

**The CARMA Report
on
Western media coverage of
Humanitarian Disasters**

January 2006



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Introduction

Founded in the US in 1984, CARMA International provides objective analysis and consultancy on corporate and organisational reputation based on global, national, regional and digital news coverage. The European company which was launched in 1992 now leads the sector, supported by offices in France, Washington DC, Toronto, New Delhi, Tokyo and Sydney.

In addition to client activity, CARMA also publishes reports periodically on issues covered by international media in order to stay abreast of media trends and to determine social and cultural moods. There was a sense at the end of 2005 that the year had been dominated globally by unforeseen disasters with the debate shaped from Los Angeles to London on the dimensions and magnitude of these events. As media analysts, we were interested in natural/humanitarian disasters and their treatment in the press because as “acts of God” within an allegedly politically neutral context, they would serve as a control group to take the pulse of the media and the audiences they serve.

In our understanding, the media works like the ‘push-me-pull-you’ beast of Doctor Doolittle, at once driving perceptions and opinions but also crystallising and condensing received cultural and social discourses. This rocking effect not only impacts consumer and governmental behaviour but also helps to interpret and negotiate messages on how we all, as consumers of media, ought to think and act and what we say and do.

To this end, we have analysed the media coverage in a range of western countries of the Asian Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in the USA, earthquake Bam in Iran, Hurricane Stanley in Mexico, the ongoing conflict in Darfur, Africa, and the most recent earthquake in Kashmir.

With these disasters we wanted to ascertain what factors drive western media interest, whether these are perceived equally and if not, why not. We investigate the relationship between media coverage and national interest, gaining a sense of the cultural and economic tenor of relationships between the disaster region and those nations writing about it. We attempt to achieve an understanding of what, if any, irrationality or prejudices are at work as well as what strategies are deployed to stimulate sympathy and action. We also compare coverage in Europe and between Europe and the USA and to reveal any national inconsistencies in the volume and tone of the writing.

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Study methodology

The period

The period of analysis for each disaster ranges from two days prior to the incident to 10 weeks thereafter. The only exception to is the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan, where there is no definite incident to mark the beginning of a period of analysis. Also, the volumes of coverage since the beginning of the crisis are so low that the period of analysis was set, from 01 February 2003 to 15 December 2005, at 150 weeks.

The disasters covered

The study includes six disasters: the earthquake in Pakistani Kashmir (8 October 2005), Hurricane 'Stanley' (1 October 2005), Hurricane 'Katrina' (23 August 2005), the Indian Ocean earthquake a.k.a. Tsunami (26 December 2004), the earthquake in Bam, Iran (26 December 2003), and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan (since February 2003). CARMA chose these disasters because they provide a certain chronological and geographical diversity.

The media

This report analyses 64 daily and weekly publications in nine countries with a focus on the European press. All nine of those countries were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively (UK, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Pan-Europe, U.S.A., and Australia). From 11,798 articles displaying at least two mentions of the disaster specific key words, we took a random sample of 17%, which resulted in 1,967 articles being researched. These articles were selected from 43 national and pan-national daily newspapers, 4 Sunday editions, and 17 weekly newspapers and news magazines.

Ratings system

In order to appropriately assess the articles researched for this study, the proven CARMA rating system has been adapted. Each article is rated on a 50 point scale. An article with a rating of 50 displays neutrality towards its subject matter; an article with a rating of 0, displays a highly negative or emotive response. Each article begins evaluation at 50, and points are progressively deducted for the article's negativity or emotion. The first criterion is the placement of the article: depending on the sense of the headline (further intensified by position and size of the article as well as by a visual), the article can fall up to 20 points in this section of the rating. Secondly, the messages in the corpus of the article are assessed as to their portrayal of the situation; here the article can fall another maximum 20 points. The final section of evaluation is the bias, where depending on the tone of the journalist, the article's rating can decrease by a further 10 points, thus minimizing the rating to 0. As most articles display a certain combination of these values, the majority of articles will be rated in a range from 15 to 35. This rating system allows CARMA to treat each article with great sensitivity to detail.

CARMA's methodologies are vetted by the University of Massachusetts in the USA.

A rating of ...

Placement (max. - 20 points)

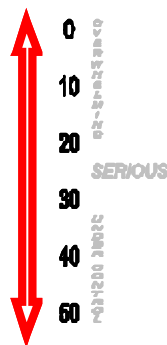
- Headline
- Photo/Logo
- Size/Length
- Position

Sources/Messages (max. - 20 points)

- Fav/Unfav Sources
- Pos/Neg Messages

Journalist bias (max. - 10 points)

- Overall Pos/Neg Tone



0 – 20 is characterised as highly alarmist / highly negative

21 – 30 strongly concerned / strongly negative

30 – 40 shows clear concern and clear negative sentiment

40 – 48 Some concern / some negative sentiment

50 = neutral tone

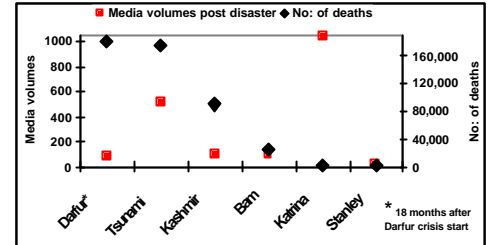
Conclusion

**Western self-interest is the
pre-condition for significant
coverage of a humanitarian crisis**

Economics is a better guide to press interest than human suffering

- **There appears to be no link between the scale of a disaster & media interest in story.** Of all the disasters, Stanley and Katrina suffered the least deaths. Katrina also had one of the lower population displacement rates. But Katrina got far more attention in global media than any other humanitarian disaster studied. Kashmir attracted similar media interest to Bam while suffering 3.5 times as many deaths (90,000). The Tsunami attracted nearly double the coverage of Darfur, but generated similar a death toll (circa 180,000) - if the timeframe is limited to the first eighteen months after the crisis emerged, the Darfur media interest falls to 73 articles for 180,00 deaths. Katrina generated 1,035 articles across the nine media markets analysed. The Asian Tsunami came second with 508, Darfur third with 312, Kashmir with 102, Bam with 90 and Stanley last with 25.

No link between the scale of a disaster & media interest in story



- **But there is a clear correlation between the perceived economic impact of a disaster on western markets and the quantity of media coverage.** Where there is most economic interest (Katrina), there is most coverage; where there is least, there is least interest (Guatemala). **17 per cent of the articles on Katrina focus on its economic issues—the greatest for any disaster.** One per cent of articles focus on this theme for Bam and none for Kashmir and Stanley—these have generated the lowest level of international interest. Although direct association with the global economy is lower for the Tsunami, coverage is nonetheless dictated by economic and strategic concerns: despite the apparent altruism, media reaction and charitable giving was motivated by the economic and strategic importance of the tourist industry and the region as a whole; and by the fact that Western tourists have directly affected. The combination of articles on indirect, global economic issues (the 'local industry' equates in reality to Western tourism interests) and 'impact on visitors' (Western tourists) amounts to 15 per cent.

