Western media coverage of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue

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27 February 2012

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Media coverage of the world/conflict

• 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
US television coverage of conflict (2009)

- Afghanistan: 18
- Israel-Palestine: 5
- Iraq: 5
- Pakistan: 4
- Darfur: 1
- Somalia: 1
- DRC: 1
- Yemen: 1
- Colombia: 1
- Sri Lanka: 1
Media coverage of peace processes

- Peace processes not compatible with media ‘needs’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peace process</th>
<th>Media needs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Right now</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calm deliberation</td>
<td>Violence/action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Simplicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Good vs. evil</td>
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- 'If it bleeds it leads'
- Coverage: violent phase > peace process?
- Yes and no
  - Extensive coverage of Israel-Palestine peace process
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Result</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-23 Oct 01</td>
<td>ICD opens in Addis Ababa</td>
<td>Talks break down</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Feb-19 Apr 02</td>
<td>ICD resumes with talks in Sun City</td>
<td>Agreement on power sharing framework reached</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-30 Jul 02</td>
<td>Rwanda-DRC peace talks</td>
<td>Bilateral peace agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Sep 02</td>
<td>Uganda-DRC peace talks</td>
<td>Bilateral peace agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Oct 02</td>
<td>Withdrawal of Rwandan troops ends</td>
<td>Complete withdrawal confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Oct 02</td>
<td>Withdrawal of Zimbabwean, Angolan, Namibian troops ends</td>
<td>Complete withdrawal confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Oct-17 Dec 02</td>
<td>Talks in Pretoria by all Congolese parties to conflict, political opposition, civil society</td>
<td>Comprehensive power sharing agreement reached, formal end of conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Apr 03</td>
<td>Pretoria agreement ratified in Sun City</td>
<td>Conclusion of ICD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Apr 03</td>
<td>Promulgation of transitional constitution</td>
<td></td>
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# Media coverage of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Coverage highlights</th>
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| **New York Times (USA)**         | 65% of articles were world briefings  
One article on two-month Pretoria talks                                                                                                                                                                           |
| **Times (UK)**                   | One substantive article on Sun City talks  
No substantive article on Pretoria talks                                                                                                                                                                           |
| **Globe and Mail (Canada)**      | 78% of articles were world briefings  
Only four substantive articles on entire process                                                                                                                                                                   |
| **Australian (Australia)**       | Needed only 672 words to cover entire process  
Missed Sun City and Pretoria talks altogether                                                                                                                                                                      |
New York Times and Australian

- **New York Times**
  - Sun City talks: 4 articles, 10 briefings
  - Rwanda agreement: 5 articles, 1 briefing
  - Pretoria agreement: 1 article, 1 briefing

- **Australian**
  - One substantive article: Rwanda deal
  - Ignored Sun City and Pretoria talks
  - But, DRC was covered:
    - Congo exhibition in Belgium
    - Volcanic eruption
    - Students rioting over school fees
Some coverage comparisons (word count)
DRC (2002) and Israel-Palestine (2003)

• New York Times
  • Overall conflict: Isr-Pal = DRC × 12 to 13
  • Peace process: Isr-Pal = DRC × 20
  • Average article length: Isr-Pal = DRC × 3

• Globe and Mail
  • 1 day of Isr-Pal > 18 months of DRC

• Australian
  • Peace process: Isr-Pal = DRC × 115

• Coverage of peace processes for Darfur, Kenya and Nepal also considerably greater than DRC
The DRC in perspective
Conflict death tolls (1990-2007)

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

5,400,000 deaths
5,000 deaths

North-south Sudan
Angola
Rwanda
Afghanistan
Iraq
Somalia
Sierra Leone
Burundi
Darfur
Zaire
Liberia
Algeria
Ethiopia-Eritrea
Chechnya
Uganda
Kashmir
Colombia
Sri Lanka
Bosnia
Tajikistan
Myanmar
Nepal
Croatia
Kosovo
Kurdish Iraq
Chad
Southern Iraq
Israel-Palestine
Côte d'Ivoire
Congo
Peru
Aceh
Azerbaijan
Bougainville
Philippines
Turkey
Nigeria
Gulf War
Azerbaijan
Kosovo
Kurdish Iraq
Chad
Southern Iraq
Israel-Palestine
When is a peace process a ‘process’?

Use of term “peace process”

*New York Times, 2000-2009* (n=276)

- Israel-Palestine: 63%
- Northern Ireland: 13%
- Sri Lanka: 4%
- India-Pakistan: 3%
- Cote d'Ivoire: 3%
- Colombia: 2%
- Other: 12%
Summary of findings

• DRC peace process severely under-reported
• Coverage of the DRC peace process was proportionately less than that of the overall conflict (compared to Israel-Palestine)
• Coverage of peace process so little and sporadic that the series of events leading to agreement not considered a 'process'
So what?

- How can media coverage help stop conflict/conflict-related suffering?
  - Encourages action by policymakers
  - Encourages increase in humanitarian aid
  - Encourages restraint
  - Limits the facilitation of conflict
  - Contributes to better policymaking
What factors determined coverage?

- National/political interest (elite nation/person)
- Ability to identify (relevance/meaningfulness)
- Continuity (follow-up)
- Proximity/access (budget)
- Perceived simplicity (Darfur, Kenya, Nepal)
- Unexpectedness (Kenya)

*NOT*

- Magnitude (conflict scale or progress of process)
- Bad news/good news