Global crises in the news: Staging new wars, disasters and climate change
Global Crises in the News: Staging New Wars, Disasters and Climate Change

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Abstract

We live in a world increasingly defined by global crises. These are crises whose origins and outcomes cannot adequately be encompassed or explained by national or even international frames of reference. How they are staged in the world’s news media proves critical to their constitution as “global crises” and variously conditions their course and conduct. This paper grounds and elaborates on these claims in respect of three selected global crises — new wars, major disasters, and climate change. Here, three general forms of news staging are delineated in terms of global surveillance, global-focusing events, and global spectacle. Global crisis reporting, it is argued, variously expresses today’s “negatively globalized planet” (Bauman, 2007), but how global crises become staged and enacted within the news media also extends their global reach and variously intensifies their responses. In such ways, the news media may even, on occasion, contribute to an emergent global “cosmopolitan outlook” (Beck, 2006).
“Global Crisis is a magnum opus that will remain a touchstone in three areas for at least a generation: the history of the entire globe, the role of climate in history, and the identification of a major historical crisis in the seventeenth century. . . . Wide-ranging, monumental works of history are rare; this is one of them.”—Theodore K. Rabb, Times Literary Supplement, (Theodore K. Rabb Times Literary Supplement). Parker, in a very captivating way, put this global era in a completely new perspective. He not only describes the effects sudden climate change had on society. Like failing crops, there for no food for the population, with the result that 30% of society just starved. The bottom third of the global population was pushed over the cliff. Conflict and climate change threaten rural livelihoods. Around the world, social and political instability are on the rise. Since 2010, state-based conflict has increased by 60 percent and armed conflict within countries has increased by 125 percent. War hits farmers especially hard. Conflict can evict them from their land, destroy crops and livestock, prevent them from acquiring seed and fertilizer or selling their produce, restrict their access to water and forage, and disrupt planting or harvest cycles. Many conflicts play out in rural areas characterized by smallholder agriculture or pastoralism. Without other options to feed themselves, farmers and pastoralists in crisis may be forced to leave their land and communities.