“(Darfur) The worst humanitarian crisis in the world”

But for over a year, virtually no attention was paid
Los Angeles Times, 11 August 2004

- **But even for Bam and Kashmir, the combined totals of articles on the political and economic dimensions of the story outweigh those on the humanitarian response (32 per cent versus 24 per cent for Bam; 35 and 19 per cent for Kashmir).** So even when a humanitarian crisis is not of economic importance, the perspective of politics and economics remained the West's key interest, not human suffering.
- **The Hurricane Stanley emergency stands out as the worst indictment of the selfish Western approach to humanitarian disasters:** here there is no obvious significant economic or political interest. Consequently, there is virtually no coverage of any kind (25 in total) beyond the first few days, or coverage that focused on the humanitarian response.

“That's a dilemma we live with”

Kofi Annan, on the apparent inequity of the response to disasters
Financial Times 7 January 2004

Politics determines the timing, level of interest and story angle, not the humanitarian issues

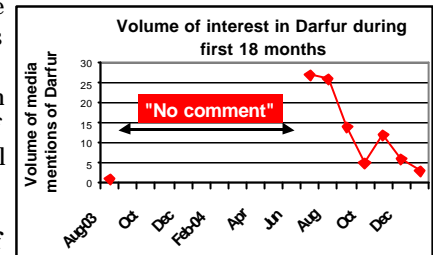
- **All of these crises, apart from Hurricane Stanley, affect politically highly sensitive regions:** Iran; an oil-rich but war-ravaged African Muslim province (Darfur); the Pakistan-India-Afghanistan borderland; war-torn (Muslim) Indonesia and Sri Lanka; and the neglected US backyard. The degree of coverage accorded to each is reflected in its political capital. There are two main types of political use to which the disaster reporting is put: **1) The 'Grist to the mill' approach** (the disaster represents useful support to an ongoing debate), and **2) The 'Strategic' approach** (the disaster is presented so as to serve national objectives).
- **In disasters exhibiting the 'Grist to the mill' approach, the humanitarian dimensions of the crisis are downplayed in order to maximise the impact of the political arguments.** Examples of this tactic are Katrina and Darfur. Here the humanitarian response elicited only five per cent of articles. In relation to Katrina, this has led global media to savage the Bush administration for the inadequacy of the aid effort. Based on this, a sustained political attack was developed

on targets as diverse as the administration's economic and fiscal policies; its attitude to the predominantly black, deprived population of Louisiana; the Iraq war; and the competence of Bush himself. Despite this, the coverage of the relief effort itself is relatively neutral: it displayed little heavily charged emotion. The situation on the ground – covered by well-resourced local media – was apparently not as bad as the political agenda (including that of the more remote overseas media) had wished to make out.

“It has put in sharp focus the shortcomings of the Bush presidency”

10 September 2005

- **For the first eighteen months of the Darfur disaster, only 73 articles were written globally, as the disaster had not developed political capital** —although as a humanitarian disaster, it most certainly had momentum. Thereafter, coverage of the relief efforts – in all but UK and Pan-Europe media – was minimised in order to concentrate on two separate campaigns for more forceful UN-led intervention. Consequently, significantly more attention has been devoted to the role of external governments in attempting to force a solution (29 per cent of articles) than to the effect of the crisis on the people and area of Darfur (21 per cent). However dreadful their suffering has been, it weighed less in the balance than the politics.
- **By contrast, UK/Pan-Europe media is focused on the humanitarian relief efforts in over half of the 97 Darfur articles.** But again, this aspect is not emphasised because of any intrinsic merit it might have, but was also in the service of a strategic-type political argument. Coverage of the difficulties and dangers encountered by relief agencies in Darfur is used to build an attack on the very politics with which the UN had become associated, portrayed as compromising the practical efforts to bring relief and broker peace on the ground. This is consistent with UK government policy formulations in the run up to the Gleneagles summit and the Live 8 concerts, which were postulating a new development and aid framework for Africa. However, as an illustration of the cynical nature of the politics involved, coverage of the humanitarian relief work in Darfur was completely dropped when the issue fell off the political agenda in the aftermath of the London bombings.
- **Some of the language used in reporting disasters has racist overtones:** “Hordes of Arab tribesmen on horseback, known as Janjaweed, swoop down on isolated southern Sudanese villages ... often hacking them to death with swords” (*Sydney Morning Herald* [Australia], 26 May 2004). In another example, there were widespread reports of wild black groups raping and pillaging New Orleans, which often turned out to be false. This kind of reporting plays to racial prejudices and heightens fears of readers regarding the alien/primitive caricatures of Islamic and black people.



Me, me, me

- **An obvious corollary to the political and economic self-interest of Western markets in disasters is an often tasteless egocentric tendency in reporting or a manipulation of disasters for selfish ends.**

Self-absorption: In Tsunami coverage, there were around 175,000 deaths and up to 2.4 million displaced. In the eight western countries analysed, there were around 900 deaths and few displaced. Yet around 40 per cent of all coverage on people impacted by the disasters focused on the westerners.

Aid money in return for votes: “Tony Blair promising to outdo, with British taxpayers’ money, whatever they might contribute voluntarily as individuals. Thus came the first politicisation of the tsunami aid: governments using it to win votes at home” (*The Economist*, 8 January).

Aid money in return for bids: To gain favourable publicity for their Olympic bids, the Spanish and French Olympic teams offered corporate donations as though it were their own money. Kevin Roberts of *SportBusiness* magazine said: “The whole thing smacks of the worst sort of gross opportunism” (*The Times*, 10 January).

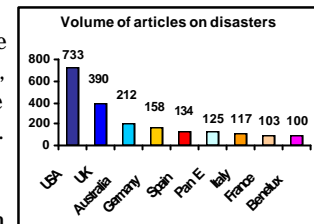
Donors becoming the story: In a number of markets, there was a congratulatory tone to some coverage: “The international community decided to allocate \$6 billion ... This is a chance to re-build; it’s more than President Pervez Musharaff had expected” (*Suedische Zeitung*, 21 November). “The British public should be feeling a little better about itself this morning” (*Sunday Times*, 2 January).

Regional disparities

Overall: Anglo-Saxons demonstrate most commitment to covering disasters

Anglo-Saxon media (US, UK, Pan Europe, Australia) tend to devote far more column inches to disasters than continental European markets - 79 per cent of the volume, but 48 per cent of the media researched. Some of this imbalance is clearly due to the domestic impact of Hurricane Katrina on American media. But excluding this, UK, Australian and pan European dailies each generated 57 on average articles. The French, German, Spanish and Benelux media wrote less than half this—an average of 23.

