



# Sudan Famine Crisis in International Media

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## Abstract

The Sudan crisis is an important topic that reflects global humanitarian challenges, yet there is a gap in the literature regarding media representations of this issue. This study aims to uncover how two media outlets, royanews.tv and Aljazeera, portray the famine crisis in Sudan, with a focus on the role of the United States and its geopolitical impact. The method used is a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collection techniques through text analysis of two news reports. The main findings show that the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions by using attention-grabbing terms such as "humanitarian catastrophe." The resulting discourse reflects power relations, where media narratives can benefit or harm certain actors in the existing political context. In addition, there are hidden ideologies in the use of language that support or challenge power, in line with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory. The conclusion of this study confirms that language in media discourse not only shapes public perception, but also reflects and maintains power relations, and influences social and political narratives. This research demonstrates the important role of the media in international responses to humanitarian crises.

**Keywords:** *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fairclough, Famine Crisis in Sudan, Media*

## Introduction

The role of the media in public life has undergone a fundamental transformation over the past two decades, paralleling the evolution of the media landscape itself. Today, 'media' transcends a mere collection of diverse communication modes governed by journalistic principles; it has become an almost monolithic, computer-controlled infrastructure that shapes much of the world's symbolic activity (Hunt, 2021). This shift is particularly significant in the context of humanitarian crises, where media representation plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and influencing international response.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan has garnered global attention, particularly concerning the devastating impact of prolonged conflict on hunger and food insecurity. Recent media reports underscore this dire situation. For instance, Royanews.tv's article titled "More than 25 million Sudanese suffer from hunger," published on September 26, 2024, highlights the staggering number of individuals facing hunger. Similarly, Al-Jazeera's article "Millions will starve if Sudan's war doesn't end," published on August 30, 2024, warns of the potential for widespread famine if the conflict persists. These reports illustrate the urgent need for a critical examination of how such crises are represented in the media.

In this context, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerges as a pertinent framework for investigating media narratives surrounding the Sudan crisis. CDA allows for an exploration of how language is employed to construct public understanding and shape perceptions of the situation. As Norman Fairclough, a key figure in CDA theory, posits, discourse is not merely a reflection of reality; it actively participates in constructing and reproducing social realities (Fairclough, 2015). Thus, media coverage of Sudan not only conveys information but also plays a significant role in framing the crisis, revealing the intricate interplay of power and ideology.

With regard to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research, there are several studies that have discussed it, including in the political and social context, research covers religious and political discourse in ISN Friday sermons in the Netherlands (Gürlesin, 2023) natural gas development in China's five-year plan (Zhou & Qin, 2020), moral and legal status of volunteer translators in Chinese media (Wu, 2020), Chinese identity in handling COVID-19 (Pan & Yao, 2023), and narratives of rural displacement due to COVID-19 in Austrian media (Schorn et al., 2024). Meanwhile, in the fields of education and language, research includes the limits of verbal behavior in schools (Downes et al., 2021), the use of taboo language by teachers (Downes, 2022), plagiarism policies at universities (Merkel, 2021) and the professional identity of student midwives (Mcluckie & Kuipers, 2024).

In health, there is research on cross-sector meetings between mental health professionals (Jørgensen et al., 2022) nurse advocacy towards elderly patients (Jørgensen et al., 2022) dementia-related awareness (Hansen et al., 2021) and social isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic (Sundberg et al., 2023). Finally, in mobility and public services, studies include the everyday politics of mobility related to car and bicycle use (Egan & Caulfield, 2024), as well as discourses of care in bilingual library services (Frye & Hasler-Barker, 2024).

