University of Nairobi

School of Journalism and Communication

MA Communication Studies

The Role of Sudan Media in Conflict Resolution: A Case Study of *The Sudan Mirror* newspaper and the Darfur Crisis

Presented by

ANGELA N. BAIYA

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To

MR PATRICK MALUKI

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my original work and has never been presented to any examination body before.

Name: **Angela Baiya**

Signature: _____

Date: _____13 / 11 / 09_____

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval on behalf of the school of journalism, University of Nairobi.

Name: **Mr Patrick Maluki**

Signature: _____

Date: _____18 : 11 : 2009_____

Dedicated to Alfonso Odete Wadeyua. Thanks for your support!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one introduces the research, gives a statement of the research problem, objective of the study, justification, hypotheses, theoretical framework, and finally the scope and limitations of the study.

1.1   Introduction and Background

Sudan has been in a state of conflict for many years. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, the mainly Muslim north and the Christian south emerged from a 21-year civil war which is said to have cost the lives of 1.5 million people.[1] However, the CPA did not cover the Darfur conflict which had broken out earlier.

Darfur, a region the size of France in the western part of Sudan, is the latest conflict zone in the country. The crisis broke out in February 2003 when Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebels took up arms against the government, attacking villages, town and Government positions, looting and killing civilians.[2]

The rebels cited years of political, economic and social marginalisation and neglect of the region as their reason for taking up arms. Khartoum mobilised mostly Arab militias to crush the revolt. Competition over resources (land, water

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[1] Diyan, D., *Sudan: Fresh North-South Fighting Tampers Hopes for Building Trust,* 11 January, 2008, Nation Media Group
[2] Obeid, K. M. (ed), *Darfur: The Absent Truth,* Khartoum: Sudan Media Centre, 2005

and oil) and tribal differences continue to complicate the crisis. It will be noted that these same issues have been at the heart of other conflicts in Sudan in the past.[3]

The Darfur crisis represents one of the greatest challenges to the Horn of Africa region and the international community today. Despite significant high-level international attention and engagement over the past several years, the country is still a long way from sustainable peace.

The biggest obstacle to achieving peace is the fracturing of rebels [4] into more than a dozen armed groups following an unpopular 2006 AU brokered peace deal with the government that was signed by only one of the three negotiating factions at the time. These divisions are in some cases along tribal lines after power struggles between leaders. [5] The situation is complicated by a proxy war between Sudan and Chad in which both sides have exchanged accusations of backing rebel groups in each other's countries.

The Darfur conflict has resulted in one of the biggest humanitarian crises in the world. As of October 2006, the UN and most NGOs had put the figure of those left dead by the violence at 200,000, and those displaced into camps and neighbouring countries at 2.5 million.[6] A 2008 report released by the UN, has

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[3] International Crisis Group, *Crisis in Sudan,* December 2007
[4] Amran, A., *Battle for power breeds more rebels in region,* The Standard Group: The Sunday Standard, 9 December 2007
[5] www.alertnet.org
[6] See *Q&A: Sudan's Darfur Conflict* by BBC News Channel (October 18, 2004), at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3496731.stm

revised the number of deaths upwards to 300,000 and the number of displaced people to 2.7 million. These figures are disputed by the Sudanese Government as an exaggeration by the West. President Bashir's Government has revised its own estimates from the earlier figure of 9,000 to 10,000. [7]

Widespread insecurity continues in the region despite numerous attempts at brokering peace by various parties. For example, an AU brokered peace deal negotiated in Nigeria in May 2006 between the Khartoum government and three rebel groups, failed to end the fighting after two of the three refused to sign.

The search for peace in Sudan has been ongoing for a while, drawing even the attention of the United Nations. Hollywood and other celebrities have added their voices to the call for a quick solution to the crisis. Among these are Ms Mia Farrow, George Clooney, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Don Cheadle. Other prominent personalities involved in the campaign to end the Darfur crisis are Sir Richard Branson (founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways) and US Congressman Donald Payne. It is plausible that the casualty figures from Darfur would have been higher had these celebrities not drawn the world's attention to the conflict when they did.[8]

The AU appointed Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim Special Envoy and Chief Negotiator for the Darfur Talks in 2005 after the meeting held in Nigeria in which the regional body expressed concern over the situation there.[9] The Envoy worked

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[7] Reuters (April 24th, 2008). 300,000 killed in Darfur, says UN. *Daily Nation*, p 20
[8] Mbitiru, C. (May 18th, 2009). Spare a thought for Darfur. *The Daily Nation*, p 18
[9] www.africa-union.org

closely with the UN envoy on the Darfur crisis, Jan Eliasson. The two convened various AU-UN sponsored regional and international talks with warring sides of the conflict (the Sudanese Government and various rebel groups) in which negotiations on ending the drawn out conflict were held. However, a consensus was never reached.

In late June 2008, the UN appointed Burkina Faso Foreign Minister Djibrill Bossole as Chief Mediator representing the UN and the AU to take forward negotiations between the Khartoum Government and the various rebel groups as the search for peace continues.

Part of the total 26,000 man AU-UN combined force (UNAMID – The UN/AU Mission in Darfur) made up of mostly African soldiers was deployed into Darfur to replace the AU Mission in Darfur (AMIS), which did not have the resources and capacity to provide protection to civilians. AMIS did not have enough troops in light of the size of Darfur and the number of civilians needing protection. The force suffered political constraints, lack of funds, equipment and experience.

The AU-UN troops have contributed considerably to the stabilization of the situation in Darfur. However, deployment of UNAMID is slow and is held up by obstruction by the Khartoum Government, UN bureaucracy and the tepid support from troop contributing countries. In addition, countries that had pledged donation of equipment such as helicopters have never honoured their promises.

Efforts to resolve the Darfur conflict continue, as the international community rallies its support to end the biggest humanitarian disaster in the world. Unfortunately these efforts continue to be marred by a hardening of positions, forcing the UN to conclude in 2008 that both sides of the conflict seem ready to seek a military solution to the crisis. This will erode any gains earlier made to resolve the Darfur conflict.

This study will look at whether the *The Sudan Mirror*, adequately set the public's agenda on the Darfur crisis and whether this focus on the crisis contributed to increased calls to end the crisis and stepped up action to increase humanitarian aid to the victims. If indeed the newspaper managed to set the agenda for the public, the ways in which it did this will be analysed.

The study will use *The Sudan Mirror* as a case study and will look at the period between January and December 2007, when efforts in the search for peace in Darfur intensified. These included intensified calls for economic sanctions against the Sudan Government to pressure President Bashir to end the Darfur conflict.

The *Sudan Mirror* is a bi-monthly newspaper launched in 2003 to reach tens of thousands of people in southern Sudan with news and information. It has as its motto *For Truth and Justice* and aims at being the national main source of news

about Sudan, by Sudanese, for Sudan. The newspaper has a circulation of 25,000 copies of each edition, with 15,000 copies going to Southern Sudan, and 10,000 distributed in both Kenya and Uganda.

1.2   Statement of Research Problem

The Darfur crisis has drawn immense world attention from various world leaders, international media, NGOs, Hollywood celebrities, among others. [10] Indeed, top on the agenda of the 2008 US Presidential elections campaigns was to stop genocide in Darfur.

The quest for a solution to the problem is a priority on the world arena. The AU and the UN are at the forefront in the search for peace in Darfur by organising various negotiation fora between the two sides in the crisis. World leaders have also called for an end to the crisis that has variously been described as genocide. At one point British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, offered to host the next round of talks between the Sudan Government and the Darfur rebels.

It is increasingly becoming evident that the media is extremely powerful in its ability to influence and contribute to global awareness.

Despite the power of the media to influence, they have been ignored by conflict mediators and yet they are likely contributors and partners in the search for peace in Darfur. Instead, they are viewed as mouthpieces through which those

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[10] Otieno, A. (January 15th, 2008). Media must change tack on Darfur. *The Daily Nation*, p 7

involved in the mediation process and those calling for peace can push their agenda.

Despite the sidelining of the media, they do have and can play a role in conflict resolution. It is prudent to investigate if this is something they are doing within the context of the Darfur crisis. In particular, it is important to investigate whether the local Sudanese media is making any contributions to ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict.

It is no longer in doubt that the media is extremely powerful in its ability to influence and contribute to global awareness. It is therefore prudent to examine their role in either escalating or de-escalating the Darfur crisis.

The questions to be asked in this study include: how well is the local media in Sudan using their influence/voice to promote or support the conflict resolution efforts in the Darfur conflict, or are they instead contributing to the escalation of the crisis? Are they complacent as mere observers and reporters of events or are they taking a stand on the conflict?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the role of the local Sudan media in conflict situations, in particular the role of the Sudan Mirror newspaper in the search for peace in Darfur between January and December 2007.

Specific objectives were:

    i.   To quantitatively and qualitatively describe and analyse coverage of the Darfur crisis by the Sudan Mirror.

    ii.   To determine the extent to which Sudan Mirror is contributing to the ongoing conflict resolution process in Darfur, or whether instead it is contributing to the escalation of the crisis

1.4   Justification of the Study

No other crisis has attracted so much world attention in a long time. Due to consistent media coverage, the Darfur region has received unprecedented international attention, perhaps only comparable to the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

In addition, numerous reports have been published on the Darfur conflict by experts, specifically on the search for peace in the vast region in western Sudan. These include regular update reports on the crisis by the organisations such as International Crisis Group, Small Arms Survey and the UN.

However, these publications have focused on all other efforts and failed to acknowledge the role of the media in the search for a solution. In fact, many stakeholders working in the area of conflict resolution rarely acknowledge the media's importance in conflicts, only inviting journalists to cover their briefings on the latest reports. The strategic importance of media engagement in conflict resolution is not recognised.

The information thus generated from this study will add on to the existing and indeed growing body of knowledge around the Darfur crisis. In addition the research is intended to introduce a different perspective on an alternative avenue to exploit to resolve the conflict, i.e. harnessing the power of the media.

In addition, the study will fill an information gap by providing an additional case study on the role played by the media in particular conflicts today. The Darfur crisis will be added to this body of knowledge and will be of particular interest for being among the most difficult problems to solve more than five years after it broke out.

The knowledge thus generated will be of interest to students, media practitioners, academicians and conflict resolution experts to demonstrate the extent of the effectiveness of media in fulfilling their role in resolving conflicts.

By investigating the effectiveness of media in resolving conflicts, the results of the study, will make a contribution to policy formulation on best practices in conflict resolution. It is hoped that these best practices will include the involvement of media as an important partner and tool in conflict resolution.

1.5   Hypotheses

The study will focus on the *Sudan Mirror* newspaper and will be based on the following hypotheses:

i.   The media, by playing its moral and social responsibility role, can contribute to conflict resolution

ii. The media, by paying attention to a conflict, has the effect of establishing it on the public's agenda, resulting in stepped up efforts in the search for a solution to the crisis

1.6   Theoretical Framework

This study will be guided by the Agenda Setting Theory. This is among the main theories of mass communication that have informed communications studies over the years.

1.6.1 Agenda Setting Theory

The term 'agenda setting' is used to describe a phenomenon where the news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issue.[11] This theory posits that although media may not influence *how* people think or *how* people form their opinions, it does influence *what* people think about. This is as a result of the media's ability to influence audiences by their choice of what stories to consider newsworthy and how much space (or time in the case of electronic media) and prominence is given to them.

The Agenda-setting theory was introduced in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their ground breaking study of the role of the media in the 1968 presidential campaign in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

In his analysis of the role of the press in shaping foreign policy, Bernard Cohen said that the media may not be successful in telling its readers what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about. That is, the media has the ability to influence the public's perception of the important topics and issues of the day although it may not dictate what people think about those issues.

Evidence from research shows correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to 'issues' and the order of significance attached to the same issues by politicians and the public.