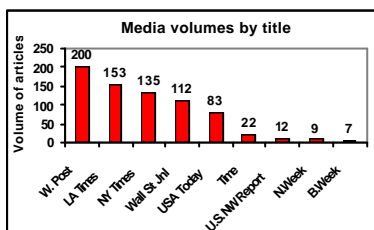
Anglo-Saxon markets dominated reporting - 80% of the total



USA: Not so interested in Katrina's victims as in economics and apportioning blame

Despite its reputation for isolationism, the US still wrote more articles on disasters than other markets - excluding Katrina 226 articles were written on the world's disasters. Katrina was biggest with 508 out of the 733 articles; but more articles were written on economic issues than on the impact on local people (155 versus 134). The government response to the crisis also generated more coverage (138) and in half of these articles media sought to apportion blame (69) - half of these pointed the finger at government. The humanitarian impact of the disaster was only the focus of 34 articles. Again, reinforcing the political dimension, the *Washington Post* wrote most on disasters 200 articles, nearly double the volume of the *Wall Street Journal*. Perhaps most surprising about the US was the total lack of interest in Stanley affecting nearby Guatemala (just five out of 733 articles) - no economic or political fallout from the similar death toll. But this was a disaster where the government reaction in a poor nation was thought by others to be good: "Aid specialists are full of praise for the government of Oscar Berger" (*Economist*, 5 November)

Washington Post led the charge on the political mess of Katrina

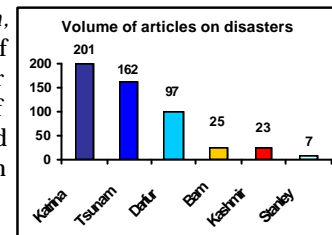


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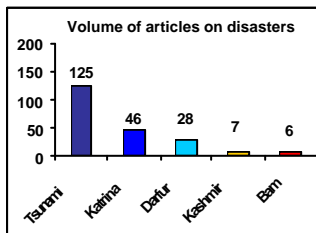
UK / pan Europe: The Guardian held the flag high for disasters

Katrina dominated reporting in UK and was highly politicised, reflecting a strong anti-Bush sentiment found in many markets. Quoting the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, commented that Mr Bush's response had been "casual to the point of carelessness" (*Guardian*, 3 September). The *Guardian* shows a commitment to disaster reporting not matched by other papers—122 articles - more than double the total of nearest placed rival the *Financial Times*. The only disaster where the *FT* out-reported the *Guardian* was in the more economically focused disaster of Katrina. One surprise in reporting was that despite colonial and current links between Kashmir and Britain, media devoted more attention to Bam with less than a third casualties than more closely-linked Kashmir.

Katrina dominated; but Tsunami had a strong pull



Tsunami dominated Australia to an extent not found on other markets



Australia: Interest in Tsunami reflected changing political and economic realities

Although it is possible to read into Australia's greater interest in the Tsunami (than Katrina) a neighbourly concern, it also reflected the changing economic and political realities of the last decade. The level of interest in Katrina was similar to that in continental Europe (around 50 articles in total); the Tsunami nearly three times this total (124). Kashmir, Bam only attracted single figure totals in the sample with Stanley getting none; these last three markets are of little political or economic significance to Australia. More than any other market, Australian media focused on the humanitarian response to crises and on the impact on local people.

Continental Europe: More detached from the disasters

All the markets of continental Europe (France, Germany, Spain, Benelux, Italy) produced significantly less coverage than the Anglo-Saxon markets—between 100 and 150 in total versus 212 in Australia and 390 for UK; even the two pan European titles (*Wall Street Journal Europe* and *IHT*) generated more than double the total of the five French dailies (55). This was despite similar media samples. In all markets Katrina dominated, but Darfur was more prominent than in Anglo-Saxon markets. Darfur was the second most covered disaster in three of the continental five markets, rather than the Tsunami which was second in the all English-speaking countries. Katrina was least prominent in France; the problems faced by the people of New Orleans were given virtually the same space as those faced by the people of Darfur. Curiously in Germany, the media devoted nearly three times more coverage to Katrina—in which no German lives were lost and which had little real economic significance than about the Tsunami in which they lost more lives than any other European country (537).

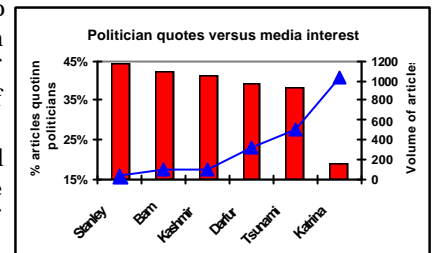
Implications

**Two groups of people are at the sharp end of such crises:
Those who suffer a disaster & those who go to help.
Our comments are addressed to them:**

Call in the politicians and the stars? Perhaps not as a first call.

Based on the findings of this study, it might be expected that we advise NGO's to get the politicians involved first to drive the political angle. In fact, there was a linear inverse proportion to the volume of politician quotes and the number of articles. Katrina attracted the highest volume of articles and the lowest ratio of politician quotes to articles (19 per cent); Stanley the lowest volume but the highest ratio of political quotes to articles (44 per cent). Politicians can be useful in driving coverage, but will do so for their own reasons and are thus unreliable as a foundation for developing sustainable interest—see the fickle interest of politicians in Darfur.

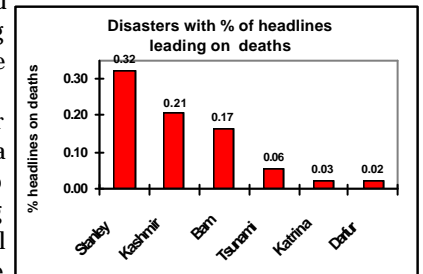
Involvement of politicians didn't guarantee high media interest



But do consider the perspective through which the story may be judged.

It is clear from the data that the four key motivating factors for western markets are: Global economic interest, national political advantage, involvement of westerners and a 'feel-good' from giving to a good cause. This is not to say that NGO's should become cynical, but that societal realities must be taken into account when planning communication and fundraising strategies. Relentlessly pursuing the public and the media with streams of disaster victim images is unlikely to be most helpful in sustaining interest, indeed there is evidence of the contrary—the greater the number of headlines leading on deaths was in most cases a leading indicator of lower media interest. There was ample evidence in this study that suffering does not equate to interest; perhaps the most flagrant is Darfur: No interest despite massive suffering for months; then a keen political perspective emerges driving volumes; the political perspective disappears, so then the coverage. Also look at the Kashmir issues in the UK - such tight historic and current population links, but not more interest than in Bam. In order to sustain interest, politics, economics and western self-interest must be carefully considered by NGO's.

Focus on suffering seemed to lead to lower interest



Call the politicians to account ... Name and shame

During the white-hot glow of humanitarian crises when publicity is cheap to come by, governments are prone to offer very optimistic sums of money for both aid and re-construction. Once the world moves on, it is very difficult to sustain pressure and these sums don't always materialise. By co-ordinating with the media a very public and global, quarterly review of funds delivered versus promised, NGO's can keep a high political pressure on governments to fulfil their commitments and provide a story with both a political and economically relevant angle to publishers and readers of news.

Interesting facts

Government relief not appreciated

In every disaster but Bam, there were significantly more negative citations of the local government relief work than positive or neutral references: For Katrina this was extreme: 90 negative references, 20 positive and 16 neutral.

