Western media coverage of Africa

Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo
2 March 2012

Virgil Hawkins
Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP)
Osaka University, Japan
Today's session

- Role of the media
- Reporting the world
- Reporting conflict
- How does the media choose?
- Internet?
Role of the media

• Role of the media in society
  • Provide information to and about society
  • Linking policymakers and public

• Role of the media in a democracy
  • Deliberation
  • Representation
  • Accountability (watchdog)

• Does this apply internationally?
  • Globalization
  • Tax money
  • Humanitarian interest/concern
Media coverage of the world

- Very little coverage
  - End of the Cold War
  - National frames
- Extremely selective coverage
  - Geographic/geopolitical/cultural slant
  - Africa always comes in last
- Chosen conflicts and stealth conflicts
  - Spotlight or blackout
### Reporting (or not) the world

**Coverage of regions in international news (2000)**

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<th>Africa</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Mid. East</th>
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- **Other examples:**
  - Yomiuri: 1 day Chile mining tragedy = 5 years coverage of conflict in DRC
  - Australian (2007): coverage of Israel-Palestine > coverage of entire African continent
Reporting (or not) conflict
US TV network coverage (hours): 2009

![Bar chart showing conflict coverage by region in 2009](chart.png)
The DRC in perspective
Conflict death tolls
(1990-2007)

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

North-south Sudan

Angola
Rwanda
Afghanistan
Iraq
Somalia
Sierra Leone
Burundi
Darfur
Zaire

Liberia
Algeria
Ethiopia-Eritrea
Chechnya
Uganda

North-south Sudan

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Conflict death tolls (1990-2007)

5,400,000 deaths
5,000 deaths

Côte d'Ivoire
Congo
Peru
Aceh
Myanmar
Nepal
Croatia
Kosovo
Kurdish Iraq
Chad
Southern Iraq
Israel-Palestine
Glitter charged
PHNOM PENH: British former rock star Gary Glitter, whose real name is Paul Gadd, has been formally charged with committing obscene acts with two girls in Vietnam. A prosecutor in the southern province of Ba Ria Vung Tau, where 61-year-old Glitter lives, said the charges carried prison terms of three to seven years.

Congo deadliest
PARIS: Eight years of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo has left almost four million people dead, making it the deadliest humanitarian crisis today, according to a study published in The Lancet. The study found the national mortality rate was 2.1 deaths per 1000 people every month.

Moss to roll home
LONDON: Supermodel Kate Moss will return to Britain and face arrest on claims she snorted cocaine. "She is very happy to co-operate with the police," a British newspaper quoted an unnamed friend as saying.
How does the media 'choose'?

- Why Darfur? Why Zimbabwe?
- Why not DRC?

- Some criteria?
  - National/political interest
  - Geographic proximity/access
  - Ability to identify
  - Ability to sympathise
  - Simplicity
  - Sensationalism
Internet as game changer?

- Audience
  - No longer a captive audience (foraging)
- Participant in newsmaking
  - Blogs, citizen journalism, Facebook, Twitter
- Enormous potential, but...
  - Elite media continue to dominate gathering
  - Audience still identifies with local events
  - Domestic watchdog: yes
  - Greater international interest: no