

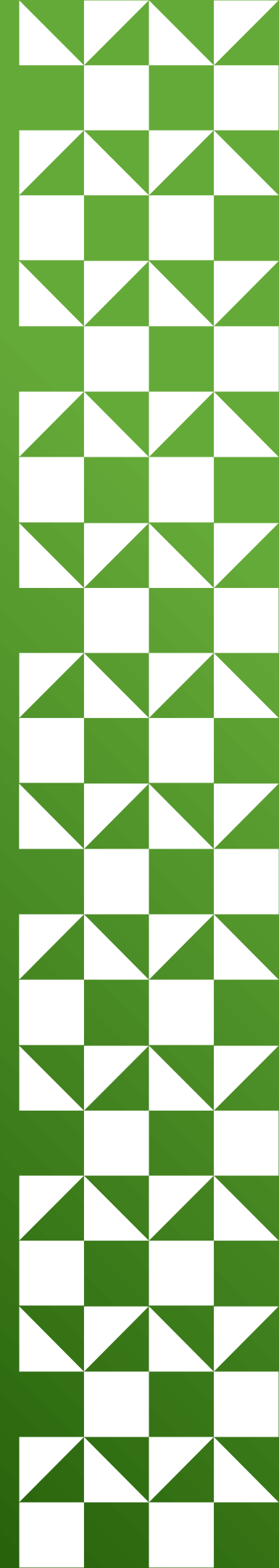


Senior
Independent
Study

Who Controls The Crisis?

**A Framing Analysis Of Western And Non-Western News Coverage
Of The Sudan Crisis From 2023 to 2025**

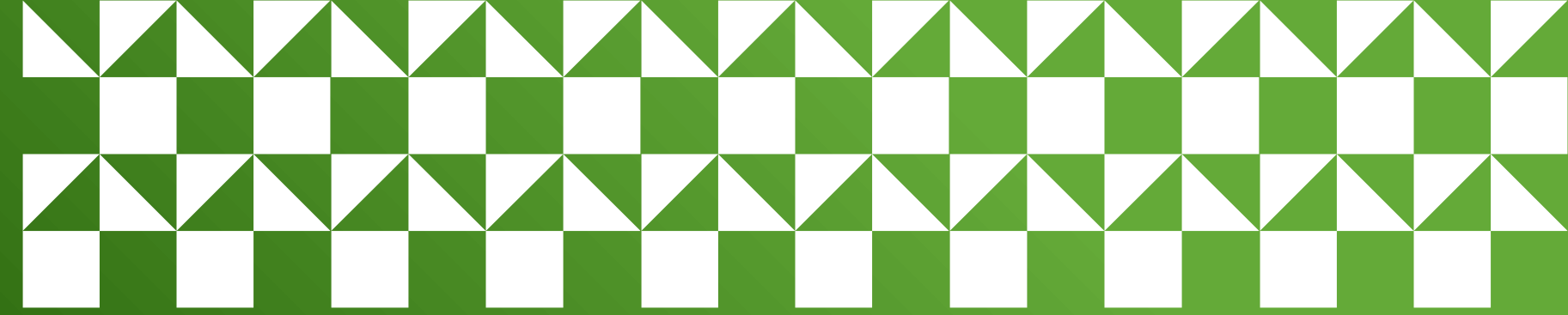
Seyram Essey | The College of Wooster | 2026



Why Does Media Coverage of Sudan Matter?

- Despite being the world's largest humanitarian crisis, Sudan received far less international media attention than comparable crises elsewhere.
- This study asks: how did the media that covered it choose to tell the story, and whose version of events shaped global understanding?

