

Chapter 4

Media agenda-setting and donor aid

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On January 26th 2004, the tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean unleashed three floods. The first was quite literally a catastrophic flood; a wall of water that killed hundreds of thousands. The second was a torrent of news coverage that inundated every corner of the globe. The third was an outpouring of humanitarian assistance that was pledged and delivered on an unprecedented scale. Each of these floods was extreme to the point of unique and the combination of the three simply has to be considered one of those few, truly exceptional events that serves as a defining moment in history. And that is the problem.

The problem with this is that our common knowledge regarding the role of the news media in the humanitarian response to crises, and to a lesser extent the provision of development aid, is defined by events like the tsunami. We imagine the norm in terms of the most extreme of the rarest and most unusual events. Over 14,000 disasters have been catalogued since 1965 yet our general understanding of how the media covers them and how that influences the global response is defined by four or five of the biggest and most dramatic cases.¹ A similar problem can be seen in our understanding of media's relationship with development aid. Every year, dozens of donor countries offer development assistance to hundreds of recipient countries and hundreds of organizations assist thousands of communities, but it is the rare instance, usually a scandal or failure of some kind, when development aid becomes prominent in the news. Because these rare cases are what the media brings to our attention, we believe they define both development aid and its relationship to the media. In these extreme cases we have seen undeniable evidence of agenda setting. We saw the flood of tsunami coverage drown the coverage of the concurrent quake in Pakistan and we saw the vast majority of the assistance follow the coverage. However, these extreme cases also lead us to believe that media is an overwhelming influence upon aid, or that it is typical for top-level officials to be involved in the aid response, or that the aid response itself is a significant source of media coverage. In fact, these and many other things that most of us think of as typical only occur in the tiniest fraction of cases.

Treating these extreme cases as the norm is a problem that also extends into the academic research on the role of media in development assistance and disaster aid. Normative and qualitative research methodologies define a significant portion of the research—particularly in terms of disasters,

media and aid—and the vast majority of these studies examine the same huge but extremely rare events that define the popular understanding of the subject. As the previous chapter in this volume makes clear there is significant value in such studies. Extreme events like the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 or hurricane Katrina expose underlying aspects of social and political response in a way that makes them ideal for asking questions regarding the qualities of disaster or development coverage, or how aspects of the coverage compare to ideals, or how we should respond, or how the nature of a media-driven response might be inadequate, inappropriate or inefficient. However, to extract the full value of that approach to the study of these topics, they must be contextualized in terms of a careful analysis of what actually is normal. The statistical empirical analyses described in this chapter are designed to identify the patterns and relationships that define that norm and help us break from the problem of treating the salient extremes as normal.

In addition to the problem of mistaking the extreme for the norm, developing a reliable explanation for how media, agenda setting, and donor responsiveness are intertwined is further complicated by the fact that the subject of study is not static. Over the last three decades, advancing communication technology and other sources of change have altered the relationship between media coverage and response. Further, there are problematic presumptions about these changes and their effects that have become part of the mythology and illusion surrounding the subject. As a result, just describing the current nature of the relationship between media and global humanitarian responses is a challenge.

Separating fact from fiction and developing the empirical and theoretical foundations needed to create a coherent explanation of the interconnections between media and aid has been an extended effort, particularly in the case of disaster or crisis aid. In 1979 a committee of policy officials and researchers gathered for a workshop not unlike this one to address concerns regarding the media's role in the political and social response to disasters.² A great deal of research followed but almost all of it examined local media as an instrument of policy and official response.³

It was not until the mid-to-late 1990s that research into the agenda-setting effects that a donor's domestic media had on the provision of foreign disaster and development aid was added to the research agenda. In part this was due to the policy orientation of the researchers involved in much of this line of study, but it was also a consequence of the simple fact that until that time no one had any reason to believe that there might be significant agenda-setting effects acting upon foreign aid donors. The decision and implementation processes used by aid donors were almost entirely bureaucratic and

the long-standing consensus on the nature of bureaucracies was that those agencies were all but immune to most if not all forms of public pressure or influence.⁴

In the 1990s, two things led researchers to question that belief. First, the US 'humanitarian' invasion of Somalia along with other events commonly referred to in terms of the CNN effect unsettled the presumption that the bureaucratic fortress insulated aid from media influences. It appeared that the media could outflank the fortifications and drive humanitarian responses. Second, the application of agency theory to the study of bureaucracy was demonstrating that the bureaucratic ramparts were far from impenetrable⁵ and it had become clear that bureaucracies were far more dynamic and far more responsive to public demand than anyone could have imagined earlier. The research and theorizing that followed from these two factors led to a new understanding of how advances in communication technology had altered the media-aid relationship, as well as a reconceptualization of the underlying dynamics of the process in terms of agency theory. The expectation of bureaucratic responsiveness to the media which was then developed from agency theory⁶ provided the conceptual foundation that has led to our understanding the current structure and dynamics of the media/aid relationship.

This conceptual development provides an excellent starting point for this discussion, and for the study of development aid bureaucracies the findings are quite straightforward. Media coverage is not an overwhelming influence on the allocations made by development aid agencies, but its substantive effect on aid is roughly equal to the most influential of other factors in the process and it is by far the most consistent influence across time and across donor agencies. *New York Times* coverage has a substantive influence⁷ on the levels of development aid that is roughly equal, if not slightly greater than the impoverishment of the recipient and it has more influence than a recipient's alliance ties with the US. For British development aid, the substantive influence of *Times* coverage is second only to commonwealth membership and it is greater than the poverty of the recipient. *Globe and Mail* coverage's influence upon Canadian aid is substantively greater than all other influences including the other statistically significant factors of poverty, trade and commonwealth membership. For French aid, *Le Monde* coverage is second in substantive influence to status as a former French colony and far more significant than poverty. *Asahi Shinbun* coverage is clearly the most substantively significant influence upon Japanese development aid and this is also the case where it proves to be the most robust influence across donors because the poverty of recipient is not statistically significant in the Japanese aid allocation.

Moving to the examination of disaster aid, the story becomes far more complex. Disaster aid is made in response to events and that makes the statistical analysis of a catalogue of cases far simpler, but there are some intriguing puzzles woven into the media's influence on international disaster response. It is only in the last few months that enough progress has been made in these studies to begin to unravel these puzzles and the discussion provided below presents the first comprehensive outline of the dynamics of the relationship and what they mean for future policy and action.⁸ Thus, the discussion of an agenda setting effect on disaster aid is presented in terms of the puzzle generated by the unexpected discovery that the CNN effect is illusory. Somalia, Bosnia and a few other high-profile events seemed to make it obvious that the 1990s marked the rise of a global political environment defined by instantaneous communication and media-driven foreign policy.⁹ However, in empirical analyses of disaster assistance it was found that starting in roughly 1990, media coverage suddenly *ceased* to be a statistically significant influence on the humanitarian response to natural disasters. The dynamics of the media's agenda setting effect on disaster aid can only be described in terms of the unraveling of this apparent contradiction.