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[11] Mcquail, D., *Mcquail's Mass Communications Theory*, 5th ed., New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2005

The agenda setting hypothesis about the effects of mass communications holds that mass media by the fact of paying attention to some issues and neglecting others will have an effect on public opinion.[12]

People tend to know about those things that the mass media deal with. They also learn how much importance to attach to an issue from the emphasis the mass media place upon it.

The news editor may believe he is only printing the things the people want to read but he is thereby putting a claim on their attention, powerfully determining what they will be thinking and talking about 'until the next wave laps their shore'.

The agenda-setting theory's central axiom is salience transfer, or the ability of the mass media to transfer importance of items on their mass agendas to the public agendas.

1.6.2 Relevance of Agenda Setting Theory to this Research

Using this theory as a guide, this study will analyse the importance attached to the Darfur crisis by *The Sudan Mirror* by looking at the ways in which the newspaper has treated news and information on the crisis. It will investigate whether a correlation exists between the attention given to the crisis by the paper and the ongoing efforts to seek for a solution to the problem, or whether it has

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[12] Mcquail, D. & Windahl, W, *Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communications*, Singapore: Longman, 1981

contributed to its escalation. That is, what exactly was *Sudan Mirror*'s role in its coverage of the crisis?

Under the Agenda Setting Theory, it is assumed that where the public is informed constantly about a situation such as the Darfur crisis, that their perception of it is influenced. Whether this is true or not will be investigated in this study.

1.7   Scope and Limitation

Although there are a number of Sudan media houses operating from Nairobi and which would have been accessible during this study e.g. Sudan Radio, this study which has set out to investigate the role of Sudan media in the Darfur crisis is limited to the study of *The Sudan Mirror* due to time and financial constraints.

Issues of the newspaper published between January and December 2007 were analysed in this study. This period was selected because 2007 was a year when efforts were intensified in the search for peace, increased calls were made for a quick solution to the problem in Darfur, and humanitarian aid to those affected stepped up.

The study limited its data collection method to content analysis. Time and financial constraints prevented an expansion of the study to include the survey method of data collection which would have entailed speaking to journalists and

editors at the *Sudan Mirror* and the newspaper's readers to get their view on the newspaper's role in the Darfur conflict.

Further, being a case study, its findings are limited to the Darfur crisis and the role of the local Sudan media, particularly *The Sudan Mirror,* in its resolution. Its findings cannot therefore be generalised to all conflict situations and all media necessitating additional studies on other conflict situations and the role of specific media in those conflicts.

There being no other accessible repository of archival copies of the *Sudan Mirror,* the research depended solely on the *Sudan Mirror* office in Nairobi to provide past issues of the paper. In some instances particular issues would be missing necessitating a further search in the office stores thus delaying the research.

As noted elsewhere in this study, the schedule of publishing the paper every two weeks was not adhered to resulting in less than 24 issues being published in 2007. In one instance, a particular issue could not be traced. This resulted in confusion as it was not clear whether it had been published at all or whether it simply could not be traced. This necessitated leaving it out all together from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews various literature on conflict and the media, including a past study by a student at the School of Journalism.

It begins by giving a background to conflict and its resolution, including how conflict has evolved from being largely an interstate affair in the early part of the 20th Century to an intrastate affair in the latter half of the century and beginning of the 21st.

The chapter then highlights the role of communication and media in conflict and its resolution. The key role is acknowledged by various authors on the subject. The latter part of the chapter looks at a dissenting voice, questioning whether the media is really a solution provider in times of conflict or an exacerbating factor.

Finally the chapter briefly looks at the Darfur crisis and the local media in this crisis, and examines the extent to which they can play a role in the search for peace in the region.

1.0 Understanding Conflict and its Resolution

Bushra and Lopez state that conflict is no longer an exceptional circumstance but rather the norm.[13] During the 1970s and 1980s, structural poverty deepened in the Third World. Coupled with that, the Cold War ended opening up outlets for local animosities, frustration, and rebellion, which were violently expressed in country after country. Understanding and addressing these root causes of conflict is important in their resolution and management.

Conflict is not an isolated issue; rather it feeds off, and in turn nourishes, other factors of turbulence such as political inequality and repression, economic decline, and the growing scarcity of subsistence resources.[14] Similarly, the complexities of conflict must be understood in the context of interrelationships within regional and global political systems, and wider world events. Armed conflict, therefore, stands at the centre of the concerns in the world today.

Bushra and Lopez point out that warfare in the latter half of the 20th Century has involved increasingly high levels of civilian casualties. UN estimates put the proportion of civilian casualties globally since the end of World War II at 95% compared to 5% in World War I and 50% during World War II.[15] Warfare used to be waged between professional armies in formal battlefields with regulated rules

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[13] El Bushra, J. & Lopez, E. P. 1994. *Development in Conflict: The Gender Dimension. A report of a workshop held in Thailand, February 1993,* UK: Oxfam Discussion Paper 3, p. 3
[14] *Ibid,* p3
[15] *Ibid,* p3

of engagement. In contrast, of the 150 wars or so that have taken place since World War II, most of them have been internal conflicts in Third World countries.[16]

Suffice it to note that war itself is changing, increasingly becoming Information War for those able to wage it, by which is broadly meant saturation with information and ICTs. In this milieu, media play an integral and vital role both in the conduct and even commencement of war.

Mutere and Ugangu argue that in Africa conflicts revolve around scarce resources – their extraction, allocation and utilisation; lack of skilled human resources; uneven access to employment, incomes and wealth; and economic stagnation.[17] As seen in Chapter 1, some of these factors or all of them are what have led to the Darfur conflict, which can be classified as an intra-state conflict.

Violence in this context is a means through which groups express their cultural identity and aspirations. Armed conflict therefore can be viewed as an indicator of where transformation in society is sorely needed.

Journalists therefore, need to understand all the social, historical and economic factors around a conflict to be able to report accurately and clearly on it and to analyse ways in which these factors can be addressed to resolve the conflicts.

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[16] *Ibid*, p3

[17] Mutere, A. & Ugangu, W. (eds). 2004. *Conflict Management: A training Manual for African Journalists.* Nairobi: ACCE, p. 6

James H. Laue says that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of all human social relationships. It occurs at all levels of society – intrapsychic, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, intranational and international. Parties in conflict believe they have incompatible goals, and their aim is to neutralise, gain advantage over, injure or destroy one another.[18]

Quincy Wright in *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution* says that *conflict* may be used to refer to inconsistencies in the motions, sentiments, purposes or claims of entities. Sometimes, it refers to the process of resolving these inconsistencies. E.g. the values of the communist and democratic systems are in conflict as it is impossible for a person to rationally believe in the two systems at the same time.[19]

Mutere and Ugangu define conflict as a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable human groups because these groups appear to be pursuing what appear to be incompatible goals.[20] These groups may be identifiable along tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious or political lines.

Wright opines that in analysing the word conflict as used in the sociological sense and in accord with its etymology, its meaning is best limited to situations where

[18] Burton, J. and Dukes F. (eds). 1990. *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution.* London: The Macmillan Press Limited, pp256-257
[19] Ibid, p15
[20] Mutere & Ugangu, op. cit., p. 34

there is an actual or potential process for solving the inconsistency. Where there is no such process, conflict may not be the proper word.[21]

The online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, defines conflict resolution as the process of attempting to resolve a dispute or a conflict.[22] Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties, and to adequately address interests so that each party is satisfied with the outcome. Conflict resolution specialists talk about finding the win-win outcome for parties involved vis-a-vis the win-lose dynamic found in most conflicts.

Laue is of the view that conflict is never solved; the focus is on its *re*-solution and not solution. Society never "solves" conflict totally; conflicts are solved and then re-solved and re-solved. When conflict resolution mechanisms are working, all parties have adequate representation in the forum and can create a win-win outcome that satisfies at least some of their needs. If true resolution is achieved, the outcome 'sticks' and contributes to the ability of the system to resolve other conflicts as they arise, rather than allowing them to fester.[23]

Resolution implies at least three elements: the outcome addresses the underlying problems or issues, rather than just the symptoms or surface manifestations; it is jointly determined; and the process achieves at least some degree of satisfaction

[21] Burton & Dukes (eds), op. cit., p16
[22] Retrieved May 20, 2008 from www.wikipedia.org
[23] Burton & Dukes (eds). op. cit. p258

for parties involved. Wright notes that there are four ways in which social conflicts can be relatively solved:

i.   *By negotiation and agreement resulting in settlement or adjustment in accord with the will of all the parties*

ii. *By adjudication and decision in accord with the will, perhaps guided by legal or moral principles, of an outside party*

iii. *By dictation or decision in accordance with the will of one party to the conflict*

iv. *By obsolescence through agreement to disagree which may in time sink the conflict into oblivion and result in a settlement in accordance to the will of no one*[24]

2.0   Communication, Media and Conflict

The world media arena is fast changing. The public now has more sources of information to choose from e.g. more radio and television services, numerous newspapers, websites, etc.

Although Governments are keen to put a leash on players in the field, media organisations are now less likely to be state controlled than ever before. They are more commercially driven in a bid to please and secure audiences, thus attracting more advertising revenue. The industry has become more professional, with content now being shaped by 'professional' ideas of what makes a story. There is now a willingness to report 'both' sides of the story and less willingness for

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[24] Ibid, pp. 29-30

reporting to be shaped by the direct demands of government, leaving more room for independent analysis of and reporting on a conflict.

The importance of communication in conflicts cannot be gainsaid in light of the fact that media representation of conflicts is how policy makers and the public usually learn about events. Actors in a conflict also respond to how the conflict is presented in the media.

This important role of media in conflict situations is demonstrated by Mayom who points out that the media are an integral part of society. They perform essential roles in social transformation. They function as agenda setters, mediators in national discourse; they serve as conveyor belts or conduits of information/news, entertainment, among other roles. [25]

Mayom goes on to say that the media serve both as watchdogs and whistle blowers to draw attention to issues. They serve as potential agents of change and transformation.

Eiffe shares Mayom's view. On the 1998 famine in Bahr-el-Ghazal in south western Sudan in which 2.2 million faced starvation, he says that it was the exposure the press gave to the situation that helped save thousands of lives – millions of dollars poured in and relief supplies flew in in large numbers.[26] He

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[25] Mayom, M. (2007, May 21 – June 3). The media must project society in all its glory and tribulations. *Sudan Mirror,* p. 13
[26] Eiffe, D. (2007, May 7 – 20). The critical role of the media in the promotion of the CPA. *Sudan Mirror,* p. 17

goes on to point out that the media have played an enormous role in exposing the suffering and injustice and in gaining support for the Southern Sudanese.

With the media held in such high esteem as demonstrated by the views of Mayom and Eiffe, it is expected then that their role assumes critical proportions and their influence is potentially enormous in conflict situations.

Okunna argues that conflict is irresistible to the media, a fact demonstrated by the editorial content of print and electronic media.[27] Thomas and Lee[28] agree with Okunna by stating that conflict is the bread and butter of journalism; conflict sells, while Tehrarian states that conflict attracts the media as powerfully as flies gather around sweets.[29]

These views by media experts attest to an age-old journalism dictum that news media concentrate particularly on bad news. War is newsworthy and as such is of compelling interest to the media. This increases the likelihood of conflicts receiving prominent and sustained attention as has happened with the Darfur Crisis.

In summarising the role of journalism in conflicts, Howard says that professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict.[30] They seek to present accurate and

[27] Okunna, C. S., *Communication and Conflict: A commentary on the role of the media*, Senegal: Africa Media Review (Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 7 – 12), 2004

[28] Thomas, P., & Lee, P., *Editorial*, Media Development, vol. 4, 1996, cited by Okunna (ibid.), p. 8

[29] Tehranian, M., *Communication and Conflict*, Media and Development, Vol. 4, 1996, cited by Okunna (op. cit.), p. 8

[30] Howard, R., *Conflict Sensitive Journalism*, IMPACS & International Media Support, 2003, p. 8

impartial news. It is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced since good journalism is a constant process of seeking solutions.

