

# **Casey Behringer**

## **Project report**

**BCM390, “Media, war and peace”**

**Autumn session, 2015**

**University of Wollongong**

The project report assignment had two parts. For details of the assignment see [http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/BCM390\\_15outline.pdf](http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/BCM390_15outline.pdf)

*Casey Behringer* prepared

(1) an information pack in the form of a leaflet;

(2) a fictional dialogue on doing the project.

See following pages.

- The link to this document is from [http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/mwp\\_tops.html](http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/mwp_tops.html).

# Geography

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the second largest country in Africa with a population of 70 million.<sup>1</sup>



## Political History of the DRC

2



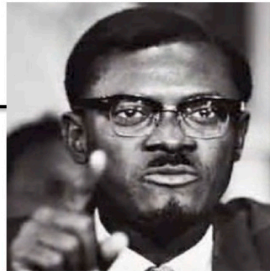
**1884:** Congo given to King Leopold II of Belgium

**1884-1908:** Leopold ruled for 23 years, under his reign 15 mil Congolese died



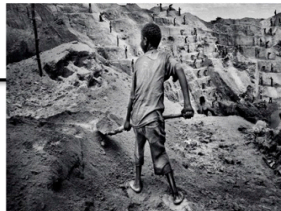
**1960:** Congo obtained Independence from Belgium

**1960-1996:** Political instability: a succession of leaders overthrown and assassinated



**1996 & 1998** British & Us allies, Rwanda & Uganda invade the Congo, killing over 6 million

**1998-2012** Local militia groups plunder resources, raping and murdering millions of Congolese



## Think Outside the Frame

Spreading awareness on the Conflict in the DRC in an attempt to inform the misinformed public on the news that matters.

Think Outside  
The Frame

*News that Matters*

## Why the Congo is systematically left out of the media?

News Values are a set of criteria that guide the selection of news. <sup>3</sup> This explains the systematic absence of the Congo conflict from Western media screens. The factors that determine the coverage level of conflicts include:

- 1. National/Political interest:** The Congo is not a military or terrorist threat to Western nations.
- 2. Geographical Proximity/access:** The Congo is set in dangerous and dense jungles, limiting reporter access.
- 3. Ability to identify:** Congolese have a different language, religious and historical complexities.
- 4. The involvement of elite nations or people:** The Congo does not involve large economically powerful nations.
- 5. Simplicity:** Congo war has a number of stakeholders; traditional media favour the simplistic dichotomy of 'good vs. evil.'
- 6. Sensationalism:** The slow starvation and persistent rape and torture of the Congolese communities are apparently not sensational enough.

### Why you should care?

- ⇒ **Blood on your handset.** Precious minerals found in consumer electronics are illegally mined in the Congo and fund the war.
- ⇒ **Need for conservation.** Congo is part of the second largest rainforest in the world.<sup>4</sup>
- ⇒ **They are human beings who have been systematically let down by the global community!**



## Fast Facts on the Extent of Tragedy

- With over 5.4 million dead and over 2 million displaced, Congo is home to the deadliest conflict since WWII. <sup>5</sup>
- Congo ranks near the bottom of the UN Human Development index. <sup>6</sup>
- The conflict is a war of profit as armed groups use violence and rape to exploit local populations to take control of the mineral economy. <sup>7</sup>
- The UN have labeled the Congo as the rape capital of the world. <sup>8</sup>
- 'Should one add the deaths in Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Rwanda, they would not equal the millions dead in the Congo.'<sup>9</sup>



Casey: Hey Hamish, I see you are writing up an article for the Telegraph tomorrow.

What are you writing about?

Hamish: Hey Casey, I am writing an opinion piece about the Israel Palestine conflict.

I have been reporting on peace and conflict issues for over ten years now!

Casey: I look forward to reading it! Have you ever thought about writing about the war in the Congo to spread awareness?

Hamish: What? I have never heard of that?