Background



50 million+ people in Sudan have been affected



Number 1 largest displacement crisis in the world



4 million+ facing famine

Methodology

The Research: What and How



80 articles collected

40 articles analyzed

14 images analyzed

2 key time windows

Time Windows: June 19 to 25, 2023 (UN Crisis Declaration) | August 1 to 8, 2024 (UNICEF Famine Confirmation)

Entman's Framing Theory

How news media
select and
emphasize
certain aspects
of reality

01

Problem Definition: What is being identified as the issue? In Sudan: mass civilian suffering, famine, displacement

02

Causal Interpretation: Who or what caused the problem?
In Sudan: the SAF and RSF power struggle

03

Moral Evaluation: Who is good, who is bad?
In Sudan: civilians = innocent; armed groups = villains

04

Treatment Recommendation: What should be done?
In Sudan: ceasefires, funding, accountability

Textual Findings

What Did The Words Reveal?

CNN

Extends villain frame internationally, reports UAE 'support and complicity' in genocide at World Court. Emphasizes legal accountability, sanctions, investigations.

BBC

Strongest use of personal testimony, survivors speak directly. Frames sexual violence as a weapon of war. Most emotional and intimate of all four outlets.

Al-Jazeera

Uses explicit moral language: genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing. Frames civilians as abandoned by both government and international actors.

Anadolu Agency

Relies heavily on statistics and official data. Uniquely emphasizes Turkish humanitarian organizations (IHH). Constructs Sudan as a large-scale emergency requiring global response.

ALL 4 OUTLETS AGREE: Civilians = victims · SAF & RSF = villains · International actors = overwhelmed responders · Government = absent

Fiske's Three-Level Semiotic Model

How images
construct
meaning — from
what we see to
what we are
made to believe

01

Reality: What is literally in
the image?

02

Representation: How is it
shown? (camera angle,
lighting, composition)

03

Ideology: What does it make
us believe?

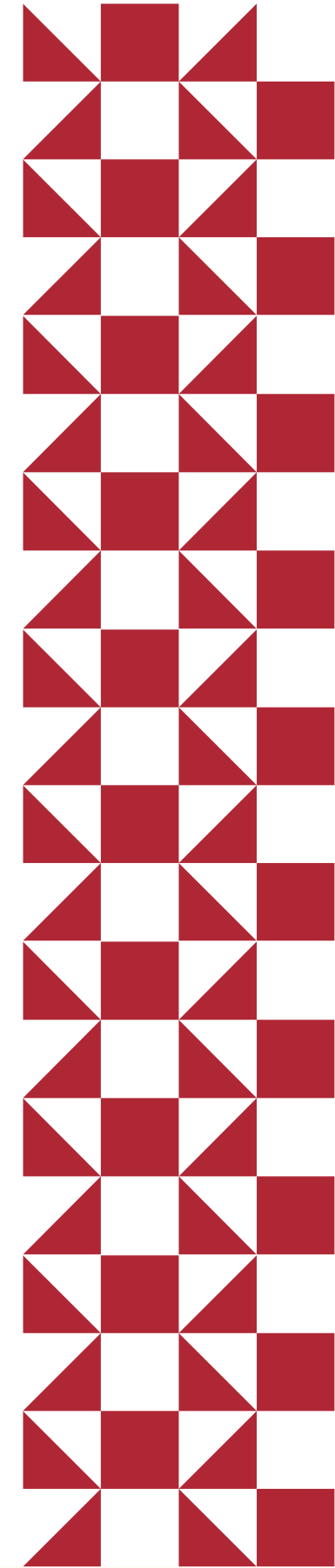
What Did The Images Reveal?