Ideally, there are various roles that the media should play when reporting on conflicts. They can shape opinions, and influence how to handle and resolve conflicts.

Okunna is of the view that while media practitioners have a duty to report conflicts as they see them (the mirror analogy), they also have a responsibility to enhance opportunities for their peaceful resolution (social responsibility). The latter is a heavy responsibility for the media and which they should take more seriously.

However, among media practitioners themselves the debate rages on as to what their exact role in conflict situations is – is it to reflect society as it is (mirror analogy) or is it to change society for the better (social responsibility)?

Howard describes two kinds of journalists: Those that are of the view that theirs is merely to observe and describe a conflict as they see it, and those that recognise that they are more than just professional spectators and distributors of facts. The latter see their role as agents of positive change by writing balanced accurate stories that expose injustice and point the way to possible solutions. Journalists who exercise social responsibility generate constructive reports that make audiences better informed and even more secure by also reporting on efforts to

promote conflict reduction. Howard refers to this kind of journalism as conflict sensitive journalism. [31]

Reporting only on the bare facts about violent conflicts denies audiences a deeper understanding of the conflict. Searching for news beyond the bare facts and presenting more information to citizens, including possible solutions, enables them to see the conflict in different terms. Journalists should search for new voices by reporting how a conflict affects ordinary people's lives and seek their opinions about it. They should report on attempts to end the conflict and how other similar situations were solved and look closely at all sides of the conflict. Journalists committed to conflict resolution should not take sides but should analyse issues and present alternative ways out of the conflict.

The media have a potentially crucial role to play in conflict situations as one of the wide range of actors who have to operate within it. Ngugi argues that the media come into conflict situations with new voices, perspectives and interests.[32] This is despite the fact that they are not regarded as key contributors to the peace process by other players in conflict resolution.

Increasingly there's talk among media experts about the strategic role media could play in conflict resolution. One measure of how well or poorly it carries out

[31] Ibid., p. 15
[32] Ngugi, V., *The role of Kenya Media in conflict and Peace-building Processes: A Case Study of the Somali Conflict*, 2006 (A research study submitted at the School of Journalism), p. 10

such a task is the degree to which it is able to highlight issues around a conflict, establish them on the public agenda and rally efforts to resolve that conflict.

When playing a role as mediators, journalists share similarities with conflict resolution specialists such as mediators themselves, negotiators and counsellors. By their very inquiry, they clarify and influence. They become players, members of the cast and not just the audience. Robert Karl states that the work of conflict resolution experts is also the work of good journalism. [33]

Reporting on conflicts calls on the journalist to investigate more deeply, question the mainstream perceptions and remain on the alert to ensure that a story is not coloured by their prejudices and assumptions. This calls for a solid understanding of the core values of professional journalism – independence, fairness, impartiality, freedom of information, decency, accuracy and responsibility.

Lloyd and Howard quote the Conflict Resolution Network based in Australia which clarifies four key moves that media as mediators can make: They can clarify the facts, the players in the conflict, the positions by the various sides of the conflict and the issues around the conflict. Secondly, the media can explore the options offered by the various players and those they themselves see as viable given the whole picture. Thirdly, the media have a crucial role to play to focus the

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[33] Manoff, R.K., *Role Plays*, Track Two, Vol. 7. No. 4, December 1998, cited by Lloyd & Howard, op. cit., p. 55

public on the positive aspects i.e. they should enquire what it would take to solve the problem and make it better. Fourthly, the media should focus on legitimate needs and concerns of the various sides of the conflict.[34]

In other words, what Lloyd and Howard mean is that journalism plays a role in conflict situations by explaining the conflict, building confidence by identifying the key issues and gives it a human face by reporting real life consequences. It assesses the ideas of the affected and ignored for alternative approaches to solving the conflict. While actual mediation in a crisis is best left to experts, journalists can support the process by carrying out these various roles professionally.

Howard is of the view that by providing adequate information, journalism makes the public far better informed about the conflict beneath the violence and can assist in resolving it.[35] Only by addressing the underlying issues can violence be resolved definitely.

Okunna states that the media's role should revolve around seven clearly defined responsibilities. [36] She states these as:

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[34] Lloyd & Howard, op. cit, p. 55
[35] Howard, op. cit., p. 5
[36] Okunna, op. cit., pp. 9 - 11

2.1 Provision of truthful information

Truth is the most fundamental of the ethical values of journalism. Media should therefore, be the armour against the avalanche of propaganda and misinformation usually churned out by opponents in a conflict. Journalists should "ignore the propaganda on either side and tell the truth".[37] However, truth is often the first casualty in conflict situations.

Journalists must therefore remember that their mission is to tell the story as it is no matter how difficult that may be and no matter how unpopular this may make them with the governments of the countries where they operate.

2.2 Avoid sensationalism

Sensationalism is a news report that presents facts in a way intended to produce strong feelings of shock, anger or excitement by making a situation more shocking or worse than it really is. Conflicts, particularly armed ones, are situations that lend themselves to sensational reporting. The media should remain alive to the fact that sensationalism can cause havoc and they must guard themselves against it.

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[37] Siddiqui, H., *International media coverage and changing societies: the view from Canada*, Media Development, Vol. 3, 2002, cited by Okunna (ibid.), p. 9

2.3 Sensitise people by providing full information

The public has a right to know about a conflict situation. They should therefore be provided with relevant details about its horrors. Sensitisation of the public through provision of details could play a role in the search for peace.

Iyare and Ozonnia point out that "You give people enough so that they can understand the intensity of what is happening." [38] Thomas and Lee say that the media's role is one of telling the stories of the victims of the war so that ordinary citizens are sensitised to its horrors. [39] However, providing full details should be handled with caution and decorum, while guarding against alarmist sensationalism.

2.4 Observe fairness and balance in coverage

Journalists have a responsibility to report fairly without bias and to offer balanced coverage of all sides of the conflict. Indeed fairness means reflecting the experiences and voices of all those affected. Dunsky advises that the media must "consider both sides of the story as equally valid and give them balanced representation and voice." [40]

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[38] Iyare, T & Ozonnia, O., "How to report a crisis" in *Reporting Conflicts*, Lagos: Mass Media Africa Peace Centre, 2001, cited by Okunna (op. cit.), pp. 9 - 10

[39] Thomas & Lee, op. cit., cited by Okunna (op. cit.), p. 10

[40] Dunsky, M., *What constitutes full and fair media coverage of Israeli – Palestinian Issues?*, Media Development, Vol 3, 2002, cited by Okunna (op. cit.), p. 10

2.5 Have a full understanding of the context of the conflict

Journalists should be knowledgeable about the historical, political and other aspects of a conflict for its effective coverage. Thomas and Lee refer to journalists who plunge into coverage of a conflict in ignorance of its context as "parachute journalists". [41] Such journalists are unable to properly contextualise and interpret events. Dunsky urges them to always be aware of relevant historical or recent contexts surrounding conflicts and highlight them even briefly in their stories.

2.6 De-emphasise the profit motive

Conflict sells. It in fact is a news value that the media looks out for in their coverage to make their news 'hot'. However, the profit motive should not be allowed to upstage ethics in coverage of conflicts. The media should guard against commercialising conflict for financial gain.

2.7 Play the role of peace maker

Apart from reporting, commenting or interpreting a conflict situation, the media should also seek to play a role in its resolution. Ekwo advises that we must be conscious of evolving a conflict resolving media. [42] Journalists who are assigned to cover conflict stories must be people genuinely committed to peace. Media practitioners, therefore, have a unique role in the maintenance of stability.

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[41] Thomas & Lee, op. cit., cited by Okunna (op. cit.), p. 10
[42] Ekwo, U., "Nigeria's media in a crisis prone democracy" in *Reporting Conflicts*, Lagos: Mass Media Africa Peace Centre, 2001, cited by Okunna (op. cit.), p. 11

Okunna's view on the media's role is a reflection of UNESCO's guidelines for journalists which call on them to be independent, fair, impartial, to exercise their freedom of information, decency, accuracy and responsibility in their reporting. If practised, these principles would ensure that journalism maintains its integrity.

Reporting on a conflict should result in a well informed public that addresses the violence. Journalists should therefore include in their reporting an analysis of possible solutions.

Thomas and Lee raise a number of thought-provoking questions in discussing the role of the media in conflicts.[43] These are: How should those responsible for public communication and education respond to potential and actual conflict? What role should journalists play in covering conflicts? Should they merely report, comment on and interpret it, or should they be actors in the resolution or, more importantly in the prevention of conflicts? What are the moral and social responsibilities of journalists involved in reporting conflict situations?

Okunna and Ekwo advocate the practice of social responsibility by journalists. In the various literature quoted above, they call on for journalists who cover conflicts to be genuinely committed to peace and to use all opportunity to contribute to their peaceful resolution.

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[43] Thomas & Lee, op. cit., p. 8

Journalists should therefore report to change society positively by supporting conflict resolution efforts that bring about sustainable peace. They should be constantly on the look out for potential and actual conflicts and report analytically about them to keep them on the public's agenda as a way of reminding authorities to act towards resolving them.

The publication *War and the Media* identifies three key roles of the media in communicating conflict as critical observer, publicist, and most recently, as battleground, the surface upon which war is imagined and executed.[44] The way in which the mass media represent the conflict is part of the conflict. Media coverage has effects not simply on the audience, but on those actually and potentially involved in the conflict. Shaping the perceptions of opponents, supporters and neutral groups influences whether they will become involved and how they will participate.

As critical observers, it is assumed that journalists are able and willing to shrug off ideological and organisational restrictions to keep a watchful eye on the activities of military combatants. There is also the assumption that they are prepared to confront the arguments of powerful voices in government and the military who are responsible for strategic and tactical decisions in a time of war.

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[44] Thussu, D. K. & Freed, D. (eds), *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2003

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The adversarial model suggests that the prying eyes and investigative reports of committed journalists force governments to be more open in their justifications for war and more transparent in their conduct of military operations. The recent expansion in the number of media outlets and volume of news has therefore, fuelled the 'watchdog' role of the media. Increased competition forces reporters to go beyond handouts and briefings to discover an original story that their rivals may not have discovered. This scenario increases the chances the various dimensions of a conflict will get highlighted as media houses compete to churn out new news.

As a publicist, the media is deemed to have a public relations role to play that legitimises government perspectives and narratives. Far from adopting a critical or oppositional viewpoint, this model suggests that journalists covering conflicts are more likely to publicise and reinforce official sources on which they choose to depend for information.

In playing out his/her role as a publicist, the journalist presents himself/herself, not as a disinterested observer, but as a patriot and partisan to either side of the conflict. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky are quoted in *War and the Media* as saying that under the publicist model, media coverage in war is notable for the way in which views that run counter to official sources are deemed unacceptable, ideological alternatives are ignored and discussion is 'bounded'. They are of the view that mainstream media reproduce the frameworks of political and military leaders, and in so doing provide propaganda rather than 'disinterested'

journalism. That is, the media are likely to privilege and publicize official versions of the conflict. In this scenario, the relationship between the media and the military impinges on the reporters' ability to speak independently.

In acting as the battlegrounds for war, the media constitute the spaces in which wars are fought and the main ways through which the audiences experience war; they are the means by which contemporary conflicts are literally played out.

The idea of the media as a battleground for conflict is related to the postmodernist critique of reality that foregrounds the importance of the spectacle; and technological innovations that have led to a revolution in military affairs in which war is increasingly technologised, informatised and mediated. It is from this premise that Jean Baudrillard claimed in 1995 that the Gulf War was a gigantic simulation in which we were bombarded by TV images rather than missiles. [45]

Major innovations in ICT have been embraced by the American military in their PR efforts to present a new and 'bloodless' view of war that looks good on domestic television screens. James Der Derian is quoted in *War and the Media* as describing this as 'virtuous war' which combines virtual technologies with a claim to embrace humanitarian motives. This US-led imperial initiative relies on computer simulation, media manipulation, global surveillance and networked warfare to deter, discipline and, if need be, destroy potential enemies.