Casey: Hmm, not surprising. The war in the Congo is the deadliest conflict since WWII. Over 5.4 million people have died and over 2 million people are displaced.<sup>1</sup> The UN have labeled the Congo as the ‘rape capital of the world because of the pace and scope of the use of rape as a weapon of war by militia gangs.’<sup>2</sup>

Hamish: I can’t believe I have never heard of it. I am in the media! If it is such a devastating conflict with an astronomical death toll, why are there no news reports on it?

Casey: There is actually no correlation between death toll and media coverage, as numbers of fatalities are ‘not a factor in the media’s determination of

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>

<sup>2</sup> Tampa, V 2012, ‘Why the World is Ignoring the Congo War,’ *CNN*, 27 November, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/27/opinion/congo-war-ignored-vava-tampa/>>

newsworthiness.<sup>3</sup> I have actually created an activist project on the lack of media reporting to try and disseminate information on the conflict. I chose this issue because I am tired of only reading about select issues in the media; it is like the millions of people who live in the Congo don't matter because they are not an elite Western nation! Here, take a look!

Hamish: Thanks! [Reads pamphlet] This is really informative Casey! How did you find research on the topic if it is not reported in the media?

Casey: Despite the lack of mainstream news coverage, there is an abundance of research online. I found not-for-profit organisations had really helpful resources such as 'Raise Hope for Congo'<sup>4</sup> and the factsheets on the 'Congo Week' site.<sup>5</sup> I also used scholarly articles and books to consolidate my understanding and provide a conceptual framework for the project. However, I did have difficulty in verifying the reliability of information as statistics on the Congo vary greatly amongst sources, I guess that is a result of a third world country inundated with war and having limited resources to accurately record data of the society and level devastation.

Hamish: As a journalist it is hard when your sources vary! I would recommend the United Nations as a great source! Why did you choose to make a brochure? Why not post something online?

---

<sup>3</sup> Hawkins, V 2011, 'Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,' *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

<sup>4</sup> *The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>

<sup>5</sup> Breaking the Silence 2015, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.congoweeek.org/en/downloads.html>>

Casey: I did use The United Nations it was a great source! I chose a brochure because not everyone has access to information online and I also wanted to create something physical that can be handed out at University or in the streets. I thought people are more likely to read something physical rather than click another one of the thousands of links available online.

Hamish: I agree! I guess that's why I work for print media! Did you have difficulty using the right language and appropriate information?

Casey: Very much so! My mother who was struggling to understand the Conflict from the draft brochure pointed this out to me. I didn't want to make the complexities of the Congo even more difficult to understand so I simplified it with language that is easily accessible. I also added an unambiguous outline of the complex political history so individuals can easily attain a contextual background on the situation that lead to the conflict.

Hamish: The part about News Values is really informative in the brochure. I haven't looked at news values since I was studying journalism at Uni. Can you explain them again for me?

Casey: Sure thing! News values are a set of criteria that guide the selection of news.<sup>6</sup> Virgil Hawkins has a really interesting theory that explains the systematic absence of the Congo conflict from Western media screens. The marginalisation of the Congo conflict 'is the result of a series of conscious decisions based on entrenched perceptions of newsworthiness and commercial considerations.'<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Hawkins, V 2011, 'Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,' *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

<sup>7</sup> Hawkins, V 2008, '*Stealth Conflicts: How the World's Worst Violence is Ignored*,' Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire England.

Hamish: What are the 'newsworthiness' considerations?

Casey: I have listed them in the brochure and also provided a linking sentence to the Congo case study. Simply put, the war in the Congo is not reported on because it is not an elite nation and is geographically, culturally and socially different from Westerners. My brochure subverts these values by illustrating the Congo is of news value to Western viewers. This was achieved through simplifying the issue through the timeline and illustrating the Congo's social and economic relevance by showing how Western consumerism is fuelling the war through Conflict minerals. I also portrayed why the Congo should be of national and economic interest to elite nations by showing the Congo's potential as a young nation with an abundance of natural resources.<sup>8</sup>

Hamish: You have definitely showed this journalist it is worth reporting on! Does this non-reporting happen to other conflicts too?