Based on the preliminary study above, this research has similarities and differences with the preliminary study above. The similarity lies in the theme, namely Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Meanwhile, the difference lies in the object under study. In the fields of politics, education, health, social media, CDA is used to analyze how language shows power, policy, and identity. For example, Gürlesin (2023) shows how national and religious identities strengthen political power and minority communities in the Netherlands, while Zhou and Qin (2020) examine energy policy in China as a tool of state legitimacy. In education, Downes et al. (2021) examine language barriers in schools. In health, research by Jørgensen et al. (2022) reviewed mental health discourse, and Kim and Chang (2024) explored patient rights advocacy in nursing homes. In social media, highlighting how the COVID-19 pandemic shaped discourses on fear, hope, and national identity in the media, as discussed by Pan and Yao (2023).

This research falls within the realm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough. Its main focus is on how language, especially in mass media, is used to reproduce or challenge power and social inequality. This research uses two news articles, namely from Royanews.tv entitled "More than 25 million Sudanese suffer from hunger" and from Al-Jazeera entitled "Millions will starve if Sudan's war doesn't end", as case studies to analyze how media discourse shapes public perceptions of the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Using the CDA approach, this research seeks to show how the language used in these media reports not only describes reality, but also reflects and influences global power structures and international responsibility in addressing humanitarian issues.

This research aims to analyze several important aspects. First, this research will analyze the media discourse used in the two reports, focusing on how language shapes perceptions of the famine crisis in Sudan. Second, this research seeks to uncover the power relations reflected in the media discourse, especially in relation to the actors involved in the conflict as well as the narratives that support or challenge existing social and political structures. Third, this research aims to identify hidden ideologies that may lie behind the use of language in these media reports, in accordance with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theory that views language as a tool of power and ideology. Finally, this research will evaluate the influence of the discourse conveyed by the media on social actions and international policies related to the famine and conflict crisis in Sudan, especially in the context of global humanitarian considerations.

While previous studies have applied CDA in various contexts, including political and social discourse, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific representation of humanitarian crises in the media. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a focused analysis of how media narratives shape public understanding of the Sudan crisis, thereby contributing to

the broader discourse on media representation and its implications for humanitarian action.

### **Method**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze how representations, relations, and identities related to the Sudan crisis are conveyed in two news articles from royanews.tv and Al Jazeera, using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The articles chosen were "More than 25 million Sudanese suffer from hunger," published on September 26, 2024 by royanews.tv, and "Millions will starve if Sudan war doesn't end," published on August 30, 2024 by Al Jazeera. These sources were chosen for their relevance to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and their potential to illustrate the role of the United States and the international community in the narrative.

Data collection involved a document study focusing on the selected articles, supplemented by relevant literature on CDA and previous discourse analysis studies. Analysis followed three stages as outlined by Fairclough: Description, which involves linguistic analysis of the text; Interpretation, relating language to the socio-political context; and Explanation, examining how discourse reproduces social structures and power dynamics. This structured approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the media's representation of the crisis.

To ensure reliability and validity, the study utilized triangulation by cross-verifying the findings with existing literature and conducting peer review to reduce bias. Language translation issues were minimized by analyzing the original text in English, and any ambiguities were clarified by using additional context from secondary sources. Through these methodological steps, this study aims to provide insight into how the Sudanese crisis is represented in the media, highlighting the interplay between language, power, and social structures in humanitarian discourse.

## Result

### News 1 Aljazeera

Table 1. News 1 (Aljazeera)