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[45] Op. cit. Thussu & Freed, 2003

This involvement of media as a battleground for war and in light of ICT developments has made it possible for there to be fewer bodies to observe in conflicts and less mess to clean up. Yet modern conflicts are not 'media wars' or 'screen battles' but encounters in which there are plenty of civilian casualties, horrendous destruction and unimaginable misery for victims.

3.0 Can the media really play a role in conflict resolution? Dissenting Views

The above section demonstrates the clear roles that the media should and can play in conflict situations and their resolution. Nevertheless, some analysts maintain that their role in the new generation of regional conflicts is ambiguous, unclear, overrated and often misconstrued.[46]

Questions arise whether their coverage is in fact a help or hindrance in conflict management and resolution.

Gowing's is one of those dissenting voices. He posits that too often, a direct cause-and-effect relationship between media coverage and apparent action to end a conflict is assumed.[47] He goes on to say that much as the media are a factor in generating humanitarian relief for refugees in conflict situations, their distorted

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[46] Gowing, N., *Media Coverage: Help or Hindrance in Conflict Prevention?*, New York: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997, p. 1
[47] ibid., p. 3

reporting on events is a contributing factor to the failure by key stakeholders to take more action to stem the conflict. He accuses the media of being a very disturbing or disruptive element in conflict situations.

This view by Gowing begs the question, what about instances where media focus on a conflict has led to global calls for and stepped up action towards its resolution? Such is the case with the Darfur crisis where media concentration on that part of Sudan has resulted in many famous personalities and world leaders taking interest and calling for a speedy resolution of the same.

Gowing maintains that a body of research and analysis questions the conventional assumption that media reporting results in efforts to resolve a conflict, suggesting that practitioners in the media overestimate the impact of coverage in conflict management. This school of thought holds that beyond mere reporting of a conflict or signs pointing to a looming conflict, the media have significant limits to their influence once a conflict has boiled to the surface; that there is negligible response to most media coverage of conflicts. [48]

Gowing quotes the one time British Foregin Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind who says, "In complex conflicts, it is difficult within the constraints in which journalists operate to portray a balanced picture which properly represents all the

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[48] ibid., p. 32

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factors in a conflict."[49] This may contribute to little impact being achieved from the coverage of a conflict by the media.

Gowing shares this scepticism and maintains that media reporting is greeted with official scepticism, with most officials treating what they see or read with caution. He is of the view that those who are of the opinion that a direct correlation exists between coverage of a conflict and efforts to resolve it forget or ignore the presence of national strategic interests and the subsequent political will to resolve it. He maintains that there's negligible response to most media coverage of conflicts, except personal emotions that images create among officials about the horrors.[50] Gowing consequently describes the media as impotent.

Also forgotten is the fact that some governments declare conflicts as "internal matters" and therefore the need to respect sovereignty.' Such a stance can override reactions generated by media coverage that something must be done.[51] Media impact in such instances is therefore minimal because of such intervening circumstances.

Proponents of the media argue that without media coverage, conflicts would not appear at all on the Government radar screen and therefore would be forgotten by the international community. Increased media coverage helps to focus international attention on a conflict situation, thereby attaining a sustainable

[49] *Ibid*

[50] ibid., p. 3
[51] ibid., p. 8

momentum and mediation-support mechanisms. For example, television is seen as having the power to create the "something-must-be-done" pressures on government. Consequently, journalists and policymakers maintain that media coverage has an undefined yet pivotal role in conflict management or prevention. It is therefore assumed that high profile media coverage will prevent much worse from happening.[52]

Media practitioners are of the view that they are an indispensable tool for telling what is actually happening and, in certain circumstances, for influencing a government's policies in a fruitful direction.

Gowing maintains that for media coverage of a conflict to have impact, timing and chance must coincide. Often the relentless news cycle (new information is always being sought and a story today is tomorrow's history unless new angles come up) and the pressure of vivid domestic issues will conspire to prevent a conflict from making an impact as a lead or close-to-lead story to which governments and individuals will respond. [53]

Gowing argues strongly that media coverage is in fact counterproductive for effective diplomacy aimed at conflict management. For example, in some cases, during discussions or negotiations, protagonists perform for the media (as was witnessed during the post election violence in Kenya in January – February

[52] ibid., pp. 1 - 2
[53] ibid., p. 15

2008), apparently stiffening their positions thus compounding problems of mediation or confidence building. In addition, media coverage can inflame tensions and polarise positions rather than assist in conciliation. Gowing therefore is of the view that unseen mediation and diplomacy can play a more pivotal role than media coverage.

Gowing in fact accuses the media of engaging in crusades and becoming partial when reporting on conflicts. This results in distortion of facts, refusal to include certain qualifying facts in a story or distorting the overall impression. The result is inadequate and inaccurate reporting which hampers the effectiveness of media reporting in playing a crucial role in resolution. [54]

Gowing concludes by saying that beyond the mere fact of reporting conflict or simply pointing to a looming conflict, the media have limits on their influence. He advocates quiet, behind the scenes diplomacy as a way of managing conflicts. He quotes a former Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe High Commissioner on National Minorities and a leading figure in conflict prevention, Max van der Stoel, who shuns any involvement with the media. Without the media, he says, he believes he can make progress. [55]

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[54] ibid., pp. 25 - 31
[55] ibid., p. 33

Gowing's views are supported by Lloyd and Howard who posit that the power of the media in warfare is formidable. [56] They can be mediators, interpreters or even facilitators of conflict, if only by editing away some facts and emphasising others. Ngugi shares this view when she says that the media often manipulates news, providing wrong information or exaggerating issues, thereby fanning conflicts as happened during the Rwanda genocide. [57]

By investigating the *The Sudan Mirror* newspaper is playing in the search for a resolution to the has played a role in resolving the Darfur crisis, this study will by extension set out to prove Gowing right or wrong in dismissing the media as capable of playing any role in conflict situations.

4.0   Factors impeding the effectiveness of media in conflicts

Much as there are clear guidelines on the role of the media in conflicts, a number of factors make their impact less effective.

War reporting for African journalists remains one of the most challenging occupations due to limited resources available for those covering conflicts, the limited training available and the intrinsic dangers that accompany covering volatile situations.

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[56] Lloyd, F. & Howard, R., *Gender, Conflict and Journalism: Voices from South Asia*, Paris: UNESCO, 2005, p. 49

[57] Ngugi, op. cit., p. 13

All conflicts are complex and multi-layered, even if they are framed by the media, political leaders and other parties in such a way that they appear simple. As such, there are three elements at play in a conflict story: the root causes of the conflict, exacerbating factors, and factors triggering the crisis.[58] Consequently, there is more than one side to a story. However, rarely do all these elements appear in a news story on a particular conflict situation.

This is often as a result of space and time constraints that highly limit reporting on a conflict. Journalists are bedevilled by deadlines and the need to beat competitors in filing a story. Nevertheless, emerging conflicts in the 21st Century are demanding more from the media.

The media are now being pressured to give more attention to conflicts and to go beyond national interests. By virtue of their regional and global dimensions, conflicts are a big issue. Journalists have to identify and manage their multifaceted cultural, economic and political dimensions and report on all these issues in order to be more effective agents of change.[59]

Mutere and Ugangu argue that the inverted pyramid technique of news writing limits the journalist to only one side of the story.[60]

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[58] Mutere & Ugangu, op. cit., p. 14
[59] ibid., p. 87
[60] ibid., p. 14

This technique calls for only one event defining a story. Therefore, one or more of the three elements that define a conflict are left out of a news report in the face of such limitations.

Mutere and Ugangu advocate for "pro-active reporting" in which the journalist goes beyond limitations of the inverted pyramid format to capture the historical context of a conflict, its exacerbating factors and significance of the various events around it.

Journalists should therefore move from "events oriented" (the inverted pyramid of answering the 5 Ws and H) to "process oriented" reporting (in which the journalist analyses and revisits the historical causes of the conflict, its exacerbating factors and the role of various parties in order to enhance readers' understanding of issues). This scenario is only possible if conflicts are allocated space for more than news stories, and provided enough for in-depth full length feature pieces that would allow enough space for all issues to be raised.

Single-sourcing for stories is another problem in coverage of conflict situations. Often, those who create and manage events are the ones most quoted, thus giving an incomplete story. The problem with single sourcing is that only one protagonist is picked per story, so that other views are rarely carried in one story. This limits the debate on either side of the conflict. Such stories are therefore unbalanced and are manipulated by the source.

Mutere and Ugangu call for multiple sourcing for stories to bring balance and build the credibility of a conflict story.[61] This would involve gathering information from the affected parties, official sources, unofficial sources, the grapevine, the library, documented sources, media cuttings, the internet, books, observation, historical records, among other sources. However, in their quest to be the first to report a story, this in-depth gathering of information from all sources is sacrificed resulting in incomplete reporting on conflicts.

Journalists should maintain the tempo in reporting on a conflict by undertaking follow up work as conflict is a never ending story. This means keeping an eye on the horizon and comparing the situation with similar ones in order to develop perspectives to address the future.

For example in covering the Darfur crisis this would entail highlighting the impact of peace keeping in Darfur, the possibility and impact of UN and economic sanctions on Sudan, the effectiveness of the AU in handling the crisis, among other issues.

Gowing identifies comment and opinion journalism as an obstacle to clear, impartial comprehension of a conflict, its root causes and exacerbating factors.[62] As indicated above, it is difficult, within the various constraints in which journalists operate, to portray a balanced picture which represents all factors in a

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[61] ibid., p. 19
[62] Gowing, op. cit., p. 2

conflict – space constraints are one of the biggest deterrents to adequate coverage of all factors of a conflict as is the competition among media houses to be the first with the news. Under the latter scenario where speed is of the essence, time lacks for comprehensive coverage of issues.

In addition, Gowing accuses the press of superficial, less-than-well-informed reporting, often based on second or third hand information as opposed to primary data.[63]

The publication *War and the Media* identifies a range of constraints – both organisational and ideological – that prevent the media from reporting conflict in a truly critical or independent way. As publicists for one side or other of a war, media are said to be partisan and act as cheerleaders. At the same time, market-led media largely ignore dissenting voices in favour of corporate and government tunes.

A challenge for journalists is the likelihood of receiving sharply conflicting accounts of events in the efforts of combatants to 'perception manage'. The media are viewed as being important to war, but are not to be trusted. Consequently, both sides of a conflict prepare to 'handle' journalists, with 'minders' allocated, spoke persons carefully groomed and 'unfriendly' reporters kept at bay. This scenario makes it difficult for journalists to report effectively on a conflict, resulting in scepticism among them.

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[63] ibid.

Another challenge in reporting on conflicts is the inability by journalists to be completely objective. Howard points out that the media naturally take sides according to the values, religion and ethnicity of journalists and editors.[64] Consequently suspicion and mistrust are created thus potentially fuelling conflicts further.

When a newsroom reports the news by looking at everything only from one side against another, reporters cannot think independently. Howard recommends that journalists should help to bridge barriers against opposing sides by searching for stories about what is common to the various sides of a conflict e.g. environmental concerns, health concerns, the plight of the affected, and reporting on possible solutions that are acceptable to all.

5.0   Sudan Media and the Darfur Conflict

With internal conflicts becoming more common in modern times, the responsibilities increase for the regional and local media. Local journalists and media practitioners have to decide whether to play safe and be mouthpieces for the Government in the country they reside in or to strive for independence reporting. The latter necessarily means that the local media would at one point or other of reporting on the local crisis rub the authorities up the wrong way and almost certainly be beaten up by government thugs or be imprisoned. Thus, the risks for local journalists increase as well.

