

Global Crises in the News: Staging New Wars, Disasters, and Climate Change

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We live in a world increasingly defined by global crises. These are crises whose origins and outcomes cannot adequately be encompassed or explained by national or even international frames of reference. How they are *staged* in the world's news media proves critical to their constitution as "global crises" and variously conditions their course and conduct. This paper grounds and elaborates on these claims in respect of three selected global crises — new wars, major disasters, and climate change. Here, three general forms of news staging are delineated in terms of *global surveillance*, *global-focusing events*, and *global spectacle*. Global crisis reporting, it is argued, variously expresses today's "negatively globalized planet" (Bauman, 2007), but how global crises become staged and enacted within the news media also extends their global reach and variously intensifies their responses. In such ways, the news media may even, on occasion, contribute to an emergent global "cosmopolitanism outlook" (Beck, 2006).

Keywords: Global crises; News staging; Globalization; New wars, Disasters, Climate change

We live in a world increasingly defined by global crises. Climate change, the war on terror, financial meltdowns, forced migrations, pandemics, food and water shortages, impending energy crises, humanitarian disasters, new wars, and the permanent emergency of world poverty. These are just some of the crises whose origins and outcomes cannot adequately be encompassed or explained by national or even international frames of reference.¹ This is because, in today's interconnected and interdependent

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¹ There is no shortage of "global crises" or potential sponsors committed to defining them as such in the public eye (See, for example, Held, 2004; Annan, 2005; Boyd-Barrett, 2005; Beck, 2006; Glen & Gordon, 2007; IISS, 2007; Lull, 2007; Energy Watch Group, 2007; UNEP, 2007; Seitz, 2008). And this, in part, of course, is the point: Global crises, as with other social problems, require sponsors or claim-makers to define and articulate them in the media if they are to become legitimate public concerns and sites of wider political mobilization and action (for a review, see Cottle, 2000). Even so, global crises today often precede and threaten to exceed social constructionist accounts when confined to practices

world, global crises are the dark side of a "negatively globalised planet" where "there cannot be local solutions to globally originated and globally invigorated problems" (Bauman, 2007, pp. 25-26).

Global crises cannot be regarded as exceptional or aberrant events only, erupting without rhyme or reason or dislocated from the contemporary world (dis)order (Beck, 1999; Calhoun, 2004; Duffield, 2007). Nor can they be adequately understood as the dreadful remnants of an earlier pre-modern era that has somehow escaped the civilizing forces of modernity (Albrow, 1996). Rather, they are endemic to the contemporary global world, enmeshed within it. But, importantly, they also become enacted within that same world. Today, global crises are publicly defined, legitimated, and mobilized as "global crises" within the world's news media (Shaw, 1996; Cottle, 2009; Beck 2009). How this news enactment or *staging* takes place and with what possible repercussions forms the focal point of this discussion.

Though leading social theorists of globalization generally acknowledge communication flows and world news media as integral to processes of globalization, how exactly news media communicate and thereby enter into the course and conduct of different global crises has generally found sparse recognition, much less detailed engagement.² With one notable exception, globalization theorists generally undertheorize how global crises can themselves become drivers of global change and not simply the epiphenomena of underlying globalizing dynamics.³

of language, claims-making and media discourse. As discussed below, both social constructionist and realist epistemologies are warranted in an age of global crises, where "Alongside (and independent of) the material explosiveness, discourse-strategic action potentially renders politically explosive the dangers which are normalized in the circuits of legitimation of administration, politics, law and management and spread uncontrollably on a global scale" (Beck, 2009, p. 91).

² Most theorists of globalization acknowledge the "globality of communication systems" (Albrow, 1996, p. 4) and the "consolidation of global media" as crucial to processes of globalization (Robertson, 1992, p. 27). They see "media and communications and their role in promoting global interdependencies, as the most dynamic force" (Giddens, 2005, p. 68; see also Giddens, 1990, p. 77), or as one of the "deep drivers of globalization" (Held, 2004, p. 11). For the most part, though, they have not sought to pursue how today's global media systems and world news ecology shape the constitution and conduct of different global crises.

³ Debates within the field of globalization theory have tended to polarize between those theorists who either emphasize multiple or mono-causalities, cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity, Western universalism or particularism, late modernity or post-modernity, and the global or the local (Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Appadurai, 1996; Waters, 2001; Held & McGrew, 2003; Urry, 2003; Held, 2004; Ritzer, 2007). So-called "globalists," "skeptics," and "transformationalists" stake out their differing positions on this contested field (Held & McGrew, 2003). But few have explicitly sought to theorize the proliferating nature of global crises and how, if at all, the latter are communicated within the world's media and with what further globalizing impacts. David Harvey, for example, theorizes the condition of postmodernity in terms of capitalist "crises of overaccumulation" that "typically spark the search for spatial and temporal resolutions" leading to "time-space compression" (1989, p. 327) — processes theorized more recently as driving globalization and "accumulation by dispossession"

Media and communication scholars for their part have sought to develop theoretical frameworks that recognize the proliferation of accelerating, synchronizing, vertical and horizontal news flows, and contra-flows, now transacted on a daily basis around the globe — whether conceived, for example, as "the global news arena" (Reese, 2008) or "global public space" (Volkmer, 2007). But researchers have yet to engage more empirically and comparatively with how exactly different global crises are enacted within today's overlapping and interpenetrating "world news ecology"⁴ and with what further global(izing)