NO	Data findings (Aljazeera)
1	إن نحو 150 ألف شخص قُتلوا، كما تراكمت الجثث في مقابر مؤقتة يمكن رؤيتها من الفضاء". About 150,000 people died, and bodies were piled up in makeshift graves that could be seen from space.
2	أجبر أكثر من 10 ملايين شخص -أي خمس سكان البلاد- على الفرار من منازلهم". More than 10 million people-about a fifth of the country's population-were forced to flee their homes.
3	"ويقدر البعض أن 2.5 مليون مدني قد يموتون بحلول نهاية العام". It is estimated that 2.5 million civilians could die by the end of this year.
4	الأمم المتحدة عاجزة، والعنف سيؤدي إلى زعزعة استقرار الدول المجاورة". The UN is powerless, and this violence will cause instability in neighboring countries.
5	"يتهم الجانبان الجيش السوداني وقوات الدعم السريع بارتكاب جرائم خطيرة ضد المدنيين". Both sides, the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, are accused of serious crimes against civilians.
6	وصفت ما يحدث في السودان بأنه 'أسوأ' أزمة إنسانية في العالم". What is happening in Sudan has been described as "the world's worst humanitarian crisis."
7	السودان قنبلة جيوسياسية موقوتة تهدد بنشر الفوضى خارج حدود ثالث أكبر دولة أفريقية". Sudan is a geopolitical time bomb that threatens to spread chaos beyond the borders of Africa's third-largest country.
8	تحولت الخرطوم إلى خراب وقد كانت يوماً مدينة تعج بالنشاط". Khartoum has turned into ruins, whereas it was once a vibrant city.
9	السودان تهدد الدول المجاورة بزعة استقرارها ودفع موجات اللاجئين إلى أوروبا". Sudan threatens neighboring countries with instability and drives waves of refugees to Europe.
10	يجب على العالم الضغط على الأطراف الخارجية 'المغرصة' التي تغذي الصراع". The world must put pressure on "maliciously motivated" external parties that exacerbate the conflict.

**News 2 (Royanews.tv)**

NO	Data findings (Royanews.tv)
1	وقد فر نحو 11 مليون شخص من منازلهم، ما يجعلها واحدة من أسوأ الأزمات الإنسانية على مستوى العالم." Around 11 million people have fled their homes, making it one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.
2	"أكثر من 25 مليون سوداني يعانون من الجوع نتيجة الحرب المستمرة في السودان." More than 25 million Sudanese are suffering from hunger due to the ongoing war in Sudan.
3	"واشنطن ستقدم مساعدات إنسانية إضافية بقيمة 424 مليون دولار لدعم الشعب السوداني." Washington will provide an additional 424 million dollars in humanitarian aid to support the Sudanese people.
4	يتعين على الطرفين المتحاربين الالتزام بهدن إنسانية في الفاشر والخرطوم ومناطق أخرى معرضة للخطر." Both warring sides must adhere to the humanitarian ceasefire in El Fasher, Khartoum, and other areas at risk.
5	"يتعين على الطرفين وضع أسلحتهم جانبًا للجلوس على طاولة المفاوضات." Both sides must lay down their weapons to sit at the negotiating table.

**Discussion****Text Analysis (Description)****Aljazeera News:**

Data (1) illustrates that this news emphasizes the humanitarian crisis and violence. Example in data (3): "bodies are piling up in makeshift graves that can be seen from space" (hyperbolic phrase), "2.5 million civilians could die", then in data (6) "the world's worst humanitarian crisis". The language used reinforces the narrative of great crisis and suffering involving large-scale deaths and displacement. Terms such as "geopolitical time bomb" and "chaos" in data (7) indicate the widespread threat of conflict that is not only limited to Sudan, but has the potential to extend to neighboring countries and even to Europe. There is an evaluative use of language in describing the UN in (4) as "powerless", and the use of the term "maliciously motivated external parties" in (10) as exacerbating the conflict. This emphasizes the existence of parties who are considered guilty or contributing to the escalation of the conflict.

**Royanews.tv:**

Data (1) describes this news emphasizes the number of refugees and famine with clear numbers, for example: "11 million people fled" and in data (2) "25 million Sudanese are suffering from hunger". Data (3) describes the narrative as focusing more on international efforts to deal with the crisis, such as the \$424 million humanitarian aid from Washington, as well as the importance of a ceasefire

in some areas. This shows the news focus on solutions and crisis management. Phrases such as "humanitarian ceasefire" in data (4) and "negotiating table" in data (5) emphasize the importance of diplomacy and peaceful negotiations as a way out of the conflict.