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[64] Howard, op. cit., p. 19

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The Darfur region has received unprecedented international attention, perhaps only comparable to the 1994 Rwanda genocide. This is thanks to the consistent coverage of the same by the international media.

Sudan has one of the most restrictive media environments in Africa. Suffice it to note that the Government has tried to limit media access to Darfur and has consistently harassed journalists and restricted press freedom in an effort to stop the information flow from the region. Consequently independent media in Sudan faces severe challenges to pursue their right to express themselves freely.

The Human Rights Watch website indicates that in 2004 the government detained the Al Jazeera correspondent in Khartoum for several weeks after the news agency transmitted reports about Darfur. In August 2006, several western journalists were arrested in Darfur and turned over to Sudanese intelligence.[65] Although these individuals were later released, in September 2006 the Government began cracking down on Sudanese media through pre-print censorship and arbitrary arrests, and imposing many bureaucratic restrictions on international journalists.

The question to ask is, if reporting on the Darfur crisis is so dangerous for international journalists who have the option of fleeing the country at any time,

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[65] See *Q & A: Crisis in Darfur* by Human Rights Watch (April 25, 2008), at http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/05/darfur8536.htm

how much more difficult is it for the local journalist for whom Darfur or Sudan is home?

The role local media can play in monitoring a conflict and influencing its resolution is important. In an environment of conflict however, the local media tends to be generally weak due to the political instability that threatens press freedom.

Sudan has a large number of local and national newspapers. However, both have limited access to information.[66] In addition, poor infrastructure in the south hampers media operations in that region.

While the media are called to be fair and independent at all times, is this possible for a local newspaper when covering a conflict in its own backyard, especially when it is likely that the journalist or editor is affected directly by the turmoil? Consequently the responsibilities increase for the local reporter and editor to remain balanced as do the risks because of the likelihood of hitting out at the authorities on the crisis.

When covering a local conflict, the local journalist is hard pressed to remain objective. It is difficult not to take sides. A media house can avoid partisanship by assigning reporters to both sides of the conflict, and by the editor standing above the fray in its editorial policy.

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[66] Op. Cit. Ngugi, 2006

The Islamic government, which for years has imposed ruthless media censorship in the north, attempted to scuttle the Mirror by launching its own almost identical version of the newspaper. Indeed the Darfur conflict seemed set to be replaced with an information war.

The private press enjoys a greater degree of freedom than the state broadcasters and offers a limited forum for opposition views, but the state retains and uses powers to influence what is published.

However, broadcasters and newspapers, some with foreign funding such as *The Sudan Mirror*, are active thanks to the Southern Sudan's President's commitment to "create space for the media to enjoy freedom".

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedures that were followed in conducting the study. The section answers two main questions: How was data collected or generated? How was it analyzed? In other words, it shows how results of the study were obtained by describing the steps that were involved in conducting the study.

This description will be useful for future readers to enable them to understand the study, particularly where replication may be desired.

3.0   Introduction

A content analysis of the *Sudan Mirror* was undertaken for the period January to December 2007. This methodology was chosen because of its suitability in studying records (in this case, past newspapers). The *Sudan Mirror* was chosen due to the fact that it covers Southern Sudan in its reporting. It is published in Nairobi, making access to past issues of the paper easier.

The units of analysis were various kinds of materials - news stories, op-eds, letters to the editor, features, editorials, illustrations/graphics/photos, book reviews and interviews. These were thoroughly studied to gauge their relevance to this study. Relevant stories did not necessarily have to mention Darfur in their headlines; treatment of the crisis in the body of the story qualified it for analysis.

Various aspects of relevant stories were measured and categorised for analysis i.e. role of the story or slant, type of story, source, size, placement on a page, frequency of relevant stories and use of photographs.

3.1 Content Analysis

Krippendorff defines content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use. By including the phrase "or other meaningful matter" in his definition, Krippendorff means that works of art, maps, images, sounds, signs, symbols and numerical records may be considered as text provided they speak to someone about phenomena outside of what can be sensed or observed. [67]

He notes that content analysis is an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent. [68]

Babbie states that content analysis is a social research method appropriate for studying and analyzing human communication.[69] Under this method researchers examine the content of written documents such as books, magazines, newspapers, letters, speeches, etc, and other communication channels such as motion pictures, radio or TV programmes, etc.

[67] Krippendorff, K. *Content analysis. An introduction to its Methodology*, 2nd ed., California: Sage, 2004 pp. 18 19

[68] *ibid.*, p. xviii

[69] Babbie, E., *The practice of social research*, 5th ed., California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1989, pp. 322 - 323

The advantages of this method of research is that it is unobtrusive or non reactive as it depends on analysis of documents instead of observing people's behaviour directly or asking them about it. Content analysis has no effect on the subject under study such as newspapers and other communications materials. This mode of observation is particularly well suited to the study of communication and to answering the classic question of communication research i.e. who says what to whom, why, how and with what effect? In addition, it allows for the study of processes occurring over long periods of time.

Nachmias indicates that content analysis is a method of data analysis as well as a method of observation in which the researcher obtains copies of communications that people have produced and asks questions about these records.[70]

This method of research is used to describe the contents of a message, to compare media, to study trends or changes in content of a medium over time or to analyse internal differences in communication content.

3.2   Sampling

Babbie defines sampling as the process of selecting observations.[71] In the study of communications it is often impossible to observe directly all individuals that the researcher is interested in under the study due to resource constraints such as

[70] Nachmias, C. F., *Research methods in the social sciences*, 5th ed., Worth Publishers, 1999
[71] Babbie, op. cit., p. 163

time, money and practicability. This is especially the case where the study population is large. Selection of a representative sample on which to base a study is the more realistic way of undertaking a research.

Mugenda and Mugenda define sampling as the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that individuals selected (the sample) represent the large group from which they are selected (the population).[72] Each member in the sample is referred to as a subject.

A representative sample is one that contains essentially the same variations that exist in the population and which therefore when studied provides useful descriptions of the total population.

In order to select a representative sample, the researcher must have a sampling frame i.e. a list of cases from which a sample is selected. A probability sampling technique is used to come up with this sample. These techniques include random sampling, simple random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling and cluster sampling. Probability sampling is the primary method for selecting a sample for Social Science research.

[72] Mugenda, O. & Mugenda A., *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1999. pp.10-11

The researcher selects the one among these probability sampling techniques that lends itself to selection of the most representative sample from his study population depending on the variations existing in the population.

However, for purposes of this study, a non-probability sampling method was used. The sample was not chosen in a random manner but was chosen through purposive sampling i.e. with a purpose in mind and that was to analyse treatment of the Darfur crisis in 2007 by a particular newspaper. The sample desired was specific and already known hence it was not necessary to undertake probability sampling.

The sample in this research is therefore the copies of *The Sudan Mirror* within the study period.

The Sudan Mirror is ideally published twice every month. The study period covered in this research is 12 months, a period selected as it was marked by intensified efforts in the search for a lasting solution to the Darfur crisis. It was therefore expected that the sample would be 24 newspapers. However, only 20 issues were published in that year.

Therefore, Sample = 20

This study did not lend itself to the use of probability sampling. The need to calculate sampling interval, sampling ratio and sample size was also eliminated since all instances of the newspaper published in 2007 were considered.

3.4   Data Collection

To meet the objectives of this study, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

The study used descriptive research design with the preferred data collection method being content analysis. Wikipedia (the online encyclopedia) indicates that descriptive research, also known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied. This type of research answers the questions *who, what, where, when* and *how*.[73]

Kothari says that descriptive research includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds.[74] He states that the major purpose of this research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at a particular time. Kothari goes on to say that the main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he/she can only report what has happened or what is happening.

[73] Retrieved December 10, 2008 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Descriptive_research
[74] Kothari, C.R., *Research methodology: methods and techniques*, New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 1990

News stories (both topical and business), features/analyses/reports, editorials, graphics (photos, cartoons, maps), Op-eds, letters to the editor, book reviews and interviews were read, measured and categorised for analysis and description.

The qualitative data collected formed the basis of the descriptive process of presenting the findings of the study. Quantitatively, measurement of the amount of space dedicated to the crisis and the frequency with which relevant stories appeared over the study period was taken as a measure of the importance *The Sudan Mirror* has attached to the crisis.

The following factors were looked at:

Frequency - the number of relevant articles and the number of times they were published

Story types – news stories, op-eds, letters to the editor, features, editorials, illustrations/graphics/photos, book reviews and interviews

Origin of the story – local or foreign or international sources

Placement and prominence –front page lead story, front page sub-story, inside lead story, inside sub story. The back page of the *Sudan Mirror* is dedicated exclusively to sports stories and did not carry any useful stories to the study

Story slant – awareness creation/sensitisation, push for a solution, provision of options towards ending the conflict, bias, etc

Space allocation for each story vis a vis the size of the whole page

3.5   Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data was analysed and presented graphically in the form of tables and charts. The qualitative data was analysed and presented in a narrative form.

Qualitative and quantitative was presented in prose form and using graphical illustrations such as graphs, charts and tables. Data was analysed using simple statistics e.g. percentages, means and frequencies.

3.6   Operationalisation of Terms

In this study, the following applied as definitions of the following concepts:

Lead story: this referred to the main story on any page of the newspaper so identified by its headline having the biggest font size of all other headlines.

Sub-story: this referred to any other story on the newspaper page, other than the lead story

Local story: this referred to a story on Darfur in the *Sudan Mirror* written by a staffer of the newspaper or another writer of Sudanese origin so identified through his/her name

Foreign story: this referred to a story on Darfur clearly identified as having been sourced from another African country other than Sudan

International story: this referred to a story on Darfur who's source was an international news agency e.g. BBC, Reuters, AFP, etc

Editorial: This referred to any article that expressed the opinion of the editor, editorial board, or publisher

Feature: This referred to an article in the newspaper that was not meant to report breaking news, but that took an in-depth look at the Darfur issue and that was significantly longer than the news stories

Op-Ed: This referred to an article placed on the same page as the editorial that expressed opinions on Darfur from a named writer who was unaffiliated with the newspaper's editorial board. Where such an analytical article was written either by the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper or by the Sudan Development Trust Director, it was treated as an editorial

Story slant: This referred to the tone adopted by the writer of a story or the purpose for which he/she wrote the story e.g. sensitisation/raising awareness, provision of solutions to the crisis/peace building, bias, etc

3.7   Potential threat to validity

Validity is an indication of how sound a research is. Validity in data collection means that your findings truly represent the phenomenon you are claiming to measure. Valid claims are solid claims.

The fact that only 20 of the initially expected 24 issues of the newspaper were studied due to factors beyond the control of the researcher as described elsewhere in this research document, denied the research the additional information that would have contributed to a more accurate description of the role of the *Sudan Mirror* in resolving the Darfur crisis.

However the difference between the expected sample size and the actual size studied is not big and did not overly affect the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents data gleaned from the study, presents the findings graphically using tables and various kinds of charts, and analyses the findings.

4.1 Introduction

A total of 20 issues of the *Sudan Mirror* published in 2007 were analysed. Table 1 details the sample analysed.

Table 4.1.1: Sample summary

Vol. No.	Issue No.	Date
4	8	Jan 15 – Jan 28, 2007
4	9	Feb 5 – Feb 18, 2007
4	10	Feb 19 – March 4, 2007
4	11	March 12 – March 25, 2007
4	12	March 26 – April 8, 2007
4	13	April 9 – April 22, 2007
4	14	April 23 – May 6, 2007
4	15	May 7 – May 20, 2007
4	16	May 21 – June 3, 2007
4	17	June 18 – July 1, 2007

4	18	July 16 – July 29, 2007
4	19	July 30 – August 12, 2007
4	20	August 20 – Sept 2, 2007
4	21	Sept 10 – Sept 23, 2007
4	22	Sept 24 – Oct 7, 2007
4	23	Oct 22 – Nov 4, 2007
4	24	Nov 5 – Nov 18, 2007
5	1	Nov 26 – Dec 9, 2007
5	2	Dec 9 – Dec 23, 2007
5	3	Dec 24, 2007 – Jan 6, 2008

Total number: 20

Whereas the *Sudan Mirror* should ideally be published every two weeks, this schedule is not strictly adhered to as shown in the table above. Delays of up to two weeks in between issues were noted in some cases resulting in 20 papers being published in 2007 instead of the expected 24.