(Harvey, 2003, p. 141). Manuel Castells' magnum opus on the "network society" and the new "space of flows" (Castells, 1996) theorizes how informational capitalism produces a "fourth world" of social exclusion and "black holes" of communication (Castells, 1998, pp. 70-165), and Zygmunt Bauman addresses the systemic production and reproduction of globally "wasted lives" (Bauman, 2004). David Held and Anthony McGrew, who regard globalization as the widening, intensifying, speeding up, and growing impact of worldwide interconnectedness, note how this same interconnectedness can create new "animosities and conflicts" because "a significant segment of the world's population is either untouched directly by globalization or remains largely excluded from its benefits" (Held & McGrew, 2003, p. 4). And John Urry's thesis of "global complexity" (2003) argues that "emergent systems of information and communication are the bases for increased reflexivity" and help to create a world of fluids where "the 'structure' of 'societies' has progressively less purchase" (Urry, 2003, p. 139). But he comments that "collective global disasters are the key to forming" what he terms "cosmopolitan global fluids" or the capacity to live simultaneously in the global and the local, the distant and the proximate, the universal and the particular (Urry, 2003, pp. 135-137). (See also Albrow, 1996, p. 4.)

Perhaps most influentially of all, Anthony Giddens has defined globalization as a "stretching process" in which there is "an intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). This definition, as well as core concepts of "time-space distancing," "disembedding," "action at a distance," and "reflexivity," all potentially speak to today's global crises and their communication worldwide as does his general theoretical statements on the globalization of risk in the modern world (Giddens, 1990, 1994, 2002, 2005). But, disappointingly, he doesn't go on to develop these ideas in respect of processes of global mediation, though he does argue for the media's indispensable involvement in the forward march of democracy. "In a world based upon active communication," he suggests, "hard power — power that comes only from the top down — loses its edge" as authoritarian regimes become undermined by their "loss of information monopoly" in today's "intrinsically open framework of global communications" (Giddens, 2002, pp. 72-73). In these and other leading statements about globalization, then, questions of global crises, the dark side of globalization, and their staging within the global news media remain conspicuously underdeveloped.

⁴ The "world news ecology" comprises overlapping and interpenetrating communication flows, traditional mainstream and alternative news media, and new interactive technologies of news dissemination and user-generated content. Its underpinning political economy, ownership structures, and leading news agencies and 24/7 global news services grant continuing dominance to Western media corporations, interests, and agendas, but today's world news ecology is complexly structured nonetheless. Regional and national news formations, both established and emergent, as well as contra-news flows from the

impacts. When the reporting of international conflicts and crises is theorized more directly, general differences of news staging often become lost from view — whether through the conceptual prisms of "manufacturing consent" (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) and the Western "emergency imaginary" (Calhoun, 2004, 2008), or "cultural chaos" (McNair, 2006) and "culture-on-demand" (Lull, 2007).⁵ Theoretical optics such as these, predisposed to see market determinisms, Western interests, and dominant outlooks on the one hand, or cultural indeterminacies, contingencies, and chaos on the other, have yet to explore general differences of news staging and how these variously intervene within and shape the course and conduct of different global crises.

The following discussion delineates three general modalities of global crisis staging within and across today's world news ecology and examines how each now powerfully enters into and shapes the constitution of global crises. But first a few more words on global crises and ideas of news staging.

Global Crises and News Staging

Global crises by definition and enactment, as suggested, are not confined behind national borders, nor are their origins often best accounted for through national prisms of understanding. Their de-territorializing impacts register across sovereign national boundaries, surrounding regions, and beyond, and they can also become subject to systems of governance and forms of civil society response that are no less geographically dispersed or transnational in scope. Crucially, global crises are highly dependent on global news media. Here, the ideas and arguments of Ulrich Beck can help us to think about how this is so.

"rest to the West," the local to the global, and new oppositional and alternative sources of news and cross-over journalism productions, all make for a far more complex communicative space of world news than could have been envisaged even a few years ago. Traditional newspapers and mainstream broadcasting still predominate within this news ecology, but they are increasingly surrounded by and/or actively immersed within the ubiquitous Internet with its enhanced connectivity, interactivity, and invigoration of new forms of online journalism and blogosphere(s). For the most part, however, mainstream journalism organizations, news outlets, and associated ideas of professionalism continue to enact traditional ideas and practices of editorial control, agenda-setting, and source access, selecting who enters "their" news domain and how and when — though they increasingly make use of forms of citizen journalism and growing blogosphere(s).

⁵ For an earlier study that identifies how news media can, in fact, enact different responses to global crises, as well as observing the central role of news media in their constitution, see Martin Shaw's *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises* (1996), and for a recent study that insightfully explores different "regimes of pity" structuring news reports of human suffering, see Lillie Chouliaraki's *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (2006). This article develops its encompassing argument based on the author's *Global Crisis Reporting: Journalism in the Global Age* (2009).

