hawk, 1992a; Jarosz, 1992; Fair, 1993; Spurr, 1993; Myers et al., 1996; Said, 1997; Campbell, 2007). Indeed, analysis of contemporary representations of Africa and Africans in American news media reveals that Africa's "colonial image has become the media image" (Hawk, 1992b: 13). I turn next, therefore, to investigating Africa's media image in the United States – an image profoundly shaped by the colonial past.

1.5 Africa's Media Image in the United States

News media are fundamental to shaping Americans' understandings about the world. In today's globalization era of sophisticated communication and transportation technologies, images and descriptions of foreign places, peoples, and events provided through a wide array of news media pervade American society. It is principally through news media, thus, that Americans experience and envision the rest of the world (Klak, 1994: 319; Sharp, 2000: 32; Debrix, 2008: 12-13). Beyond the importance of the ubiquity of representations of the global today provided by news media, news media are also critical to influencing Americans' perceptions of the world due to their highly

esteemed status. News-making organizations – like *Reader's Digest* magazine and the *Cable News Network* (CNN) for example – are commonly regarded as professional institutions that adhere to an honorable code of objectivity, thus their foreign reporting is often perceived as constituting mere 'fact' (Fair, 1993; Sharp, 2000; McFarlane & Hay, 2003: 214; Debrix, 2008). The manner in which the news media represent and interpret foreign places, peoples, and events, however, is shaped profoundly by numerous social factors, thereby undermining any claims to 'objective' reporting. The cultural and political positions of those involved in the news-making process (e.g., journalists, editors) always come to bear on how the global is presented. Moreover, the news media frequently draw upon and reproduce the language and discourses of incredibly ideological institutions in their foreign coverage (Sorensen, 1991: 223; Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993: 13; Said, 1997; McFarlane & Hay, 2003; Debrix, 2008). Journalists, for example, rely heavily on the texts and pronouncements of state foreign policy establishments in their foreign reporting, thus the global interests of states often color how the global is represented (Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996; Sharp, 2000; Entman, 2004).

Furthermore, the cultures of the audiences that news stories are targeted for affect how the world is represented. News coverage of foreign places, cultures, and events requires unambiguous explanations, thus, foreign news must be packaged and translated into meanings that are immediately comprehensible to news consumers back home (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Sorensen, 1991: 224-5; Entman, 1991, 2004: 2-17). The news media, therefore, rely on culturally specific conventions, rules, and codes for conveying meanings in their foreign coverage that resonate with the cultural belief systems of their

readerships (Hawk, 1992b: 6-7; Fair, 1993: 9-10; Sharp, 2000; McFarlane & Hay, 2003: 214). Foreign news coverage can thus be regarded as constituting Foucault's notion of a discourse – how the global can be reported meaningfully is bound by culturally specific rules (Sharp, 2000; Robison, 2004: 380-1; Debrix, 2008). As a result, foreign news stories are inevitably imbued with widely established cultural presumptions and biases held about foreign places and peoples (Fair, 1993; Myers et al., 1996). News media representations of the world, however, are presented as mere 'fact' and the cultural prejudices and ideological interests that structure the meanings imparted to foreign places and peoples consequently seem 'natural,' taking on an appearance of 'truth' due to the illusion of the news media as disinterested purveyors of 'objective realities' (Sharp, 2000; McFarlane & Hay, 2003: 214).

In American news coverage of Africa, the culturally resonant 'facts' that consistently serve to represent people and explain events unfolding on the continent are grounded in notions of 'primitiveness' and 'savagery,' a phenomenon dictated by Europe's historical way of seeing and representing Africa (Hawk, 1992b: 5; Fair, 1993). Africa's predominant news media image in the United States, thus, is not a good one, positing a poverty-stricken, violence- and disease-ridden continent populated by helpless jungle people (Ebo, 1992; Hawk, 1992a; Fair, 1993). The colonial discourse of the 'Other' for representing Africa has proven to be tenacious as it now structures how the American news media communicate meanings about the continent and its peoples to American news consumers. In what follows, I will highlight some main themes of U.S. news coverage of Africa, especially coverage of violent conflict.

Two salient themes emerge from the literature on U.S. news coverage of Africa. First, coverage is sparse compared to other regions of the world. Second, when Africa does receive news media attention, the focus is almost always on negative events like violence, disease epidemics, poverty, and environmental catastrophe (Pratt, 1980; Terrell, 1989; Sorensen, 1991; Ungar & Gergen, 1991; Hawk, 1992a; Fair, 1993; Domatob, 1994; Schraeder & Endless, 1998; Stock, 2004: 28-39). Scant and invariably negative coverage does not of course create a favorable image of Africa in the minds of U.S. news consumers. This gloomy image is exacerbated by the fact that U.S. African coverage is rife with derogatory and racist language rooted in European colonial discourses – Africa is still depicted as a 'timeless' place populated by 'savages' (Terrell, 1989; Sorensen, 1991; Ebo, 1992; Hawk, 1992b; Jarosz, 1992; Fair, 1993). Moreover, when negative events are reported, they are frequently stripped of their historical and political-economic context – Africa's woes are instead portrayed as if they merely represent the continent's 'natural' condition, implying that Africans' 'primitiveness' is solely to blame for problems like widespread poverty, hunger, and disease (Sorensen, 1991; Hawk, 1992b; Jarosz, 1992; Fair, 1993). For example, *Newsweek* magazine's coverage of mass famine in Ethiopia during the 1980s emphasized Ethiopians' supposed reckless abuse of the land and native "incompetence," "dishonesty," and "savagery" for interpreting the calamity, while neglecting the political-economic origins of the famine, such as the large-scale expansion of commercial agriculture at the expense of subsistence production (Sorensen, 1991: 228). In addition, discussions on AIDS in Africa in a wide array of U.S. news media – from *Cosmopolitan* magazine to *The Washington Post* newspaper – have tended to attribute Africa's AIDS epidemic to the 'abnormal,' 'bestial,' and 'dangerous' sexual

practices of Africans rather than focusing on the specific historical, political, economic, and ecological contexts in which the disease occurs (Austin, 1989; Jarosz, 1992: 111-13).

The constant use of disparaging language and the de-historicized and de-politicized representation of negative events is perhaps most evident in U.S. media coverage of *conflict* in Africa. Specifically, conflict in Africa has consistently been represented as being essentially 'tribal' in nature – that is, violence is depicted as ultimately stemming from age-old rivalries and innate animosities between different so-called 'tribal' or 'ethnic' groups (Nwosu, 1987; Ebo, 1992: 18; Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993: 11-16; Lowe et al., 1997; Stock, 2004: 45-6). From the early 1950s Mau Mau revolt in Kenya (Maloba, 1992), to the Biafra civil war in Nigeria in the late 1960s (Artis, 1970; Ibelema, 1992), to the anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa during the 1980s (Brock, 1992), to civil war in Liberia during the early 1990s (Fair, 1993: 15-16), to the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Myers et al., 1996; Melvern, 2007), the U.S. news media relied heavily on purported 'tribal' enmities to account for the violence that occurred in these places, a phenomenon Artis (1970) has called the "tribal fixation."

Attributing violent conflict in Africa to 'tribal' hatreds is extremely problematic. The term 'tribal' when applied to Africa in any context carries negative connotations associated with 'primitiveness' (Lowe et al., 1997). "What the word 'tribal' does is to instantly separate Africa from America. 'Tribalism' invokes the primordial; it invokes the 'uncivilized,' locating Africa in a distant time in evolutionary scale from 'our' contemporary and modern time" (Fair, 1993: 15). The backward image that the word conjures in fact has its roots in European colonialism. European colonial administrators and anthropologists viewed and represented forms of socio-cultural organization in

Africa as being 'tribal,' a strictly European classification that was reserved for and applied to types of societal organization regarded as 'primordial,' 'immutable,' and 'primitive' (Southall, 1970; Brock, 1992: 153-4; Cooper, 2002: 18; Young, 2002). Today, consequently, when the American news media interpret conflict in Africa as being 'tribal,' violence is effectively ascribed to the presumed 'barbaric' and 'atavistic' essence of Africa and Africans, while the historical and political-economic factors surrounding violence are elided (Brock, 1992; Ibelema, 1992; Maloba, 1992; Myers et al., 1996). This is evidenced in the way that the American news media covered the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This tragedy was represented as a spontaneous eruption of deep-seated 'tribal' hostilities between Hutus and Tutsis, while the historical and political factors that contributed to it – such as the manipulation of Hutu and Tutsi ethnic identities during Belgian colonial rule and the fact that the genocide was planned and carried out by the Rwandan government and its military apparatus using sophisticated forms of propaganda – were ignored (Myers et al., 1996; Cooper, 2002: 6-9; Stock, 2004: 47-8; Melvern, 2007).

Moreover, the U.S. news media's reliance on 'tribal' enmities for explaining conflict in Africa is troublesome because of the highly simplistic manner in which 'ethnic' group formations and identities in Africa have been represented within this explanation. Specifically, purportedly warring 'ethnic' groups in Africa have been portrayed as discretely bounded, homogenous, and unchanging socio-cultural entities that have existed since time immemorial (Brock, 1992; Myers et al., 1996; Lowe et al., 1997; Stock, 2004: 44-8; Melvern, 2007), an understanding of ethnicity in Africa commensurate with how Europeans during colonialism perceived of it (Southall, 1970; Ranger, 1983;

Young, 2002). This understanding and representation is problematic because it misses the incredibly fluid, flexible, changing, overlapping, and circumstantial nature of ethnicity in Africa (Southall, 1970; Ranger, 1983; Young, 2002; Stock, 2004: 44-8). It is also problematic in that it ignores the fact that there is nothing 'timeless' or 'natural' about ethnicity in Africa today – many ethnic group formations and identities in Africa are in fact quite novel and the deliberate product of cultural manipulation engineered by colonial and postcolonial regimes seeking to bolster their authority (Vail, 1989; Brock, 1992; Young, 1994). The oversimplified, ahistorical, and apolitical representation of ethnicity in Africa was apparent, for example, in the U.S. news media's coverage of political strife in South Africa during the 1980s. Violent struggles for political power between the paramilitary wings of the Zulu-based Inkatha political party and the multi-ethnic United Democratic Front were represented as 'tribal' conflicts rooted in ancient 'tribal' animosities between 'timeless' ethnic groups like the Zulu and Xhosa (Brock, 1992). The coverage neglected to mention, however, that there is nothing 'ancient' nor 'natural' about ethnic groups in South Africa in that white minority governments deliberately fostered ethnic distinctions in South Africa throughout the twentieth century in order to weaken African solidarity and safeguard minority rule (Vail, 1989; Brock, 1992).

In conclusion, the U.S. news media have repeatedly interpreted conflict in Africa as resulting from 'tribal' hatreds between unequivocally distinct and 'timeless' ethnic groups. This explanation naturalizes conflict in Africa by removing it from its historical and political context and reduces incredibly complex political events to 'irrational savagery' embodied in 'tribal' animus. This explanation also produces highly simplistic

and myopic understandings of ethnic group formations and identities in Africa. The 'tribal' explanation is profoundly influenced by the discourse on Africa as Europe's 'Other,' a conceptualization that very much resonates with Americans' understandings of the continent and its peoples as being 'primitive' and 'savage' (Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993; Myers et al., 1996). Nonetheless, political scientist and Africanist Crawford Young has recently written, "the 'ancient tribal hatreds' thesis...has largely disappeared from serious media reporting" (2002: 1-2).

The on-going violence in Darfur, Sudan presents an excellent case to test whether Young's statement is accurate because it represents a deadly conflict in Africa that has received significant U.S. news media coverage. Beginning in early 2003 and continuing into the present, Darfur has witnessed an explosion of violence and mass murder – hundreds of thousands have been brutally killed and millions have been uprooted from their homes and now languish in fetid refugee camps (ICID, 2005; Prunier, 2007; United Nations, 2008). The violence has even been designated as constituting 'genocide' by the U.S. government, among others. In 2004, the violence and human suffering gripping Darfur first registered in the West and gained the attention of the U.S. news media. Two of America's most respected newspapers in terms of international reporting – the NYT and the WP – have since covered the horrors of Darfur extensively. For example, a search in the Lexus-Nexus database for news stories and op-ed pieces carried in the NYT with 'Darfur' in the headline and/or first paragraph for the period 2004 to 2007 yielded 648 news articles. The same search, but for the WP, produced 606 news articles. The focus of this thesis is both newspapers' coverage of Darfur during the 2004 period.