Casey: It sure does, not all instances of conflict are reported on. The conflicts that are ignored are stealth conflicts, which refer to the marginalisation of stories in media based on a series of conscious decision of 'entrenched perceptions of newsworthiness and commercial considerations.'<sup>9</sup> Hawkins completed a study in 2011 and compared instances of war reporting. She found that 'in all media corporations studied, the Israel Palestine conflict received by far the most coverage (whilst) African conflicts were almost invariably marginalised.'<sup>10</sup> Based on news values, any incident in Palestine is newsworthy because it involves the polite interest of elite powerful

---

<sup>8</sup> Basic Facts on the Congo 2006, *Friends of the Congo*, accessed 4 June 2015, <[http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic\\_facts.pdf](http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic_facts.pdf)>

<sup>9</sup> Hawkins, V 2008, *'Stealth Conflicts: How the World's Worst Violence is Ignored,'* Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire England.

<sup>10</sup> Hawkins, V 2011, 'Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,' *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

nations. It is clear that factors such as the death toll or level of humanitarian suffering in African nations are unlikely to impact media time.<sup>11</sup>

Hamish: I guess I am guilty of this always focusing on Middle Eastern affairs.

However, I don't think the media are fully culpable for the absence of Western knowledge about the Congo.

Casey: You are right Hamish; it is very simplistic to believe that 'media drives Western conflict management by forcing Western governments to intervene militarily in humanitarian crises against their will.'<sup>12</sup> There are a number of other factors and agendas that prevent Government intervention and public knowledge of conflicts.

Hamish: What agendas? This sounds a bit like a conspiracy theory to me!

Casey: Not at all, policy makers and large corporations are also to blame for the silencing of issues in the Congo, which Hawkins theory doesn't cover. See the phone in your pocket there? That is actually funding the conflict.

Hamish: What? How?

Casey: Congo is rich in minerals like tin, coltan, tungsten and gold, which are highly valuable. 'Money earned from the sale of conflict minerals is used for personal profit and to further violent causes.'<sup>13</sup> The extent to the wealth gained is astronomical. It is estimated that armed groups earn approximately '\$180 million' from the mineral trade

---

<sup>11</sup> Hawkins, V 2011, 'Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,' *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

<sup>12</sup> Jakobsen, P 2000, 'Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect,' *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 131-143.

<sup>13</sup> *The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>



with little of this wealth going to the Congolese people.<sup>14</sup> Despite being geographically and culturally distant, Western consumerism is fuelling the war as these minerals are smuggled out of the Congo and shipped around the world, smelted and distributed in technological devices including the smart phone. With the enormity of the war, as well as the involvement and demands of the Western manufacturing and consumerism systems, it is outlandish that media reports discerning the conflict are minimal.

Hamish: Is that why you included the 'blood on your handset' part in your brochure?

Casey: Yes! I wanted to create a sense of responsibility for viewers to see that we are all connected in this global village and we should be aware of the part we play in distant conflicts.

Hamish: That is really effective to make responders feel connected to an issue regardless of perceived newsworthiness. But there are stories from Africa on TV sometimes aren't there?

Casey: 'Sometimes' being the operative word, Hamish. It is interesting though, because when Africa is shown on television it is framed in a way to shape and distort viewer's perceptions. Robert Entman did some work on media frames and found that they influence 'aspects of a perceived reality and make (some issues) more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, casual interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation.'<sup>15</sup> So when the Congo

---

<sup>14</sup> Lezhnev, S & Prendergast, J 2009, 'From Mine to Mobile Phone: The Conflict Minerals Supply Chain,' *Enough Project*, 10 November, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/mine-mobile-phone?page=show>>

<sup>15</sup> Briggs, D, Pierre Najem, T & Soderlund C 2012, *Africa's Deadliest Conflict: Media Coverage of the Humanitarian Disaster in the Congo and the United Nations Response*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Canada.

and Africa are on screen it is often to how Western media organisations want to portray them.