Beck, more than any other social theorist, posits global threats and crises centre stage in his theorization of the global age, extending ideas of "risk society" (1992) to "world risk society" (1999) and discerning at least three different axes of world crises that he terms, respectively, "ecological, economic and terrorist interdependency crises" (2006, p. 22). Not only does he point to the endemic nature of global crises as defining forces of the global age, Beck also theorizes how they may yet unleash radical impulses in a new global "civilizational community of fate" (2006, p. 13):

. . . the cosmopolitan outlook means that, in a world of global crises and dangers produced by civilization, the old differentiations between internal and external, national and international, us and them, lose their validity and a new cosmopolitan realism becomes essential to survival. (Beck 2006, p. 14)

His view of "enforced enlightenment" and "cosmopolitan realism" opens up the possibility that the "manufactured uncertainties" (1992) and, more recently, "manufactured insecurities" (2009) produced by world risk society prompt transnational reflexivity, global cooperation, and coordinated responses (though these same processes may also prompt much else besides). Beck's emphasis on staging in world risk society follows on from this central theoretical preoccupation with "risk," which is defined, essentially, as those man-made, incalculable, uninsurable threats and catastrophes that are anticipated, but which remain invisible and therefore highly dependent on how they become defined and contested in "knowledge" and the media.

Risks are social constructions and definitions based upon corresponding relations of definition. Their existence takes the form of (scientific and alternative scientific) knowledge. As a result their "reality" can be dramatized or minimized, transformed or simply denied according to the norms which decide what is known and what is not. They are products of struggles and conflicts over definitions within the context of specific relations of definitional power, hence the (in varying degrees successful) results of stagings. (Beck, 2009, p. 30)

It is this core understanding of risk, therefore, that leads Beck to grant media staging such centrality and significance (1992, 2009), and it is this same theorization that also posits the media with "political explosiveness" (2009, p. 98).⁶ When staged in the media, he suggests, global crises can become "cosmopolitan events":

Thus "cosmopolitan events" are highly mediatized, highly selective, highly variable, highly symbolic local and global, national and international, material and communicative reflexive experiences and blows of fate that transcend and efface all social boundaries and overturn the global order that holds sway in people's minds. (Beck, 2009, pp. 70-71)

⁶ For an earlier review of Beck's thesis of risk society and his theorization of media, see Cottle (1998).

It is not necessary to accept Beck's entire theoretical edifice, or its overriding preoccupation with "risk" and consequent emphasis on the "anticipated catastrophes" of contemporary world risk society, to acknowledge how global crises and catastrophes materially unfolding in the world today have become critically dependent on processes of social construction (cultural mediation) in the news media. As Beck himself argues, social constructionist and realist epistemologies are both required to grasp the nature of reflexive modernization. Here, we must seek to grasp, epistemologically, how the imminent risks and catastrophes of "world risk society" and their social construction within knowledge and media in "world risk society" interpenetrate and mutually condition each other. Both naïve realist and strong constructivist epistemologies are thus found wanting as means of interrogating the nature of contemporary crises and threats (Beck, 2009, pp. 85-93).

In what ways news staging of different global crises may, or may not, provide the foundation for "cosmopolitan moments" clearly begs serious reflection and demands empirical inquiry. Beck's writings are exceptional amongst theorists of globalization in forefronting global crises and media staging so centrally, but we need to attend more closely to the possible different modalities of news staging and how the latter now variously condition global crises and their enactment. This discussion sets out, then, to get a better analytical fix on general differences of contemporary news staging and does so by turning to three different contemporary global crises — new wars, (un)natural disasters, and climate change — crises that can only be adequately theorized in global context. Here, three general news stagings are distinguished and discussed in terms of "global surveillance," "global-focusing events," and "global spectacle." Some general differences of news staging are thereby thrown into sharper relief, and this serves to illuminate how news staging now variously enters into the constitution and conduct of global crises.

Global Surveillance: New Wars, New Humanitarianism

New wars take place in failed and failing states and are usually defined by their extreme violence: the deliberate targeting of non-combatants, use of systematic terror, and forced expulsions ("ethnic cleansing"). They must also be situated and theorized in global context (SIPRI, 2004; Duffield, 2001; Kaldor, 2006; Ploughshares, 2007) where their global entanglement "challenges the distinction between the 'internal' and the 'external' " (SIPRI, 2004, p. 1). For example, when global forces exacerbate processes of state failure and dissolution and prompt shadow economies, global transactions, criminal and terrorist networks, and new forms of social violence (Dillon & Reid, 2000; Duffield, 2001, 2007; Kaldor, 2006), these are forms of global enmeshing and response — from the inside out. When military intervention, under the guise of humanitarian motives ("military humanism") and humanitarian interests allied to military and state objectives ("humanitarian war" and "human security"), come to characterize Western forms of intervention, as they have in recent decades (Macrae, 2002; Rieff, 2002; Duffield, 2007; de Waal, 2007; Weiss, 2007; Barnett & Weiss, 2008), those on the receiving end become enmeshed within the surrounding regime of global power — from the outside in. The humanitarian catastrophes that result from new wars cannot, therefore, be seen as aberrations only or as simply excess violence;

according to Mary Kaldor, they are endemic to the nature of new wars, their goals, and methods and means of funding (Kaldor, 2006, pp. 95- 118).⁷

But new wars are not only globally enmeshed in the ways noted above. When subject to global news surveillance, their violence vicariously reverberates beyond the killing zone. Global news surveillance, the first of three general modalities of news staging, is more than simply monitoring and information conveyance — a matter of cognition — and should not be assumed to be relatively inconsequential when compared, say, to more elaborate and performative forms of news staging discussed later. In a world in which the capacity to bear witness to human suffering anywhere in the world has become technologically feasible, both the fact and potential for global surveillance can become implicated within those same processes and events in different and sometimes profound ways.