In analyzing NYT and WP coverage of Darfur during 2004, my chief objective is to determine how both newspapers initially explained and represented the violence occurring in Darfur. More specific, I am interested in what the NYT and the WP emphasized as lying at the roots of the violence. Did both newspapers point to 'tribal' and/or 'ethnic' hatreds as playing an important contributing role in the violence while removing it from its historical and political context? Furthermore, I am interested in how the NYT and the WP represented people and socio-political groups involved in the violence. If the NYT and the WP did indeed rely upon the 'tribal' explanation for making sense of the violence, how were 'ethnic' group formations and identities in Darfur depicted? Finally, I am interested in what kinds of impressions and understandings of Darfur as a place and society are imparted to news consumers as a result of both newspapers' representations of violence and people. To what extent are these representations and understandings of Darfur shaped by and reflective of Western cultural biases rooted in Europe's historical way of representing and 'seeing' Africa as the 'dark continent'?

2. Methods

I conducted a textual analysis of 2004 coverage of Darfur in the NYT and the WP using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. News articles analyzed were obtained through the Lexus-Nexus database by searching for stories in the NYT and the WP that carried "Darfur" in the headline and/or lead paragraphs during the period January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004. Editorial and opinion pieces were excluded from analysis, while stories provided from news wires (e.g., Associated Press) that ran in either newspaper were included. In total, I analyzed 198 news articles – 108 from the NYT and 90 from the WP (Table 1). I read each article twice.

Table 1 – Total news articles with "Darfur" in the headline/lead paragraphs, 2004

Month	NYT	WP	Total
January	3	0	3
February	0	0	0
March	0	1	1
April	2	2	4
May	5	7	12
June	8	7	15
July	15	13	28
August	19	12	31
September	19	16	35
October	15	12	27
November	14	13	27
December	8	7	15
Total	**108**	**90**	**198**

I chose the year 2004 for analysis to determine how both newspapers *initially* represented the violence and it was during 2004 that the violence and human rights

abuses in Darfur first gained the attention of the NYT and the WP.[2] The year consequently witnessed a proliferation of NYT and WP stories – especially during and following the summer (Table 1) – dedicated to describing and making sense of the violence. Moreover, I selected the 2004 period because it included enough news articles for distinct patterns in representations of the violence to emerge and because it yielded a manageable number of news stories that could all be studied individually in detail. I chose the NYT and the WP for analysis because of the esteemed reputation of both newspapers' foreign coverage. When it comes to international reporting, journalism scholar Robert Entman lists them as "the two leading newspapers" in the U.S. in terms of quality and influence (2004: 11). Furthermore, I selected the NYT and the WP because both had reporters on the ground in Darfur, bordering areas of Chad, and Sudan's capital Khartoum producing news stories during 2004.

A textual analysis methodology called 'framing' informed and guided my examination of NYT and WP coverage of Darfur. Framing directs attention to how meanings are conveyed in news texts through the operation of 'frames' (Entman, 1993). Frames are information-ordering devices that guide news consumers' understandings of news events – they "encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understandings of them" (Entman, 1991: 7). Overall, frames tell us how to interpret events (Entman, 1993, 2004: 5-6; Klak, 1994: 321; Myers et al., 1996: 25; Dodds, 1998). For example, a frame that emerged in the British news media for

[2] NYT and WP coverage of Darfur in 2003 was virtually non-existent despite the occurrence of large-scale violence in the region during this period. For example, a search in the Lexus-Nexus database for stories carried in both newspapers during the 2003 period with "Darfur" in the headline and/or lead paragraphs yielded only one story.

explaining the Bosnian Conflict in the early 1990s was that the violence was a result of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' (Dodds, 1998; Robison, 2004).

Frames work essentially through selection and salience – attention is called to certain facets of news events, thereby elevating them in prominence, which in turn makes them more memorable and meaningful to news consumers (Entman, 1993: 53). The objective of scholars studying frames has been to detect and illustrate their existence in news media. A key way in which this is achieved is by uncovering the particular words emphasized in a news narrative, especially words that appear *repeatedly* (Entman, 1991: 7, 1993, 2004: 6-8; Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996; Potter, 2006). Repetition of certain words has the effect of augmenting their salience, which increases their potential for guiding news consumers' understandings of news events (Entman, 1991: 7). Frequently invoked words comprise frames and their connotations help structure the interpretation of issues and events for news audiences. The conventional approach to elucidating frames has been through the accounting for and enumeration of words that consistently appear throughout a news narrative on a specific event or topic (Entman, 1991; Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996; Potter, 2006). The words that comprise frames are then placed into context through the provision of specific examples of how they have been used in news stories.

Cultural geographers have utilized the framing methodology in analyzing the foreign coverage of several major U.S. newspapers (Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996; Potter, 2006). In particular, these geographers examined how U.S. newspapers framed issues and events in non-Western places – such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Myers et al., 1996), social and economic crisis in Havana, Cuba during the early 1990s (Klak,

1994), and environmental degradation, emigration, and political upheaval in Haiti during 2004 (Potter, 2006) – and focused on the kinds of understandings and representations of foreign places and peoples that emerged from the interpretive news frames uncovered in their analyses. These geographers have demonstrated that news frames pertaining to events in the non-Western world are important for geographers to study because they produce particular impressions and understandings about foreign places and peoples.

Furthermore, these geographers compared U.S. newspaper representations of the non-West established in news frames against scholarly research relating to the same foreign issues, places, and peoples highlighted in newspapers. Scholars and journalists are trained differently from each other, collect their data in different ways and for different purposes, write for different audiences, and are enmeshed within different political and institutional structures, therefore, their representations of the same issues, places, and peoples often differ significantly (Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996). Thus, geographers drew upon information from scholarly research to construct alternative understandings of non-Western peoples, places, and issues to those produced by U.S. newspapers. Geographers did not regard representations of the non-West gleaned from scholarly sources as yielding incontrovertible 'truths,' but deemed them, nonetheless, to provide understandings of the world less imbued by popular cultural prejudices and more attuned to the historical, political, and cultural complexity of foreign places, peoples, and events than those provided by newspapers. Geographers, thus, also employed scholarly research to challenge U.S. newspaper representations of the non-West, showing them to be simplistic, culturally biased, and lacking serious historical, political, and cultural consideration.

In analyzing the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur, I focused on how both newspapers 'framed' the violence in Darfur. While reading news articles, I concentrated on and noted how both newspapers consistently interpreted the violence. Toward this purpose, I paid particular attention to how people and socio-political groups involved in the violence were described and how their role in the violence was represented. Geographers have shown that how news media describe people and groups involved in violence provides understandings of how that violence is rationalized and interpreted in news coverage (Myers et al., 1996; Dodds, 1998; Robison, 2004). I present how people and groups implicated in the violence are represented and discuss what types of understandings of violence these representations yield.

Moreover, I recorded which words were repeatedly used to explain the violence and to describe the people and groups involved in it. I counted and tabulated these frequently occurring words and tallied the total number of news articles that carried them to establish a sense of how prevalent their usage was in the 2004 coverage. I reflected upon the meanings of these recurring words in order to determine what kinds of representations and understandings of Darfur's violence that they communicate. Placing the recurring words into context by providing examples of how they were used in news stories facilitated this. I also reflected upon the types of understandings of Darfur as a place and society that are imparted to news consumers as a result of both newspapers' interpretations of violence and concomitant representations of people involved in it.

Additionally, I juxtaposed NYT and WP interpretations of violence and accompanying representations of people with historical, anthropological, and geographical scholarly research relating to Darfur and the region's violence. I used this

body of academic research to develop an alternative description of Darfur focused particularly on the political history, people, ethnic composition, and cultural ecology of the region. I also used this literature to construct an alternative interpretation of the current violence in Darfur that highlights the historical, political, ethnic, and ecological factors that culminated to produce it. The descriptions of Darfur and interpretations of the region's violence obtained from the scholarly literature begin the next section, preceding the analysis of NYT and WP Darfur coverage. In the analysis of NYT and WP coverage, however, I continually refer back to the scholarly literature in order to problematize some aspects of both newspapers' interpretations of violence and concomitant representations of people.

3. Scholarly Representations of Darfur

3.1 Cultural Geography of Darfur

Darfur is comprised of three federal states and located in western Sudan bordering Libya, Chad, and the Central African Republic (Figure 1). Its present-day political

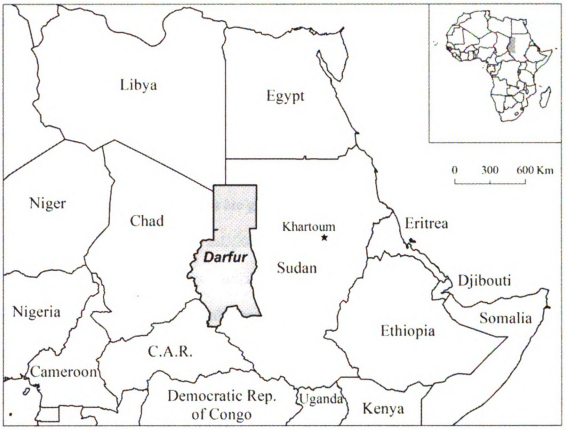

Figure 1: Map of Darfur, Sudan

boundaries are based largely on the territorial extent of the Darfur Sultanate, an autonomous polity that existed for almost three centuries beginning in the mid-seventeenth century (de Waal, 2005). Encompassing nearly 150,000 square miles – an area roughly the size of France – Darfur contains a great diversity of cultures, livelihood patterns, and ecologies. It lies entirely within the vast Sahelian belt of desert, semi-

desert, and savanna, and can be divided into three general regions based on environmental conditions and predominant livelihood practices and ethnic groups (O'Fahey, 1980: 1-8).

Nomadic pastoralist groups dominate Darfur's northern and southern regions. In Darfur's arid and unfertile north, which sits south of the Sahara and annually receives about 300mm of rain, nomadic pastoralism based on camels is the principal livelihood pursuit (Daly, 2007: 6; Prunier, 2007: 3). Darfur's northern nomadic groups are grouped under the name 'Abbala,' or 'camel-people' in Arabic (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 9). In Darfur's south, a vast sandy region where rainfall is more plentiful than in the arid north, cattle-based nomadic pastoralism predominates (Daly, 2007: 7; Prunier, 2007: 3). Darfur's southern nomadic groups are generally referred to as 'Baggara,' or 'cattle-people' in Arabic (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 9). The generalizing labels of Abbala and Baggara, however, mask the great number and ethnic complexity of Darfur's nomadic groups. Both north and south Darfur are home to a vast array of nomadic ethnic communities and these groups can trace their lineage to several different regions of the Arab Near East and Africa, including the Arabian Peninsula, the Nile Valley, North Africa, and especially West Africa (O'Fahey, 1980: 4-6; de Waal, 2005: 187-8; Prunier, 2007: 6). Over the years, nomadic groups originating from different parts of the African and Arab worlds have intermixed, thereby combining various African and Arab cultures to produce a unique cultural and ethnic mosaic of nomadic communities (de Waal, 2005: 187-9; Daly, 2007: 10). Darfur's nomadic groups have been traditionally called 'Arab' in Darfur – not in a strict ethnic and cultural sense, but chiefly because they are nomadic (de Waal, 2005: 185; Prunier, 2007: 5).

Wedged between the predominantly nomadic northern and southern regions are Darfur's fertile savanna lands (O'Fahey, 1980: 1; Prunier, 2007: 3). Year-round, settled agriculture dominates here and is mainly rain-fed or practiced along and in the beds of seasonal watercourses (O'Fahey, 1980: 2; Daly, 2007: 6-7). The region is home to several agriculture-practicing ethnic communities, the two largest being the Fur and Masalit. The Fur are regarded as indigenous to Darfur and they ruled the Darfur Sultanate (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 3; Prunier, 2007: 6-7).