Race:

One in eleven articles on Katrina saw evidence of race prejudice in the disaster response by government: "In a large sense, the administration's lethally inept response to Hurricane Katrina had a lot to do with race. For race is the biggest reason the United States, uniquely among advanced countries, is ruled by a political movement that is hostile to the idea of helping citizens in need" (*International Herald Tribune* [Pan Europe], 20 September).

German (lack of) self-interest:

German media wrote three times more articles about New Orleans, in which no German lives were lost, than about the Tsunami in which 537 were lost (79 versus 28).

Celebrities:

In some cases, there was an inverse proportion to the involvement of celebrities and the volume of media interest. Kashmir got nearly double the proportion of quotes from individuals than Katrina and nearly triple Darfur (40%, versus 24%, versus 16%), but second lowest coverage.

NGO's:

Excluding the UN, the various arms of the Red Cross/Crescent were most mentioned, but they came in for severe criticism in the US: "I will never, ever wear the Red Cross vest again" (US volunteer, *International Herald Tribune* [Pan Europe], 21 September).

'Inhumanitarian' Katrina

One in twenty articles focused on humanitarian aid to victims; this was one quarter of the average for the others. Politics was more important.

The blame game:

Nearly two hundred accusations of blame for the disaster were made in the 1,035 articles on Katrina - 19% ratio. Next was Kashmir with 15%, but the main supposed culprit there was God. Incompetent government was implicated twice as often as God.

Global warming:

Accusations that global warming and green house gases were responsible for the Katrina disaster were higher (45) than all other environmental causes combined on all other disasters - including tectonic movements (31).

Leading humanitarian issue?

Aid obstruction

The single most mentioned theme in the category of 'Humanitarian issues' relating to a single disaster was 'Aid Obstruction' in Darfur. This outnumbered the number of references to 'Clothing and Food aid' for the Tsunami. Aid obstruction was also the leading humanitarian issue for Kashmir.

Big oil:

The leading 'Global economic theme' in coverage was Oil prices. It was mentioned in 220 articles about Katrina (20%). It was also mentioned in reference to Darfur and Bam.

Local impact:

No surprise that in every disaster, the lead theme in the category of 'Impact on local area/people' was 'Death toll and homelessness/IDP's'.

Casualties:

Casualty figures were mentioned in 70 per cent of all articles. Nothing received more headline attention. Because of the political dimension in Darfur, only two per cent of headlines mentioned casualties versus six per cent in Tsunami. Katrina was similarly low, but was far less fatal (1,383 versus 180,000).

Little disease in reality:

The risk of disease was mentioned in a wide array of articles (156). Rarely (and thankfully) did this scare manifest itself.

Less food than water:

Food shortages were mentioned far more often than water shortages (171 versus 120). Both attracted 'pained' ratings in the 20's.

Study overview

Of the six humanitarian disasters analysed, **Hurricane Katrina obtained by far the highest volume of coverage**. It was discussed in 1,035 articles, representing a **50 per cent share of voice** ('share of voice': SoV).

By contrast, the Asian Tsunami gained a 25 per cent SoV, while the crisis in Darfur generated a 15 per cent share of the coverage. The three remaining disasters combined gained only 10 per cent of the voice (allowing for rounding): the Kashmir and Bam earthquakes obtained five and four per cent of mentions respectively, **while the SoV for Hurricane Stanley was only one per cent**.

In terms of national media interest in disasters, the US devoted most media space with 35 per cent of the total. 69 per cent of US coverage focused on Katrina, which meant the US media still wrote most about other international crises. Next was UK/pan Europe with 25 per cent; Australia, Germany, Spain and Italy scored in descending share between ten and six; the Benelux generated five per cent, with France last on two per cent. All markets had comparable numbers of daily newspapers analysed, with some having more weeklies.

Contrary to expectations, there was no direct correlation between the number of deaths and quantity of coverage. Katrina had highest volume, but equal lowest deaths. Kashmir attracted similar media interest to Bam, but suffered 3.5 times as many deaths. The Tsunami attracted double the coverage of Darfur, but generated a similar death toll.

While being most discussed, **Hurricane Katrina was treated as the least serious of the crises in terms of the ratings of the coverage**. Articles dealing with Katrina obtained a 'rating' of 39 (where 50 would constitute the best possible coverage – neutral in tone – while 0 would equate to the worst possible: highly stressed/negative).

However, the difference was only marginal: **the Tsunami rated 38; Hurricane Stanley 36; and the Bam earthquake 36**. Two disasters stood out for their distinctly more emotive treatment by the media: Darfur (rated 33) and – worst of all – Kashmir (31).

A closer correlation of disaster to media editorial interest was found when linked to their possible impact on the global economy. For example, this issue provided the main angle in 17 per cent of the articles on Katrina – more than for any other disaster. By contrast, only one per cent of the Bam stories focused on the global economic impact; and not a single Kashmir or Stanley story concentrated on this theme.

Politics played an even more impactful role in influencing media coverage. **All the disasters, apart**

from Hurricane Stanley, occurred in politically highly sensitive regions: an oil-rich but war-ravaged African Muslim region (Darfur); Iran; war-torn (Muslim) Indonesia and Sri Lanka; the neglected US backyard; and the Pakistan-India border.

This meant that **national interests were at stake and the media in the western countries reflected these**. **There was, for news editors, much political capital to be made from made from critical reporting of the relief efforts of humanitarian and government agencies**. **This greatly influenced the choice of story focus**, more so than the humanitarian concern.

In the case of Katrina, interest in the political and economic aspects of the story was double the level of concern for the humanitarian crisis as such (570 stories versus 273). Stories focusing on the main economic and political themes combined accounted for 55 per cent of articles on Katrina. By contrast, stories focusing on the impact of Katrina on the local area / people, and on the non-governmental humanitarian response generated only 22 per cent and five per cent of the coverage respectively. In addition, the purely humanitarian response was treated overall with calm serenity (45 rating), certainly in comparison with the bleaker tone of reporting on the impact on the local people (35 rating) and reviews of the local (i.e. US federal and state) government response (38 rating).

By comparison, **reporting on the impact of the Kashmir and Bam earthquakes on the local people and area was much more extensive than in the case of Katrina**: 41 per cent and 34 per cent of their respective coverage. This impact was also viewed as much more alarming than that of Katrina: in the case of Bam, it obtained a rating of 28; for Kashmir, this was 26. Despite this, in both cases **the combined political and economic angles outweighed the focus on the humanitarian effort**. For Bam, the share of reporting devoted to the political and economic aspects amounted to 32 per cent, while the humanitarian response generated only 24 per cent of the coverage. For Kashmir, the imbalance was even greater: 35 per cent concerned with the politics and economics, and only 19 per cent with the humanitarian response.

