

Western media coverage of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue

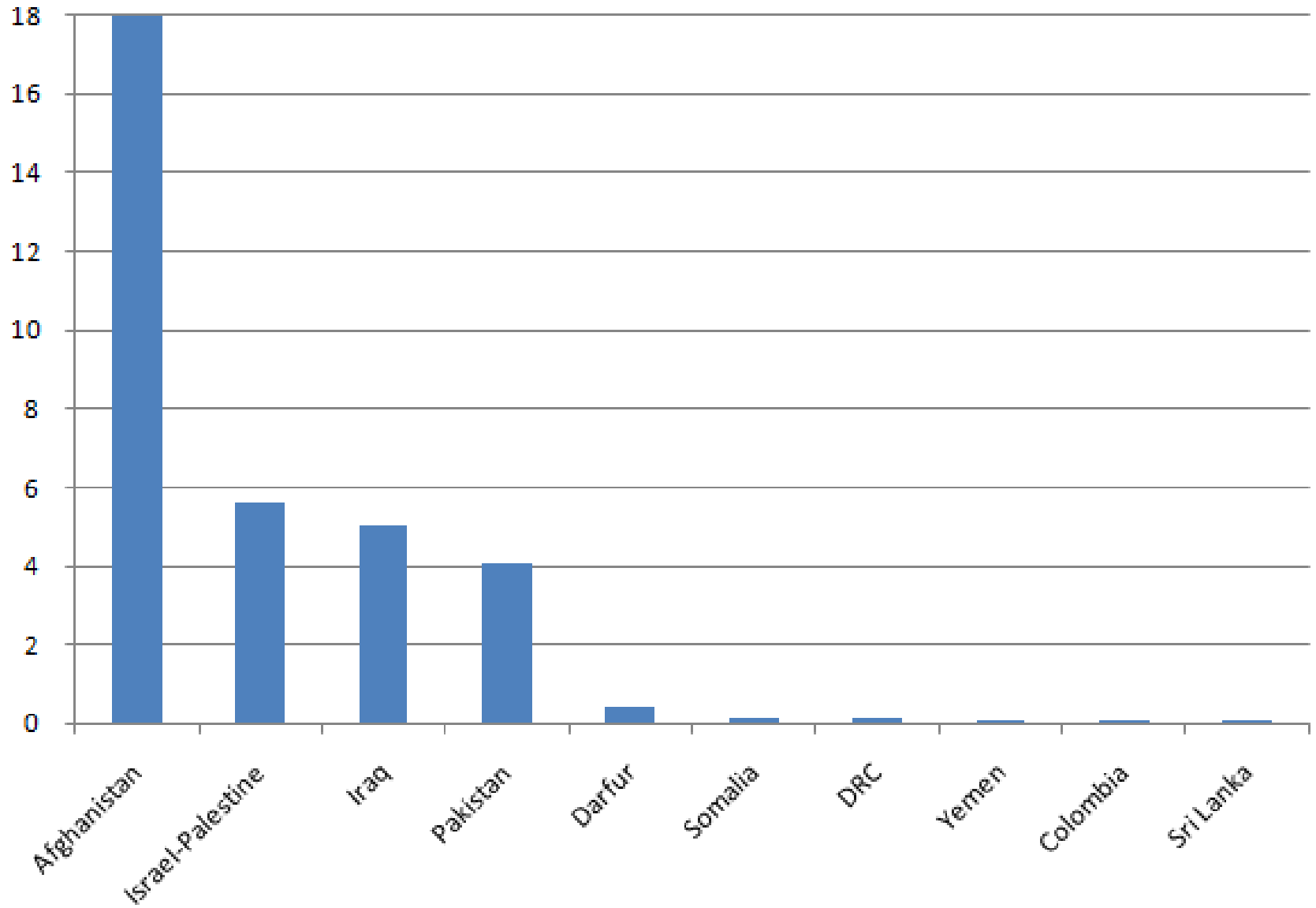
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Media coverage of the world/conflict

- 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)



Media coverage of peace processes

- Peace processes not compatible with media 'needs'

Peace process	Media needs
Long-term	Right now
Calm deliberation	Violence/action
Complexity	Simplicity
Compromise	Good vs. evil

- 'If it bleeds it leads'
- Coverage: violent phase > peace process?
- Yes and no
 - Extensive coverage of Israel-Palestine peace process

Timeline of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) (2001-2003)