Darfur's nomadic and agricultural spheres have not been isolated from one another, but have historically been tightly linked through mutual exchange relationships between Darfur's farmers and nomadic pastoralists. This is particularly evident in the farmer-pastoralist relations exhibited between Abbala nomads and Darfurian farming communities, especially the Fur.[3] Specifically, during the dry season in Darfur – approximately October through May (Prunier, 2007: 3) – water supplies and pasture dwindle in the arid north and Abbala groups migrate south in search of sufficient water and pasture for their camels and livestock, which brings them into contact with farming communities (de Waal, 1989). Farmers have traditionally accommodated migrating nomads by providing them with temporary access to pasture and water resources in return for some form of compensation (Harir, 1994; 162; de Waal, 2005: 190). For example, some Abbala have paid rent while others have labored on farms, taking care of farmers' livestock and providing load camels to transport produce to store houses and markets (Harir, 1994: 179; Daly, 2007: 216). Moreover, in addition to receiving needed pasture and water, Abbala often obtain from farmers millet, a staple of their diet (de Waal, 1989:

[3] Symbiotic relationships have also existed between Baggara nomads and Darfurian farmers (see Haaland, 1969).

51). Mutual exchange relationships between Darfur's nomads and farmers have historically been important to maintaining the livelihoods of both groups and have brought both into relations of interdependence as a result (O'Fahey, 1980: 2; de Waal, 1989). Furthermore, these exchange relationships have encouraged a great deal of intermarrying between nomadic and farming groups (Haaland, 1969; Harir, 1994: 162-3).

As noted above, Darfur is comprised of numerous ethnic groups. Prunier (2007: 4) estimates that Darfur is populated by at least 36 and perhaps up to 150 different ethnic groups. Distinctions between ethnic identities and physical appearances in Darfur, however, are blurry owing to hundreds of years of interdependence, intermixing, and intermarrying between groups (Haaland, 1969; O'Fahey, 1980: 1-8; de Waal, 2005; Daly, 2007; Prunier, 2007). Virtually all Darfurians have mixed ancestry and all villages in Darfur are ethnically mixed with elements of 'Arab' nomadic groups and 'non-Arab' agricultural groups (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 4-5). In addition, virtually everyone is Muslim and nearly everyone speaks Arabic, including 'non-Arab' groups that speak native languages, such as the Fur (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 4; Daly, 2007: 13). In fact, the 'non-Arab' Fur were crucial to the promotion and spreading of Islam and Arabic throughout Darfur during the reign of the Darfur Sultanate (O'Fahey, 1980: 9; Flint & de Waal, 2005: 3).

If the ethnic map in Darfur was not complicated enough, ethnicity there has historically been incredibly flexible, always shifting according to political, economic, and ecological contexts. "The salient point is of fluidity and change, not stagnation and immemorially fixed positions geographically, socially, or economically" (Daly, 2007: 12). For example, Haaland (1969) during the 1960s documented how Fur farmers

invested in cattle to a point where the cattle's value surpassed that of their farms and, in order to protect their cattle investment, they had to cross ethnic boundaries, abandoning their former sedentary life and indigenous language to 'become' Baggara. These Fur farmers became nomadic and were incorporated into Baggara communities where they acquired Baggara wives and adopted Baggara customs. Similarly, it has been common for 'Arab' nomads, both Baggara and Abbala, to settle and 'become' Fur, especially when camels and livestock were lost to drought, sickness, or war (O'Fahey, 1980: 8; Harir, 1994: 162-3; Flint & de Waal, 2005: 5).

In summary, Darfur is a cultural mosaic marked by a diversity of ethnic groups, some nomadic and some agricultural. Its many nomadic groups exhibit a coalescence of various Arab and African cultures. The region's 'Arab' nomadic groups and 'non-Arab' farming communities have also mixed extensively, partly through the complementary economic and ecological relationships developed between them, further blending Arab and African cultures and ethnic identities. Moreover, ethnic boundaries are slight, remarkably permeable, and constantly changing. Despite – or perhaps because of – Darfur's extraordinary cultural and ethnic diversity, and the ease with which ethnic divisions can be surmounted, there has historically existed in Darfur a coherent regional cultural identity that is cemented by Islam and Arabic and *simultaneously* African and Arab (de Waal, 1989, 2005). Today, however, ethnic identities in Darfur have become what, historically, they were not – simple, rigid, unyielding, and mutually antagonistic. This development is intimately related to the violence now occurring in the region and the confluence of historical, political, and ecological circumstances that led to it. An interpretation of this violence follows, beginning with the end of the Darfur Sultanate.

3.2 Darfur's Sorrow – An Interpretation of Violence

In 1916, the independent Darfur Sultanate ceased to exist as it and the rest of modern-day Sudan were incorporated into the British Empire. British colonial rule in Sudan lasted until 1956 and during this period Darfur was the object of severe social and economic neglect. The British paid scant attention to Darfur, regarding the region as a backwater, and only a trickle of funds and resources targeted for social and economic development reached it (Daly, 2007: 2; Prunier, 2007: 26). Consequently, at the end of the colonial period, Darfur was hopelessly underdeveloped (Prunier, 2007: 32-3).

The abysmal social and economic conditions in Darfur did not improve following Sudanese independence in 1956. During the postcolonial period, successive Arab-dominated regimes in Khartoum have viewed Darfur as a region of little importance and the marginalization of it begun by the British has continued and deepened. For example, projects for social and economic development in the region have been virtually absent, and Darfurians have been largely excluded from national political leadership positions (Harir, 1994: 155; Flint & de Waal, 2005: 15-18; Daly, 2007: 211-14). Khartoum's blatant disregard for Darfur and the poverty that it has wrought represents a key variable in the complex equation that has led to the harrowing situation in Darfur today. In particular, during the 1980s, this disregard and concomitant destitution interacted with drought, civil war in neighboring Chad, and the geopolitical ambitions of Libya to anchor the roots of Darfur's current violence.

An Arab supremacist and ardent pan-Arabist, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi sought to establish an Arab-Islamic Empire across the Sahel during the 1970s and 1980s (Burr & Collins, 1999). To achieve this objective, Gaddafi created the Islamic Legion (IL), a

paramilitary group that would be used to unite and 'Arabize' the Sahel through military means (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 23; Prunier, 2007: 44). 'Arab' militiamen were recruited for the IL and came from all over the Sahel. In particular, the IL targeted and drew heavily from Sahelian nomadic groups – these groups were deemed to be 'Arabs,' however, simply because they were nomadic (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 23). During the mid- to late-1980s, IL militiamen launched attacks against the Chadian government from military bases located in Darfur.

Chad loomed large in Gaddafi's plans for a unified Arab-Islamic belt in the Sahel. From 1965 to 1990, the country was ensnared in a civil war between its 'African,' Christian-dominated government in the south and Muslim rebels in the north. Gaddafi sought to overthrow the African-Christian government in Ndjamena and eventually annex it by supporting the northern rebels and directing IL military strikes in Chad (Burr & Collins, 1999). Bordering Chad (Figure 1), Gaddafi regarded Darfur as a strategic location from which to launch IL attacks against the Chadian government (Flint & de Waal, 2005; Prunier, 2007). During the 1970s and early 1980s, however, Khartoum denied Gaddafi access to Darfur due to a political rift between Gaddafi and Sudan's then president Jaafar al-Nimeiri (Prunier, 2007: 44-6). In 1985, though, Nimeiri was overthrown and replaced by Sadiq al-Mahdi, a Gaddafi ally. Sadiq struck a deal with Gaddafi in which Khartoum received money, weapons, and oil to support its civil war with southern Sudan in return for granting Gaddafi unfettered access to Darfur, which would be used as a military base and launching pad to achieve Gaddafi's political ambitions in Chad (Burr & Collins, 1999; Flint & de Waal, 2005: 25). In 1985, as a result, conveys of Libyan trucks, scores of weapons, and thousands of IL troops and

allied Chadian nomads from across the border flowed into Darfur, all with their sights set on Ndjamena (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 25; Prunier, 2007: 55). The Libyan military presence in Darfur coincided with dire social and environmental conditions in the region and the emergence of widespread tensions between Darfur's Abbala nomads and agricultural communities.

In the early 1980s, Darfur experienced a succession of droughts that deteriorated into famine during the 1984-85 period and hundreds of thousands of Darfurians died, due mainly to malnutrition-related illnesses (Bush, 1988; de Waal, 1989). Negligence and indifference displayed by Khartoum played a crucial role in the development of the famine. For example, Khartoum's long-term neglect of Darfur's water infrastructure left it in a dilapidated state and thus unable to mitigate water shortages (Daly, 2007: 213-14; Prunier, 2007: 49-50), and Khartoum eliminated in the early 1980s what was once a successful famine prevention and relief system that was intact in Sudan's rural areas, including Darfur (de Waal, 1998). Moreover, urgent requests made to Khartoum by Darfur's regional government for assistance were met with no response – Khartoum denied that problems existed in Darfur (Bush, 1988: 9). In fact, Khartoum actively blocked food aid and medicines from reaching the region (Daly, 2007: 228; Prunier, 2007: 54-6). In the midst of crisis, Darfur was simply left to its own devices and Khartoum's neglect of the region prolonged and exacerbated the famine (Bush, 1988; de Waal, 1998; Daly, 2007: 228; Prunier, 2007: 56).

All of Darfur suffered in the mid-1980s, but the region's Abbala nomads were perhaps most devastated. The succession of droughts significantly deteriorated and diminished pasture and water resources in northern Darfur and the character of Abbala

seasonal migrations south into Darfur's agricultural belt in search of pasture and water began to radically change as a result (de Waal, 1989; Daly, 2007: 215-17). Specifically, Abbala migrant numbers were substantially larger than in years past and settlement by Abbala nomads became in many cases permanent as opposed to seasonal (Harir, 1994: 163; Daly, 2007: 215-17). Adding to the unprecedented number of Abbala amassing in Darfur's agricultural region were influxes of Chadian nomads fleeing the violence of the Chadian civil war, and also Chadian nomads coming to join the ranks of the IL (Daly, 2007: 217; Prunier, 2007: 67). The unusually large numbers of nomads overwhelmed farmers as their camels and livestock degraded farmers' fields and trampled and ate farmers' crops (Harir, 1994: 161-2; Daly, 2007: 216-29). Moreover, nomad theft of farmers' animals was rampant (Harir, 1994: 161).

Farmers during this period were already struggling to survive in the grips of a famine; the damage to their fields and pilfering of their animals and crops done by Abbala and their herds rendered this endeavor more precarious. Under such duress, farmers refused to accommodate the nomads, camels, and livestock inundating their fields, and blocked access to their farms, pastures, and water sources (Harir, 1994: 179; Daly, 2007: 217; Prunier, 2007: 57). Abbala were deprived of the pasture and water resources needed to maintain their herds and nomadic livelihoods and violent conflicts over land and natural resources proliferated between them and farmers (Harir, 1994; Daly, 2007: 217). Attempts to reconcile such conflicts were futile because Khartoum never provided the regional government in Darfur with the necessary resources to mediate natural resource disputes and enforce decisions made on their resolution – in

fact, law enforcement in Darfur completely collapsed during the 1980s (de Waal, 1989: xv; Harir, 1994; Daly, 2007: 240-3).

The ecologically adverse effects wrought by the droughts in northern Darfur coupled with the actions of farmers barring access to pasture and water had devastating impacts on Abbala nomads. Deprived of pasture and water, Abbala nomads found it increasingly difficult to maintain their nomadic livelihoods. They became impoverished as they lost and sold their camels and livestock in massive numbers, and many were forced to become sedentary, abandoning a revered way of life (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 46-7; Daly, 2007: 230). Abbala were greatly shaken and suffered dramatic cultural and mental damage as a result (Prunier, 2007: 55-6). The destitute and demoralized state of Abbala groups in the mid-1980s rendered them ready recruits to Gaddafi's militias as they entered Darfur in 1985.