Western: BBC & CNN

- Named individuals: Kueaa Darhok, Hawa Salim are the focal point
- Close-up and medium shots create emotional intimacy
- Viewer feels personally connected to individual victims
- Crisis is personalized: the viewer sees one face, one story

Non-Western: Al-Jazeera & Anadolu

- Maps, long shots, and urban destruction dominate the imagery
- Civilians appear small within large landscapes, emphasizing scale
- Displacement shown as numbers and arrows rather than faces
- Crisis is territorial: the viewer sees a country, not an individual



KEY FINDING: Armed actors dominate the text, but are almost ABSENT from the images

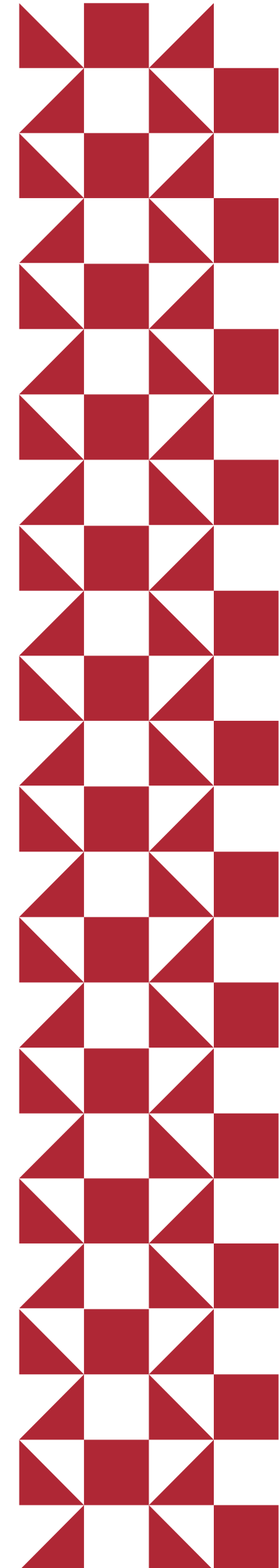
EXAMPLES



“This may be the only meal these children get for a day” (Usher, 2025a)
-CNN



A Sudanese soldier atop a vehicle after the army's recapture of an oil refinery in Khartoum North [File: Reuters] (Al Jazeera, 2025a)



Conclusions

What All This Means

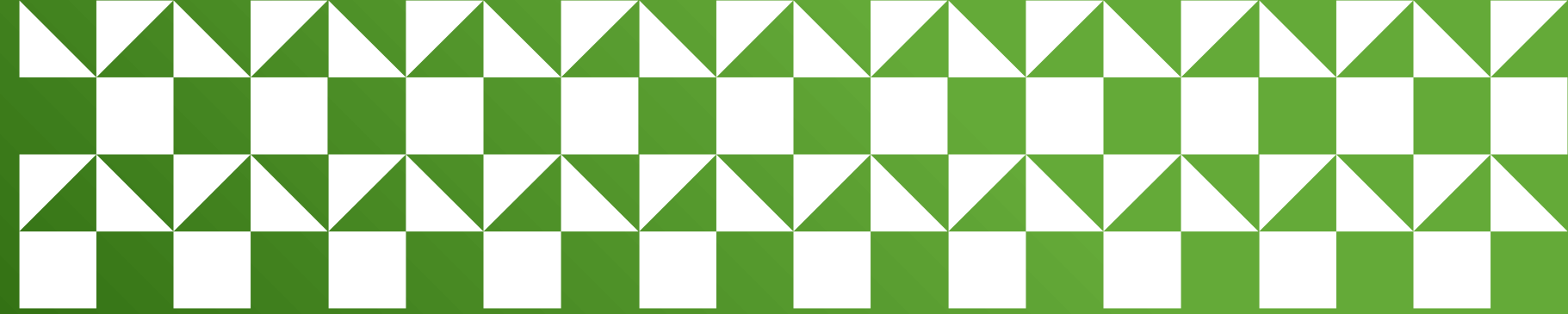


- Victimhood is a global visual convention
- How you tell the story matters as much as what you say
- Implied does not equal explicit
- Media framing is not neutral; it distributes power

Implications & Limitations

So What? What Could Be Better?

- Implications: Balance suffering with resilience. Name accountability explicitly. Diversify visuals. Make solutions concrete
- Limitations: Lack of Sudanese-owned media. Focused on English-only channels.



**Thank
You**