In a world progressively sensitized to human rights upheld by international institutions and frameworks of law, the imperative to report atrocities and collective human rights abuses around the world finds normative support (Weiss, 2007; Kaldor, 2003, 2007). This is all the more so in a time when national sovereignty becomes qualified. Both the United Nations General Assembly and the UN World Summit of 2005, for example, have endorsed the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) principle (Weiss, 2007; Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Evans 2008). As formulated by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001), R2P allows, under certain circumstances, human rights to trump national sovereignty through humanitarian intervention and by force if necessary.

State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself . . . Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect. (Weiss, 2007, p. 100)

In the post-Cold War era, then, this "new humanitarianism" (Reiff, 2002; Barnett & Weiss, 2008) can recognize collective human rights abuses as global crises even though the interests of major state powers may not be directly involved, because there is "a worldwide *perception* of large-scale violations of life and globally legitimate principles" (Shaw, 1996, p. 156; Ignatieff, 1998). In this context, news surveillance of

⁷ In the context of new wars, the earlier concept of "complex emergencies" (Keen, 2008) ultimately mystifies this global "complex" of determinants and dynamics, interests, and power relations involved within such humanitarian emergencies, or what Mark Duffield has recently termed the state of "permanent emergency" and "unending war" (Duffield, 2007). In new wars, methods of warfare are no longer principally oriented to the capture of territory and states or conducted through decisive battles but directed at the control of populations by sowing "fears and hatreds" (Kaldor, 2006). The political economy of warfare also undergoes a fundamental shift from centralized and autarchic modes of state funding to decentralized and non-hierarchical means, including émigré remittances, external government assistance, diversion of international humanitarian aid, and military plunder and criminality. (Kaldor, 2006).

human rights abuses around the globe can become historically infused within and register the institutionalized norms and surrounding culture of humanitarianism. This is not a rehashed "CNN effect" claim based on the dubious causality said to run from scenes of human suffering to public outrage to foreign policy response and military intervention (Gilboa, 2005; Robinson, 2005). But it does point to the constitutive role of global news surveillance within an increasingly human rights-aware world where global news media can now perform important and differentiated roles in respect of three temporally distinct phases of the responsibility to protect doctrine: "the responsibility to prevent," "the responsibility to react," and "the responsibility to rebuild" (Weiss, 2007, p. 101; see also Price & Thompson, 2002).

Global news surveillance is not only confined to new wars and the new humanitarianism, it also conditions the "new Western way of war" (Shaw, 2005). In modern Western wars, argues Martin Shaw, the physical risks of war are transferred from governments to the military, and, because of the potential political damage incurred by news scenes of military casualties, military risks are also transferred to civilian non-combatants (via high altitude bombing, for example) (see also Tumber & Webster, 2006). This helps to explain the increased incidence of civilian casualties, so-called "collateral damage," in contemporary Western wars in contrast to the deliberate use of violence targeting non-combatants in new wars — though in both civilians are exposed to increased deadly violence. Shaw's thesis of risk-transfer war thus recognizes the enhanced importance of the news media in managing public perceptions of war as well as the added risks to the political legitimacy of states, politicians, and military when war is subject to global news surveillance.

Because electorates are almost exclusively national, Western governments still think largely of national surveillance. However, even this element of surveillance is mediated through the global and the international. National publics take notice of what allied governments and publics think, as well as of broader international official and public opinion. National media are influenced by global media. National politics and media are affected by norms of international legality and by decisions and judgments [sic] in international institutions. Although governments think in terms of accountability in a national public sphere, this is never autonomous to anything like the extent to which it was in the total war era. On the contrary, governments must always recognize how integrated global media, institutions and public opinion have become. (Shaw, 2005, p. 75)

The significance of global news surveillance is not exhausted, however, with reference to the global spotlighting of human rights abuses, humanitarian actions, or even the conditioning impacts exerted in the "new Western way of war" — important as these are. Some wars and conflicts remain largely invisible within the world's news media, notwithstanding the advanced development of the technological means of recording and disseminating news images around the world (AlertNet, 2009). But even here, when lack of news visibility renders some wars and conflicts into "hidden wars" and "forgotten disasters," the latter are not necessarily untouched by the technological capability for global news media surveillance — such is the universalizing impact of potential news surveillance.

If new wars are characterized by endemic, extreme violence targeting non-combatants in contravention of international humanitarian law and universal human rights, those who seek to commit such acts will generally seek to do so out of sight of the world's news cameras (Rwanda, Srebrenica, Aceh, DRC, Darfur).⁸ It is for this reason, in part, that the deliberate targeting of journalists (and humanitarian workers) by insurgents and combatants has increased in recent years with deadly results (CPJ, 2008). In globally mediated times, the news media, as paradoxical as it may sound, may influence the field of violence even when outside it, reporting or not from a distance. Here, the absence of the world's news media unwittingly becomes complicit with the murderous practices of contemporary warfare and, by its collective silence, enables war's most inhumane expressions. In a news environment of potential global surveillance, "proper distance" (Silverstone, 2007) shrinks necessarily, if repugnantly, to the killing zone.