Amid the famine conditions and escalation in farmer-herder conflicts, IL forces made their way into Darfur. Smarting from the deleterious effects of the droughts and preventative actions of farmers, and seeking a route out of poverty, Darfur's Abbala communities were easy targets for Gaddafi's militias who bore famine relief and money (Daly, 2007: 266; Prunier, 2007: 55). Gaddafi considered Darfur's Abbala nomads as his 'Arab' allies and IL forces swiftly incorporated them into their ranks, training and arming them to fight in Chad (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 48). Khartoum, meanwhile, turned a blind eye to Libyan recruitments of Darfur's Abbala into the IL (Daly, 2007: 243).

In addition to furnishing money, food, and arms, IL militiamen indoctrinated Abbala with a racist and militant ideology that espoused 'Arab' superiority (Prunier, 2007: 44). Darfur's Abbala suffered great damage during the droughts and owing to the

racist propaganda disseminated by Libyan militiamen, their woes were increasingly interpreted in 'racial' and 'ethnic' terms – that is, blame for their miserable condition was placed squarely on so-called 'non-Arab,' 'black African' agricultural groups in Darfur (Prunier, 2007: 57-8). Libyan propaganda asserted that lowly and detestable 'black Africans' had trampled upon the 'rights' to land and natural resources of 'Arabs' (Daly, 2007: 243). This Arab supremacist ideology is important because it exposed Darfurians to fixed and polarized 'Arab' and 'African' identities for the first time (de Waal, 2005; Prunier, 2007: 79). Although these understandings of identity were hitherto alien to Darfurians, thrust upon them by the outside world, in the milieu of catastrophe visited upon Darfur's Abbala, the notion that there existed in Darfur two coherent socio-cultural communities – 'Arab' and 'African' – and the explanation that 'Africans' were chiefly responsible for the plight of the 'Arabs' increasingly gained credence among Darfur's Abbala (de Waal, 2005; Prunier, 2007: 57-8). The supremacist Arab ideology and the mutually antagonistic 'Arab' and 'African' identities that it posited would prove to have devastating consequences for Darfur's agricultural communities.

Heavily armed and imbued with a racist ideology, Abbala nomads during the late 1980s began ruthlessly attacking 'African' – especially Fur – farms and villages with the overall objective of removing 'Africans' so as to claim the emptied land as their own, thereby securing access to pasture and water resources in perpetuity (Harir, 1994; Daly, 2007: 217). The Arab supremacist ideology justified the character and goals of the attacks (Daly, 2007). Adding to this violence were frequent battles between Chadian and IL forces on Darfur's soil (Daly, 2007: 243; Prunier, 2007: 61). As a result of the Chad-Libya conflict spilling into Darfur and the marauding activities of Abbala nomads,

thousands of Fur were murdered and hundreds of Fur villages destroyed in the late 1980s (Daly, 2007: 246; Prunier, 2007: 63-5). Fur protested the Libyan presence in Darfur, but their objections fell on deaf ears in Khartoum (Prunier, 2007: 63). Fed up, Fur organized defense militias and by the late 1980s, Darfur was in the throes of a civil war between Libyan-backed Abbala nomads and Fur militias, which blended with the Chad-Libya war (Daly, 2007: 244; Prunier, 2007: 60-1). Finally, in 1990, the war in Chad ended and Libya consequently lost interest in Darfur and its presence there subsided (Prunier, 2007: 71). Darfur, meanwhile, was irrevocably changed for the worse – a deep rift had been driven between Darfur's Abbala and agricultural communities and a powerfully militant and racist ideology had been instilled in the Abbala nomads that produced historically bogus and mutually antagonistic 'African' and 'Arab' identities. Nonetheless, following the end of the Chad conflict and subsequent exit of Libya from Darfur, a period of relative calm fell upon the region. The lull would be broken in the late-1990s, however, as West Darfur erupted into violence.

During the mid-1990s in West Darfur state, several Masalit were stripped of influential regional government positions because of constitutional reforms imposed by Khartoum; their jobs were given to local Abbala 'Arabs' (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 58). The positions bestowed to 'Arabs' the power to grant rights to land, which nullified traditional Masalit claims to land (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 58-9; Daly, 2007: 262). Incensed, Masalit resisted and unrest grew in West Darfur. Khartoum construed Masalit resistance as being insurrectionary and responded by mobilizing and arming a proxy militia picked predominantly from Darfur's Abbala nomads to quash it (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 59-65; Daly, 2007: 262-3). Khartoum's selection of Abbala nomads was purely

opportunistic for three main reasons – first, it allowed Khartoum to conserve its own stretched military resources as it fought a civil war with the south of Sudan (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 57); second, Abbala nomads remained in a destitute state and therefore were ripe for the picking as a proxy instrument as Khartoum coaxed nomadic groups with money and promises of development projects (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 103; Prunier, 2007: 97); and last, relations between Masalit and Abbala nomads were already hostile due to Libyan-inspired ideological manipulation and long-running grievances over access to land and natural resources (Prunier, 2007: 97-8).

In a situation reminiscent of the actions of IL-supported Abbala militias in the late 1980s, the Khartoum-sponsored nomadic militias engaged in unremitting attacks on Masalit villages and farms in which they ruthlessly murdered and raped, set fire to villages, and destroyed everything that made life possible, such as agricultural fields and drinking wells (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 59-60; Daly, 2007: 263). In sabotaging the Masalit's sustenance base, the nomadic militias sought to render life untenable for Masalit farmers so that they could confiscate the land – land that they believed belonged rightfully to them owing to the Arab supremacist ideology foisted upon them by Libya (Daly, 2007: 267). The nomadic militias earned a name among the Masalit as the 'Janjaweed,' "a word that means 'hordes' or 'ruffians'" (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 55). During the period 1996-98, Janjaweed attacks on Masalit villages claimed hundreds of civilian lives and displaced 100,000 (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 59; Daly, 2007: 263). The Janjaweed militias operated with Khartoum-sanctioned impunity, and in several instances, even worked in tandem with Sudanese military forces in razing Masalit villages (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 59-61; Prunier, 2007: 75).

Adding further to Janjaweed-dispensed violence was an attempt in 2001 by southern Sudan's main anti-government rebel group – Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) – to move into Darfur and create alliances with beleaguered 'non-Arab' communities, such as the Fur and Masalit, and support incipient anti-Khartoum movements emerging in Darfur (Prunier, 2007: 87). In response, Khartoum harnessed the Janjaweed militias to successfully foil the SPLA incursion. The Janjaweed subsequently carried out devastating attacks on Darfurian groups suspected of being 'in league' with the SPLA – hundreds died, hundreds of villages were torched (especially Fur), and tens of thousands fled their homes (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 62-5; Prunier, 2007: 87-8). Again, the nomadic militias acted with impunity.

In addition to the many years of neglect in Darfur when it came to social and economic development, political participation, famine relief, and security provision, several Darfurian groups in the late 1990s and early 2000s were again being murdered and violently removed from their land by nomadic militias that operated with Khartoum's blessing and military support. In response, Darfur's Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa[4] communities – groups that were frequently the target of Janjaweed attacks – forged political and military alliances in the early 2000s in order to combat the predations of the nomadic militias, and more important, to demand serious political change from Khartoum in the hopes of significantly improving social, economic, and political conditions in Darfur (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 66-96; Daly, 2007: 268-9). These alliances were formed under the banners of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality

[4] The Zaghawa are a camel-herding nomadic group based in Darfur's northwest (Daly, 2007: 6). Historically, the Zaghawa were aligned with Darfur's other Abbala groups, but relations between them frayed during the 1980s droughts and violent battles between them proliferated (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 73).

Movement (JEM) and labeled 'African' (de Waal, 2005). It is important to note, however, that the 'African' label is purely opportunistic in that it was chosen by SLA and JEM leaders as a prudent means to building political alliances – it serves to unite disparate Darfurian groups that have suffered at the hands of the Arab Sudanese government and 'Arab' nomadic militias (de Waal, 2005). The 'African' label when applied to any Darfurian group, however, is historically and anthropologically naïve – Darfurians had never seen or represented themselves as 'African' until rather recently when the label was imposed upon certain non-nomadic groups as a result of the Libyan discourse on Arab superiority brought into the region (de Waal, 1989, 2005; Prunier, 2007: 76-80).

Weary of the violence and wretched conditions in Darfur, the 'African' SLA and JEM promulgated political agendas that called for an end to the political and economic marginalization of the region (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 82-96). In their condemnations of Darfur's condition, both groups placed the blame solely on Khartoum and *not* Darfur's 'Arab' nomads. The SLA and JEM regard Darfur's nomadic populations as essential components of Darfur's social fabric and attribute their violent activities ultimately to Khartoum's political machinations and disregard of the region (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 70-83). The SLA and JEM regard political change in Khartoum as essential to ending the violence plaguing Darfur and to improving Darfur's political and economic lot (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 82-96). The means through which both groups have attempted to achieve this desired political change have been bold military strikes directed against government targets, particularly military installations, throughout Darfur beginning in 2001 and escalating in the beginning of 2003 (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 97-100; Prunier, 2007: 92).

In response to the SLA and JEM attacks, Khartoum mobilized its Janjaweed militias in Darfur in the hopes of swiftly crushing the resistance. In particular, during the summer of 2003, Khartoum increased its efforts in building up the nomadic proxy militias, establishing numerous military camps all over Darfur to recruit and train Abbala nomads – militia recruits were heavily armed and paid well and 'Arab' leaders were promised development projects if they assisted in the building of the proxy armies (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 102-3; Daly, 2007: 277-82). The militias were eventually organized into coordinated military units and unleashed on a grand scale in July 2003 to suppress SLA and JEM attacks. In the fall of 2003, however, Janjaweed attacks turned increasingly toward civilian villages far from rebel positions, to stanch the flow of rebel recruits (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 104-9). Revealed in a captured government communiqué to Janjaweed leaders, Khartoum in fact ordered the nomadic militias "to change the demography of Darfur and empty it of African tribes" through the killing "of intellectuals and youths who may join the rebels in fighting" (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 106). Moreover, Janjaweed attacks on civilian villages were closely coordinated with air force bombardments by the Sudanese army (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 104-9).

The character of the Janjaweed attacks mirrored those of the past carried out by nomadic militias on civilian villages in Darfur – mass murder and rape was rampant, entire villages were leveled, and pillars of sustenance, such as agricultural fields and water pumps, were destroyed. Again, the overarching goal of the attacks was permanent removal of the inhabitants so as to take their land (Flint & de Waal, 2005: 104-8; Prunier, 2007). As in the past, the Libyan-introduced Arab supremacist ideology inculcated in nomads justified the attacks and their aim of confiscating the land of 'non-Arabs' (Flint

& de Waal, 2005; Daly, 2007; Prunier, 2007). These attacks differed significantly than those in the past, however, in the scope of their killings and in the magnitude of the displacement of peoples that they triggered. Since the summer of 2003, hundreds of thousands of Darfurians have died due directly or indirectly to the coordinated Janjaweed and Sudanese government attacks and millions more have fled their homes, many of them seeking refuge in the hundreds of refugee camps that have sprouted all over Darfur and neighboring Chad (ICID, 2005; Prunier, 2007; United Nations, 2008).

4. Results and Discussion

I begin this chapter by providing general descriptions of how the NYT and the WP represented the chief people and groups implicated in Darfur's violence and their role in the violence. Based on these descriptions, I identify two frames employed by both newspapers for explaining Darfur's strife: 1) violence stems from a chain of connected political issues and factors; and 2) violence revolves around socio-cultural differences and concomitant tensions between 'Arabs' and 'Africans.' I devote the remainder of this chapter to problematizing aspects of the second frame and demonstrating how it manifests itself in both newspapers' representations of alleged internal, local-level factors within Darfur that have contributed to the region's carnage.