According to Fairclough, language in discourse has the ability to shape social reality (Moghaddam, 2024). Aljazeera news uses hyperbolic and dramatic language, such as the phrase "bodies piled up in makeshift graves that can be seen from space," which exaggerates facts to reinforce the narrative of a humanitarian crisis. Terms like "geopolitical time bomb" and "chaos" reflect the way the story frames Sudan's conflict as a global threat, transcending the country's geographical borders. It portrays Sudan as a source of international instability and reinforces the impression that the situation in Sudan is dangerous not only for the country itself but also for the wider region, including Europe.

In contrast, Royanews.tv news takes a more factual and solution-based approach. It focuses on the immediate impact of the crisis, such as the number of refugees and the level of hunger, presented with concrete figures such as "11 million people fled" and "25 million Sudanese are suffering from hunger." The text highlights international intervention through humanitarian aid, reflecting more diplomatic and solution-oriented language. Royanews.tv also emphasizes the importance of negotiations and ceasefires, using terms such as "humanitarian ceasefire" and "negotiating table," reflecting a narrative of peace and stability.

### ***Social Practice (Explanation)***

Sudan is in a state of civil war, with conflict between the Sudanese Army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that has destroyed infrastructure, caused a humanitarian crisis, and created regional instability. Aljazeera focuses on the impact of the chaos that could spill over into neighboring countries and into Europe. It showed the fear of mass immigration and chaos that might disrupt political and economic stability in the region. While Royanews highlighted the steps taken by the international community, such as assistance from the US, as well as the importance of peace negotiations and a ceasefire. This shows a more constructive perspective in looking at solutions to the conflict.

Data (7) illustrates Al Jazeera's focus on regional and global impact: "Sudan is a geopolitical time bomb that threatens to spread chaos beyond the borders of Africa's third largest country." This quote clearly shows Al Jazeera's concern about the widespread impact of the Sudanese conflict, especially regarding the potential for mass migration and regional destabilization. Data (8) illustrates the emphasis on violence and destruction: "Khartoum has turned into ruins, when it was once a vibrant city." This highly visual description illustrates the scale of the destruction in Sudan and emphasizes the impact of the conflict on people's lives. Data (10) describes the accusations against outsiders: "The world must put pressure on 'maliciously motivated' external parties who exacerbate the conflict." This quote

shows Al Jazeera's tendency to look for external parties responsible for the conflict, and implies an international conspiracy.

Data (3) illustrates Royanews.tv's focus on humanitarian aid and solutions: "Washington will provide an additional 424 million dollars in humanitarian aid to support the Sudanese people." This quote shows Royanews.tv's attention to the humanitarian aspects of the conflict and the international community's efforts to provide aid. In data (4) it describes the importance of peace negotiations "Both sides should lay down their weapons to sit at the negotiating table." This quote emphasizes the importance of dialogue and negotiation as a way out of the conflict. In data (2) illustrates the emphasis on the impact on civilians "More than 25 million Sudanese are suffering from hunger due to the continuing war in Sudan." This quote highlights the direct impact of the conflict on civilians and emphasizes the urgency to find a solution.

According to Fairclough (2015), discourse is always related to the wider social context and power processes. Aljazeera news portrays Sudan as the center of a crisis that will have a major impact on international stability, particularly in the African and European regions. This reflects how Aljazeera shapes the narrative of Sudan as a source of geopolitical instability, threatening the wider region. Aljazeera uses language to create global awareness of the crisis and frames Sudan as a victim of the failure of global actors, such as the UN and external parties that play a role in the escalation of the conflict. In contrast, Royanews.tv uses a more pragmatic social approach, highlighting the role of major countries such as the United States in providing aid and support. This shows how it positions Sudan in the context of international cooperation and diplomacy, emphasizing the important role of global actors in resolving the crisis. This approach reflects that Royanews.tv is more supportive of international power status, believing that a solution to the crisis can be achieved through negotiation and coordinated intervention from major powers.