Date	Event	Result
15-23 Oct 01	ICD opens in Addis Ababa	Talks break down
26 Feb-19 Apr 02	ICD resumes with talks in Sun City	Agreement on power sharing framework reached
25-30 Jul 02	Rwanda-DRC peace talks	Bilateral peace agreement
6 Sep 02	Uganda-DRC peace talks	Bilateral peace agreement
5 Oct 02	Withdrawal of Rwandan troops ends	Complete withdrawal confirmed
30 Oct 02	Withdrawal of Zimbabwean, Angolan, Namibian troops ends	Complete withdrawal confirmed
25 Oct-17 Dec 02	Talks in Pretoria by all Congolese parties to conflict, political opposition, civil society	Comprehensive power sharing agreement reached, formal end of conflict
2 Apr 03	Pretoria agreement ratified in Sun City	Conclusion of ICD
4 Apr 03	Promulgation of transitional constitution	

Media coverage of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue

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

New York Times and Australian

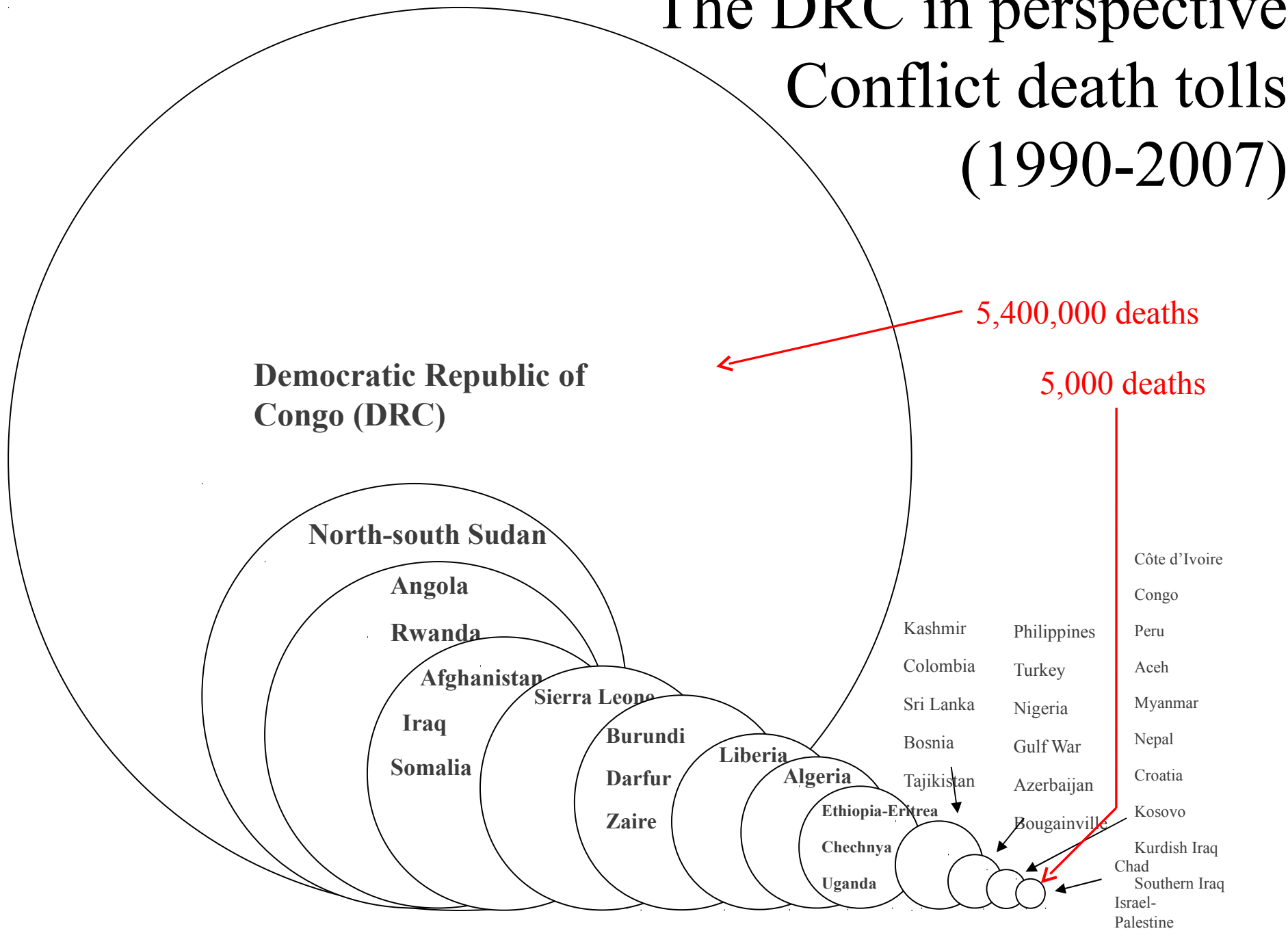
- New York Times
 - Sun City talks: 4 articles, 10 briefings
 - Rwanda agreement: 5 articles, 1 briefing
 - Pretoria agreement: 1 article, 1 briefing
- Australian
 - One substantive article: Rwanda deal
 - Ignored Sun City and Pretoria talks
 - But, DRC was covered:
 - Congo exhibition in Belgium
 - 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 \times 12 to 13
 - Peace process: Isr-Pal = DRC \times 20
 - Average article length: Isr-Pal = DRC \times 3
- Globe and Mail
 - 1 day of Isr-Pal $>$ 18 months of DRC
- Australian
 - Peace process: Isr-Pal = DRC \times 115
- Coverage of peace processes for Darfur, Kenya and Nepal also considerably greater than DRC