The contrasting examples of Katrina and Bam/Kashmir suggest the political factors dominated the humanitarian dimensions of these disasters. **Where a crisis was portrayed through the prism of short-term political immediacy, the crisis on the ground and the humanitarian response were relatively de-emphasised (Katrina)**. This had the effect of limiting sympathy for the government of the affected country (in the case of Katrina, also by portraying the suffering of the local people as having been magnified by government neglect and prevarication) and to encourage the reader to adopt a political perspective, rather than a humanitarian one.

Where the potential political and economic gains from a crisis were more strategic (e.g. the chance to promote stability within, and better relations with, affected regions), **the crisis and response were emphasised (Bam/Kashmir)**. Here, a humanitarian reaction was encouraged (e.g. Western countries reaching out to Muslim people), while the emphasis of the political/economic-focused coverage was encouraged a more conciliatory approach between warring parties in the affected region, and between outside and local governments. Nonetheless, **the economic/political reporting still outweighed coverage of the humanitarian response (35 stories versus 22), suggesting that the ongoing facts of the crisis were not the main driver.**

Katrina

In seven of the eight western markets in which research was carried out, Katrina attracted the highest volume of coverage. The key reason for this was the economic / political dimensions of the disaster. Australia was an exception; it devoted 59 per cent of its coverage to the Tsunami and 22 per cent to Katrina. Whilst this may reflect ‘neighbourly’ concern, it also reflected Australia’s changed diplomatic and economic focus of the last ten years.

Its global total was the highest (1,035 articles) by a large margin **but delivered the highest rating (39)**, i.e. the tone of the reporting was closest to being neutral than for any of the other disasters. While a 39 rating is certainly not positive, this does suggest at a top level that the sheer volume of coverage was not in proportion to the media’s own view about the seriousness of the crisis. In fact, purely in terms of the number of fatalities, Katrina was indeed the second-least serious of the six disasters analysed here, as it resulted ‘only’ in 1,383 deaths (according to news reports).

As indicated above, **closer analysis reveals that factors other than humanitarian concern were the main drivers of the Katrina coverage.** Katrina was one of only two emergencies (the other being Darfur) where the local or external government response featured more prominently in reporting than the suffering and destruction on the ground. The local government response provided the main focus in 236 Katrina articles (24 per cent of the global coverage). This compared with 222 articles (22 per cent) concerned mostly with the impact on the local people and area. There was little distinction between US and non-US media in this respect: 139 out of the total of 507 US Katrina articles (27 per cent) concentrated on the federal and state governments’ response, while 134 articles looked at the impact on the ground.

Media were critical of the US authorities’ response to the crisis: 92 per cent of the articles focusing on this aspect were negative. The criticisms were wide-ranging

and included incompetence, slowness, lack of preparedness, and racial and economic inequality in the provision – or lack – of emergency aid. Together, these appeared to develop into a sustained attack on the Bush administration. The political (non-Katrina-specific) targets for this assault included the administration’s economic and fiscal policies, the Iraq war and the competence of Bush himself. Some of the strongest criticism was linked to the deployment of US military personnel in the affected areas. There were 76 articles (rated 32) that discussed this theme, of which 96 per cent were unfavourable. The criticism majored on reproaches about the delay of the initial deployment with an attack on the priorities of the Bush administration as a whole, particularly the Iraq war. In a typical example, a local resident was quoted: “We live in the richest country in the world with the most powerful military who go off and invade any country they like, but then a disaster like this happens and we can’t even evacuate people from their homes” (*The Guardian* [UK], 13 September).

CARMA’s ‘blame monitor’ clearly demonstrates the strength of the media outcry against the US authorities. The leading recrimination (in 57 articles) was, “*post-disaster casualties could have been prevented/lower through better post-disaster management by local government*”. The second-most frequent blame (45 articles) was “*number of casualties lower if Western governments had given better warning / taken better precautions*” (where the burden of blame was directed at the federal administration seen as responsible for strategic planning). And a further 32 articles expressed the view that the casualties could have been reduced if “*local government had heeded pre-disaster warnings*” (blame directed at federal and state agencies, including FEMA, responsible for acting upon warnings issued at a national or international level). Interestingly, US media provided a disproportionately large number (32) of the 45 articles blaming Western governments (i.e. the federal administration), while non-US media provided more than its share of recriminations against the local authorities (i.e. state and city administrations).

In terms of the impact on the local people and area, the two most-frequently mentioned topics were also the leading issues in all the other crises, apart from Darfur: ‘homelessness’ (159 articles) and ‘number of casualties/people affected (as mentioned in the body of the text)’ (158 articles). These emphases were clearly justified, in the sense that Katrina resulted in a large-scale displacement of persons whose homes were destroyed: around 1.5 million people, according to various news reports. If anything, without the dominance of politically motivated reporting, a serious issue such as this might have been expected to generate a higher share of the coverage than it did (16 per cent). The most serious (lowest-rating) aspects of the emergency were also common to other disasters: ‘threat of disease’ (30-rated) and ‘shortage of medical supplies’ (31-rated); alongside ‘number of casualties

(when mentioned in the headline)', which also generated a seriousness index of 31.

There were 165 articles that focused on the impact of Katrina on the global economy and 122 that examined the effect on the local economy. By contrast, only 51 articles profiled the actual humanitarian response. By far and away the main global worry related to oil price rises resulting from the destruction of production capacity by the hurricane (207 articles in total mentioned the oil price issue). The main concern relating to the local economy was the same in Katrina as in all the other disasters: damaged infrastructure (236 articles). Relatively speaking, ratings in articles devoted to the global economy showed less concern: 42 for the story focus and 40 for the oil price issue. The rating on 'oil price' improved as the impact of Katrina was absorbed: 35 in August, 40 in September and 43 in October.

The ratings in articles focusing on the **humanitarian response** were also relatively neutral (45). **This was the most positive score on this aspect obtained by any of the disasters surveyed** – more even than for the Asian tsunami, where the humanitarian response was widely praised. This more positive coverage was even more prevalent in US media – of every political persuasion – than non-US publications: 65 per cent of US articles concentrating on the relief effort were neutral in tone, compared with 55 per cent for the global coverage. Considerations of wishing to provide a morale boost apart, this implies that the situation on the ground – covered by well-resourced local media – was not as compelling as the political agenda (including that of the more remote overseas media) wished to make out. As one article referring to the economic impact put it: "Politically it may be the biggest event since 9/11 but its economic impact is likely to be smaller, at least in the US" (*The Times* [UK], 5 September 2005).

Tsunami

Reporting on the Asian Tsunami was unique in that the humanitarian dimensions of the disaster (impact on local people/area and response) **gained more attention than the overt economic and political issues.** Indeed, the humanitarian response provided the focus of the most articles (134, or 26 per cent of the total). Second in line was the impact on the ground (22 per cent). While **the extent of reporting on the former theme was high compared with the other disasters, that on local people/area was relatively low:** it was comparable with the Katrina coverage and well below the level of the Bam and Kashmir earthquakes.