Agency Theory

Agency theory provides the key conceptual foundation for understanding why aid bureaucracies, or any bureaucratic system for that matter, will respond to media coverage. Agency theory reconceptualizes bureaucracies as something roughly equivalent to a commercial service provider. Bureaucracies are thought of as agents hired to perform certain tasks on behalf of a principal and as such, they will behave in much the same manner as agents employed in other contexts. For the study of bureaucracies, the key insight derived from this is that constant monitoring by the principal is not necessary. Instead, principals use the threat of severe negative sanctions to force the agent to monitor its own actions and to strive to provide the best possible service as efficiently as possible. Commercial agents practice this kind of quality control and constant adaptation because they fear losing the business of the principal that hired them. Bureaucratic agents monitor the political environment and constantly adjust their activity in order to avoid giving the elected officials that "hire" them a reason to pull the big stick out from behind the door¹⁰ and threaten the tenure of senior administrators or even the very existence of the agency.

By the mid 1990s the insights from agency theory had led to a wide variety of findings detailing how government bureaucracies had responded to changes in their political environment.¹¹ The changes in the political environment examined were typically big, structural changes or shifts and what had been

left largely unaddressed in the application of agency theory was the means by which these bureaucratic agents monitor their environment. The extensive agenda setting literature provided the perfect suggestion, media coverage, and the cockroach theory of bureaucracy translated that into a mechanism that fit into the punishment-avoidance logic of agency theory.

The Cockroach Theory of Bureaucracy and Aid Response

The term cockroach theory of bureaucracy began as a tongue-in-cheek reference offered in the context of a workshop for aid officials and it turned out to be a metaphorically-compelling and an unfortunately memorable label.¹² Like the beloved insect, bureaucracies strive to consume as much as possible while avoiding getting stomped on. The best way for both insects and bureaucracies to accomplish this is incorporate an avoidance of those bearing shoes into the way they operate. For bureaucracies the wearers of shoes are usually public officials who are themselves accountable to a public constituency, such as elected officials, and in this context it is the news media that represents the light that guides the Italian loafers of doom. News media salience provides a simple and reasonably reliable means for bureaucracies to monitor what is considered politically important. Therefore bureaucracies must pay attention to what is attracting the media's attention and adjust their processes accordingly in order to avoid becoming the focus of negative news media attention themselves.¹³

For foreign aid bureaucracies this translates directly into a simple and easily testable proposition. To avoid the attention of the media aid bureaucracies want to avoid providing too little aid to recipients that the public considers important while also avoiding providing too much to recipients the public considers unimportant. This translates into a simple equation; more coverage means a recipient is more important and the more important the recipient, the more aid it should receive.

Two conceptual points are significant in applying the cockroach theory to foreign aid bureaucracies. The first is that both agency theory and the media responsiveness extension of agency theory are formulated in terms of democratic bureaucracies. For non-democratic donors, there is still reason to expect a similar correlation between media coverage and aid, but the underlying logic would be based upon the expectation of a lateral communication role of the news media. The news media in non-democracies is often used to quickly and efficiently communicate messages, such as policy priorities, across government subdivisions and agencies. Thus, it is more of a top down mechanism, but non-democratic bureaucracies would still follow coverage for policy guidance, including guidance on aid priorities. Second, the simpler the structure of the aid decision and allocation process, the more clearly the news media's influence appears to be. There is substantial evidence of this in the Japanese aid

program.¹⁴ Thus, when additional layers are added to the process, such as happens with multilateral aid programs, the influence should still be present in the priorities that each participant's representative brings to the process, but the overall effect will be less clear cut as the additional layers of decision making alter the result of the influence of the news media coverage.

Development Assistance

Foreign development assistance has been historically analyzed in terms of a tripartite model¹⁵ where humanitarian, strategic and capitalist motives all act simultaneously to influence the aid decision. The humanitarian motive is measured in terms of need, typically using some indication of the wealth of the recipient country, such as the per-capita GNP. The strategic motive is measured in terms of some sort of concrete indication of an established relationship, such as an alliance tie or ongoing relationship based upon a colonial tie and the capitalist motive measured in terms of some measure of trade or resource exploitation. A wide variety of indicators for these motives have been used, usually applied to the study of the US aid program, and most analyses find that strategic and humanitarian motives clearly influence aid in the expected way and the capitalist only finds occasional, marginal support and that support is sensitive to the combination of indicators and control variables used in the analysis.¹⁶

This agenda setting function was expected to work within the bounds set by other factors known to influence aid, such as need, and not to supersede or overwhelm them. From the moment that the thesis was first tested, it was clear that the media's effect upon development aid was a robust and significant addition to the existing factors known to influence development aid.

[Table 4.1 about here]

Data from the analysis of the US development aid program¹⁷ are presented in Table 4.1. The dependent variable is the annual US aid commitment to recipient countries measured in millions of inflation-adjusted US dollars. *New York Times* coverage, measured as the number of stories explicitly mentioning the recipient country in the twelve months leading up to the aid commitment, is the independent variable of interest. The independent variables used to control for other influences upon the aid decision include: The previous year's Per Capita GNP (measured in thousands of inflation-adjusted US dollars) used to control for the humanitarian motive; the previous year's trade balance with the US to address the capitalist motive; the presence of a formal alliance with the US to measure the strategic motive; and the previous year's aid commitment to control for the incremental nature of foreign development aid decision making.¹⁸

In the original analysis, extensive measures were taken to ensure that the findings presented in Table 4.1 are both robust and reliable. A wide variety of additional control variables, alternative specifications of the independent variables and alternative model specifications were tested. Most importantly, two complimentary methods were used to make certain that aid could not be causing the media coverage. First, the media coverage measure is lagged; it measures the coverage in the twelve months leading up to the aid commitment. Second the content of the media coverage was analyzed and development aid was almost never the subject of the *New York Times* coverage. Removing any stories that mention development assistance does not, in any way, alter the pattern of correlations reported. The results in Table 1 are robust and representative of the influences on US development aid.