4.1 Representations of People in Darfur and their Role in the Violence

The NYT and the WP identified four principal groups involved in Darfur's violence: 1) Darfur-based rebel groups, 2) the Sudanese state, 3) nomadic militias (the Janjaweed), and 4) Darfurian civilians. The rebel groups are represented as emerging in 2003 when they attacked Sudanese military installations in Darfur. These groups, and those who they are said to represent, are consistently described as "African" (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 – Representations of people and groups connected to the violence

Key words and phrases[a]	NYT[b]	WP[b]	Total[b]	%[c]
Rebels & those they represent – "African"	21	35	56	28%
Sudanese central government – "Arab"	20	23	43	22%
Nomadic 'Janjaweed' militias – "Arab"	79	75	154	78%
Civilian victims – "African"	57	58	115	58%

[a] Key words and phrases used in the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur.

[b] Total number of news articles that carried the specified word or phrase.

[c] Percentage of total news articles.

For instance, Wax writes, "The Darfur conflict began in early 2003, when...*African rebel groups*, attacked military installations, charging that the government had treated *Africans* unjustly" (emphasis added: WP, July 4). The motivation for the rebels' emergence and strikes against government targets is represented as Khartoum's marginalization of Darfur's 'African' communities and a related desire to improve the political and economic lot of Darfur's 'Africans.' This is illustrated in the comment, "The rebels have fought...for more resources for the black African majority in Darfur, which they say has been neglected by a government in Khartoum dominated by Arabs" (Lacey, NYT, Aug. 3).

As the last quotation illustrates, the Sudanese central government is regularly described as ruled or dominated by people who are "Arab" (Table 2.1). In addition to being portrayed as responsible for the grievances that inspire the violent actions of Darfur's 'African' rebels, the 'Arab' government in Khartoum is represented as implicated in Darfur's violence in two ways. First, Khartoum is depicted as mobilizing and arming nomadic militias in order to quash Darfur's rebels. Second, the Sudanese military is represented as working in tandem with the nomadic militias in displacing and murdering Darfurian civilians. Khartoum's complicity in the violence is shown when Wax comments, "The violence erupted...when African tribes rebelled against the Arab-led government. The government responded by bombing villages and arming and supporting an Arab militia known as the Janjaweed to put down the rebellion" (WP, Sept. 28). The nomadic militias, thus, are represented as operating at the behest of Khartoum and are nearly always described as "Arab," as shown in Wax's previous statement (Table 2.1). In cooperation with the Sudanese military, the 'Arab' nomadic militias are depicted

as inflicting massive violence in Darfur, torturing, murdering, and uprooting from their homes bewildering numbers of innocent Darfurian civilians, who are regularly described as "African" (Table 2.1). For example, Elbagir asserts, "As many as 50,000 *African* villagers have been killed and 1.5 million displaced in Darfur by an Arab militia" (emphasis added: WP, Aug. 8).

Based on these general descriptions of how the NYT and the WP represented during 2004 the violence in Darfur and the chief peoples and socio-political groups implicated in it, two important observations can be made. First, unlike the majority of past U.S. news media representations of violence in Africa, the NYT and the WP point to deeply *political* factors as contributing to Darfur's violence – namely, the violent actions of Darfur-based rebels aimed at redressing the political and economic inequities suffered by Darfurian communities at the hands of the Sudanese state, and also the Sudanese government's use of its military and mobilization of proxy militias to curb the rebels and murder Darfurian civilians. By appreciating and shedding light on some of the critical political factors and processes underlying Darfur's carnage, the NYT and the WP did not reduce *all* aspects of the violence to apolitical, primitive 'tribalism,' as has been the standard practice in American news media portrayals of conflict in Africa (Hawk, 1992b; Fair, 1993; Myers et al., 1996).

Second, the NYT and the WP consistently represented the main peoples and groups involved in Darfur's violence as either 'Arab' or 'African' (Table 2.1), and both newspapers invariably represented discord and violence as taking place along an 'African'-'Arab' chasm. For example, an *Arab-dominated* government in Khartoum is represented as neglecting the *'African'* community in Darfur, which serves as inspiration

for the *'African'* rebels' attacks on the *Arab* government. Additionally, '*Arabs*' – embodied in either the nomadic militias or the Sudanese military, or both in conjunction – are represented as attacking '*African*' groups in Darfur, as shown in the comment, "Sudan's *Arab-dominated* government is accused of carrying out bombing raids in coordination with ground attacks by *Arab* tribal militias on the villages of non-Arab *African* farmers" (emphasis added: NYT, Nov. 6). Therefore, by always representing antagonism as occurring between 'Africans' and 'Arabs,' the NYT and the WP create the impression that socio-cultural differences between 'Arab' and 'African' groups connected to the violence have played an important role in both igniting and driving the violence. This mirrors past U.S. news media interpretations of violence in Africa, which have tended to heavily emphasize social fractures in African societies in accounting for the emergence and spread of violence (Brock, 1992; Idelema, 1992; Fair, 1993: 15; Myers et al., 1996; Lowe et al., 1997; Melvern, 2007).

Two frames for interpreting Darfur's violence are thus established based on the manner in which the NYT and the WP represented violence and the people and socio-political groups implicated in it highlighted above in the two observations: 1) the violence in Darfur stems from and revolves around a series of connected political issues and factors (e.g., Khartoum's neglect of Darfur, a Khartoum-launched counterinsurgency employing proxy militias); and 2) Darfur's violence fundamentally constitutes a conflict between various 'Arab' (Khartoum and the nomadic militias) and 'African' (Darfurian rebels and civilians) groups, and the socio-cultural divisions between them have contributed to sparking and fueling the violence. The ideas encapsulated in the second frame that Darfur's violence represents a conflict between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' and

that the cultural differences between them constitute an important contributing factor to the violence is omnipresent in NYT and WP representations of local-level social dynamics in Darfur that have allegedly played a crucial role in bringing about and sustaining Darfur's misery.

4.2 Local Dynamics of Violence in Darfur

While the NYT and the WP devoted considerable attention to highlighting the Sudanese government's role in Darfur's violence, both newspapers focused heavily on local social and cultural dynamics within Darfur that supposedly represent crucial contributing factors to the crisis. In particular, purported cleavages in Darfur's cultural make-up are represented as fundamental to fomenting and sustaining the bloodshed. Instances of conflict and violence are frequently represented as occurring between native 'African' (embodied in the rebel groups and civilian victims) and 'Arab' (often depicted as comprising the Khartoum-backed nomadic militias) communities in Darfur, with the latter mostly inflicting harm on the former. This is shown when Sengupta asserts that Darfur represents a "brutal war pitting black *African* tribes against *Arab* communities" (emphasis added: NYT, July 30); and similarly in the comment, "The fighting in Darfur pits...*Arab* nomads against black *African* residents" (emphasis added: WP, May 10).

Thus, in positing two discrete socio-cultural communities in Darfur – 'African' and 'Arab' – and representing violence as always taking place between them, the NYT and the WP imply that Darfur's violence is partly an *ethnic* or *tribal* conflict. Indeed, the 'Arab' and 'African' designations are often represented as constituting bona fide ethnic or tribal group formations and identities in Darfur, as illustrated in the statement, "it was largely *tribes* that call themselves *African* that crowded into refugee camps" (emphasis

added: Sengupta, NYT, Oct. 3); and similarly in the comment, "tensions in this strategic town in North Darfur had boiled over, pitting *ethnic Africans* and *Arabs* against each other in mob violence (emphasis added: Sengupta, NYT, Nov. 29). Moreover, the words "ethnic" and "tribe" and words derived from them such as "ethnicity" and "tribal" were prevalent in the 2004 coverage (Table 2.2), thereby reinforcing the notion that ethnicity or tribalism is an important factor in fueling the violence.

Table 2.2 – Representations of ethnicity and tribalism

Key words and phrases[a]	NYT[b]	WP[b]	Total[b]	%[c]
"Tribe(s)," "tribal," or "tribalism"	24	41	65	33%
"Ethnic" or "ethnicity"	40	26	66	33%
"Ethnic cleansing"	21	14	35	18%
"Genocide"	37	43	80	40%

[a] Key words and phrases used in the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur.

[b] Total number of news articles that carried the specified word or phrase.

[c] Percentage of total news articles.

Furthermore, readers are many times explicitly told that Darfur's violence does indeed stem from 'tribal' or 'ethnic' differences and related hostilities. This is shown when Sengupta writes, "As Africa's longest-running civil war comes to a close in one corner of this vast country, a terrifying new theater, *fueled by old ethnic divides*...opens here [referring to Darfur] in another" (emphasis added: NYT, Jan. 17); and also when Wax comments, "The conflict in Darfur is the result of *long-simmering ethnic tensions*" (emphasis added: WP, June 30); and lastly in the statement, "The Darfur rebellion began in February 2003...where *tribal tensions have long simmered*" (emphasis added: NYT, Dec. 22). Alleged 'ethnic' and 'tribal' antagonisms in Darfur are often represented as entrenched and immemorial, as shown in these three comments.

Similarly, the NYT and the WP represented the violence as driven by differences and tensions explicitly between Darfur's 'African' and 'Arab' 'ethnic' groups, as shown in Lacey's statements, "An *ethnic dimension* to the attacks is undeniable. The militants are *Arab* and the villagers they attacked were...from black *African* tribes" (NYT, July 23); and likewise in the assertion, "The antagonism has been primarily *ethnic,* pitting *Arabs* against *African* villagers" (Chan, NYT, Nov. 21). Moreover, the term "genocide" and related phrase of "ethnic cleansing" were both frequently used to represent Darfur's violence as an attempt by 'Arab' militias to completely eliminate Darfur's 'ethnic African' communities, further supporting the idea that ethnicity is a crucial motivation of the violence (Table 2.2).

Thus, in summary, the NYT and the WP represent Darfur's violence as constituting not just a conflict between 'Arabs' and 'Africans,' but an explicitly 'tribal' or 'ethnic' conflict between Darfur-based 'African' and 'Arab' groups, and the 'tribal' or 'ethnic' hatreds between them are presented as deep-seated and age-old, adding fodder to the violence.

4.3 Problematizing 'African' and 'Arab' Cultural Designations

According to the scholarly literature on Darfur, there are problems with the second framing of the violence, especially the manner in which it assigns 'African' and 'Arab' cultural labels to communities within Darfur.[5] Use of the 'Arab' and 'African' group designations constructs an image of Darfur as populated by two well-defined and starkly different 'tribal' or 'ethnic' communities that are socially and geographically

[5] Within the scholarly literature on Darfur, the Arab designation given to the rulers of the Sudanese central government is *not* treated as problematic.

separated from one another. This representation is remarkably simplistic in that it misses the great diversity of ethnic groups in Darfur, the significant amount of intermixing and intermarrying that has historically occurred between them – including between so-called 'Arab' and 'African' groups – and the constantly shifting nature of ethnicity in Darfur.

Moreover, the 'Arab' and 'African' ethnic identities attributed to Darfurian communities are represented as if they were timeless and natural. Recognition of the political and ideological factors that, only in recent years, have contributed to shaping these identities is entirely absent in the NYT's and the WP's coverage. For example, there is not a single mention of Libya's role in inculcating the notion of mutually hostile 'Arab' and 'African' identities among Darfur's Abbala nomads, many of whom make up the ranks of the Janjaweed militias (Flint & de Waal, 2005). Nor is there any recognition of the rebels' politically opportunistic uses of the 'African' label to unite Darfur's beleaguered communities under its sign. Indeed, the 'African' and 'Arab' identities have become very powerful, and in a sense 'real,' in Darfur recently (de Waal, 2005; Campbell, 2007; Prunier, 2007). In fact, even Darfurian civilians exposed to the violence have insisted on claiming the 'African' label, not because it naturally represents them, but because it serves as a sign of difference from those who attack them and claim an 'Arab' identity, and it serves as a symbol of solidarity with the 'African' rebels who battle their 'Arab' tormentors (de Waal, 2005). It is crucial to understand, however, that there is nothing historically salient or 'natural' about these 'African' and 'Arab' identities. They are, rather, modern creations engendered through the large-scale violence that has bedeviled the region since the late 1980s (Flint & de Waal, 2005; de Waal, 2005; Campbell, 2007: 363; Prunier, 2007). As de Waal says, "identity markers that had little

salience in the past are extremely powerful today, and the overwhelming reason for this is the appalling violence inflicted on people" (2005: 200).