In today's global world, news staging as surveillance variously conditions both the course and conduct of socially organized violence that we call "war." It can enter into the preparation of humanitarian interventions (or imposition of Western "liberal peace") in new wars; it can shape the "new Western way of war," sensitive to Western public opinion and national and global news media and the resultant transfer of risks and generation of collateral damage; and so, too, may it influence the deliberate killing of civilians under the cover of news media invisibility in hidden wars. In these ways, news staging as global news surveillance has become profoundly enmeshed within new wars, the new humanitarianism, and new forms of warfare — conditioning their course and conduct. In such ways, war becomes mediatized, and global news surveillance acts as the hinge between new wars and hidden wars, collective human rights abuses and the new humanitarianism, and Western war and "risk-transfer war."

Global-focusing Events: (Un)natural Disasters

According to a recent Oxfam report, "the total number of natural disasters has quadrupled in the last two decades – most of them floods, cyclones, and storms. Over the same period, the number of people affected by disasters has increased from around 174 million to an average of over 250 million a year" (Oxfam, 2007). Many of these so-called "natural disasters" are the result of anthropogenic climate change (discussed next) and can, in any case, be understood as unequally globally distributed and socialized hazards. So-called "natural disasters" always exhibit a socialized nature with their unequal impacts around the globe. Buildings, not earthquakes, kill people, and risk reduction strategies invariably cost money, hence: "Natural hazards only become disasters when they exceed a community's ability to cope" (Holmes & Niskala 2007, p. 2, see also UNEP, APELL, 2001).

Not all (un)natural disasters automatically find prominent news exposure. The vast majority of "uninsured lives" in the South, it seems, are not only cheap (Duffield, 2007) but also unnewsworthy. This

⁸ A possible exception here, though no less media reflexive, is the deliberate staging and production of inhumane acts as "violent symbolism" choreographed in front of cameras and uploaded to the Internet and the world's news media to send a chill down the spine of the world (Ignatieff, 2004; Cottle, 2006, pp. 152-162). In terms of news staging, such events are best conceptualized as forms of source-engineered global spectacle.

is often explained in terms of impinging geopolitical interests, national cultural outlooks, a professional "calculus of death," and the operation of foreign news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harrison & Palmer, 1986; Benthall, 1993; Philo, 1993; Minear et al., 1996; Rotberg & Weiss, 1996; Moeller, 1999; Bacon & Nash, 2002; IFRCRCS, 2005; Seaton, 2005; CARMA, 2006). When staged in the world's news media today, however, there is often more to global disaster reporting than selective silence, fixation on the latest body counts, or focus on human interest stories about "our" nationals involved. Staged in the news media, major disasters can also become opportunities for elites to capitalize on the "disaster shock" of catastrophic events (Klein, 2007), ritualized moments of national and international unity and solidarity, or occasions that give vent to voices of dissent and criticism to galvanize forces for change — whether in the countries affected or worldwide. When staged in these ways, disasters become global-focusing events, our second general modality of news staging.

The reporting of the South Asian tsunami (2004) and Hurricane Katrina (2005) serve to illustrate how major disasters can indeed become staged as global-focusing events. Caused by an underground earthquake in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Aceh, on the Northern Indonesian island of Sumatra, the resulting tsunami led to massive destruction and an estimated loss of more than 220,000 lives across coastal regions of Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Somalia, and the Seychelles. Predictably, perhaps it was first reported in the Western news media (and elsewhere) through national journalist prisms and cultural outlooks — initial disaster reports, for example, focused on the ever-rising death tolls followed by stories of involved nationals and affected tourist destinations. But the Western news media thereafter also began to inscribe their coverage with collective appeals and a moral infusion that extended beyond their own national boundaries to encompass the geographically distant wasted human landscape and its survivors.

This ritualistic appeal to ideas of moral community found expression through a succession of newspaper articles and features with headlines variously drawing and re-drawing boundaries of solidarity and collectivity — nationally, internationally, and transnationally: "Britain Unites to Help Victims," "£1 Million Raised in One Hour After Tidal Wave Disaster," and "Generous Britons Pledge To Help Victims" (*International Express*, p. 4, January 10, 2005); "Friendship Blossoms in the Rubble, Indonesia, Australia Closer" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 5, 2005); "Aid Forges Closer Links," "Generosity Worldwide Amazes UN," and "We're in For the Long Haul, Howard Tells Indonesians" (*The Courier Mail*, January 7, 2005).

Such headlines encode relations of national hierarchy and power while they proclaim international solidarity and extend boundaries of collective compassion (Ignatieff, 1998). As time passed, further opportunities for collective representations instantiating both "community" and the "globalization of emotions" (Beck, 2006, pp. 5-6) also presented themselves. This included public ceremonies of remembrance, both religious and secular, and principally played out within and through the news sphere: "Let Us Pray: A Nation Stops to Remember" (*Sunday Telegraph*, January 8, 2005) and "They Are Not Alone: Australia Stops in Sorrow, In Fraternity" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, January 8, 2005).

Not all disasters staged in the news media, however, prompt such consensual and integrative forms of ritualized news coverage, from the national to the international. Some globally reported

disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, can simultaneously become focusing opportunities for states to militarize disaster zones and increase their control of affected populations and, occasionally, so too can they tip over into political contention and challenge on a worldwide stage. In the terms of Jeffrey Alexander and Ronald Jacobs (1998), such events become "mediatized public crises" moving discernibly beyond the more integrative appeals of ceremonial "media events" (Dayan & Katz, 1992; see also Alexander, 2006).