To get a rough idea of the magnitude of the relationships, we can interpret the statistics in terms of the per-unit effects that the independent variable has in an average case. The .20 coefficient for the *New York Times* variable means that for every New York Times story mentioning the recipient country, the US aid commitment increases by approximately US\$200,000. For every US\$1,000 increase Per Capita GNP, the aid commitment decreases by US\$6.7million. A US ally gets US\$16.8million more in aid and every dollar of aid given the previous year is correlated with US\$0.53 of aid in the current round. In terms of the significance of the media coverage variable, these results are also reasonably representative of what was found in all of the development aid programs analyzed by the research group that pursued the application of the cockroach theory. This includes the US, Britain, Canada, France, and Japan.¹⁹ Across the five donor countries, media coverage was the most robust and most consistent influence upon the aid commitment. No matter what combination of independent variables was used and no matter what the form of the analysis, or what medium was used as an indicator of salience, media coverage was always statistically significant.²⁰ Further, its substantive significant (the size of the influence the media coverage had upon the aid allocation) was always roughly equal to or greater than the most influential of the other variables analyzed.

The other aspect of these analyses that is important is that they made it clear that it was salience, not content that mattered. Consistent across all cases thus far studied is the finding that the content of the coverage does not have any kind of consistent, significant influence on the aid commitments being made.²¹ The analysis of content was somewhat crude, and there were a few, rare cases where an anecdotal analysis suggested that content mattered, but it was clear from the analyses that if content mattered in any kind of comprehensive and generalizable way, it's impact was nowhere near as substantial as salience. This finding fits perfectly with the conceptual foundations of agenda

setting, where media coverage is either creating or indicating the importance of a subject, but not having a substantial influence upon other aspects of opinion. This also fits with what foreign aid bureaucrats have informally said regarding the value of the content of media coverage. Most aid professionals consider the information content in news media reports to be of little or no value to them and they always refer to professional or official resources as the only sources of substantive information that they consider to be reliable. The conclusion to be drawn is relatively simple. The media salience of a recipient country, regardless of the content of that coverage, provides a consistent and significant but not overwhelming boost to development aid allocations from the democratic donor countries.

Media, the International Environment and Disaster Aid

Initially, examinations of US foreign disaster assistance were used as a robustness check to confirm that media responsiveness was applicable beyond the bounds of the development aid programs and the results seemed to indicate just that. The basic finding also applied to the humanitarian response to natural disasters and presumably forms of humanitarian crises. In fact, the influence of the media was so clear and so robust and so substantial in the allocation of disaster assistance, that was by far the most significant of all factors examined.²² However, recent studies²³ have shown that the relationship is not as simple as it first appeared and understanding the current nature of news media's influence upon responses to humanitarian crises requires a historical analysis of how the current structure evolved.

Because of limitations on the temporal extent of the available data, most of what the initial studies were capturing was the relationship during what is now labeled as the 'baseline' period, 1965-1980. Extending the disaster database to include the years between 1994 and 2006 led to the discovery that at or near 1990 there was a significant and unexpected change in the nature of the media's influence on disaster aid and the discussion of the humanitarian response to disaster can only be framed in terms of that puzzle.

The Illusion of a CNN effect

In the early 1990's, there was a series of high profile events that led analysts and scholars to the conclusion that persistent media coverage, it could even drive reluctant Western leaders into engaging complex humanitarian emergencies they would rather avoid. This was dubbed the CNN effect and it quickly led to the argument that the global political environment had become defined by media-driven foreign policy.²⁴ This is also how most people, including policy makers and researchers then conceptualized the media's role in the humanitarian response to disasters. Despite what seemed like

overwhelming and undeniable anecdotal evidence, however, when the disaster aid database of Olsen and Drury was extended to make it possible to measure the sudden change that was supposed to have occurred in roughly 1990, the results produced exactly the opposite of what was expected.²⁵ Instead of an increase, the influence of the media disappeared from the disaster aid response.²⁶ This finding proved robust. Rigorous examinations of methods, all of the way back to the methods employed in extending the data set were explored, and it did not appear that the disruption of the media influence was a methodological artifact or in any other way erroneous. Further, a subsequent analysis identified a similar disruption in the influence of the media on the allocation of Japanese foreign disaster assistance.²⁷ Clearly, this presented a challenging puzzle and sorting this out turns out to be the key to understanding the current dynamics of the relationship between media coverage and disaster aid.

The Intellectual Fiat Accompli

Even before the paradox of finding that media's influence had vanished from disaster aid rather than increasing with the CNN effect, the unusual initiation of the academic research into the CNN effect offered a clear suggestion that it might be illusory. Unlike any other theory about world politics, the CNN effect was immediately presumed to have suddenly altered the nature of global politics. As a result, instead of beginning with an idea and slowly building the evidence needed to convince skeptics and counter the arguments of critics, academic researchers were presented with the equivalent of a scientific *fait accompli* and the bulk of the debate skipped right past any effort to explore the proposed relationship rigorously.

Despite this entry into the debates over foreign policy, researchers quickly realized that the CNN effect was probably overstated. Even in the cases that might be offered as the most obvious examples, the claim that leaders had lost control of policy to the whims of media coverage was immediately shown to be dubious. In the case of Somalia, Livingston and Eachus provide substantial evidence that most US policy actions were not only driven by diplomatic, strategic and bureaucratic considerations, US policy actions also *preceded* spikes in coverage, with most of the coverage coming in response to those actions.²⁸ More generally, even when the narrowest definition of the CNN effect was employed, the degree to which news coverage actually drove Western states to intervene in complex humanitarian emergencies was unclear, and almost certainly overstated.

While it is always dangerous to depict any research subject as homogenous, the Livingston and Eachus study is indicative of the general nature of much of the academic study of the CNN effect. Most of the last decade worth of academic research can be depicted as the systematic "reining in" of the

initial claims of overwhelming media influence and an ongoing effort to distil, define, refine and consolidate the conceptual foundations of the news media's actual role in foreign policy.²⁹ Further, most of the studies of the CNN effect were case-based and a-historical. Little or no effort was made to make systematic large-N comparisons to earlier periods and that turns out to be the key.

The limited consideration of a historical perspective on the CNN effect is troubling. The initial argument was that advances in communication technology created the CNN effect by creating a technological infrastructure that enabled a truly global communication environment. But the realization of that infrastructure preceded the CNN-effect by roughly a decade³⁰ remoteness as a determinant of levels of foreign coverage roughly a decade before the emergence of the CNN effect and the general idea of news media driving foreign policy is far far older than that, with the Spanish-American war offering one of the oldest of many seemingly obvious examples. This historical problem with the literature and the timing of the CNN effect was the rather modest puzzle that led to the 2007 Van Belle study. If the two defining aspects of the CNN effect, rapid global coverage and foreign policy responsiveness to the news media were in place for at least a decade before the live broadcast of the US Marines landing on the beach near Mogadishu, why then, does idea of the CNN-effect appear so suddenly in the early-1990s?

