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The Media as a Non-State Actor in International Relations:
A case study of the *New York Times*' coverage of the Darfur conflict in 2004.

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Abstract:

The media's role is to disseminate accurate and objective information about particular phenomena but the media itself is rarely an objective institution. In international relations, the media exists as a non-state actor, able to exert power through its representation, reinforcement and the possibility to challenge the narrative of a particular conflict or intervention. The hypothesis of this paper is that the media does not play the role of neutral observer in a conflict. Using the *New York Times*' coverage at the start of the Darfur conflict in 2004 as a case study, this paper discusses how the newspaper reported on the conflict, exploring how the description of the conflict, its root cause and actors involved, as created by the coverage as well as the calls for international intervention demonstrates the role of the media as a non-state actor. Using discourse analysis and discussing power and representation through language and framing, it links international relations theory with that of media theory to show how the media is situated within discourse, where it creates and recreates historical representation. This paper suggests that through a more nuanced description of the Darfur conflict and subsequent intervention and more interrogation of the accepted narrative, the media could have created a richer contribution to the existing discourse on the Darfur conflict specifically and conflict in general.