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Germany's humanitarian aid and media reporting on natural catastrophes

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Abstract

The Federal Republic of Germany is one of the leading donors of both humanitarian and development assistance worldwide and the single most important contributor to the European Commission's humanitarian aid budget. This paper investigates the relationship between the extent of the presence of the issue of humanitarian aid in Germany's media reporting and the provision of humanitarian aid to disaster-stricken countries by the German federal government. The empirical findings show that, while the number of fatalities recorded on a selected crisis and the number of articles published on such a crisis are the most significant variables affecting the disbursement of emergency financial assistance, no clear cut positive correlation between an increase in issue salience and an increase in Germany's provision of humanitarian aid can necessarily be observed.

* Research results of ongoing work to be published as part of a PhD thesis.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present empirical findings of a study on the relationship between increases in issue salience in the media on the topic of humanitarian aid and increases in the provision of emergency humanitarian aid on behalf of the German government. Germany has been selected as a case study since the country is the fourth largest donor of humanitarian aid worldwide and the single largest contributor to the European Commission's humanitarian aid budget (GHA 2011). The paper is presented from a political science perspective but also draws on both media and humanitarian research and it is exactly this interdisciplinary approach that enhances the added value of the paper. Overall, the paper provides clues and observations on how an increase in issue salience of the topic of humanitarian aid in public discourse might contribute to focus the German government's attention on the issue of humanitarian aid and its provision to disaster-stricken countries.

Starting from these premises, a number of independent variables have been identified in order to identify which factors might have a significant impact in determining the dependent variable represented by the disbursement of emergency financial assistance. These independent variables included the country's gross domestic product; the presence of a centre-left or a centre-right government; the institutional architecture of the country's humanitarian system; the presence or non-presence of a period of electoral campaigning; the number of fatalities recorded in each natural disaster taken into consideration; the number of people affected by it and the estimated damage caused by the disaster. Furthermore, the presence of articles published in centre-left or centre-right newspapers, their valence¹ as well as the total number of articles published between one and five days following the onset of the catastrophe were investigated as potentially significant independent variables.

This paper presents its findings through a five-step approach. To begin with, a contextualization of the work carried out, its theoretical background, and the methodological framework employed are presented. After that, a general overview of the German humanitarian aid system is provided. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis is carried out through a multiple regression analysis. Then, a number of bi-dimensional graphs are presented in order to investigate the specific relationships taking place between selected variables. Finally, some general conclusions are offered for what concerns the interplay and the dynamics between an increase in issue salience on the topic of humanitarian aid and the provision of such aid by the German government.

¹ In the context of this research, the term "valence" refers to the emotional elements to be found within media content. Emotional elements within media content can increase or decrease the overall salience of an issue. Each article that has been coded for this research paper has therefore been evaluated for its valence in order to observe whether the article had a positive valence (i.e. it directly or indirectly argued in favour of the provision of humanitarian aid), whether it had a neutral valence (i.e. it limited itself to report actual facts) or whether it has a negative valence (i.e. it directly or indirectly argued against the provision of humanitarian aid).

For the collection of data, three key sources were used. In the case of the articles published in German newspapers, Lexis-Nexis² database was employed on the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Die Welt*. The two newspapers were selected so as to encompass a broad spectrum of public opinion from a more left-leaning public to a more conservative one. When looking at the German government's disbursement of emergency financial assistance, the data was obtained through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Financial Tracking System. Finally and for what concerns data on key alternative explanations (the number of fatalities, the number of affected people and the estimated damage of each natural disaster), the information provided by the International Emergency Events Database of the University of Louvain was used.