The End of the Realist Era in Global Politics

The timing of the CNN effect wasn't much of a puzzle, because an alternate explanation for the timing of the CNN effect debate seems obvious. Robinson argues the point quite clearly.

"A frequently cited cause of the CNN effect was policy uncertainty. Many scholars (Entman, 2004; Gowing, 1994; Minear, Scott and Weiss, 1997; Robinson, 2002; Shaw, 1996; Strobel, 1997) agree that as policy certainty decreases, news media influence increases and that, conversely, as policy becomes more certain, the influence of news media coverage is reduced. ... At the macro-level, U.S. foreign policy was characterised by a loss of direction following the end of the Cold War." (Shaw, 1996).³¹

The logic of policy uncertainty caused by the end of the Cold War as a key element for the emergence of the CNN effect is quite robust. In fact, it seems perfectly reasonable to argue that the end of the Cold War had effects well beyond unhinging U.S. foreign policy, perhaps even to the point of altering the very nature of the international system. With a significant reduction of the influence of realist factors imposed by the Cold War conceptualization of the global context, it then seems reasonable to assert

that something else, such as media, would replace it and provide a new conceptual and decision-making framework to define international politics. Thus, the timing of the CNN effect's appearance.

Van Belle's 2007 study argued that this argument might be only half-correct. While the end of the Cold War removed the long-standing, bipolar realist framework for the conduct of international politics, it may not have been the case that the news media rose to fill that vacuum. Instead, removing the cold war structure may have simply exposed the already existent, substantial influence of the news media on disaster response³² That and a few high-profile cases may have thrust it to the forefront of policy debates and policy analysis without really altering media's influence in any substantial way. A simple test was conducted using the update of the Olsen and Drury disaster response database.³³ Instead of distinguishing between an increase or a steady continuation of media's influence, however, the analysis exposed a profound disruption in the influence of the media at the end of the Cold War and that did not fit with either explanation for the CNN effect. *New York Times* coverage is measured as the number of stories that explicitly mention the specific disaster and, contrary to the expectations generated by treating the extreme events as the norm, almost none of this coverage mentions an aid response. The three variables used to measure the human impact of the event, fatalities, People Affected and People made homeless, are all defined and cataloged by the data-holding agency

[Table 4.2 about here]

The results in Table 4.2 were surprising. In the post-Cold War period, the media is clearly not the significant and substantial influence that it was during the Cold War. During the Cold War, every *New York Times* story covering the disaster led to an increase in aid of roughly US\$1.76 million. In comparison, every person killed correlated with a increase in aid of only US\$1,600, but when the numbers of people killed in disaster events is considered, often in the thousands, the aid in response to fatalities can still be substantial and these two variables account for most of the 43% of the aid that this regression can explain. In contrast, in the Post-Cold War period, this neither of these variables is statistically significant, meaning that they had no consistent³⁴ influence on the aid allocation whatsoever. This particular analysis is presented because of the clarity and ease of interpretation offered by a simple OLS regression model, but the choice of presenting such a simplistic analysis can also be taken as indicative of how robust this change is.³⁵ Regardless of the statistical technique employed or the regression model used or the adjustments that might be made in case selection, it is absolutely clear that there is a tremendous drop in the general, statistically-identified influence of the media.

From US\$1.76 million per news story to nothing is exactly the opposite of what is expected for the CNN effect, but perhaps even more interesting and more valuable as a clue to the puzzle presented by this analysis is the more general changes that are revealed. R^2 is a measure of how much of the variation in aid spending is explained by all of the causal variables in the analysis put together and it can be roughly interpreted as a percentage. Thus, during the Cold war, these four influences explained roughly 43% of the disaster aid offered. This is 7.15 times more than the 6% they explained after the end of the Cold War. This provides a significant explanatory clue. If the change that was being captured by the statistics was just the elimination of media coverage as an influence on disaster assistance, other variables should have continued to explain a fair portion of the aid allocation. Instead, the explained variance drops to nearly zero; after the Cold War it became difficult to find any consistent explanation for disaster assistance.

That immediately leads to the discovery of a second explanatory clue. Comparing the standard errors attached to each of the coefficients shows a massive increase for all of the variables in the Post-Cold War period. The standard error (SE on the table) is a measure of how much randomness there is attached to the variable's ability to explain what is happening. Standard errors that are much smaller than the coefficient (Coef.) show that the variable consistently has roughly the same effect from case to case. The larger the standard error in comparison to the coefficient the more its influence varies from case to case and in the Post-Cold war analysis, standard errors that are several times larger than the coefficients indicate huge variations from case to case. Sometime a variable had a tremendous influence while in others it had almost none. Though the confidence that can be attached to any interpretation of that detail is unclear, the changes shown in Table 4.2 are extreme.³⁶ This leads to the conclusion that in the Post Cold War period, the decision making rules used for allocating disaster aid shifted dramatically, almost randomly from case to case. The decision making for each disaster was still a rational, considered process, but the process was not consistent from one disaster to the next.

The Ad Hoc Period in International Politics

In their often cited-examination of models of US foreign policy during and after the Cold War, Meernik, Krueger and Poe note a relative decline in security-driven and systemic influences on foreign policy in the beginning of the post-Cold War period.³⁷ Employing logic that is similar to the way that the CNN effect has been discussed, in terms of media influence replacing the influence of realist factors, Meernik, Krueger and Poe interpret their findings in terms domestic ideological factors replacing strategic factors. Implicit in that interpretation and also in the argument regarding policy uncertainty as

cause of the CNN effect is the belief that one defining structure of world politics was replaced by another. That includes an assumption that both of these periods are structured. Questioning the assumption of a post-Cold War structure suggests an alternative interpretation and in that lies the explanation for the puzzle of media's disappearance as an influence on disaster aid.

Regardless of the specific technique employed, large-N statistical analyses are all designed to identify influences that are consistent across most or all cases. The goal is to separate the generalizable factors applicable to all cases from the ad-hoc or stochastic influences that make each of the individual cases unique. In the application of statistical analyses to the study of international politics, statistical analyses presume that the same model of decision making, context or process can reasonably be applied to all or most of the cases in the population being examined.

Specific to the discussion here, the statistical analyses of Cold War and post-Cold War events presumes that both periods were equally explicable. The models are presumed to be different. The relative influence of specific causes is expected to vary, and perhaps different constellations of causal influences might apply to the two periods, but when a statistical analysis of the two periods is conducted, it assumes that both have an over-arching structure that defines decision making. There is no reason that this has to be the case. There is no reason to assume that there is any overarching structure in the post-Cold War period. And, in fact, the arguments regarding the effects of policy uncertainty in the explanations for the CNN effect suggest exactly the opposite.