#### ***Discursive Practice (Interpretation)***

Aljazeera often targets a global audience with a focus on Middle East and developing countries news. In this story, the rhetoric used aims to arouse international attention by creating a sense of urgency and severity to the crisis. The use of language that describes Sudan as a "geopolitical time bomb" has the potential to create an alarmist narrative that reinforces the need for international intervention. The focus on crimes against civilians and the helplessness of the UN could reflect a critical view of international institutions that are perceived to have failed to resolve the conflict. Royanews, a Jordanian-based media outlet, appears to be targeting a Middle Eastern and international audience. In this story, the focus on concrete numbers and international aid shows a desire to provide accurate information as well as optimism regarding humanitarian aid efforts. It emphasizes



diplomacy and solutions rather than the conflict itself, focusing on the actions that need to be taken by the warring parties.

Data (7) illustrates Al Jazeera's focus on a global audience and alarmist narrative: "Sudan is a geopolitical time bomb that threatens to spread chaos beyond the borders of Africa's third largest country." This sentence clearly shows that Al Jazeera is trying to make the world aware of the potential impact of the Sudan conflict, not only in the African region, but also globally. The use of the term "geopolitical time bomb" creates a sense of urgency and danger that threatens international stability. Criticism of international institutions "the UN is powerless." Data (4) shows Al Jazeera's critical view of the UN's inability to resolve the Sudan conflict. It also implies a failure of the international system to protect civilians. Focus on war crimes "Both sides, the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, are accused of committing serious crimes against civilians." Data (5) illustrates that by highlighting serious human rights violations, Al Jazeera is trying to draw the world's attention to the suffering of the Sudanese people and urge international action.

Data (2) shows that Royanews.tv focuses on numbers and data "More than 25 million Sudanese are suffering from hunger due to the ongoing war in Sudan." This specific use of numbers gives a clear picture of the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. Emphasis on solutions "Both sides must put down their weapons to sit at the negotiating table." In data (5) shows Royanews.tv's focus on finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. Involvement of the international community "Washington will provide an additional 424 million dollars in humanitarian aid to support the Sudanese people." This quote shows the active role of the international community in providing humanitarian assistance to Sudan.

Fairclough's CDA emphasizes that discourse not only reflects reality, but also shapes it through the way texts are produced and consumed. Aljazeera news produces a narrative that focuses on the humanitarian crisis with the aim of attracting global attention. The production of this text positions the UN as a "powerless" institution and blames external parties who are referred to as "maliciously motivated" for exacerbating the conflict. This shows how language is used to criticize global institutions and question their responsibility in conflict management. Aljazeera through this discursive practice creates a discourse that raises issues of domination and subordination, by criticizing global powers that are considered unable to defuse conflicts (Moghaddam, 2024).

Meanwhile, Royanews.tv presented a narrative that supported international diplomatic efforts by emphasizing humanitarian intervention and the importance of negotiations. It described how aid from the United States, worth 424 million dollars, as well as a focus on a ceasefire in Khartoum and other areas, reflected discursive practices that encouraged international stability and cooperation. In this context, Royanews.tv positions international actors as capable of providing

solutions and maintaining global power structures through orderly and solutive interventions.

Analysis of the two news articles showed significant differences in the way Al Jazeera and Royanews.tv represented the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, reflecting wider implications for public perception and international response. Al Jazeera used hyperbolic and dramatic language, such as describing Sudan as a “geopolitical time bomb” and emphasizing “the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.” These language choices not only increased the urgency of the situation, but also framed Sudan as a source of global instability, potentially influencing public opinion to support immediate international intervention.

In contrast, Royanews.tv adopts a more solution-oriented approach, focusing on concrete statistics, such as “11 million people displaced” and “25 million Sudanese suffering from hunger,” while highlighting international humanitarian aid efforts. This narrative fosters a sense of hope and emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and negotiation, which may lead to a more constructive public perception of the crisis.