Nonetheless, the main determinant of high-volume coverage (global economic interest) was present, as was a strategic political agenda that stood to gain from the encouragement of humanitarian engagement. In the case of the Tsunami, these were combined with a more

personal, emotive dimension (connected with the involvement of Western visitors in the disaster), giving the disaster its distinctive 'appeal', i.e. its ability to move and elicit a response.

Although the impact of the Tsunami on the global economy was the explicit preoccupation of only two per cent of the coverage, **the international economic interest was revealed in the six per cent of articles devoted to the local economy; the nine per cent of stories on the impact on tourists and visitors to the region; and the coverage around the response of outside governments** (15 per cent of reporting overall). These story focuses all revolved around the centrality of the tourist industry within the region. The Tsunami was unique in that the topic of 'local tourist industry' (48 articles) overtook 'destruction of livelihood' (31 articles) as the second-most important feature of the local economy to be affected, behind the leading issue in all disasters, 'damaged infrastructure' (100 Tsunami-related articles).

Much of the Tsunami coverage presented the 'local tourist industry' as if it was just that: a locally based industry and livelihood. But the fact that concern about the industry as such outweighed concern about local people's ability to support themselves – and that actual interest in the impact on the local people and area was comparatively low – suggested that **the global economic factor was the most important driver. What was distinctive about the Tsunami was the presence of a globalised industry upon which the affected countries were dependent. And it was the very global nature of this industry that was responsible in the first place for the presence of so many international visitors at the time the disaster struck.** Many stories about the effect on the tourist industry implicitly reflected these truths without making them explicit: "Pirayanth Bottega, a waiter at the Club Lanka Hotel, said, 'I don't know what will happen now. Maybe the tourists will never come back. We have no future'" (*The Times* [UK], 30 December 2004). Another article quoted the general manager of the Marriott Hotel in Phuket: "When Colin Powell comes here today. I hope the television reports will pick up that . . . 90 per cent of the hotel rooms are open" (*International Herald Tribune* [UK/Pan-Europe], 4 January 2005).

Examples such as these suggested that **two key factors behind the push to foreground the humanitarian relief efforts were: 1) Unease about the dependency of the affected areas on a tourist industry designed to serve the needs of well-off Westerners; and 2) an urge to accelerate the reconstruction process in order to restore the industry as quickly as possible and ensure its future survival.** The factor was again largely implicit, particularly in the sometimes rather self-congratulatory discussions about public generosity: "Australian donors had been among the most generous in the world. This is eclipsing anything we've seen before by a long way" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 January 2005). There was an unprecedented amount of coverage of the relief

effort – more so even than for Katrina: 108 articles discussed donations of food, clothing and money; 59 discussed aid co-ordination; and 46 discussed the media coverage of the fundraising itself.

Much of this coverage included statements such as the following: “Relief officials say money, rather than clothing or food, is the fastest way to get help to affected countries” (*Washington Post* [USA], 30 December 2004). The effort to persuade governments to match the financial generosity of the public also played a major role in the articles devoted to the outside government response: ‘financial aid’ was easily the leading external government theme, being discussed in 90 articles.

As the financial needs of the immediate relief effort were rapidly met, **it was hard to escape the impression that what was being called for was increasingly development aid – effectively free investment capital to assist with the reconstruction of local infrastructure and tourism – rather than mere relief aid:** “The preliminary Sumatran reconstruction bill is estimated at 10 trillion rupiah (\$1.4 billion) – apparently within the scope of aid money already pledged” (*Sydney Morning Herald* [Australia], 7 January 2005). Indeed, OECD figures concerning financial aid tend to bear this out: of the total of \$2.06 billion distributed to affected countries up to September 2005, 23 per cent was non-emergency aid (i.e. reconstruction funding). In the case of Indonesia – a major Muslim state and the principal beneficiary – the share of non-emergency aid was 27 per cent. The need to insure that these reconstruction efforts were not laid waste by another tsunami – thus really eradicating the tourist industry once and for all – was behind the high level of coverage devoted to the theme of ‘development / deployment of better warning systems’. This was discussed in 43 articles, considerably more than other disasters, including Katrina.

A major source of interest in the Tsunami was also the fact that many Westerners were directly affected. A total of 71 articles referred to the number of tourist casualties, while 45 articles mentioned missing persons among tourists. Nonetheless, two observations can be made about this: **1) This concern of the media was a further example of the Western-focused, economics-based drivers (the affected persons were identified, precisely, tourists); 2) It casts further doubt on the supposedly altruistic humanitarian concern towards local communities that media portrayed as at the heart of the reaction to the Tsunami.** By way of comparison, 188 articles reported on the number of local casualties (only 2.65 times the number that dealt with Western victims); while only three more articles (48) discussed local missing persons than missing tourists. In reality, the number of Western victims was infinitesimal compared with that of local casualties: the countries whose media are analysed in this report accounted for ‘only’ around 0.5 per cent (903) of the total number of confirmed fatalities (174,542).

This disproportion lends further support to the view that it was the economic factors that drove the coverage: without the Westerners – acting as global consumers of the tourism provided by the tsunami countries – would there have been anything like the level of humanitarian interest that was displayed in the event? In fact, **it was English-language media that provided the bulk of the coverage: Australia, 24 per cent; USA, 23 per cent; UK, 22 per cent; and Pan-Europe, ten per cent. This was not in proportion to the number of fatalities, where these countries’ citizens accounted for 21 per cent of deaths from the countries analysed** (according to news sources). This suggests again that the global economic interest was a more decisive factor than the impact on the ground.

Interestingly, the level of charitable donations reflected a combination of the economic-strategic interest, the actual number of fatalities and apparently more genuine altruism. According to OECD figures to September 2005, Australia, the UK and the USA were among the leading countries making definite aid payments (as opposed to as yet unrealised commitments), reflecting their economic-strategic interest. Other leading donors included France, Germany and Norway (where there were larger numbers of deaths). The level of giving from Canada (\$131 million) appears to correspond more to genuine charity. However, the economic-strategic interest was clearly a major factor for Japan, the leading actual contributor (\$539 million).

There was also political capital to be made from Western governments appearing to be generous: “Tony Blair promised on January 5th to outdo, with British taxpayers’ money, whatever they might contribute voluntarily as individuals. Thus came the first politicisation of the tsunami aid: governments using it to win votes at home” (*The Economist* [UK/Pan Europe], 8 January). **There were also strategic international dividends**, including the chance to promote the cessation of hostilities in areas such as Aceh (where the Indonesian government was fighting rebels) and Sri Lanka. Another important consideration was referred to by General Powell: “The fact that it is a Muslim nation adds to the importance of the effort” (*The Times* [UK], 3 January 2005).

Darfur

The crisis in Darfur – also a Muslim region – generated the third-highest volume of reporting of the six disasters surveyed: 312 articles. It also generated the second lowest rating (33). Coverage of this crisis was tracked for the whole of 2004 and 2005 up to and including November 2005 (plus August 2003 – one article). This was massively longer than for any other emergency. In strict comparable terms, **the number of articles on Darfur was appallingly low. If the number of articles on Darfur are related to the ten weeks for the other disasters, the number falls into single figures.**

This was linked to the absence of the prime ‘volume generator’, global economic interest: articles examining the impact of Darfur on the global economy accounted for less than one per cent of the total (specifically, two). Its political capital had not yet developed.