The DRC in perspective

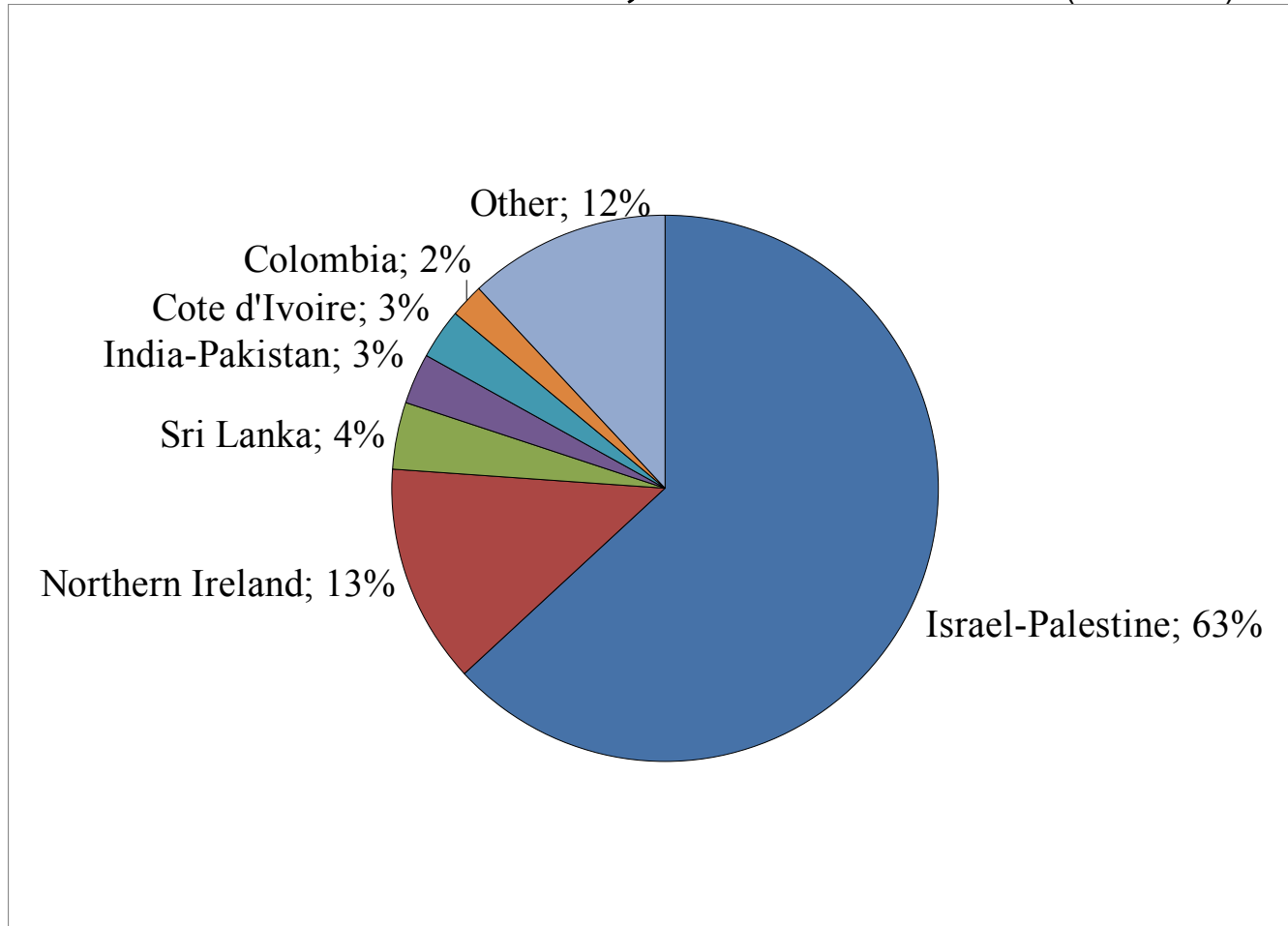
Conflict death tolls (1990-2007)



When is a peace process a ‘process’?

Use of term “peace process”

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



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