For example, what should have been the first issue for 2007 (January 1st – 14th) was not published as this period coincided with the Christmas and New Year holiday thus delaying publication. The first issue of 2007 was therefore the issue

covering the dates January 15 – 28th. Between issue 16 (May 21 – June 3, 2007) and 17 (June 18 – July 1, 2007) is another two weeks.

It should be noted that although each newspaper volume ideally should have 24 issues, the first issue of the year is not necessarily numbered *Issue No. 1* but is a continuation from the last number published in the previous year.

The following section undertakes an analysis of various aspects of the newspaper's treatment of the Darfur crisis.

4.2 Overview of type of Stories/Material Analysed

The research looked at the following type of stories and material during the content analysis:

- News stories (both topical and business)
- Features/analyses/reports
- Editorials
- Graphics (photos, cartoons, maps)
- Op-eds
- Letters to the editor
- Book reviews

- Interviews

The study findings demonstrate that out of the 182 materials (stories and graphics) analysed for the study, 108 were various types of stories forming 59% of the total - news (topical and business), features, editorials, graphics (photos, cartoons and maps), Op-eds, letters to the editor, book reviews and interviews. The remaining 41% were various types of graphics – photos, cartoons and maps.

Overall, a total of 74 photographs were used with the various stories on the Darfur crisis. Some stories had up to two photographs or cartoons accompanying them; most had one photo while some had none. In one or two cases, maps were used to graphically illustrate various aspects of the crisis.

A total of 66 news stories (both topical and business) were carried in the newspaper. The topical news were carried in the main pages, while the business news were carried in the Business Review magazine published with each issue.

Feature articles formed 15% of the total 182 materials analysed. This brings their number to 28. Four (4) editorials were dedicated to issues surrounding the Darfur issue either directly or indirectly, forming 2% of the total number of material analysed for this study. Op-ed stories formed 3% of the total, bringing the total number of such stories to five (5) in total.

Letters to the editor, book reviews and interviews were the least used stories to push the agenda for peace in Darfur. Letters and reviews each formed 1% of the materials studied – two of each were published over the one year period; only one interview was carried in the 20 issues forming 1% of the total.

The table and chart below summarise the break down according to the above numbers and percentages.

Table 4.2.1: Overview of totals and percentages of material studied

Type of story/material	Frequency	Percentage
News	66	36
Features	28	15
Editorials	4	2
Graphics (photos/cartoons)	74	41
Op-ed	5	3
Letters to the editor	2	1
Book review	2	1
Interview	1	1
Grand total of number of items analysed	**182**	**100%**

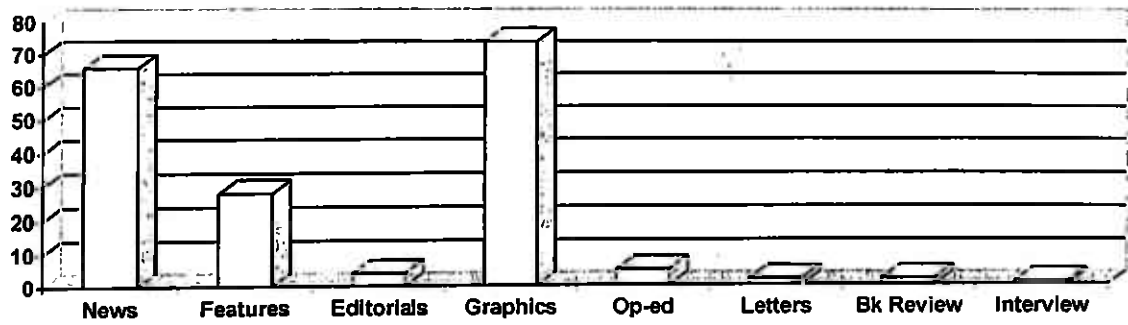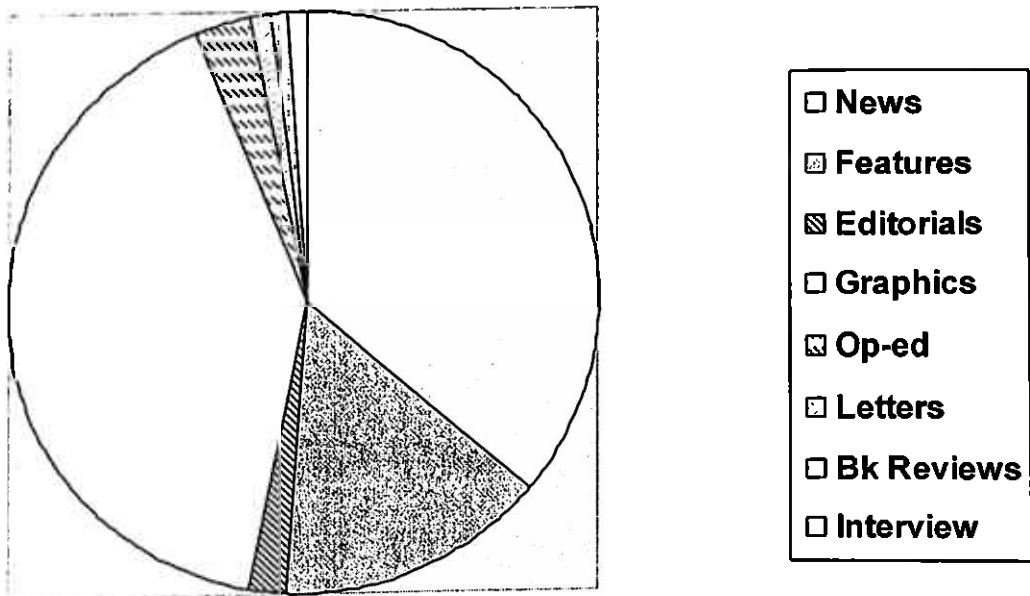**Chart 4.2.1 Totals of material studied**

Chart 4.2.2: Percentages of material studied

The above figures are the totals for relevant stories and graphics published from January to December 2007. The numbers in each issue varied from month to month as shown in Table 4.2.2 below:

There was an erratic variation in the number of relevant material on Darfur from issue to issue of the newspaper. From zero (0) stories and graphics in the first issue of January 2007, the numbers peaked at 19 in Issue 14, and dropped again to one (1) in the last issue of 2007.

Table 4.2.2 Number of relevant materials in each issue

Vol. No.	Issue No.	Date	Total no. of relevant materials (graphics, stories) per issue
4	8	Jan 15 – Jan 28, 2007	0
4	9	Feb 5 – Feb 18, 2007	9
4	10	Feb 19 – March 4, 2007	3
4	11	March 12 – March	6

		25, 2007	
4	12	March 26 – April 8, 2007	2
4	13	April 9 – April 22, 2007	16
4	14	April 23 – May 6, 2007	19
4	15	May 7 – May 20, 2007	12
4	16	May 21 – June 3, 2007	6
4	17	June 18 – July 1, 2007	12
4	18	July 16 – July 29, 2007	12
4	19	July 30 – August 12, 2007	11
4	20	August 20 – Sept 2, 2007	15
4	21	Sept 10 – Sept 23, 2007	15
4	22	Sept 24 – Oct 7, 2007	9

4	23	Oct 22 – Nov 4, 2007	11
4	24	Nov 5 – Nov 18, 2007	5
5	1	Nov 26 – Dec 9, 2007	8
5	2	Dec 9 – Dec 23, 2007	10
5	3	Dec 24, 2007 – Jan 6, 2008	1

Graphically this can be represented as shown in the chart below

Chart 4.2.3 Number of relevant materials in each issue
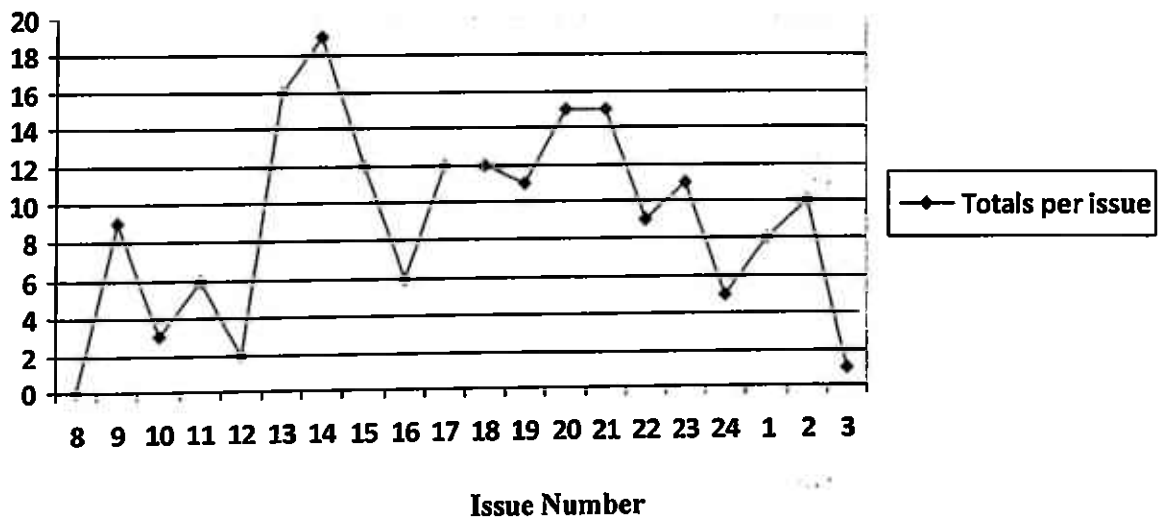
The large number of media material dedicated to Darfur demonstrates the importance the *Sudan Mirror* attached to efforts to resolve the crisis and to the human suffering and devastation resulting from it. The large numbers are also in line with the stepped up efforts to seek a solution to the crisis. It will be noted that 2007 formed a year when a lot of attention was directed at Darfur with efforts being stepped up to end the crisis. For example, Hollywood celebrities joined in the push for a solution as did the UN in passing a resolution to send a peacekeeping force to Darfur to support the lean AU force. In addition, various campaigners pushed for economic sanctions against the Sudan Government to pressure the President to act fast to end the crisis.

All this international, regional and national attention was adequately captured in the 20 issues analysed.

The variation noted in the number of materials on Darfur in each newspaper issue was dictated by other key issues happening in Sudan at the time of publication of the newspaper. The first issue of 2007 for example, recorded 0 (zero) materials focusing exclusively on the crisis. The focus of the issue was the second anniversary of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which is marked at the beginning of every year in Sudan. While issue 23 carried 11 relevant stories and graphics, its main focus was the crisis in the Sudan Government after the Government of South Sudan recalled its ministers from the Government of National Unity. At the same time there was a threat of a newed North-South war which would have had dire repercussions on resolving the Darfur crisis and Sudan as a whole. Nevertheless, even with the main focus lying elsewhere, in many cases Darfur was mentioned in the context of other issues at hand. For example, various articles on the implementation of the CPA noted that the Darfur conflict posed a problem to its implementation. This was because Darfur was not covered in the stipulations of the CPA.

Seasons also seem to have affected the number of materials published on the crisis – from the analysis, the lowest number published on Darfur was around Christmas/New Year when most people take their holidays. It can be assumed that the *Sudan Mirror* chose to focus on lighter issues as the year drew to a close or perhaps there were no new developments around the crisis as people such as campaigners went on holiday.