Rather than something like media driven foreign policy replacing the realist-structure imposed by the Cold War, it is arguable that the realist structure was replaced by a complete absence of an overarching structure. The absence of an overarching structure would create an Ad Hoc policy environment where the individual aspects of each case became the predominant consideration in decision making and that stochasticity would reduce any statistical measure of an independent variable's significance across the set of cases.³⁸ This explains the results offered by Meernik, Krueger and Poe as well as their explanation. It also fits with the findings from many of the other analyses of a systemic change, including the findings on media and disaster assistance noted above.

The removal of a predominant structure for interaction and decision making also explains why news media suddenly appeared to become so important. The same structure that enabled certain systemic, domestic and geo-strategic variables to find consistent expression across most cases also constrained the variability of influences from case to case. The influence of any one factor was limited by the bounds defined by the Cold War environment. During the Cold War, media could only influence

policy when, or to the degree that they did not contradict the realist demands imposed by the ongoing confrontation. Removing those constraints also opens the door for any one factor to become hugely important in any one case. It was possible for media coverage could become a huge factor in the decision making on Somalia because it was no longer limited by the constraint imposed by the likely or potential Soviet reaction to US action in a state that had been contested as part of the proxy conflict in the developing world. Thus, the 1990s wasn't a period of media-driven foreign policy. It was an Ad Hoc period in international politics and because one of the first big events we noticed was Somalia, we started thinking about it in terms of media and presumed that it represented the new structure.

It is important to note that 'Ad Hoc' is being used here in strict reference to its focus on the singular as opposed to the general. Normative associations with the term need to be excluded. Of particular concern is any idea that ad hoc might refer to irrational policy. The heuristics employed in decision making may vary radically from event to event, but they are still assumed to be rational within the context specific to each case.³⁹ In some ways, this could be argued to be better normatively than a highly structured environment, since it should result in choices that are more effective because they more closely tied to the specifics of the case and would allow far more latitude for policy innovation.

Why the CNN effect?

If this Ad Hoc period decreased the generalizable influence of most variables, including media coverage, how did it happen that this period became so closely associated with the CNN effect and the idea that the world had become defined by media driven foreign policy? Part of the explanation may simply be chance. Somalia happened to be the first prominent foreign policy event to occur after the removal of the Cold War constraints allowed something other than the US-Soviet confrontation to become a significant driver of policy. It could have just as easily have been the Rwanda-Burundi genocides and we could have spent a decade arguing about a laissez faire effect characterized by a preference for a hands off approach that made the avoidance of local or regional conflicts as a default choice that had to be overcome by other forces.

Somalia reframed our perception of international politics in terms of media coverage and the unsettled context, often referred to as policy uncertainty in the CNN effect literature, made the situation ripe for the adoption of a new frame for understanding world politics. Without delving too far into the social and cognitive psychology literature, these kinds of cognitive frameworks are most easily created in new, chaotic or empty conceptual spaces. People are in many ways dependant upon cognitive

frameworks and will actively seek one in an unstructured or unfamiliar context, using analogous reasoning or other mechanisms to make things fit or make sense of the incoming information.

The opposite is also true. People become wedded to cognitive frameworks and once established they become self-reinforcing. People use cognitive frameworks to make sense of incoming information (interpreting things to fit) and filter incoming information (preferentially noticing and remembering what fits.) Actually, it is the reciprocal aspect of the filtering that is probably most significant as people tend to fail to notice information that contradicts the cognitive frame being employed. As a result, displacing an existing model that people used to interpret incoming information is difficult. Also, as a result, illusions such as the CNN effect one created are sustained.

To offer an analogy as a way of blatantly using the very topic of discussion to make the point, it is like the wide-spread belief in lunacy.⁴⁰ Irrespective of the bountiful evidence to the contrary, many if not most people living in a western-European-derived cultural context believe that a full moon causes insane behavior. The reason for this belief can be placed squarely upon how the myth functions as a cognitive framework. Full moons are common and mildly-insane behavior is common, and when a person notices them both occurring together, it is interpreted in terms of the myth of lunacy and considered to be evidence confirming the belief. However, people will fail to notice contradictory information. When the lady knitting an invisible sweater on the bus is talking to invisible Moses during the middle of the day, or when a night with a full moon passes without incident, the lunacy framework is not invoked and that information interpreted in terms of something else. As a result, contrary information is not considered in terms of the belief and the belief persists.

Similarly, once the idea of a CNN effect is established as a cognitive framework, it is immediately recognized in the cases it fits, information is interpreted in terms of how it fits and it becomes difficult even for trained analysts and policy officials to notice contradictory cases and almost impossible notice its absence without using some sort of scientific involving structured observation of a selection of cases that is specifically designed to ensure that null-cases are included. The result is that we see Bosnia, the inaction in Rwanda or the global response to the Boxing Day tsunami and they are all interpreted as evidence of a CNN effect even though the extreme of inaction in Bosnia could easily be interpreted as counter-evidence.

The result is the illusion of a CNN effect. The way that academic study has constantly narrowed the possible scope of the CNN effect and the contradictory findings from the large-N analysis offered here suggest quite strongly that the CNN effect was illusory. In the 1990s, media coverage clearly

exerted influence in some disasters and humanitarian crises, occasionally a great deal of influence, but not all the time, perhaps not even most of the time.

Remodeling Our Understanding of Media's Influence

This can all be brought together to remodel our understanding of media's influence on the humanitarian response to disasters and provide the foundation need for understand both how media influences response today, and why it is that way.

[Figure 4.1 about here]

Figure 4.1 provides a graphic representation of the three key elements for understanding how media influences this aspect of aid; the nature of the news environment; the nature of the international environment; and the mechanism through which coverage influences aid. Working through this as a historical narrative, from left to right in the figure, the discussion begins with the period from 1965 to roughly 1980, which might be reasonably be called the baseline period.

1965 represents the establishment of a US foreign aid program dedicated to disaster response, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). While this does not by any means represent the first instance of international disaster aid, and almost certainly does not represent the start of a media influence, it does represent an analytical starting point. 1965 was the first year that a global catalog of disasters was compiled and it was the first year that a corresponding collection of aid response figures was reported. Analyses of these data indicate that from the very beginning, media coverage was a clear influence on the aid allocation. Measured in 1994 dollars, every *New York Times* news story correlated with an increase in aid of roughly US\$1.76 million.