Hamish: So, simply put, media framing ‘highlights some features of reality while omitting others’ and this impacts audience’s understandings and awareness of the Congo.<sup>16</sup>

Casey: Spot on! In the media, Africa is continually presented to Western viewers as this exotic and dangerous land, filled with ‘political turmoil, ethnic violence, disease and savagery.’<sup>17</sup> This is very rigid and ignores the political and social complexities of unique African cultures.

Hamish: We hardly ever report on issues in Africa at our paper, and if we do, it is oversimplified and stereotyped. We often do reports on children living in poverty and stories on World Vision. This frames events as humanitarian stories ‘with emphasis on African need and Western kindness.’<sup>18</sup> So I think because get the impression of being helpless as Africa is framed as inferior and backwards.

Casey: So insightful Hamish!

Hamish: Thanks! What are you hoping to achieve from your brochure?

Casey: I am hoping to challenge dominant news values through my own media organisation ‘Think outside the Frame,’ to expand frames of reporting and spread awareness on ignored conflicts. The media have a powerful place in society and can illicit social change through education and ‘encouraging direct action by external

---

<sup>16</sup> Briggs, D, Pierre Najem, T & Soderlund C 2012, *Africa’s Deadliest Conflict: Media Coverage of the Humanitarian Disaster in the Congo and the United Nations Response*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Canada.

<sup>17</sup> Danker-Dake, J 2004, ‘US Media Coverage of Africa: A Content Analysis Of The New York Times From 2003 To 2007,’ *Oklahoma State University, Mass Communications*.

<sup>18</sup> Danker-Dake, J 2004, ‘US Media Coverage of Africa: A Content Analysis Of The New York Times From 2003 To 2007,’ *Oklahoma State University, Mass Communications*.

policymakers aimed at achieving conflict resolution.’<sup>19</sup> However, if the focus continues to be on Western conflicts than the sufferings of the Congolese persists. Unfortunately, without a shift in Imperialistic discourses, the war will wage on and ‘continue to unfold undetected by the camera lenses of Western media and excluded from Western political agenda.’<sup>20</sup> This is what my news organisation and brochure aims to prevent!

Hamish: Would you like a freelance journalist? I would love to work with you and start to change war reporting!

Casey: I would love that! Let’s get writing!

---

<sup>19</sup> Hawkins, V 2011, ‘Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,’ *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

<sup>20</sup> Holder, A 2004, ‘Forgotten or Ignored? News Media Silence and the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,’ London School of Economics pp.1-71.

## References:

### Dialogue

Basic Facts on the Congo 2006, *Friends of the Congo*, accessed 4 June 2015,

<[http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic\\_facts.pdf](http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic_facts.pdf)>

Briggs, D, Pierre Najem, T & Soderlund C 2012, *Africa's Deadliest Conflict: Media Coverage of the Humanitarian Disaster in the Congo and the United Nations Response*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Canada.

*The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, viewed 4 June 2015,

<<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>

Danker-Dake, J 2004, 'US Media Coverage of Africa: A Content Analysis Of The New York Times From 2003 To 2007,' *Oklahoma State University, Mass Communications*.

Hawkins, V 2008, *Stealth Conflicts: How the World's Worst Violence is Ignored*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire England.

Hawkins, V 2011, 'Media Selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict,' *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 55-68.

Holder, A 2004, 'Forgotten or Ignored? News Media Silence and the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,' London School of Economics pp.1-71.

Jakobsen, P 2000, 'Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect,' *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 131-143.