In what follows, I would like to illustrate how the NYT and the WP produced the 'Arab'-'African' divide in Darfur *beyond* the practice of repeatedly distinguishing the Darfur-based groups involved in the violence as either 'Arab' or 'African.' Such an exercise is important because the establishment of divisions between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' in other ways strengthens the idea that there exist in Darfur two unequivocally distinct and separate ethnic communities, a notion that is essential to the larger argument that Darfur's violence represents a 'tribal' conflict between 'Arab' and 'African' groups in Darfur. Specifically, both newspapers produced the 'Arab'-'African' distinction in Darfur in three ways: 1) in physical appearances, 2) space, and 3) livelihood pursuits.

4.4 Differences in Physical Features of the Body

The 'Arab'-'African' divide is drawn onto the bodies of Darfurians. In the NYT's and the WP's coverage, we often find bodily descriptions of Darfur's 'Arabs' and 'Africans,' with both groups represented as exhibiting physical features different from each other. In particular, 'Africans' and 'Arabs' are depicted as having different skin colors, with the former represented as having darker skin than the latter. This is apparent in representations of the purported 'Africans' of Darfur – the rebel groups and civilian victims of the violence – who are regularly described as "black" or "dark(er)-skinned" (Table 2.3). This is demonstrated when Hoge writes, "The violence in Darfur goes back to February 2003, when *black African rebel groups* rose up against the government" (emphasis added: NYT, June 26); and also in Wax's statement, "The militia, known as the Janjaweed, has...displaced close to 1.5 million *darker-skinned African* villagers"

Table 2.3 – Representations of physical appearances

Key words and phrases[a]	NYT[b]	WP[b]	Total[b]	%[c]
Rebels – "black" or "dark(er)-skinned"	14	15	29	15%
Civilian victims – "black" or "dark(er)-skinned"	45	30	75	38%

[a] Key words and phrases used in the NYT's and WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur.

[b] Total number of news articles that carried the specified word or phrase.

[c] Percentage of total news articles.

(emphasis added: WP, Aug. 7). We can also discern the 'Arab'-'African' skin color divide in comments like, "The ['Arab'] nomadic tribes primarily speak Arabic and *have physical features like...light brown skin that are more Arab than African*" (emphasis added: Wax, WP, Sept. 29); and likewise in, "[African] women have been subjected to racial insults because their *skin is darker than that of Arabs"* (emphasis added: Lacey, NYT, July 19); and finally in, "Jittery eyes followed the statuesque, *copper-skinned* man" (emphasis added: Wax, WP, July 18). The last quotation refers to Musa Hilal, a notorious 'Arab' Janjaweed commander. The use of "copper-skinned" to describe him accentuates his 'Arabness,' since 'Arabs' supposedly have lighter skin than 'black Africans' in Darfur.

Furthermore, purported differences in physical features between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' in Darfur extend beyond skin color to encompass differences in eye color and hair type. In particular, Arabs are described as having lighter eyes and wavier, curlier hair than Africans. This is conspicuous, for example, in a story that features an 'Arab' woman named Aisha Mohamed living in a refugee camp in Chad among scores of displaced 'Africans' (Wax, WP, Sept. 29). The focus of the story is a mutual unease and suspicion that exists between Aisha and some of the camp's 'African' inhabitants. This tension is represented as stemming from Aisha being 'Arab' and thus belonging to "the

same ethnic group as the attackers" of the Africans. But how is it that some camp refugees perceive Aisha as 'Arab'? According to Emily Wax, the story's author, Aisha's physical appearance ostensibly marks her as such and Wax illustrates in detail those supposed 'Arab' bodily features, describing Aisha as having "almond-colored eyes" and "long wavy hair...with spirally curls and eyes that turned light brown in the sunlight." Moreover, Wax describes a scene she observed when a few 'African' women ridiculed Aisha for being 'Arab' immediately *after*, Wax claims, "noticing her light eyes in the sun and her curly hair" – purportedly telltale signs of an 'Arab.'

The alleged differences in hair type between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' in Darfur can also be seen in a story that highlights the Janjaweed's rampant use of rape as a tool to humiliate and terrorize 'African' women. There were numerous cases in which Janjaweed rapes resulted in pregnancies and the resultant babies are represented as exhibiting 'Arab' physical characteristics, such as lighter skin, distinct from the 'African' features of their mothers (Wax, WP, June 30). Referring to one of these cases, Sengupta asserts, "[an 'African'] woman held up the product of a violent assault: *a baby boy with wavy hair*, whom she called the son of a janjaweed" (emphasis added: NYT, Oct. 26).

In conclusion, the NYT and the WP represented 'Arabs' and 'Africans' in Darfur as exhibiting sharply different bodily features. These physical differences are depicted as being 'ethnically' exclusive – people with copper skin, light eyes, and wavy hair are invariably 'Arab,' and likewise, people with black skin are always 'African.' Such strict and 'ethnically' confined bodily representations, however, are troublesome, especially when considering the great extent of blending and intermarrying that has historically occurred between different communities in Darfur, including between 'African' and

'Arab' groups. Indeed, many scholars assert that differences in physical appearances among Darfur's myriad communities are non-existent to slight and that Darfur's 'Arab' nomadic communities have acquired 'African' physical features and vice versa (Haaland, 1969; Flint & de Waal, 2005: 4-5; Campbell, 2007; Daly, 2007; Prunier, 2007: 4-5). For example, Flint and de Waal write, "all Darfurian Arabs have mixed ancestry and are as black as their 'African' neighbors" (2005: 123), while Haaland comments, "while they [nomadic 'Arabs'] have remained culturally distinct from earlier inhabitants of negro stock [e.g., the Fur], they can today hardly be distinguished from this population on the basis of physical features" (1969: 59). The notion implied by both newspapers that *all* 'Arabs' in Darfur possess 'ethnically' unique physical traits that are in stark contrast to the physical features of 'Africans,' and likewise, that *all* 'Africans' in Darfur have 'ethnically' exclusive bodily characteristics that are sharply different from the physical traits of 'Arabs' is problematic, for, according to the scholarly literature on Darfur, strict and ethnically exclusive divisions in outward appearances between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' simply do not exist in Darfur.

4.5 A 'Clash of Civilizations'

Following the demise of the Cold War geopolitical order, political scientist Samuel Huntington sought to explain what global conflicts in the post-Cold War era would look like. In an influential *Foreign Affairs* piece (1993), Huntington argued that while global conflicts during the Cold War were driven primarily by competing ideologies, the source of future conflicts would be fundamentally *cultural*. Huntington painted a picture of the world as comprised of seven or eight discrete and territorially fixed cultural blocks that represented different 'civilizations.' Future wars and conflicts,

Huntington maintained, would occur along the "fault lines" of these designated cultural blocks. "The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating...civilizations from one another" (Huntington, 1993: 25). Thus, cultural differences between the world's major 'civilizations' would ultimately fuel the world's next conflicts, a thesis that Huntington called the "clash of civilizations."

The influence of Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis is apparent in some of the NYT's and the WP's coverage on Darfur. Specifically, Darfur is represented as sitting at the "crossroads" (Wax, WP, Sept. 29), or lying on a "geo-cultural fault-line" (Duke, WP, Aug. 18) between two distinct and territorially rooted cultures – 'African' and 'Arab.' Thus, the 'Arab'-'African' division in Darfur is also expressed *geographically* in the form of discrete, spatially fixed cultural blocks. Following Huntington's logic, both newspapers interpret the region's violence as stemming from tensions between the 'Arab' and 'African' cultures lying on either side of the purported cultural 'fault line' running through Darfur. When the 'Arab' and 'African' cultural spheres come into contact, there is inevitable friction, like when two tectonic plates rub violently against each other. The notion that Darfur straddles distinct and spatially separated 'Arab' and 'African' cultural blocks and that when they come into contact tension is produced is obvious in two particular feature-length news stories highlighted below.

NYT journalist Somini Sengupta highlights Abdalla Adam Khatir, a Darfur native who challenges the notion that the violence plaguing Darfur essentially constitutes an ethnic war between 'Arabs' and 'Africans,' arguing instead that Khartoum is solely responsible for the violence (Oct. 3). Khatir demonstrates the shallowness of the

presumed strict 'African'-'Arab' divide in Darfur by underlining his own mixed ancestry. "His grandmother was an Arab, her grandfather was a member of an African tribe. 'I am African,' he says, 'who has absorbed Arab and Islamic culture.'" Sengupta seems to echo Khatir's sentiments on the problems with assuming diametrically opposed 'Arab' and 'African' cultures in Darfur when he writes, "For generations, race itself has not been all that significant in Darfurian society. People regularly referred to themselves by their tribe affiliation, and rarely as just 'Arab' or 'African.'" However, following this statement, Sengupta asserts, "But the Darfur crisis has laid bare an unspoken *Arab-African fault line* that runs across this arid belt of Africa – from Mauritania in the west, to Sudan in the east. Racial consciousness is, in fact, embedded in the history of central Africa" (emphasis added). With these statements, Sengupta suggests that monolithic and opposed 'Arab' and 'African' cultures and concomitant identities do indeed exist in Darfur (and also throughout the larger Sahel region) and that the divisions between them are sharp and spatially delimited, as implied in the use of the fault-line metaphor, thereby dismissing Khatir's claims to the contrary. Sengupta implies that the 'Arab'-'African' cultural divide in Darfur has always been real, but just "unspoken" and dormant. Now, however, "embedded" 'Arab' and 'African' consciousnesses in Darfur have been "laid bare" by the violence and have resurged for the worst as a result.

In the spring of 2004, a small contingent of African Union (AU) soldiers was sent to Darfur to monitor a peace-agreement between the Sudanese government and the SLA and JEM rebels. WP reporter Emily Wax wrote a story on how the soldiers were faring months after their deployment (Dec. 11). In the story, Wax makes note of the remarkable cultural diversity among the AU soldiers, highlighting their many nationalities, religions,

and languages. In particular, Wax illustrates the cultural differences between AU soldiers by describing a row she observed between soldiers over which cassette tape should be played in a military jeep – a tape of Koranic verses in Arabic advocated by a group of Muslims, or a U2 tape advocated by a group of non-Muslims. Wax follows her description of the quarrel by saying, "In many ways, the African Union's interaction in Sudan reflects the racial tensions underlying the conflict – one that falls along the continent's *ethnic fault lines between sub-Saharan black Africa and the more Arabic North Africa*" (emphasis added). With this statement, Wax posits discrete and geographically separated 'Arab' and 'African' ethnic blocks lying side-by-side in Darfur, and she implies that the ethnic differences between them generate "tensions" that underlie and drive Darfur's violence.

Returning to Huntington, his "clash of civilizations" thesis has been criticized for the way in which it interprets conflict in distinctly cultural terms, which neglects and obscures the multitude of historical, ideological, political, and economic processes and variables that contribute to producing violence (Dodds, 2007: 107-12). Furthermore, the manner in which Huntington represents 'cultures' or 'civilizations' has received much criticism (Said, 2001; Agnew, 2003: 115-20). Huntington depicts cultures as unchanging and homogenous phenomena bounded off and disconnected from one another throughout space in a jigsaw puzzle-like fashion, which neglects the significant intermixing and cross-fertilization that has occurred between different peoples and cultures and the constantly changing nature of cultures and ethnicities over time and space (Wolf, 1982; Lewis, 1991; Said, 2001).

The example of Darfur is emblematic of what is troublesome about Huntington's conflict explanation and related conceptualizations of 'culture.' The Huntingtonesque explanation offered by both Sengupta and Wax that Darfur's violence is essentially rooted in cultural differences and accompanying tensions between 'Arab' and 'African' groups in Darfur is problematic because it ignores the complexity of the violence and occludes the myriad political factors that have contributed to producing it, such as Khartoum's long-term marginalization of Darfur. It is also problematic in the way that it posits 'African' and 'Arab' cultures or ethnicities in Darfur as homogenous, distinct from one another, and spatially separated, as suggested by the supposed cultural "fault-line" that cuts through Darfur evoked by both Wax and Sengupta. As the scholarly literature on Darfur demonstrates, however, various 'Arab' and 'African' cultures have mixed and blended extensively throughout Darfur, thereby blurring any cultural and geographical lines that indicate where the putative 'African'-'Arab' division in Darfur ends and begins. It is thus problematic and disturbing when the NYT and the WP represent Darfur's violence as a veritable "clash of civilizations."