Celebratory media events of the type discussed by Dayan and Katz tend to narrow the distance between the indicative and the subjunctive, thereby legitimating the powers and authorities outside the civil sphere. Mediatized public crises, on the other hand, tend to increase the distance between the indicative and the subjunctive, thereby giving to civil society its greatest power for social change. (Alexander & Jacobs, 1998, p. 28)

In today's globally encompassing and interpenetrating news ecology, moreover, this public and political reflexivity can be conducted both inside and outside the national public sphere and conditioned by wider communication flows (Serra, 2000). A particularly insightful and detailed study of U.S. press reporting of Hurricane Katrina, for example, documents how sections of the press and its reporting perpetuated a number of disaster myths that served to frame the disaster aftermath in politically consequential ways.

. . . initial media coverage of Katrina's devastating impacts was quickly replaced by reporting that characterized disaster victims as opportunistic looters and violent criminals and that presented individual and group behavior following the Katrina disaster through the lens of civil unrest. Later, narratives shifted again and began to metaphorically represent the disaster-stricken city of New Orleans as a war zone and to draw parallels between the conditions in that city and urban insurgency in Iraq. These media frames helped guide and justify actions undertaken by military and law enforcement entities that were assigned responsibility of the post-disaster emergency response. The overall effect of media coverage was to further bolster arguments that only the military is capable of effective action during disasters. (Tierney et al., 2006, pp. 60-61)

These myths also became recycled internationally by different national news media. But news media around the world also gave vent to a more critical elaboration and framing of these same events (as did some sections of the U.S. news media) (see Bennett et al., 2007; Durham, 2008). Criticisms of city officials, failed evacuation plans, inadequate relief efforts, and the seeming abandonment of some of the poorest people in American society to their fate as well as the militarized response to the aftermath were also voiced in the world's news media. U.S. President George Bush was identified by some as a principal source of blame for not heeding advance warnings and then, unthinkingly, commending state officials "for doing a great job." By such means, Hurricane Katrina also exposed the normally invisible inequalities of race and poverty in American society and became an opportunity for political appropriation

by different projects and discourses worldwide. The BBC online news Web site, for example, positioned itself as a portal for world opinion, exhibiting opinion pieces from newspapers from around the world and providing hyperlinks to many of them. It is instructive to consult just a few of them here:

Bush is completely out of his depth in this disaster. Katrina has revealed America's weaknesses: its racial divisions, the poverty of those left behind by its society, and especially its president's lack of leadership.

Phillipe Grangereau in France's *Liberation*
(Web site last accessed April 9, 2009)

Hurricane Katrina has proved that America cannot solve its internal problems and is incapable of facing these kinds of natural disasters, so it cannot bring peace and democracy to other parts of the world. Americans now understand that their rulers are only seeking to fulfill their own hegemonic goals.

Editorial in Iran's *Siyasat-e Ruz*
(Web site last accessed April 9, 2009)

Co-operation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions can no longer be delayed, but there are still countries — including the U.S. — which still do not take the issue seriously. However, faced with global disasters, all countries are in the same boat. The U.S. hurricane disaster is a 'modern revelation,' and all countries of the world including the U.S. should be aware of this.

Xing Shu Li in Malaysia's *Sun Chew Jit Poh*
(Web site last accessed April 9, 2009)

This tragic incident reminds us that the United States has refused to ratify the Kyoto accords. Let's hope the U.S. can from now on stop ignoring the rest of the world. If you want to run things, you must first lead by example. Arrogance is never a good advisor.

Jean-Pierre Aussant in France's *Figaro*
(Web site last accessed April 9, 2009)

Katrina is testing the U.S.; Katrina is also creating an opportunity for world unity. Cuba and North Korea's offer of sympathy and aid to the U.S. could also result in some profound thinking in the U.S., and the author hopes that it will not miss the opportunity.

Shen Dingli in China's *Dongfang Zaobao*
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4216142.stm>)
(Web site last accessed April 9, 2009)

Differences of geo-political interests and cultural outlooks clearly register in these very different national views from around the world and here relayed via BBC online news onto the global news stage. Clearly, the exposure of America's continuing racial divides and depth of poverty by the hurricane sullied its projected international image for some as a "free democracy." Countries normally regarded as political pariahs or as economic supplicants by the U.S. government turned the tables and offered their support to the world's mightiest power in its evident failure to respond to its homegrown humanitarian disaster. And yet others took the opportunity to make the connection to climate change and the irony of the U.S. position having not signed the Kyoto Protocol. Indeed, such was the mounting criticism played out in the news media that commentators even began to speak of George Bush's "Katrinagate." In such ways, then, Hurricane Katrina became staged as a global-focusing event.

In today's global news ecology, the flows of news and commentary traversing continents, countries, and cultures can seemingly infuse different views and values into the field of disaster communication — from the outside in, and inside out. Some disasters, evidently, become staged as "focusing events," giving vent to the national political field, its contending discourses and struggles for change; others are staged as moments of national integration and/or the pursuit of political and corporate projects of control. And some, when witnessed by the world's news media from afar, such as Katrina, Cyclone Nargis in Southern Burma, or the earthquake in Sichuan province in China (the latter two in May 2008), become staged as global-focusing events, where news media give vent to different discourses, views, and voices circulating worldwide. These, as in the cases of Burma and China, can involve the public evaluation of state legitimacy following their actions or inactions in respect of disasters and the humanitarian needs of their citizens.