Lezhnev, S & Prendergast, J 2009, 'From Mine to Mobile Phone: The Conflict Minerals Supply Chain,' *Enough Project*, 10 November, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/mine-mobile-phone?page=show>>

Tampa, V 2012, 'Why the World is Ignoring the Congo War,' *CNN*, 27 November, viewed 4 June 2015, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/11/27/opinion/congo-war-ignored-vava-tampa/>>

### **Information Pack**

<sup>21</sup> Basic Facts on the Congo 2006, *Friends of the Congo*, accessed 4 June 2015, <[http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic\\_facts.pdf](http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic_facts.pdf)>

<sup>22</sup> Congo: An Overview Of Its Geography, History and Politics, accessed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/overview.pdf>>

<sup>23</sup> Hawkins, V 2008, '*Stealth Conflicts: How the World's Worst Violence is Ignored*,' Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire England.

<sup>24</sup> Basic Facts on the Congo 2006, *Friends of the Congo*, accessed 4 June 2015, <[http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic\\_facts.pdf](http://www.congoweeek.org/images/pdf/basic_facts.pdf)>

<sup>25</sup> *The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, accessed 4 June 2015, <<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>

---

<sup>26</sup>The United Nations 2011, *UN Human Development Rankings Place Norway at the Top and DR Congo Last*, ' UN News Centre, accessed 4 June 2015, <

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=40290#.VXDqejeD5ow>>

<sup>27</sup> *The Crisis* 2015, Raise Hope For Congo, viewed 4 June 2015,

<<http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/content/crisis>>

<sup>28</sup>The United Nations 2010, Tackling Sexual Violence Must Include Prevention, Ending Impunity,' UN News Centre, viewed 4 June 2015, <

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.VXDsrjeD5ow>>

<sup>29</sup>Giunta, C 2013, *'How Your Mobile Phone is Connected to Drone Warfare and the War on Terror*, ' Stopwar, 21 November, viewed 4 June 2015,

<<http://stopwar.org.uk/news/blood-coltan-remote-controlled-warfare-and-the-demand-for-strategic-minerals>>

### **Images Information Pack**

Achberger, J, 2010 *Chained Congolese Slaves on a Belgian Rubber Plantation*, image, The Ultimate History Project, accessed 4 June 2015, <

<http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/belgian-congo.html>>

Bleasdale, M 2013, A Child is put to work at a militia-run mine in Watsa, image, National Geographic, accessed 4 June 2015, <

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/conflict-minerals/bleasdale-photography>>

Carolus 2006, 'Leopold II,' *Wikipedia*, image, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold\\_II\\_of\\_Belgium#/media/File:Leopold\\_ii\\_garter\\_knight.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold_II_of_Belgium#/media/File:Leopold_ii_garter_knight.jpg)>

Dakoua, R, *Congo Independence*, image, Africa Museum, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
<http://www.africamuseum.be/museum/about-us/museum/history/temporaryexpo/expo-independence>>

Delay, J 2008, *The Specter of History*, Times, image, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
[http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1857974\\_1796166,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1857974_1796166,00.html)>

Operation World, *Map of the Congo*, image, Operation World, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
<http://www.operationworld.org/cong>>

*Patrice Emery Lumumba-First Only Elected Prime Minister of the Congo*, image, image, The Rising Continent, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
<https://therisingcontinent.wordpress.com/2013/04/04/after-patrice-lumumba/>>

Stairs, *Rwandan Troops in Eastern DRC weeks after launching a surprise operation in Eastern Congo*, ' image, Wordpress, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
<http://jamesstairs.com/my-work-2/a-war-with-many-fronts-congo-conflict-enters-a-new-phase/>>

Whiteman, B 2012, Children of the Second Congo War, image, Glogster, accessed 4 June 2015, <  
<http://www.glogster.com/beccawhiteman/children-of-the-second-congo-war/g-6mimgelcrb2l7dvpkns3sa0>>