4.3   Analysis of Story Placement

Five Darfur stories made it to the front page of *Sudan Mirror* during the period under study. Two of these were lead stories, three of them were sub stories. The rest of the stories analysed were carried in the inside pages, with majority of them being lead inside stories at 73 out of the total 107 stories on Darfur (minus the graphics); the inside sub stories were 29 out of the 107. Many of these stories were accompanied by photographs – mostly one photo while a number of them two.

The back page of the paper is dedicated exclusively to sports news hence no story relevant to the study was published there.

The breakdown of placement of relevant stories is as follows:

Figure 4.3.1   **Summary of story placement in papers**

Placement of stories	Frequency	Percentages
Front page lead	2	2
Front page sub	3	3
Inside page lead	73	68
Inside page sub	29	27
Total	107	100%

Graphically this can be represented as shown in Chart 4.3.1

Chart 4.3.1 graphical representation of summary of story placement in papers
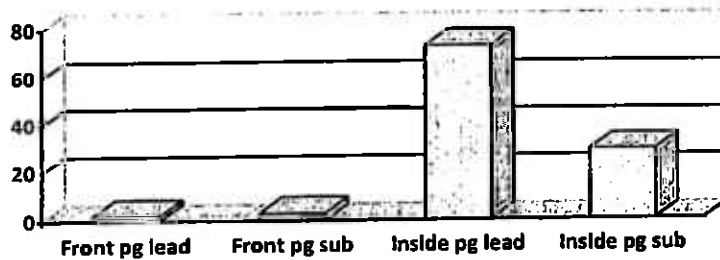
Not all stories made it to the front page due to other pressing national issues such as implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, corruption, the temporary withdrawal of the Government of South Sudan from the Government of National Unity, amassing of weapons in the North and South, among others.

The importance of an issue is not only demonstrated by its appearance on the front page; its assumption of the lead space in other pages in the paper is another indication of how it is regarded by the editors. Majority of the stories on Darfur in the inside pages were lead stories at 68% of all stories analysed while 27% of the stories were carried as inside sub-stories. Two (2) stories made it as front page lead stories and three (3) as front page sub stories. The back page is considered a prominent page in the paper. However no story on Darfur was carried on this page as it is dedicated exclusively to southern Sudan sports news.

This prominent placement of most stories demonstrates again the importance attached by the paper's editorial team to the Darfur crisis and to efforts towards its resolution. This rank in importance of Darfur to the team can be considered to demonstrate the paper's own position on the issue and further tells the public how the editorial team views the world and what they feel about the goings on. Going by this it is safe to conclude that the *Sudan Mirror* takes issues of the crisis very seriously and support efforts to address it. This prominent placement of stories has helped to keep Darfur issues on the public's agenda by pointing out to readers the important issues.

4.4   Analysis of Story Sources

Most of these stories were from local sources, that is, they were written by a staffer of the newspaper or another writer that is a Sudanese national. In total, 56 of the sources were local.

Fifty five (55) stories were from international sources, that is, global news agencies e.g. BBC, Reuters, AFP, etc.

The difference between the number of stories with local and international sources was therefore minimal.

Only four (4) of the stories or 3% had foreign sources, defined for purposes of this study as sources from another African country other than Sudan.

It should be noted that some stories had more than one source, that is, written by a local source and boosted with information from a wire source. Consequently, the total number of sources (115) exceeds the total number of stories (107).

Graphically, the analysis of story sources can be represented as shown below:

Table 4.4.1 Totals and percentages of story sources

Story Source	Frequency	Percentage
Local	56	49
Foreign	4	3
International	55	48
Grand Total	115	100%

Chart 4.4.1 Percentages according to story sources
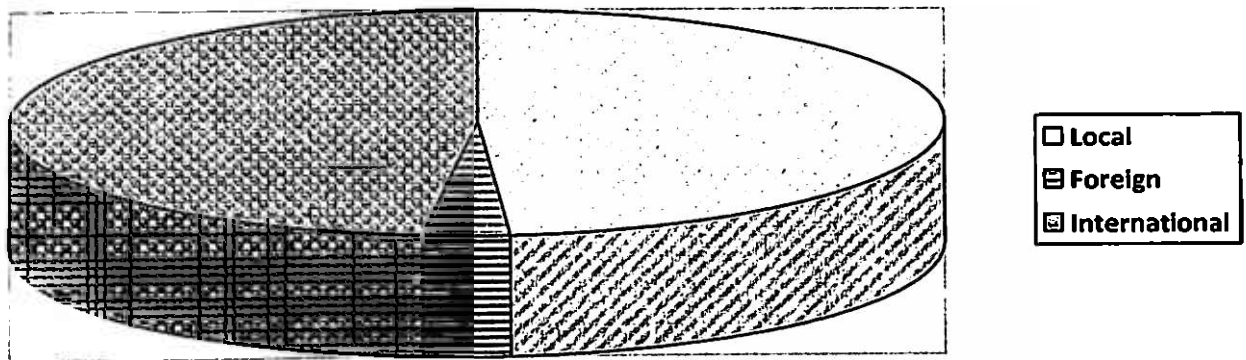
The almost equal attention given to the Darfur crisis demonstrates that the gravity of the conflict was appreciated almost equally locally and internationally, drawing near equal concern and attention from Sudanese nationals and the *Sudan Mirror* on the one hand, and the international community on the other. This attests to the fact this study presented at the outset, that 2007 was a year when the crisis drew a lot of attention globally.

4.5 Analysis of role of stories studied

The major roles of the stories analysed were mainly two – sensitisation or raising the awareness of the public on developments around the crisis, and advocating, pushing or urging for a solution.

During the study, 105 instances of the sensitisation role were recorded, while in 87 instances it was noted that stories served the purpose of pushing for a solution. Table 4.5.1 summarises this breakdown.

Table 4.5.1 Totals and percentages based on roles played by stories

Role played by stories	Frequency	Percentage
Sensitisation	105	55
Urge/push for a solution	87	45
Total	192	100%

Graphically, the break down in the roles played by the *Sudan Mirror* in its stories on Darfur can be presented in the chart below:

Chart 4.5.2 graphical representation of frequency according to role
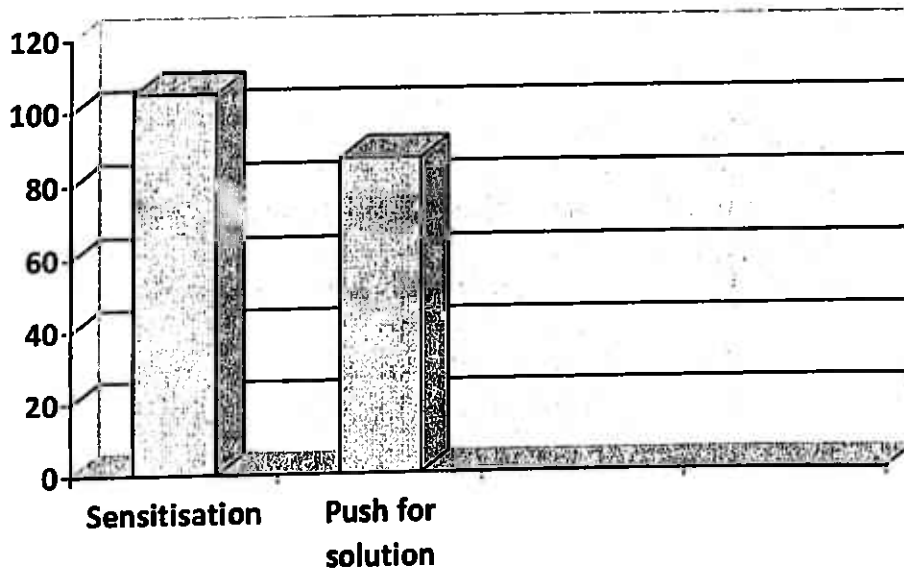
Some stories while not overtly pushing for a solution, raised awareness about developments in Darfur. This sensitisation role has the potential of mobilising the international community to pay attention to the crisis and to demand an end to it. By giving constant updates on the Darfur crisis, the newspaper serves the role of keeping it on the public's agenda, a useful strategy in efforts to bring conflicts to an end.

Not all articles mentioning Darfur of necessity described the causes and suffering of those in the crisis; a number merely gave updates on the situation in the region or gave a brief mention of Darfur in the larger Sudan context e.g. its impact in the implementation of the CPA, etc.

Some of the articles by describing the atrocities in the region and suffering of the people make a strong case for a solution to be sought on the Darfur crisis. Other stories promoted efforts towards a solution by highlighting global efforts and calls being made towards this.

Some stories played the dual role of raising awareness on the situation and calling for an end to the conflict, explaining why the totals in table 4.5.1 exceed the total number of stories analysed as shown in Table 4.1.1.

A story was deemed to have played a sensitisation role if its chief function was to give an update on the Darfur crisis by reporting on the prevailing situation and

new developments on the ground e.g. the story on mobile education introduced in Darfur or the story on Darfur topping the list of failed states.

A story was deemed to push for a solution when it reported on the actions of or calls by individuals or bodies or movements pushing for a solution. This push was sometimes overt e.g. in the story *End Darfur Hostilities* or implied e.g. in the story *Sanctions Heat Engulfs Sudan*.

From the foregoing it is therefore clear that majority of the stories served to sensitise, raise awareness and update readers about developments on the crisis with 105 such cases being identified from the 108 stories published. The role of urging or pushing for a solution to the crisis was noted in 87 instances.

It should be noted that a story could play both roles at the same time, and that while it was possible for a story to raise awareness about relevant issues, it did not necessarily play the role of pushing for a solution. For example, the story on one of the rebel leaders being hospitalised or being released from hospital gave an update on issues around the crisis but did not play any role in urging for a solution. Hence there were more instances of raising awareness than there were of urging for a solution.

While more cases were identified of sensitisation of readers than of a push for a solution, it should be noted that continuous awareness raising among the public on a crisis keeps it on the agenda and results in increased calls for action to end

the conflict. Sensitisation can therefore indirectly result in the solution of a conflict by influencing opinions and decisions on the crisis.

4.6   Analysis of Size of Stories

Relevant stories varied in size from those that ran for more than one full page, to small pieces of up to 1/12 of a page. Many stories were accompanied by one photo, a few by more than one.

The table below demonstrates an analysis of story sizes based on two ranges:

Table 4.6.1 Story sizes

Story size range	Frequency	Percentage
¼ page – full page	103	94
< ¼ page	7	6
Total	**110**	**100%**

The range of ¼ to 1 full page and those less than ¼ page were chosen due to the wide range of story sizes encountered in the course of analysing the stories. It was therefore necessary to use a few manageable ranges to group the various sizes together for easier analysis.

The below chart graphically demonstrates this breakdown:

Chart 4.6.1 percentages according to story size
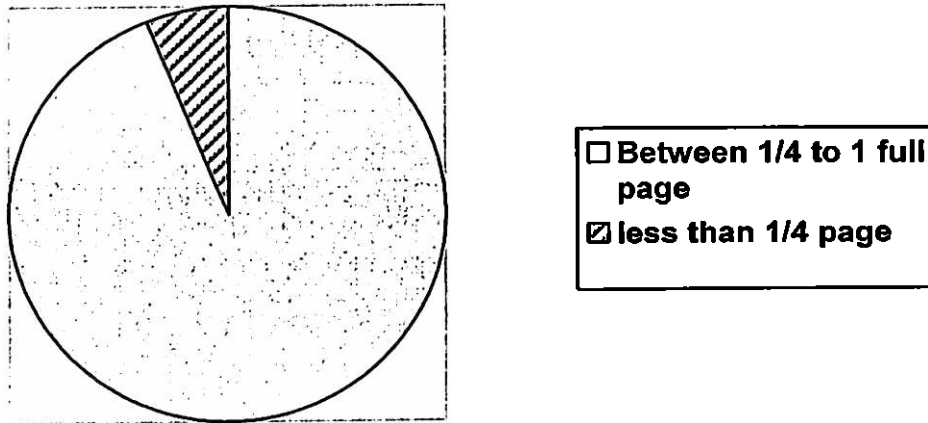
The page sizes were counted in terms of each page on which a story on Darfur featured so that where a story flowed to more than one page, each page was counted independently thus bringing the total number of pages counted to more than the number of stories analysed. E.g. the story *Verdict of the International Citizens' Tribunal for Sudan* was published over one full page and a 1/3 of the next. When counting the page size, the two sizes were counted independently of each other and recorded as such.