4.6 'Arab' Nomads versus 'African' Farmers

Both newspapers often pointed to scarcities in natural resources as contributing to the violence in Darfur. In particular, drought and desertification are blamed for significantly diminishing Darfur's land and water resources over the last thirty years. As a result, violent conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers in Darfur are said to have proliferated as both groups struggled for access to diminishing water and land supplies (for example, see Wax, WP, July 18; Duke, WP, Aug. 18; Wax, WP, Sept. 29). When the NYT and the WP represented Darfur's violence as partly stemming from

clashes between nomads and farmers over natural resources, the nomads were described as "Arab" and the farmers as "African" in this context (Table 2.4). This is illustrated in

Table 2.4 – Representations of resource conflicts between farmers and nomads

Key words and phrases[a]	NYT[b]	WP[b]	Total[b]	%[c]
"African" farmers versus "Arab" nomads	9	7	16	8%

[a] Key words and phrases used in the NYT's and WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur.

[b] Total number of news articles that carried the specified word or phrase.

[c] Percentage of total news articles.

the assertion, "The violence in Darfur stems from longstanding tensions between *nomadic Arab* tribes and their *African farming* neighbors over dwindling *water and agricultural land*" (emphasis added: NYT, Aug. 26); and also when Lacey comments, "The fighting is partly a result of a rivalry over *resources* between groups of Muslims in Darfur. The *Arabs are nomads* who have long competed for *land* with black *African farmers*" (emphasis added: NYT, July 12). Thus, the 'Arab'-'African' dichotomy in Darfur is also expressed in *livelihood pursuits*, with nomadic pastoralists represented as 'Arabs' and farmers as 'Africans.' In the context of purported natural resource scarcities, the notion that the violence in Darfur constitutes a 'tribal' conflict between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' in Darfur is given another dimension as 'Arab' and 'African' 'ethnicities' are conjoined with differing livelihood groups who clash over an increasingly shrinking natural resource base.

According to the scholarly literature on Darfur, conflicts over water and land resources between farmers and nomadic pastoralists have indeed been rampant in Darfur over the last couple of decades (de Waal, 1989; Harir, 1994; Flint & de Waal, 2005; Daly, 2007). When considering this literature, however, certain aspects of the manner in which the NYT and the WP represented such conflicts become troubling, especially the

way that both newspapers uncritically posited 'African' and 'Arab' ethnic labels as if they *naturally* fit with respective agricultural and nomadic livelihood communities in Darfur. This practice partly arises from a lack of consideration on the part of the NYT and the WP of the political and ideological context in which farmer-nomad conflicts have occurred since the 1980s. As indicated above, famine, diminishing water and land resources, and strained relations between farmers and pastoralists due to the former denying the latter access to resources during the 1980s in Darfur all coincided with the Libyan military presence in the region and the Chadian-Libyan conflict spilling into Darfur. In this context, farmer-nomad resource conflicts mixed with the pernicious, racialized ideologies circulating in the region associated with Libya's Islamic Legion forces in Darfur and the larger Chadian-Libyan war, which was fought along 'Arab' (Libya and its nomadic paramilitary allies) versus 'African' (Chadian government forces) lines (Burr & Collins, 1999; Prunier, 2007).

More specific, the ideology of Arab supremacism and concomitant African inferiority propagated by Libyan forces in Darfur and inculcated in Darfur's northern nomadic communities imbued farmer-nomad resource conflicts with a toxic ethnic character that had not previously existed in Darfur, as Abbala nomads represented themselves as superior 'Arabs' with rightful claims to land and water resources in central and southern Darfur, while also representing farming communities who barred them access to resources as lowly 'Africans' with no legitimate claims to the land and water in Darfur's traditional agricultural belt (Harir, 1994; Flint & de Waal, 2005; de Waal, 2005; Daly, 2007). Conflicts over resources (and animal theft) between farmers and nomads have historically been a regular feature of life in Darfur – however, these conflicts never

exhibited a virulent 'African' versus 'Arab' ethnic character until the late 1980s and afterwards (de Waal, 1989, 2005; Harir, 1994). Thus, in stripping resource conflicts between 'African' farmers and 'Arab' nomads in Darfur from their historical, political, and ideological contexts, the NYT and the WP *naturalize* 'Arab' and 'African' ethnic labels respectively joined with nomadic and farming livelihood groups in the region. Farmer-nomad resource conflicts, then, are represented as nothing more than primitive ethnic battles over scraps of natural resources between Darfur's 'Africans' and 'Arabs' as a result.

In conclusion, the NYT and the WP represented Darfur as a place populated by two distinct 'ethnic' or 'tribal' groups – 'Arabs' and 'Africans.' The social boundaries separating them were portrayed as stark and insurmountable, with no room for any cultural overlap. In particular, both newspapers drew rigid divisions between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' expressed in physical appearances, space, and livelihoods. In drawing salient social boundaries between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' in multiple ways, the NYT and the WP strengthen the notion that Darfur is home to two completely different socio-cultural groups, which in turn lends credence to and helps validate the explanation promoted by both newspapers that Darfur's violence stems partly from an 'ethnic' or 'tribal' conflict between Darfur-based 'Arabs' and 'Africans.'

As I have argued and shown above, though, the way in which the NYT and the WP represented 'African' and 'Arab' groups in Darfur as starkly different and socially and geographically separate from one another, and also the manner in which they posited 'African' and 'Arab' ethnic group identities and formations in Darfur as age-old and natural, is problematic. Both newspapers' ignorance of the remarkable amount of

intermixing and blending between 'African' and 'Arab' cultures in Darfur coupled with their failure to acknowledge the novelty and political roots and uses of the 'Arab' and 'African' labels enables the frame that explains Darfur's violence as an 'ethnic' conflict between 'Africans' and 'Arabs,' as an understanding and appreciation of Darfur's cultural diversity and of the political and ideological factors that have led recently to the polarization of identities in Darfur would render untenable the 'Arab' versus 'African' ethnic conflict thesis. In overlooking these crucial factors, however, the NYT and the WP naturalize and reify fixed 'African' and 'Arab' group formations and identities in Darfur, which bolsters and corroborates the notion that Darfur's violence indeed stems from a 'tribal/ethnic' conflict between 'Arabs' and 'Africans.'

Conclusion

I identified two frames for explaining Darfur's violence in the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur. The first frame points to a series of connected political factors – such as the emergence of Darfur-based rebels provoked by Khartoum's marginalization of Darfur, and Khartoum's backing of nomadic militias and the use of its military to suppress the rebels and murder Darfurian civilians – as contributing to Darfur's violence. This framing of the violence is encouraging in that both newspapers recognized and highlighted deeply political forces and issues underlying Darfur's bloodshed instead of completely divorcing violence from its political context and thus naturalizing it, as has been the case with the majority of past U.S. news media representations of large-scale violence in Africa (see Brock, 1992). This is significant because it suggests that U.S. news media representations of violence in Africa are less beholden to culturally biased understandings of Africa established during European colonialism, and that U.S. news coverage of African violence has improved in some important regards since coverage of the Rwandan genocide (see Myers et al., 1996).

The second framing of the violence, however, is less encouraging. Within this frame, the NYT and the WP interpreted violence as stemming from discord and conflict between 'Arabs' and 'Africans.' In particular, this frame manifested itself starkly in representations of local-level social and cultural dynamics within Darfur that, according to both newspapers, have contributed significantly to both igniting and sustaining the region's strife. Specifically, both newspapers represented Darfur's violence as partly constituting a 'tribal/ethnic' conflict rooted in entrenched and festering animosities between Darfur-based 'Africans' and 'Arabs.' The NYT and the WP represented socio-

cultural differences between Darfur's 'Arabs' and 'Africans' as sharp and impermeable, and delineated salient boundaries between both groups expressed in bodily appearances, space, and livelihood pursuits. These boundaries served to substantiate the idea that two distinct 'tribal' or 'ethnic' groups inhabit Darfur, a notion that is indispensable to the 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation seeming logical.

Cultural identities in Darfur, however, are at odds with and defy the rigid 'Arab'-'African' axis of identity posited by the NYT and the WP. Darfur is a cultural and ethnic mosaic characterized by a mixture of various 'African' and 'Arab' cultures that blend and overlap, and identities in the region are remarkably fluid. Recently, nevertheless, identities in Darfur have indeed become fixed along 'Arab' and 'African' cultural lines due directly to Libya's ideological machinations in the region in the late 1980s, and to the bouts of large-scale violence that have continually afflicted Darfur over the last twenty years. The role of Libya and the recent violence in the region in actively producing monolithic and mutually antagonistic 'African' and 'Arab' identities in Darfur, however, is entirely missing in both newspapers' coverage, and therefore, historically bogus 'Arab' and 'African' identities are portrayed as 'natural.' Thus, in representing Darfur's violence as a 'tribal/ethnic' conflict between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' while treating as 'natural' anthropologically naïve 'African' and 'Arab' group identities in Darfur, and in going to great lengths to demarcate social divisions between 'Arabs' and 'Africans,' the NYT and the WP demonstrate that U.S. news media – the nation's elite foreign coverage newspapers nonetheless – are still producing knowledge about Africa that is shaped by and reflective of Western stereotypes and geographical imaginings held about the continent and its peoples grounded in European colonial discourses that posit Africa as a

place inhabited by 'tribal' peoples predisposed to irrational violence fought along strict socio-cultural lines. Regrettably, it seems, "'Africa' in the Western mind [still] cannot endure outside Western discourses" (Fair, 1993: 10).

The NYT's and the WP's troubling representations of people in Darfur and interpretations of violence as a 'tribal/ethnic' conflict between 'Africans' and 'Arabs' have important ramifications. To begin with, both newspapers perpetuate and reinforce damaging misunderstandings about Africa and African peoples fixed in the Western geographical imagination. Specifically, both newspapers reinforce stereotypical Western conceptualizations of African societies as comprised of tribal or ethnic groups characterized by timelessness, homogeneity, fixity, and exclusiveness, a remarkably simplistic understanding of socio-cultural organization in Africa that forecloses alternative ways of envisioning African cultures and cultural identities as diverse, fluid, overlapping, novel, and socially constructed, and that conveys a sense of primitiveness to African peoples. Also, both newspapers reinforce Western presumptions held about violence in Africa as being fundamentally 'tribal' or 'ethnic' in nature, an understanding that has the effect of de-contextualizing, simplifying, and naturalizing violence, while simultaneously imparting to it a backward and barbaric character. The perpetuation and reaffirmation of these stereotypes in the NYT and the WP undermines and damages efforts to improve understandings of Africa and African peoples in the U.S.

Moreover, the NYT and the WP provide inaccurate understandings of Darfur's violence that could have implications for how international actors – such as the U.S. government – decide to act, or not act, toward Darfur. News media play a crucial role in providing information to Western government officials on foreign places and peoples,

and on events taking place in the world (Fair, 1993: 7; Dodds, 1998; Entman, 2004). How news media represent overseas crises – like large-scale violence – has been shown to influence significantly how Western policymakers adopt and justify policies in relation to them (Rotberg & Weiss, 1996; Shaw, 1996; Luke & O Tuathail, 1997; Dodds, 1998; Robison, 2004). For example, some analysts have argued that the U.S. news media's representation of the Rwandan genocide as a savage tribal conflict played a significant role in influencing and justifying the U.S. government's circumscribed policy of non-intervention in Rwanda (Myers et al., 1996: 42; Rotberg & Weiss, 1996; Melvern, 2007). Specifically, the tribal framing of the genocide constructed a powerful image of Rwanda's violence as primitive, chaotic, and rooted in intractable tribal hatreds, an image that increased the physical and psychological distance between the U.S. and Rwanda, and that consequently placed Rwanda beyond the universe of U.S. moral responsibility and intervention.