2. Contextualization, theoretical background and methodological framework

"Does greater commitment of a national government to the issue of humanitarian aid correlate to greater salience of the above mentioned issue in national public discourse?" This is the research question upon which the general hypothesis whereby an increase in issue salience leads to a concomitant variation in a government's disbursement of humanitarian aid is built. Within this context, the salience of an issue has to be understood as the extent to which an issue is "most noticeable or important" or "prominent and conspicuous" within a country's public discourse³. Media salience is a theoretical construct that can actually be understood in three fundamental ways (or a combination of these): as valence, as prominence and as attention (Kiouisis 2004). Issue salience understood primarily as valence places its emphasis on the role that emotional elements within the media play in increasing or decreasing the 'importance' of the reported issue. Issue salience understood primarily as prominence focuses on the role that framing techniques can play in positioning a piece of information in such a way so as to make it more or less relevant. Finally, issue salience as attention focuses on the extent to which an issue is covered in the media. This last understanding of issue salience is the one upon which this research paper focuses. To different extents as well as implicitly or explicitly, a number of scholars have addressed this question when exploring the eventual emergence of pan-European public spheres. Among others, Trezn did so while looking at the debate on the "Future of Europe" following Joschka Fischer's speech at Humboldt University in Berlin in May 2000 (Trenz 2007), Kantner and Rendfort when investigating military interventions (Kantner and Rendfort 2007), van de Steeg and Risse when analysing the famous "Haider debate" (van de Steeg 2006; van de Steeg and Risse 2007) and again Risse together with Grabowsky when exploring the European public sphere (Risse and Grabowsky 2008). Moreover, other significant

² Lexis-Nexis is a database that provides in digitalized form the most extensive access to tabloids, berliners and broadsheets worldwide. It allows users to search the available publications through a broad variety of search functions over a number of decades. Lexis-Nexis can be accessed through a paid subscription at <http://www.lexisnexis.com/>.

³ Oxford Online Dictionary, available at http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/salient#m_en_gb0729640.010 (last access: 27 July 2011).

theoretical and empirical contributions on the topic of issue salience and media coverage have been made by Baumgartner, Benford and Snow, Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller, Kingdon, McCombs, Pfetsch and Adam, Schlesinger and Zucker (Baumgartner 1997; Benford and Snow 2000; Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller 1980; Kingdon 1984; McCombs 1993; Pfetsch and Adam 2008; Schlesinger 1999; Zucker 1978). Finally and for what concerns more specific work on the relationship between media coverage and humanitarian aid, the work of Lim, Barnett and Kim should be flagged as one of the most comprehensive researches carried so far (Lim, Barnett and Kim 2006).

Within this emerging body of research, the research question investigates Walgrave and van Aelst's tentative theory on the mass media's agenda-setting power whereby national media can set the agenda of both political and institutional actors (Walgrave and van Aelst 2006). Walgrave and van Aelst propose a theoretical framework cantered upon the role of media input, political context and political adoption. To begin with, the notion of media input has to do with the type of issue covered (obtrusive or unobtrusive)⁴, the media outlets that are taken into consideration (newspapers, radio, TV, the internet, radio or newspapers) and the kind of news involved (positive or negative news). Furthermore, the political context varies in function of the election or "routine" time when the news takes place, depending on the institutional rules regulating the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of the state, following the institutional architecture of those bodies tasked with the management of a certain policy area, depending on who is uttering statements reported by the media (head of executives, leaders of the oppositions or other branches of the state) and the degree to which political life has been "personalized". Finally and following up on pressure exercised by the mass media through their agenda-setting power, policy-makers might provide a political adoption that might be classified as no reaction, slow symbolic reaction, slow substantial reaction, fast symbolic reaction or fast substantial reaction.

It is under specific and most favourable conditions that Walgrave and van Aelst claim that the media can best exercise their agenda-setting power. In terms of media input, sudden negative news of an unobtrusive nature reported in national broadsheets are the ones most likely to successfully play the role of agenda-setters for the political establishment. For what concerns the political context, the conditions under which the media can most forcefully play their agenda-setting role are in routine (i.e. non-election) time; when standard bargaining rules between the legislative and the executive do not apply; when the institutional architecture of those bodies tasked with dealing with the selected policy area are enabled to deliver fast and substantial outcomes; independently of political configurations (a centre-left or a centre-right government) and when the head of the executive has an incentive to display leadership because of a political context characterized by a high degree of "political personalization" (Walgrave and van Aelst 2006). It should be noted that this research focuses its observations only on three types of political adoption:

⁴ The Oxford Online Dictionary defines as obtrusive an issue that is "noticeable or prominent in an unwelcome or intrusive way" and as unobtrusive an issue that is "not conspicuous or attracting attention". Oxford Online Dictionary, available at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/obtrusive> and at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/unobtrusive> (last access: 18 August 2011).