And the Darfur crisis was the most politicised of all the disasters tracked. The politics were also quite polarised. In all but the UK, the coverage could be described as the type of politically driven reporting that attempts to leverage a crisis to score political points and achieve political objectives in the present. Hence, the actual humanitarian aspects were considerably downplayed. Of the 215 articles on the crisis originating from non-UK and non-Pan-Europe media, 54 concentrated on the impact on the local people and area (25 per cent). While this was already quite a lot lower than for the Kashmir and Bam disasters, **the share of the non-UK/Pan-Europe reporting devoted to the humanitarian response was massively lower:** ten articles (five per cent).

This was highly akin to the treatment of Katrina, where the humanitarian response also provided the focus of only five per cent of articles. Darfur and Katrina were the only disasters where a political focus assumed greater prominence than either the impact on local people/area or the non-governmental humanitarian efforts.

Across all media, **the response of external governments was the leading Darfur story focus, with 29 per cent of articles. Coverage on this theme peaked whenever most pressure was being exerted to bring about political or military action** through the UN. In July 2004, this involved a concerted campaign led by European media (including UK titles such as *The Guardian*) to bring about a UN resolution calling for the Janjaweed militia to be disarmed within 30 days, including the threat of oil sanctions if this was not heeded. Coverage fell away after a resolution was achieved at the end of July, albeit without the sanctions. Another peak in reporting devoted to external government intervention occurred in July and August 2005. This time, media from Australia and the USA led the charge, with strong criticism of the ineffectiveness of UN- and African Union-led resolutions and peacekeeping efforts to date, and calls for sanctions and more forceful military intervention. One article quoted Kofi Anan: “We were slow, hesitant, uncaring and . . . have learned nothing from Rwanda” (*The Australian*, 26 November 2005). The media in question (particularly *The Australian*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Washington Post*) sustained their campaign at lower volumes until a new UN resolution was in fact achieved in November 2005.

In the UK/Pan-Europe coverage, by contrast, the humanitarian response was by far the leading story focus (51 out of 97 articles). Having said that, the impact of the crisis on the local population/area generated a lower proportion of the UK/P-E coverage than elsewhere (12 articles). In fact, the physical impact of the emergency

was less frequently the centre of attention than the response of external governments (15 articles). This suggested that **the very substantial concentration on humanitarian aid in UK/P-E media was also driven – to a considerable extent – by the politics.** This included a concern not to allow the humanitarian relief efforts to fall off the *political* agenda as they so comprehensively did in the media elsewhere.

As in the case of the global Tsunami coverage – where the humanitarian response was also to the fore – **the political objectives driving the UK/P-E reporting were strategic and long-term.** Whereas the agenda of European, Australian and US media – at various stages in the story – was that of pushing interventionist action through the UN, the UK media agenda appeared to be twofold: reform of the UN itself, and positioning the UK as the broker of a new deal for Africa, including mediating between the more free-market perspective of the USA and the politically idealistic focus of Europe.

While article after UK article detailed the horrific atrocities against and suffering of local people, **the coverage built into a sustained attack, not just on the ineffectiveness of the UN as an organisation, but on the very politics with which the UN had become associated, which was portrayed as compromising the practical efforts to bring relief and broker peace on the ground.** One typical article quoted the director general of the charity Save the Children UK on the organisation’s withdrawal from Darfur after acts of violence against its aid workers: “These incidents and the deteriorating security situation in Darfur caused us to withdraw from the region at the end of last year and reluctantly cease our work with some of the world’s most vulnerable children. Political sound-bites and tactics, carried out in the name of democracy and freedom, have brought us to this. But this is no freedom” (*The Guardian* [UK/Pan-Europe], 5 January 2005).

UK and Pan European media attempted to take up a balanced position that took seriously – at least with respect to its effects if not its validity – the viewpoint of the Sudanese government, which claimed to see UN and Western-sponsored aid as the vanguard of a militaristic anti-Islamic threat: “An imam . . . said in a sermon broadcast on television, ‘We caution our people in . . . western Sudan against trusting the USA, that it wants to help them. What is being done now is for the interests of one country: Israel’” (*International Herald Tribune* [UK/P-E], 23 August 2004). Given the fact that *in reality* the preoccupation of much of the Western media – as analysed above – was less with bringing aid than with using the humanitarian crisis as a spur for more forceful intervention, the suspicion of the Sudanese authorities against aid organisations was more understandable, even if violence against those organisations was in turn exploited as a political weapon. And indeed, some of the language used about the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed militia in respected news media did seem calculated to portray the conflict there simplistically as

one between extremist Arab Muslims and victimised Africans who needed defending: “Hordes of Arab tribesmen on horseback, known as Janjaweed, swoop down on isolated southern Sudanese villages. They have been known to kill hundreds of villagers, often hacking them to death with swords” (*Sydney Morning Herald* [Australia], 26 May 2004).

After a surge in the number of the mostly UK and Pan European articles concentrating on the humanitarian response in July and August 2004, around the time of the UN resolution, a slow feed of coverage of this type continued right through to June 2005. It was supportive of the UK government’s declared policy aims for Africa at that time, as epitomised in a more emotive register by the Live 8 concerts at the beginning of July 2005 – although that movement’s call for an end to poverty and injustice in Africa was not explicitly linked by the media to any of the Darfur coverage. However, **following the terrorist attacks in the UK in that month, African poverty dropped from the UK media agenda; and interest focused on the humanitarian response in Darfur fell away for the whole period from July to November 2005.**

Kashmir

The earthquake disaster in Kashmir was another case where the relative lack of coverage (102 articles, compared with 1,035 Katrina articles) **was linked to the lack of any impact on the global economy.** In fact, not a single article focused on this theme, and only one article looked at the effect on the local economy.

Here, the main emphases were on the humanitarian aspects: 42 articles concentrated on the appalling impact of the quake on the local people/area (26 rating); while a further 19 articles dealt with the humanitarian response (rated 32). The main impacts reported were the number of casualties and affected people (as mentioned in the body text) (63 articles), and homelessness (48 articles). (These were, in fact, the most frequently mentioned human impacts for all the disasters, except for Darfur, where ‘IDPs’ (internally displaced persons) replaced ‘homelessness’ as the second-most important issue.)

Nevertheless, **the number of articles on the relief effort was low compared with the number that dealt with the crisis on the ground. This both contributed to, and was linked with, the perception that the humanitarian response was inadequate.** The most serious criticism related to ‘obstruction of aid’, which was referred to in 29 articles (rated 24). Most of these related to the Pakistani authorities’ actions in limiting the participation of Indian forces and aid workers in the relief effort, owing to the troubled security situation and political sensitivities between the two nations in the Kashmir region. Hence, the themes of ‘military deployment’ and ‘deployment of relief workers (negatively reported)’ both generated large amounts of negative publicity: 34 articles (rated 24) and 20 articles (rated 27) respectively. Overall, the local government response – of which these topics formed a

part – formed the focus in five articles with the very low rating of 27.