Global Spectacle: Climate Change

The release in early 2007 of the latest International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was based on a near consensus of the world's scientists and included dire forecasts about rising world temperatures and environmental impacts (IPCC, 2007). This led to calls for urgent global action at the G8 Summit Meeting, and then the UN-sponsored conference in Bali later that year, the most important since Kyoto. This proved to be a transformative moment in the news career of climate change. At first signaled relatively infrequently in scientifically framed news reports (Carvalho, 2007), then contested by a small group of news-privileged climate change skeptics (Antilla, 2005; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004, 2007; Monbiot, 2007), climate change finally came of age as a widely recognized "global crisis," demanding responses from all the world's nations. If IPCC predictions and those of more recent scientific modeling come to pass over the next few decades (and the latter now suggest that the 2007 IPCC predictions underestimated the acceleration, severity, and cumulative effects of feedback mechanisms on the world's climate systems), then climate change may yet prove to be the most powerful of drivers summoning into existence Beck's "civilizational community of fate."

The Western news media's spectacular visualization of climate change through dramatic and symbolic scenes collected from around the world has undoubtedly helped to establish its status as a widely recognized global crisis and serves to illuminate a third general modality of global crisis staging as global spectacle. Here, the news media do not only function in terms of global surveillance, throwing a spotlight

on events of international and transnational interest and concern, or as global focusing events, granting news space and venting worldwide criticisms, challenges and the voices of dissent. Rather, the news media adopt a more performative stance, actively dramatizing and enacting certain issues as "global crises" and doing so through the modality of constructed global spectacle or, more accurately, "spectacularization."

Following the release of the IPCC report in 2007, editors and journalists, camera crews, and photojournalists working in mainstream Western news media set about visualizing and dramatizing climate change, and they did so through the production of increasing numbers of crafted TV packages, press front pages and elaborate features, and streamed video reports accessed via global news Web sites. These spectacular forms of news presentation often did more than simply report and record the subject of climate change; they actively invited audiences to recognize and acknowledge the environmental change and devastation that is already being caused and its impacts on vulnerable communities around the world. Spectacular media images can play a powerful and affecting role in the construction and communication of social problems as well as associated processes of legitimation, mobilization, and political action (Raboy & Dagenais, 1992; Kellner, 2003; Cottle, 2006; Lester, 2007), and so, too, can they contribute powerfully to our sense of who we are and our felt relationship to the environment and others (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Szerszynski & Togood, 2000; Urry, 2002). When deployed in relation to the global environment and global climate change, images may even help to support a sense of "ecological citizenship" (Urry, 1999, p. 315). We can agree, then, with Beck: "The catastrophic consequences of climate change must be made visible" if they are to be "effectively staged" and "generate pressure for action" (Beck, 2009, p. 86).

Depictions of the globe in the context of news of climate change have become commonplace in the news media, as they have in the iconography of news journalism more generally. It is now typical, for example, for broadcasting corporations around the world to brand their news programs, opening title sequences, and logos with images of the globe and, invariably, with themselves depicted at the hub of world communication flows. Images of the globe also now proliferate in climate change reporting as well as in (un)natural disaster reporting, where satellite pictures track and capture, for example, the course of hurricanes, deforestation, forest fires, and melting ice sheets. These images that connote a shared planet and threatened environment serve as icons of globality, and they now abound in the global media sphere.

Images that function more indexically to stand in for global processes of climate change now also regularly feature across the news landscape. And here, some sections of the news media have sought to champion climate change awareness, often through visually arresting images that aim to register the full force and threat posed by global warming around the world (Lester & Cottle, *forthcoming*). *The Independent* newspaper in the UK, for example, has prominently displayed its editorial outlook on global climate change with a series of spectacular front pages. These have included: an image of a melting ice flow, representing the breaking up of the Greenland ice cap under the headline, "On the Edge: Greenland ice cap breaking up at twice the rate it was five years ago, says scientists Bush tried to gag" (*The Independent*, front page, February 17, 2006); a picture of a sun-bleached animal skull, defoliated tree, and scorched red desert with the banner headline, "The Century of Drought" (*The Independent*, front page, October 4, 2006); and a picture of an idyllic palm tree island surrounded by corals and green sea

with "S.O.S" emblazoned across it, followed by: "On the front line of global warming, Pacific Islanders battle to save what is left of their country" (*The Independent*, front page, July 16, 2007).

In images such as these, the abstract science of climate change is rendered culturally meaningful and environmentally consequential; geographically remote spaces become literally perceptible, "knowable," places of possible concern. This performative use of a visual environmental rhetoric (Deluca, 1999; Cottle, 2006, pp. 130-137) is not only confined to select newspapers. Mainstream broadcasters, whether the BBC in the UK, ABC in Australia or CNN in the U.S., have all, in the wake of IPCC reports, commissioned special reports and/or dispatched correspondents to remote places, from the Arctic to the Amazon, to visualize the consequences of climate change, as have many others broadcasters and journalists around the world. In 2007, News Corp. CEO Rupert Murdoch publicly committed his media outlets to reporting climate change as a real threat and reporting it in new vivid ways. He also committed his corporation to become carbon neutral (Nash, 2007, p. 3). Climate change, it seems, has eventually come of age in the news media as a "global crisis." *The Times* British newspaper, which had earlier given vociferous vent to the views and voices of climate change skeptics (Carvalho, 2007), can now produce a series of special Sunday magazine supplements, replete with free DVD produced by Discovery Channel titled "Nature's Fury," pull-out posters of global warming, and accounts of the "fallacy" of climate skeptics (*The Sunday Times*, November 4, 2007). The first of these posters proclaims, for example, "Natural forces, illustrated here, control the temperature of the planet. But that fine equilibrium is now threatened by man's (sic) greenhouse emissions."