During this period the decision mechanisms are, for all intents and purposes, entirely bureaucratic. Almost every aspect of the US disaster aid response is governed by the OFDA. The international political environment is also significant during this period as shown by the fact that there is clear evidence that decision making process related to aid, including the substantial influence of the media, occurred within the boundaries set by strategic aspects of the Cold War international environment. Alliance ties, for example, were a significant factor in selecting aid recipients.⁴¹ Finally, it is also clear that a globalized media environment has not yet materialized during this period. The remoteness of an event still has a significant effect upon coverage. Distant and difficult to reach disasters receive significantly less coverage than events that are easier to reach from the US or Western Europe.

The first significant change to this constellation of factors is the realization of a global media system. There no exact date at which the news media went global, but it is clear that there is a critical change that occurred relatively quickly at the end of the 1970s that signifies the shift to a global news media. Using disasters as a set of consistently news-worthy events, Livingston and Van Belle's 2005 study demonstrates that at roughly 1980 or so, the remoteness of an event ceased to have a negative influence on the level of coverage it received in the US press. In the early 1980s the global communication infrastructure had reached the critical point where disasters in Africa, Latin America, Europe and Asia all received roughly the same amount of coverage.

This change in the media did not have an immediate impact upon aid responses. Throughout the 1980s one news story continued to correlate with roughly US\$1.76 million in aid. What this change did was it made it possible for remote and distant disasters to become global media events and the first of these, the Sahal drought, is argued to have had a profound effect upon decision makers.

The Sahal drought was not the first global media event. The first Apollo moon landing would certainly qualify for any reasonable definition of that category, but the moon landing and the handful of other events that might be suggested as earlier examples of global media events all share the characteristic of being closely tied to the media infrastructure of the developed world. The Sahal drought demonstrated that an event did not have to happen in the US, Europe, or anywhere even close in order to gain massive coverage. By gaining such massive coverage, the drought signaled that the media had become truly global, but for the political leaders of the world, that lesson was secondary to what it taught them about the public response to media coverage of disasters. Regardless of the degree to which the public response to the media coverage was aided and abetted by the conspiracy of a few pop music stars, the massive public response that the media instigated was a powerful example that created a precedent that would shape future responses to the complex humanitarian emergencies of the future. It was a simple lesson: Extreme levels of coverage lead to an extreme public reaction and anything compelling enough to convince a huge portion of the voting public to voluntarily surrender their wealth without expectation of return was not the sort of thing that a democratic leader could dare to ignore. Thus, when an event gained massive coverage, presidents and prime ministers and other elected executives responded to that media coverage, directly committing funds, spurring agencies to extraordinary action and engaging resources that are beyond the reach of aid agencies, such as military landing craft.

As the CNN effect research demonstrated, this executive mechanism for responsiveness to the media coverage of human catastrophe was more constrained than first thought. There is ample evidence of a myriad of political and logistic factors that limited the executive's media responsiveness, but the argument for an Ad Hoc period suggests that these constraints varied tremendously as the specifics of the case demanded. Thus, the relative ease of getting access to Somalia by sea privileged it compared to the Sudan. And Bosnia's political and social proximity to the US and NATO undoubtedly lowered the barriers to response in comparison to Rwanda and Burundi, but whatever the specific constraints, it did appear that executives responded to inundations of media coverage.

These media inundations, however, were rare and the executive mechanism was limited to the largest of the very big media events and this is a big contrast to the bureaucratic mechanism that it replaced. There is ample evidence that when it functioned, the bureaucratic responsiveness mechanism was extremely sensitive to coverage. The details within the statistical analyses of the Cold War era suggest that a disaster didn't even have to gain TV news coverage to elicit a response from bureaucratic officials. It appeared that they responded to as little as a single *New York Times* story.⁴² In contrast, the President or Prime Minister is only going to step in and personally engage a disaster that is extremely salient in the news media.

The Reestablishment of International Structure

Robinson's argument that the CNN effect is dead is premised upon the fact that 9-11 and the subsequent war on terror (re)imposed an ideological framework upon the conduct of U.S. foreign policy and on international politics more generally.⁴³ This removed the policy uncertainty that had been argued to be one of the key aspects of the international context that enabled the rise of media influence, and for all intents and purposes, according to Robinson, it extinguished the CNN effect.

Given the arguments regarding the affect the Ad Hoc period had upon media's influence on disaster aid allocations, if there was a reestablishment of some form of international structure it would be directly relevant to the current media responsiveness dynamic. If a new structure leads to a set of decision rules being consistently applied across most cases, it should reduce the stochastic variation in the decision models applied and that should lead to the return of a predictable, generalizable expectation for what factors will influence aid and how. The variables that matter and how much they matter in the New World Order, or the War on Terror, or whatever the current era is eventually called are likely to be quite different from the realist, Cold War framework. However, any kind of overarching structure should bring back a noticeable and measurable consistency.

[Table 4.3 about here]

The analysis in Table 4.3 shows that some kind of new international structure has been established. This is most evident in the R^2 measure of explained variance and the return of news media as a statistically-significant correlate of disaster assistance. At the end of the Cold War, standard errors jump by an order of magnitude or more, suggesting a very large increase in the variation of the influence of these factors. At the end of the ad hoc period, there is another massive shift in standard errors, but this time they are shrinking back towards the levels seen in the Cold War. All of this fits with Robinson's argument about the end of policy uncertainty, but there are some suggestions in the data that the shift back to a structured international environment may have occurred before the attack on the World Trade Center and this remains a point to be sorted out.

It is important to treat the findings for the New World Order time period as no more than a tentative indication that a consistent decision making structure of some kind has been reestablished. The post-2003 data is not yet available for analysis and the 2001-2003 period is not just an unsettled period in world politics, it is also too short to be confident that the random fluctuations in the occurrence of disaster events have balanced themselves out sufficiently to consider the statistical results to be definitive.

The Current Dynamic of Agenda Setting and Disaster Response

The response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and now the Myanmar cyclone offers clear evidence that the executive response mechanism has persisted beyond the end of the Ad Hoc period, and when combined with the statistical significance of news coverage in the analysis of 2001-2004, it seems reasonable to conclude that the current dynamic includes both a bureaucratic and an executive mechanism for response.

It is important to emphasize the caution that should be exercised in the interpretation of the results for 2001-2004. With such extreme changes in the figures in comparison to the Ad Hoc Period, it should hold up reasonably well as an indication that an overarching structure has returned, and the media coverage measure is so clearly significant that it is unlikely that future analyses will find that to be wrong. Still, the coefficient for media coverage, which represents the size of the impact each story has on aid, should be interpreted with extreme caution. Without a clear understanding of what factors are likely to be important in the current global political structure there is no way to know what might be the right combination of factors we need to use to sort out just how much news coverage matters. Still, with the information currently available it appears that the bureaucratic responsiveness mechanism is

smaller than it was during the Cold War, but it is clearly there and it functions in parallel to the executive mechanism. Thus, it is probably wise to formulate policy and other actions with the expectation that every bit of news coverage in donor nations creates a small increase in aid response and the occasional flood of coverage of a major disaster is likely to generate a massive response.