This political effect (depreciation of the local government’s role) **was in part an intended consequence of the way the media portrayed the relief effort.** As the present analysis has attempted to demonstrate, strong emphasis on the acute nature of a humanitarian crisis – which can all the more be represented as acute the more the response is seen as inadequate – tends to serve strategic political objectives. International politics were never far from the surface in the Kashmir crisis. As many articles (19) focused on the response of external governments as on the humanitarian response. In addition, overtly political issues formed the main theme in 11 articles.

The strategic political dividend from the Kashmir crisis appeared to be that of fostering co-operation and reconciliation between Pakistan and India in the region, with the potential benefit of diminishing the operational freedom and moral legitimacy of ‘extremist’ Muslim Kashmiri separatists with potential links to Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Certainly, the political theme of ‘inter-governmental relations (positively reported)’ generated a less negative rating of 35 from ten articles than the average for the disaster of 31. As one article put it: “There are signs the disaster may help resolve the long-standing dispute over Kashmir, which has sparked three Indian-Pakistan wars” (*Business Week* [USA], 31 October 2005). Negative portrayals of the role of the Pakistani authorities in relation to the relief effort made non-co-operation with better-equipped Indian forces seem even more unreasonable. But **what was certainly absent from the media coverage was a concerted effort to drum up support for the humanitarian response and fundraising:** media coverage of fundraising was discussed in only six articles, a negligible total compared to the 46 articles this same theme attracted in the Tsunami crisis.

Bam

The level of reporting on the Bam earthquake disaster in Iran was also comparatively low (reporting on the initial crisis was concentrated mainly in December 2003 (36 articles) and January 2004 (26)). This presented a stark contrast with the Tsunami coverage, which also concerned a disaster occurring over the Christmas period. Despite the massively inferior volume of coverage on Bam, ratings were more acute than the Tsunami (36 rating versus 38 respectively).

The key to the low volume was again the lack of global economic impact: only one article concentrated on this aspect. Bam presented close parallels with Kashmir in this respect. Another was the emphasis on the humanitarian dimensions. The leading focus of reporting was the impact on the local area/people (34 per cent of articles), followed by the humanitarian response (24 per cent). The number of casualties (48 articles) and

homelessness (36 stories) were again the main concerns. In contrast to Kashmir, however, coverage of the humanitarian response was less negative. Articles devoted to this topic scored a rating of 44 (nearly neutral), while those concerned with the impact of the quake on the ground rated 28 reflecting the appalling conditions. By comparison, the humanitarian response to the Kashmir disaster elicited a rating of only 32, while the human impact was viewed as marginally more serious than Bam (26 rating).

This difference in treatment was connected with different circumstances through which rather similar strategic political objectives were being aimed at. In the case of Kashmir, criticism of certain aspects of the relief effort were intended to foster closer co-operation between Pakistan and India. In Bam, by contrast, the media was keen to play its part in fostering improved relationships between the West and Iran by commending the humanitarian response from Western countries. The third-most frequent focus of the Bam coverage was the response from external governments. There were 14 articles devoted to this theme, compared with only eight that concentrated on the local government response. There were over three times more positive references to the deployment of external specialised forces (28 articles) than to the deployment of local relief workers (nine). In addition, there were 17 articles that mentioned financial aid from foreign governments and 12 that referred positively to diplomatic communications around the disaster. Many articles made the link between co-operation in the relief effort and longer-term political benefits: "Since the earthquake in Bam there are more and more signs of a détente between the enemies Iran and the US" (*De Tijd* [Belgium], 2 January 2004).

There was also criticism of the Iranian government's response; in particular, six articles (rated 24) provided negative comment about the deployment of relief workers. **This criticism served both to underscore the idea that Iran would benefit from welcoming foreign aid and to criticise the Iranian leadership:** "It was clear that the earthquake had not only shaken the weak foundations of the ancient Arg-I-Bam, or citadel, but had also caused echoes of discontent that could help destabilise the theocratic Iranian government" (*The Daily Telegraph* [UK], 30 December 2003). Reflecting this emphasis on the opportunity presented by the disaster to foster improved relationships with Iran, ten articles (rated 46) dealt with the theme of inter-governmental relations in a positive vein; while even the four articles that provided negative discussions of inter-governmental relations obtained relatively moderate scores (43).

The Bam emergency therefore provided a clear example of where coverage of the humanitarian aspects of a crisis was leveraged to promote strategic political ends. One thing it was not designed to encourage was a mass charitable response from the general public. For instance, although a greater proportion of the Bam

coverage than that of the Tsunami discussed donations of food, clothing and money (32 per cent versus 21 per cent respectively), this was mainly in praise of the efforts of foreign governments, particularly the USA. Indeed, media coverage of humanitarian fund raising for Bam was discussed very harshly in six articles (rated only 12), compared with a 39 rating on the same topic from 46 Tsunami articles. There were also 12 Tsunami stories dealing with media efforts to raise money, against none for Bam.

Stanley

In the case of Hurricane Stanley, the paucity of the coverage (25 articles, including 24 in October 2005 and only one in November 2005) **presented stark evidence of the importance of economic and political factors in driving coverage of natural disasters.** The volume on Stanley represented about 2.5 per cent of the coverage obtained by the similar Katrina disaster only two months previously, despite the fact that Stanley generated a similar number of deaths (1153 v. 1383) and was viewed as marginally more serious (36 rating, versus 39 for Katrina). Indeed, the number of articles generated by Stanley was only just over a quarter of that dealing with Bam, the next-least covered crisis.

The lack of coverage was connected with the fact that the Central American countries affected by Stanley – mostly Guatemala – presented neither any significant global economic impact, nor any opportunity to advance major political agendas. Not a single article was devoted to the impact on the global economy. Indeed, only six articles in total concentrated on any of the five major economic or political themes (global or local economy, external or local government response, general political issues). **More damningly still, perhaps, not a single article focused on the humanitarian response.** By contrast, 15 articles were devoted to the impact on the local people and area; and most of these were concentrated in the first week of the crisis, as indeed was most of the Stanley coverage as a whole.

All of these facts suggest that while *some* of the media (20 titles in total) were sufficiently concerned by the seriousness of the emergency to report on its immediate aftermath, **there simply was not enough of a political or economic interest, not only to sustain reporting of the ongoing humanitarian response but to generate such reporting in the first instance. The evidence of Stanley appears to be that if there is no economic or political mileage to be obtained from a crisis, media take the view that it is best not to actually turn off their readers by continuing to put the emergency in their faces, so to speak.** The only significant internationally relevant dimension that was teased out of the Stanley disaster was its environmental implications in relation to global warming, discussed by three articles.