Like Rwanda, the NYT's and the WP's framing of Darfur's violence as a tribal conflict steeped in deep-seated and age-old ethnic animosities imparts to it a primitive character and a concomitant sense that little can be done to redress it. As the nation's leading and most respected foreign coverage newspapers, the NYT and the WP wield considerable influence among Washington's foreign policymaking elites (Entman, 2004), and thus, their invocation of the tribal frame to explain the violence in Darfur may have conceivably dampened American policymakers' sense of ethical duty toward Darfur and consequently legitimated the American government's avowed stance of non-intervention in Darfur. This sentiment is expressed when talking in 2005 about the U.S. government's role in Darfur, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State at the time Robert Zoellick commented,

"Frankly I don't think foreign forces want to get in the middle of a *tribal war* of Sudanese" (emphasis added: Wax, WP, Nov. 21).

Lastly, the NYT's and the WP's representations of violence and people in Darfur have important consequences for how Darfur – and by extension Africa – are perceived and understood as a place and society by American news consumers. Events, such as mass violence, and people do not exist in a spatial vacuum – they are rooted in and inextricably connected to specific *places*. How news media represent events and people imbues the places in which they are grounded with particular types of meanings and understandings, or as Robison says, "most people rely on storytelling and identity production in the media for their information about places and, as an important register of language and understanding, *the news contributes to an understanding of society and place*" (emphasis added: 2004: 381). In the case of the NYT's and the WP's coverage of Darfur in 2004, a distinct "place image" (Klak, 1994; Myers et al., 1996) of Darfur packaged with certain powerful traits and meanings emerges from both newspapers' overly simplistic and problematic representations of violence and people. Specifically, the NYT's and the WP's framing of Darfur's violence as a 'tribal/ethnic' conflict between two groups clearly identified as 'Arab' and 'African' marked Darfur – and also Africa – as a backward and savage place, a timeless place of primitive 'tribal' warfare, and a place that is all-together different from and inferior to the West. Darfur as a place and society was thus irredeemably cast as the West's distant cultural and moral 'Other' in the NYT and the WP during 2004.

The place image of Darfur as the West's antithetical 'Other' formed within the pages of the NYT and the WP, however, does not of course represent some mimetic

geographic 'reality.' On the contrary, it more reflects culturally biased understandings firmly held about Africa in the Western geographical imagination entangled within and shot through Europe's colonization of and the West's historical unequal engagement with the continent. Following Fair, then, when she comments that "through the process of signification in news stories, *place takes on particular meanings and so creates spaces*" (emphasis added: 1994: 38), the image and understanding of Darfur as a place and society found in the NYT and the WP is one that is fundamentally *made* or *socially produced* out of an archive of knowledge about and discourses relating to Africa forged during European colonialism. This culturally determined place image of Darfur confirms what postcolonial critics like Edward Said (1978, 1997) and Derek Gregory (2004) have vehemently argued – that knowledge about and representations of non-Western places created directly out of European colonialism are tenacious, continuing to shape profoundly how Westerners – such as newsmakers at the NYT and the WP – today think about, represent, and produce knowledge about formerly colonized places, like Darfur, Sudan. This unfortunate phenomenon has resulted in the defamation of Darfur, which consequently impoverishes Americans' understandings of the region, its peoples, and its plight, and also increases the physical, cultural, and moral distance between the U.S. and Darfur.

Inaccurate and culturally biased understandings of Africa indebted to European colonial discourses still have a stranglehold on the geographical imaginations of many of America's top and most respected newsmakers, as illustrated vividly in the NYT's and the WP's 2004 coverage of Darfur. The persistence of this phenomenon is deplorable, for it produces distorted, false, and hurtful understandings of Africa and African peoples.

It is thus incumbent upon folks like myself who are critical of the way in which U.S. news media produce knowledge about Africa to ask what can be done to improve U.S. news coverage of Africa so that inaccurate and damaging Western stereotypes no longer infuse representations of African peoples and events unfolding on the continent. I believe that part of the solution lies in formal education in the U.S., particularly a more robust *geographic* education in our high schools and universities.

Americans, including newsmakers (e.g., reporters, editors), form their understandings and imaginings of foreign places and peoples in myriad ways and from numerous sources. Education is especially crucial to shaping how Americans perceive the rest of the world. Geography, in particular, is well-positioned to provide young Americans – some of whom will go on to become this nation's newsmakers – with sophisticated and culturally balanced understandings of foreign places and peoples, and perhaps more important, with the critical thinking tools necessary to question biased representations of alien places and cultures ingrained in American society and culture. This is due to geography's explicit focus on producing and communicating knowledge about other places, peoples, and cultures; the discipline's acute sensitivity to how jingoistic representations of non-Western places and peoples established during colonialism still color profoundly today how many Americans think about and represent the rest of the world; and geography's firm commitment to exposing, contesting, and destabilizing representations of the non-Western world inherited from the colonial past and reworked in the present. However, the status of geography in our universities and especially in our high schools has traditionally been one of unimportance and irrelevance, and thus geography's potential for shaping Americans' understandings and imaginings

about the world and its peoples has been limited – the average American's remarkable ignorance about the rest of the world is partly to show for this. Stronger support for geography in America's high schools and universities, I believe, would aid significantly in bestowing to Americans – again, some of whom will one day write and edit for the NYT and the WP – more sophisticated understandings of non-Western peoples and places, and also the ability to recognize and eschew inaccurate stereotypes held about the former colonized world. A more vigorous geographic education in this country, then, could conceivably contribute to improving U.S. news media representations of events, peoples, and places in the non-Western world, and in particular, ameliorate the lamentable coverage of violence in Africa so marred by Western cultural biases, as evidenced in aspects of the NYT's and the WP's initial coverage of Darfur.

Furthermore, there are additional, more direct, ways in which critics of U.S. news media coverage of Africa can attempt to effect some sort of positive change in the character that media representations of African peoples, places, and events take. News media organizations that participate in perpetuating the 'dark continent' image of Africa need to be made aware of the extremely problematic nature of their coverage. Critics of news media coverage of Africa can thus write letters to news-making organizations that draw attention to the troublesome aspects of their coverage and its deleterious effects in the hopes of changing it for the better. I did just this, sending identical letters to both the NYT and the WP that highlight what I have argued – and hopefully have convincingly shown – in this thesis to be the problematic characteristics and negative consequences of their representations of conflict, people, and place in Darfur during 2004 (see appendix for the letter).

APPENDIX

January 5, 2009

Dear Editor of *The New York Times*,

I am writing in regard to your newspaper's coverage of the violence in Darfur, Sudan during 2004, the first year that the crisis in Darfur gained the attention of the *Times*. I am a former graduate student in geography at Michigan State University and for my master's thesis I examined how the *Times* – along with *The Washington Post* – during 2004 represented the violence in Darfur. In my analysis I found that there were positive elements of the *Times's* coverage, but also troubling aspects of it, which is the principal reason why I am writing this letter.

U.S. news media coverage of mass violence in Africa (e.g., the 1994 Rwandan genocide) has generally suffered from simplistic and stereotypical depictions of violence and of African peoples. Specifically, instances of violence have tended to be portrayed as essentially 'tribal' or 'ethnic' conflicts. Representing violence as such is problematic for many reasons. To start, it locates the roots of violence within presumed cultural differences – encapsulated in 'tribal/ethnic' divisions – and concomitant animosities between African communities. This marginalizes and obscures the historical and political factors that contribute to engendering violence, and as a result, places the blame for violence solely on Africans themselves, thereby creating the sense that acts of violence are somehow innate or natural to African peoples.

Moreover, the mere use of the words 'tribal' and 'ethnic' to account for violence in Africa is troublesome for these words carry negative connotations associated with the primordial and backward. When described as 'tribal/ethnic' in character, violence in Africa is consequently seen as more primitive and irrational than instances of violence taking place in other parts of the world.

Additionally, the 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation is worrisome because it assumes that forms of cultural organization and identity – again, embodied in 'tribal/ethnic' designations – in Africa are discrete, homogenous, and diametrically opposed to one another. Assuming stark social and cultural divisions between African communities supposedly engaged in 'tribal/ethnic' war is problematic because it overlooks the remarkable amount of intermixing, sharing, and intermarrying that has occurred between different communities in Africa, which has thus blurred considerably social and cultural lines that indicate where one 'tribal/ethnic' group ends and another begins.

Lastly, and perhaps most important, the 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation is problematic in that removing violence from its historical and political context, in imparting to violence and African peoples a primitive character, and in assuming strict black-and-white distinctions between African communities, it produces inaccurate and culturally biased understandings of violence in Africa and of African peoples.

In the *Times's* 2004 coverage of Darfur, deeply political factors and processes underlying the region's strife were acknowledged and highlighted – in particular, the emergence of Darfur-based rebel movements provoked by the Sudanese government's marginalization of Darfur, and Khartoum's mobilization of proxy militias (the 'Janjaweed') and use of its

military to quash the rebels and to terrorize and murder Darfurian civilians. In this regard, the *Times* attributed more political causality to Darfur's carnage than has traditionally been the case with U.S. news media portrayals of violence in Africa, and it did not reduce *all* aspects of the violence to an eruption of irrational, apolitical 'tribal/ethnic' war. This is encouraging because it places blame for Darfur's violence where it ultimately needs to be – the murderous regime in Khartoum.

There were, however, less encouraging and deeply problematic aspects of the *Times's* 2004 Darfur coverage. In particular, the use and reliance on the 'tribal/ethnic' language to rationalize and interpret Darfur's violence was very strong throughout 2004. This was especially the case when *Times* reporting focused on internal, local-level social and cultural dynamics within Darfur that have contributed allegedly to sparking and driving the strife. Specifically, several *Times* news stories assert explicitly that the violence stems from 'tribal/ethnic' clashes between 'African' and 'Arab' groups native to Darfur.

A distinct image of Darfur therefore emerges from the *Times's* reporting that posits two communities – 'Africans' and 'Arabs' – who battle and kill each other along strict 'tribal/ethnic' lines. Also, the *Times* delineate stark divisions between Darfur's 'Africans' and 'Arabs' in different ways. For instance, boundaries are drawn between both in physical appearances – 'Africans' are described as exhibiting darker or blacker skin than 'Arabs,' while 'Arabs' are represented as having wavier, curlier hair than 'Africans.' Divisions established between 'Arabs' and 'Africans' help bolster the idea that two distinct 'tribal/ethnic' groups inhabit Darfur, a notion this is crucial to the 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation seeming logical. Thus, the *Times* represented the crisis in Darfur as an archetypical 'African' conflict – one rooted fundamentally in 'tribal/ethnic' differences and hatreds, and one fought between 'tribal/ethnic' groups thought to be entirely different and socially and culturally separate from one another.

The 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation applied to Darfur is problematic for all the reasons listed above. For example, it deflects attention from and minimizes the larger historical and political context surrounding the region's discord (e.g., Khartoum's neglect of Darfur, Khartoum's harnessing of the Janjaweed militias). Violence in this light is presented merely as a primitive 'tribal/ethnic' clash of opposing cultural groups in Darfur. The 'tribal/ethnic' conflict explanation also presents a false societal image of Darfur, one of a region inhabited by two distinct and rigidly divided – expressed in physical appearances for instance – 'tribal/ethnic' communities. In reality, though, Darfur is a tightly knit cultural mosaic where 'Arab' and 'African' groups have mixed and blended extensively, and also share several cultural traits, such as the Islamic faith and the Arabic language. Thus, in reverting to the 'tribal/ethnic' conflict trope for interpreting the violence in Darfur, the *Times* in 2004 provided inaccurate understandings of Darfur's violence, while also perpetuating damaging stereotypes pertaining to Africa – namely, that violence on the continent is fundamentally 'tribal/ethnic' in nature. This could have had adverse consequences for how readers of the *Times* – including foreign policymakers – came to initially understand the nature of the violence bedeviling Darfur.

Thank you for considering my concerns outlined here,

Joel Gruley (gruleyjo@msu.edu)

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