Figure 4.1: Historical Developments in the Media, International Environment and Donor Response Mechanisms

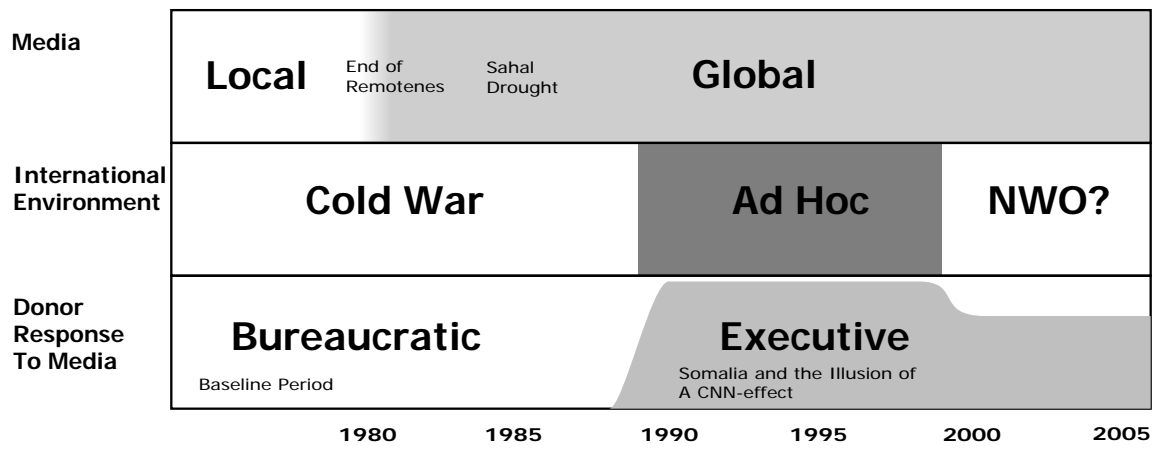


Table 4.1: Effect of *New York Times* coverage on commitments of U.S. development assistance, 1985-1995

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	Z	P> z
New York Times Coverage	0.20	0.04	4.54	0.00
Per Capita GNP (Lag)	-6.71	1.56	-4.30	0.00
Trade Balance (Lag)	0.00	0.00	1.95	0.05
U.S. Alliance	16.81	8.13	2.07	0.04
Previous Year's Aid	0.53	0.07	7.70	0.00
Constant	17.57	3.30	5.33	0.00
R-square	0.42			
Wald chi-sq. (5 df)	153.17			
Prob > chi-sq.	0.00			
Observations	7			

Note: Linear Regression, Panel Corrected Standard Errors.

Source: Adapted from Table 3-1 in Douglas Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

Table 4.2: Global aid response to lethal natural disasters during and after the Cold War

Variable	Cold War		Post Cold War	
		1965-1989		1990-2003
NYTStories	Coef.	1,764,576.00		128,385.40
	SE	173,009.00		875,110.00
	p	0.00		0.88
Fatalities	Coef.	1,606.19		22.71
	SE	65.57		1237.50
	p	0.00		0.98
People Affected	Coef.	0.30		9.74
	SE	0.13		0.65
	p	0.02		0.00
People Made Homeless	Coef.	1.81		-128.95
	SE	1.17		15.85
Constant	p	0.12		0.00
	Coef.	183669.20		1046497.00
	SE	1157543.00		5309881.00
	p	0.87		0.84
	Observations	1741		3352
	Adjusted R ²	0.43		0.06

Note: Dependant Variable: US Aid in Inflation-Adjusted US Dollars

Source: Adapted from Table 1 from Douglas A. Van Belle. "The Ad-Hoc Period in International Politics and the Illusion of a CNN effect." Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2007.

Table 4.3: Global aid response to lethal natural disasters during the cold war, ad hoc, and war on terror periods

Variable		Cold War 1965-1989	Ad Hoc 1990-2000	New World Order 2001-2003
<i>NYTStories</i>	Coef.	1,764,576.00	262,268.00	8,528.00
	SE	173,009.00	1,365,012.00	2829.93
	p	0.00	0.85	0.00
Fatalities	Coef.	1,606.19	-761.05	-19.16
	SE	65.57	2273.37	3.61
	p	0.00	0.74	0.00
People Affected	Coef.	0.30	15.70	0.00
	SE	0.13	1.01	0.00
	p	0.022	0.00	0.20
People Made Homeless	Coef.	1.81	-209.11	6.99
	SE	1.17	20.94	0.31
	p	0.12	0.00	0.00
Constant	Coef.	183,669.20	2,687,645.00	-7285.27
	SE	1,157,543.00	7,941,044.00	17630.32
	p	0.87	0.74	0.68
Observations		1741	2200	1152
Adjusted R ²		0.43	0.10	0.32

Notes: Dependant Variable: US Aid in Inflation-Adjusted US Dollars

Source: Table 2 from Douglas A. Van Belle. "The Ad-Hoc Period in International Politics and the Illusion of a CNN effect." Presented at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2007.

¹ The catalog was initiated with the creation of the US foreign disaster aid program in 1965 and since the mid-1990's the catalog has been maintained by Committee on the Research and Epidemiology of Disasters, Belgium.

² Committee on Disasters and the Mass Media. 2005 *Disasters and the Mass Media: Proceedings of the Committee on Disasters and the Mass Media Workshop*. Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences.

³ Emphasis in this literature included: coverage's affect on public opinion and support for aid programs, how media professionals function in crises or emergencies, and the immediate uses of the media in a crisis situation.

⁴ For example see Samuel Krislov and David H. Rosenbloom. 1981. *Representative Bureaucracy and the American Political System*. New York: Praeger Publishers.

⁵ For example see Terry M. Moe 1982. 'Regulatory Performance and Presidential Administration.' *American Journal of Political Science* 26: 197-224

⁶ The initial argument for bureaucratic responsiveness appears in Douglas A. Van Belle and Steven W. Hook. 2000. 'Greasing the Squeaky Wheel: News Media Coverage and US Foreign Aid.' *International Interactions* 26 (3): 321-346. See also Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

⁷ It is important to note that substantive significance refers to the proportion of aid offered. Statistical significance refers to the probability that the relationship is likely.

⁸ David M. Potter and Douglas A. Van Belle. 2008. 'The Illusion of a CNN effect? Using Japanese Foreign Disaster Assistance to Examine the Effect of Stochastic Policy Environments.' International Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco; Douglas A. Van Belle. 2007. 'The Ad-Hoc Period in International Politics and the Illusion of a CNN effect.' International Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago.