These findings are in line with existing literature on media representation and discourse analysis. For example, Gürlesin (2023) notes that differences in news presentation can reveal and reinforce hidden power structures and ideological dominance. Al Jazeera's emphasis on chaos and external blame may reflect a critical stance towards international institutions, portraying them as ineffective in managing the crisis. This perspective may foster skepticism about the ability of global actors to resolve the conflict, potentially leading to calls for more direct intervention. In contrast, Royanews.tv's focus on humanitarian aid and diplomatic solutions demonstrates a belief in the efficacy of international cooperation, which may encourage public support for ongoing humanitarian efforts

In addition, potential bias in coverage is evident in the different narratives. Al Jazeera's alarmist rhetoric could inadvertently perpetuate a narrative of helplessness, while Royanews.tv's emphasis on solutions could be seen as downplaying the severity of the crisis. These contrasting approaches affect public perception significantly; the former may engender a sense of fear and urgency, encouraging immediate action, while the latter may inspire confidence in the possibility of resolution through international collaboration. By analyzing these narratives, we can better understand how media discourse shapes public perception and influences policy responses to humanitarian crises, as highlighted by Pan and Yao (2023) and Wu (2020). Ultimately, these findings underscore the important role of the media in framing humanitarian issues and the importance of paying close attention to the language used to convey these narratives.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, this analysis relies on two news sources, namely Aljazeera and Royanews.tv, which may have certain biases. Secondly, time constraints are an important factor, where this study may only cover news in a certain period and not consider the latest developments in the Sudanese conflict. In addition, language differences in the two news outlets may lead to differences in interpretation, which may affect the understanding of the context. Lastly, focusing on only two news outlets does not provide a comprehensive picture of how other media reported this conflict, so there is a possibility of different perspectives from other outlets that could enrich the analysis.

## **Conclusion**

A critical discourse analysis of two news stories about the conflict in Sudan shows that Aljazeera and Royanews.tv have different approaches and perspectives in their presentation. Aljazeera news uses hyperbolic and dramatic language to emphasize the narrative of an extreme humanitarian crisis. Terms such as "bodies piled up in makeshift graves that can be seen from space" and "geopolitical time bomb" create a sense of urgency and fear of conflict escalation beyond Sudan. This approach highlights regional and international instability, focusing on threats to the wider region, including Europe. In addition, Aljazeera provides a critical view of the UN and external parties perceived to be exacerbating the conflict.

Royanews.tv, on the other hand, emphasizes concrete data and solutions. Its focus on the number of refugees and hunger levels, as well as the \$424 million humanitarian aid from the United States, shows a more pragmatic and solution-based approach. Royanews.tv also emphasizes the importance of diplomacy and negotiation, reflected in terms such as "humanitarian truce" and "negotiating table". This creates a more optimistic narrative about the role of the international community in resolving the Sudanese crisis.

Thus, Aljazeera forms a more critical and emotional discourse, while Royanews.tv features a more diplomatic and solution-based narrative. This difference reflects how both media use language to frame the conflict according to their respective audiences and ideological goals.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the sources by involving more news outlets from various countries, including local media in Sudan, in order to get a more comprehensive picture. Conducting a longitudinal analysis covering various time periods is also important to understand how narratives change as the situation in Sudan develops. In addition, a comparative study between Western and Middle Eastern media in reporting the conflict in Sudan can provide deeper insights into the influence of cultural and political contexts on reporting. A multimodal approach that considers visual and audio elements in the news can also provide a better understanding of how the media shapes public perceptions. Finally, research

on how audiences respond to different narratives can provide additional insights into the impact of media on public opinion and foreign policy. With these limitations and suggestions in mind, future research is expected to make a more significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of media and conflict in Sudan.

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