The amount of space allocated to an issue is an indication of the level of importance attached to it by the editor.

A huge proportion of the stories analysed (94%) were carried on between a quarter page and above, sometimes running to more than one full page per story.

Nevertheless, small stories were still viewed as playing a role hence those as small as 1/12 of a page were analysed as well. Only 4% were carried on less than a quarter page.

This space allocation clearly demonstrates that the newspaper regarded the Darfur crisis as a serious issue given the space majority of the stories were allocated. The amount of space allocated to stories on the crisis was consistent with the attention that the crisis received in 2007.

4.7   Analysis of use of graphics

Out of the 108 stories analysed, 63 or 58% were accompanied by one or more photos, cartoons or other graphic. This figure represents over half the total number of stories analysed. Forty five stories or 42% were not illustrated as shown in the below table and chart.

Table 4.7.1: Breakdown by frequency and percentages of use of graphics

	Frequency	Percentage
Stories accompanied by photos	63	58
Stories not accompanied by photos	45	42
Total	108	100%

Chart 4.7.1 Frequency of use of graphics
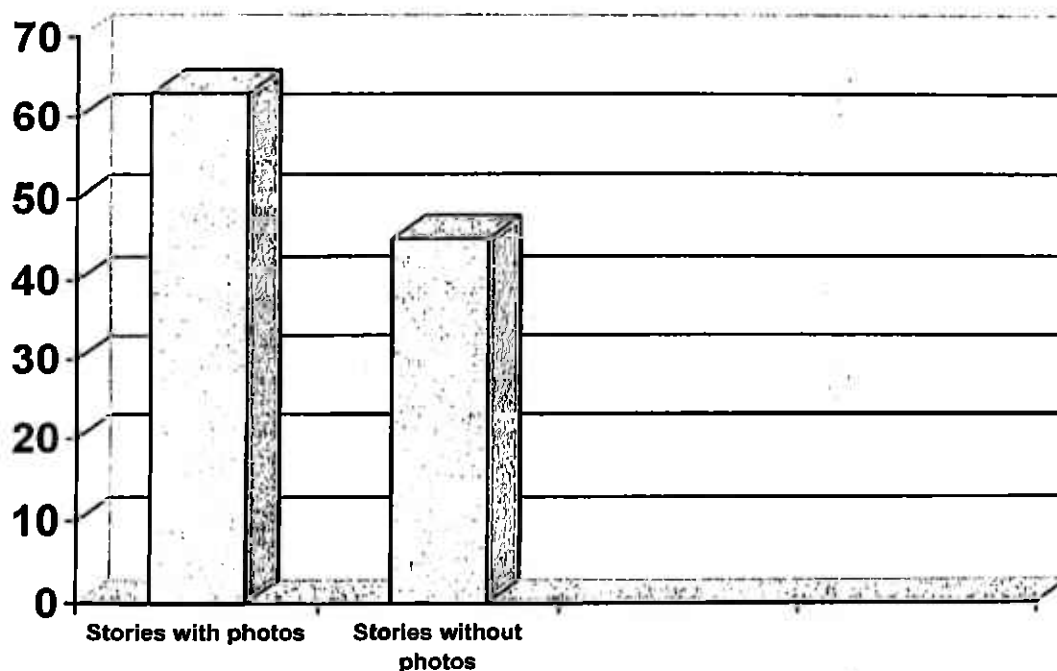
A total of 74 graphics were used with the various stories i.e. photographs, cartoons and maps. Majority of these served a sensitisation role. Others in showing the devastation in Darfur as a result of the crisis, play the role of urging for a solution.

Photos emphasised the role of the stories they accompanied so that if a story's major role was to urge for a solution, an accompanying photo emphasised that e.g. by depicting the atrocities and human suffering in the region which would intensify calls for a solution.

Editors use photos with strong visual images to not only illustrate the story but also to lay emphasis on important aspects of the story e.g. the devastation in Darfur. The use of graphics on a story may also demonstrate the importance attached to it. Photographs formed 41% of the material on Darfur analysed for this study. Their use on 58% of the stories is an indication that Darfur was taken seriously by the *Sudan Mirror* newspaper.

The graphics further served to draw readers' attention to the stories they accompanied.

Some stories were accompanied by more than one photo or cartoon and a few by maps. This heavy reliance on graphics to pass the message, demonstrates the fact that the *Sudan Mirror* recognises the important role played by photos, cartoons, maps and other graphics to lay emphasis on an issue, since, as the saying goes, a picture speaks a thousand words.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the study, including whether or not hypotheses were proved right. At the end it provides key recommendations for consideration by the media itself and conflict mediators.

5.1 Summary of Findings

In this research, a total of 182 items were analysed. These comprised various types of stories (news, features, editorials, op-eds, letters to the editor, books reviews and interviews) and graphics (photos, cartoons and maps).

Majority of the stories on Darfur (70%) were used as lead stories either on the cover page or the inside pages. This prominent placement demonstrated that the management of the *Sudan Mirror* newspaper attached high importance to the Darfur crisis and efforts to resolve it. Consequently, the newspaper continued to keep the issue of Darfur on the public's agenda by carrying a large number of stories on it prominently in the paper.

Darfur received almost equal attention from local and international media outlets with 48% of the stories being from local sources and 49% from international media. It can thus be concluded that the *Sudan Mirror* newspaper, in addition to other media in the region and internationally, continue to play a vital role in

raising awareness about the conflict and supporting efforts to resolve it by reporting on various aspects of and developments around the crisis.

The study noted that the major role played by the *Sudan Mirror* on Darfur was to create awareness about the crisis, consequently sustaining the public's attention on it. This had the potential of mobilising the public to make demands for its resolution. Indeed, a number of lobby groups and individuals such as the Save Darfur Coalition, George Clooney, Dan Cheadle, Mia Farrow, among others were reported in the paper as leading campaigns at the global level to end the crisis. Although the relation between media reports and the emergence of these campaigns could not be established in this study, it can safely be assumed that these individuals and groups got to know about the Darfur conflict through media reports such as those of the *Sudan Mirror*.

In addition to the sensitisation role, the paper provided a forum through which various voices calling for and efforts towards a resolution could be heard.

With 94% of the stories allocated space from a quarter page and above, the newspaper demonstrated that the Darfur crisis is regarded as a serious issue requiring attention and support in the search for a solution. It was thus allocated sufficient space through which related issues were articulated.

Over half of all story items analysed were accompanied by graphics – photos, maps or cartoons to emphasise whatever role the various stories were playing i.e.

either sensitisation and awareness creation or supporting the efforts in the search for a solution. The allocation of a graphic to any story demonstrates that it is regarded highly and taken seriously by the newspaper editor. The graphics draw attention to stories they accompanied and laid extra emphasis to key messages being conveyed.

5.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings in Chapter Four of this study demonstrate that the media have a crucial role to play in conflict resolution.

By constantly focusing on the Darfur crisis, the *Sudan Mirror* kept related issues on the public's agenda. It is by being bombarded continuously by stories and pictures of injustices visited on victims and by information on the willingness or lack thereof by the Government to resolve the conflict that the public can be said to have been encouraged to make calls for its resolution. Although this could not be established empirically as it was outside the scope of the study, it is an assumption that can be made safely in light of the researcher's knowledge of the power of the media to influence.

The *Sudan Mirror* therefore had an important conflict de-escalation role to play by supporting efforts to resolve the conflict by providing a forum through which related issues could be regularly deliberated at length.

It is evident that the paper remains strongly against the prolonged crisis and is clearly supportive of initiatives both within the country and outside aimed at ending the conflict.

The *Sudan Mirror* provided constant coverage of the violence, human suffering, its root causes and resolution efforts, and gave the conflict a human face by highlighting the plight of internally displaced persons and refugees. The paper especially in its editorials and in the feature articles that allowed in-depth analysis and commentary condemned the gravity of the situation and the fact that the crisis was unnecessarily drawn out and needed a quick solution. Although not all the features carried were written by the newspaper staff, the fact that the editors published hard-hitting pieces against perpetrators of the violence demonstrates their support for the many voices calling for an end to the blood shed. By so doing it applied pressure on the Sudan Government to do something thus making its contribution to the de-escalation and resolution of the crisis.

The newspaper accorded the problem the attention it deserved and acted more than a mere reporter of goings on. More importantly it showed the way forward.

The paper practised conflict sensitive journalism adequately by highlighting the violence, human rights abuses, the tragedy and calamity and assisted in healing and putting things right by reporting on efforts in this area. As Gathara puts it in

his article appearing in the *Sudan Mirror* itself, the media should play this role as part of service journalism for the promotion of humanity. [75]

These findings demonstrate that the first hypothesis of this study is correct i.e. "The media, by playing its moral and social responsibility role, can contribute to conflict resolution".

The newspaper went beyond being a mere observer and reporter of events to taking a stand on the problem as demonstrated in editorials on Darfur published during the study period. Indeed, rather than fuel the crisis through irresponsible and biased reporting, the *Sudan Mirror* has established itself as a crucial ally that mediators in the conflict can rely on for support in the resolution process. Indeed parties involved in the search for peace can use the paper as a mouth piece through which to push the peace agenda among its readers.

This being a descriptive study, it was difficult to prove *empirically* the second hypothesis i.e. "The media, by paying attention to a conflict, has the effect of establishing it on the public's agenda, resulting in stepped up efforts in the search for a solution to the crisis." That is, while it is true that media focus on an issue builds up hype around it, it was not possible to prove *scientifically* that the reporting by *Sudan Mirror* resulted in increased efforts to resolve it. This can only be inferred based on observations made. This is because the sole methodology employed in this research was one of content analysis. Content

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[75] Gathara, N. (2007, April 9 – April 22). Let us promote service journalism for humanity. *Sudan Mirror*, p. 7

analysis is a type of descriptive research that sets out to answer the questions who, what, when, where, why and how. Despite the fact that data description arising out of content analysis is factual, accurate and systematic, being a descriptive research it cannot be used to conclusively determine a *causal relationship* in which one variable affects another.

To determine whether the attention given to the Darfur crisis by the media resulted in increased calls for its resolution would have required the use of the survey research method among the newspaper readers. However due to constraints of time and resources it was not possible to adopt both content analysis and survey research methods. It is therefore, recommended that a future study be done to prove or disapprove the assumption that a direct correlation exists between media coverage and apparent action to end a conflict.

This study however recommends that all media houses in Africa add a conflict resolution and service journalism component in their reporting by practising conflict sensitive journalism. In this way, they will contribute immensely to the resolution of conflicts on the continent by lending support to ongoing efforts on the same.

Further, in their efforts to resolve conflicts, conflict mediators should tap into the media's latent power to bring change due to their wide reach. They are advised to make conscious efforts to utilise them as important partners in the search for peace. This strategy of using the media as part of resolving crises can be made a part of any policies crafted to guide conflict resolution.

The objective of this study was achieved. It examined the role of the local Sudan media in conflict situations, paying particular attention to the role of the *Sudan Mirror* newspaper in the search for peace in Darfur between January and December 2007. Through this study, the researchers has quantitatively and qualitatively analysed and described coverage of the Darfur crisis by the newspaper. By so doing, a determination has been arrived at on the extent to which the *Sudan Mirror* is contributing and continues to contribute to the ongoing conflict resolution process in Darfur. At no time did the newspaper contribute to the escalation of the crisis, but instead made all effort to see to it that the drawn out problem is resolved once and for all.

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