⁹ George F. Kennan. 1993, October 24. 'If TV Drives Foreign Policy, We're in Trouble.' *New York Times*, p.

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¹⁰ Terry M. Moe 1982. 'Regulatory Performance and Presidential Administration.' *American Journal of Political Science* 26: 197-224

¹¹ See the discussion in B. Dan Wood and Richard W. Waterman. 1994. *Bureaucratic Dynamics: The Role of Bureaucracy in a Democracy*. Boulder: Westview Press.

¹² Douglas A. Van Belle, Invited Lecture at Informal Experts' Meeting—International Development Co-Operation in OECD Countries: Public Debate, Public Support and Public Opinion, 25 and 26 October 2001, Dublin, Ireland

¹³ A detailed discussion of the logic weaving media coverage into agency theory is offered in Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

¹⁴ David M. Potter and Douglas A. Van Belle. 2008. 'The Illusion of a CNN effect? Using Japanese Foreign Disaster Assistance to Examine the Effect of Stochastic Policy Environments.' International Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco.

¹⁵ Steven W. Hook. 1995. *National Interest and Foreign Aid*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

¹⁶ Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

¹⁷ Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

¹⁸ The use of this control variable is the most common way to account for the fact that development aid decisions are generally made in terms of adjustments from the previous year's allocation.

¹⁹ Douglas A. Van Belle and Steven W. Hook. 2000. 'Greasing the Squeaky Wheel: News Media Coverage and US Foreign Aid.' *International Interactions* 26 (3): 321-346. See also Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan; Jean-Sébastien Rioux and Douglas Van Belle. 2005. 'The Influence of le Monde Coverage on French Foreign Aid Allocations.' *International Studies Quarterly* 49: 481-502; David M.

Potter and Douglas A. Van Belle (2004/2008) 'The Influence of News Coverage on Japanese Foreign Development Aid.' *Japanese Journal of Political Science*.5:113-135. Reprinted in Christopher P. Hood, (Ed.). 2008. *Politics of Modern Japan: Critical Concepts in the Modern Politics of Asia*. London: Routledge.

²⁰ Douglas A. Van Belle. 2003. 'Bureaucratic Responsiveness to the News Media: Comparing the Influence of New York Times and Network Television News Coverage on U.S. Foreign Aid Allocations.' *Political Communication* 20: 263-285.

²¹ Douglas A. Van Belle, Jean-Sébastien Rioux and David M. Potter. 2004. *Media, Bureaucracies, and Foreign Aid: A Comparative Analysis of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Japan*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

²² Douglas A. Van Belle. 1999 'Race and US Foreign Disaster Aid.' *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*.17, November: 339-365. A. Cooper Drury, Richard Stuart Olson and Douglas A. Van Belle. 2005. 'The CNN Effect, Geo-strategic Motives and The Politics of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.' *Journal of Politics* 67: 454-473.

²³ Van Belle, 2007. Van Belle and Potter, 2008.

²⁴ Kennan, 1993.

²⁵ Richard S. Olsen and A. Cooper Drury. 1997 'Un-Therapeutic Communities: A Cross-National Analysis of Post-Disaster Political Unrest.' *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*. 15:221-238.

²⁶ Van Belle, 2007

²⁷ Van Belle and Potter, 2008.

²⁸ Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus (1995) Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered. *Political Communication* 12: 413-429.

²⁹ For a thorough review of the literature, see Eytan Gilboa. 2005. 'The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations.' *Political Communication* 22:27-24.

³⁰ Steven Livingston, and Douglas A. Van Belle. 2005. 'The Effects of New Satellite Newsgathering Technology on Newsgathering from Remote Locations.' *Political Communication* 22: 45-62.

³¹ Piers Robinson. 2005. 'The CNN Effect Revisited.' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22: 344-349. Robinson's citations include: Robert M. Entman. 2004. *Projections of Power: Framing news, public opinion and U.S. foreign policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Nik Gowing. 1994. 'Real Time

Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions.’ Working paper. Cambridge, MA: The Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University; Larry Minear, Colin Scott and Thomas George Weiss. 1997. *The news media, civil wars and humanitarian action*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press; Piers Robinson. 2002. *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. New York: Routledge; Martin Shaw. 1996. *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises*. London: St. Martin’s Press; Warren P. Strobel. 1997. *Late Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media’s Influence on Peace Operations*. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press.

³² Van Belle, 1999; Van Belle, 2003; Drury, Olson and Van Belle, 2005

³³ This analysis is from Van Belle 2007 and there are a few relevant points regarding the data and the analysis that need to be noted. First, the universe of cases is defined by the cataloging agency as a disaster event. From 1965-1994 this is the US Office of Disaster Assistance, and from 1994 on this cataloging and data management responsibility was passed directly to Centre for Research in the Epidemiology of Disasters (Belgium). Patterns in this data have been noted. First, as is apparent in the numbers of disasters in each time period, there is a steady increase in the number of disasters over time. Part of this is attributed to advances in communication technology that enable a greater sensitivity to disasters occurring remote areas that were inaccessible in the past, but the majority of this increase is attributed to the dramatic and rapidly continuing increase in populations living in high-risk areas, such as coasts and river deltas. A significant number of these events receive no coverage and no aid response, but the proportion receiving coverage and the proportion that receiving assistance has remained reasonably consistent over time. It is also worth noting that a modest proportion of cases receive not coverage in the US, but still receive a modest amount of US assistance. The inverse, however, is almost never true. It is extremely rare for an event to receive coverage and not a corresponding offer of assistance.

³⁴ It is important to remember that this means something like ‘on average across the whole set of cases’ and individual cases can deviate substantially from that generalization.

³⁵ A Heckman selection model produces roughly the same results for the levels of aid stage, and is probably a more appropriate statistical methodology to be applied to the analysis of disaster aid allocations.

³⁶ Again this is a robust finding and was tested thoroughly in Van Belle’s 2007 study.

³⁷ James Meernik, Eric Krueger, and Steven C. Poe (1998) Testing Models of U.S. Foreign Policy: Foreign Aid During and After the Cold War. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol 60, No. 1, February, pp. 63-85.

³⁸ This is a statistical term for a specific type of randomness.

³⁹ Rational is used in its technical sense here. In general discussion perhaps considered or coherent are better terms than rational.

⁴⁰ Any broadly-accepted but factually or logically incorrect belief could be used as an example, such as the belief that ice dancing is a sport.

⁴¹ Olson, Drury and Van Belle, 2005.

⁴² Van Belle, 2003.

⁴³ Robinson, 2005.