The new acceptance by most news media of the reality and impacts of human-induced climate change, evidently, now registers across news agendas and in the performative deployment of spectacular images that have played a prominent part in "bringing home" the threat and reality of global climate change and its positioning for many, particularly within the West, as possibly "the" global crisis of the age.

Conclusion

This article, taking its cue, in part, from Ulrich Beck, has set out to examine how different global crises become staged in the contemporary news media. Examining new wars and the new humanitarianism, major disasters, and climate change, three general modalities of news staging have been analytically distinguished in terms of global surveillance, global-focusing events and global spectacle. Each of these news stagings is characterized by its own complexities, and each, as discussed, now variously enters into the enactment of global crises worldwide. In these different ways, the news media do not only communicate global crises, they also help to constitute them, and in so doing, can powerfully shape their course and conduct.

To be clear, it has not been suggested that these different news stagings are coincident with or simply map onto different global crises or that they cannot coexist and overlap in practice or overtime. Clearly, they often do. New wars and the new humanitarianism, major (un)natural disasters, and climate change, as well as other global crises mentioned at the outset, can all become subject to different forms of news staging across time or simultaneously within and across different news media. But this is the point. General new stagings of global crises can and do assume different forms and with consequences

that reverberate globally. This discussion has simply sought to begin to analytically distinguish between them and address how they can complexly enter into the enactment of global crises. To explain this news staging and unfolding of particular global crises, the paradigmatic orientations and explanatory approaches of political economy, strategic communications, and cultural studies will remain as relevant as ever (Cottle, 2006, pp. 13-32).

Global crises, by origin and outcome, I argue, are enmeshed within the wider global order and in their news staging can become globally extended and intensified — furthering global interdependency, reflexivity, and, even, perhaps, Beck's discerned emergent cosmopolitan outlook. But global news stagings are not destined to necessarily serve processes of "enforced enlightenment," much less promote cosmopolitan solidarity. The continuing pull of the national within the world's news formations and discourses cannot be underestimated (Lee et al., 2005). Wars continue to be reported through blood-tinted glasses colored by national interests and/or returning coffins draped in the national flag. When reporting on distant disasters and humanitarian emergencies, national news media continue to seek out and populate stories with their own "nationals" — whether embodied as victims, survivors, heroes, or concerned celebrities. And, as the global crisis of climate change moves into a new phase of national and international contention, so countries, corporations, and citizens negotiate their respective roles and responsibilities — whether in respect of national policies of mitigation and adaptation, or through governmental support of developing countries confronting the worst effects of global warming. Here, too, actions and reactions are often reported in and through national news prisms and frames of reference.

It would be hard, then, to underestimate the continuing "pull of the national" that continues to often frame global crises in ways consonant to national interests and identities, or the formidable stumbling bloc that this poses to Beck's envisaged "cosmopolitan vision," even when the latter is forced upon the world through the "golden-handcuffs" of proliferating, intensifying global crises that compel nation states to act cooperatively with other nations (Beck, 2009, p. 66). And yet, today's world news ecology and its capacity for staging global crises, whether in terms of global surveillance, global-focusing events, or as global spectacle, also speaks to the possible emergence of a "global public sphere" and the "meta-power of global civil society" (Beck, 2005, pp. 64-71). The globalization of news, as with the theorization of globalization more widely, cannot be conceived in terms of a singular logic or *telos* unfolding inexorably, deterministically, through time and space or different crises — but instead exhibits different dynamics and diverse mediations from the local to the global, including those of news staging.

Just as different global crises are granted differential signaling and staging in the world's news media, so they also find different salience in the academic fields of journalism research and media scholarship. Though international political crises, the war on terror and, belatedly, climate change, for instance, now command considerable research interest. Other world crises — whether, for example, water and food insecurity, pending energy crises, human rights abuses or the "permanent emergency" of world poverty — have yet to receive the attention they deserve. The progress of the UN's millennium goals (UN, 2007) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empowerment, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat major diseases, amongst others, have all yet to receive concerted research attention in respect of processes of global reporting.

Though studies of war and international political crises have developed models and theories of the dynamics and determinants of reporting involved (for example, Hallin, 1986; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Wolfsfeld, 1997; Entman, 2004; Tumber & Palmer, 2004; Bennett et al., 2007), to what extent these can equally serve to account for different forms of global crisis reporting — nationally, internationally and transnationally — has yet to be concertedly explored. Notable studies of national news inflection of global events (Lee et al., 2005), of how national and international public spheres condition each other (Serra, 2000), and how the Internet, for example, is now facilitating transnational networks and interventions within the circuits and flows of communicative power (Bennett, 2003; Castells, 2007) all hold considerable relevance for understanding global crisis communications. But how proliferating and intensifying global crises become constituted and conditioned on the world's news stage and thereby further processes of global interdependency and a growing sense of globality, is now, or should be, of more central concern. How a transnational "cosmopolitan vision," can be forged on the basis of growing recognition of today's global "civilizational community of fate" (Beck, 2006) depends, increasingly, on how global crises are staged in the world's news media.

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