1. No adoption whereby the German government does not release any emergency financial assistance,
2. Fast symbolic adoption whereby the German government quickly releases extremely limited amounts of funding following a natural disaster or
3. Fast substantial adoption whereby the German government provides significant amounts of emergency financial assistance immediately after the onset of a humanitarian catastrophe.

Both slow symbolic and slow substantial responses (i.e. those responses that take place *after* the first 21 days from the onset of an emergency) are not investigated because the extremely high number of potentially intervening variables would make such an effort technically not feasible.

The following research steps are undertaken in order to obtain the results presented in this paper. First of all, the dependent variable is determined by establishing the exact date when a specific amount has been disbursed by the German government in response to a selected humanitarian catastrophe. This data is obtained through the database of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Financial Tracking System. Following on that, the independent variables relating to issue salience are determined through an investigation of the exact date when an article reporting on one of the selected humanitarian catastrophes has been published in any of the two national newspapers that have been selected. The texts are coded through text body scan looking for a combination of words relating humanitarian aid to the specific natural catastrophe under investigation and the sum of relevant articles obtained through the word combination for each newspaper on each day is recorded. Data is in this case gathered through Lexis-Nexis: a database of newspapers published worldwide that provides standardized access and search functions on broadsheets, berliners and tabloids. As a next step, a multiple regression analysis is carried out in order to assess the significance of the potential impact of each one of the selected independent variables on the dependent variable (the government's disbursements).

The period of analysis taken into consideration by the study ranges from the 1st of January 2000 to the 31st of December 2008. This takes into consideration the largest natural disasters recorded according to objective parameters obtained through the International Emergency Events Database of the University of Louvain. These are humanitarian emergencies that witnessed a combination of more than 1,000 fatalities, over 1 m affected people and over US\$ 1 bn in estimated damages. The humanitarian crises selected and investigated are therefore the Gujarat earthquake of 16 January 2001, the India and Bangladesh floods of June 2004, the Southeast Asian tsunami of 26 December 2004, the Indian floods of July 2005, hurricane Stan in Central America in October 2005, the Pakistan earthquake of 8 October 2005, the Java earthquake of 27 May 2006, cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh in November 2007, cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in May 2008 and the Sichuan (China) earthquake of 12 May 2008. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Die Welt* have been selected as a key centre-left and a key centre-right newspaper to be investigated respectively: this is common practice in communication

studies and it is aimed at investigating those media outlets that can represent the broadest possible spectrum of political views of a country's citizenry. The 21 days following the onset of each one of the ten natural disasters under investigation are analysed in terms of both the total number of articles published each day by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Die Welt* and the amount of emergency humanitarian assistance disbursed by the German government.

3. The German humanitarian aid system

The German Federal Foreign Office directly manages humanitarian aid provided by the German government to disaster-stricken populations worldwide while the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) manages long-term development aid. This is due to a long-term strategic decision dating back to the 1970s to keep humanitarian aid and development aid as separate policies under the responsibility of separate government agencies. This modus operandi persisted both through the exponential growth in the number of humanitarian crises of the 1970s and 1980s as well as the re-organisation of Germany's foreign policy and the country's increased role on the world stage following the fall of the Berlin Wall. This clearly distinguishes the organisational culture of German humanitarian and development aid institutions from the structures of many of its European counterparts where, as a rule, humanitarian and development aid are managed by the same executive body. In a rather peculiar arrangement, while the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development have a distinct set of responsibilities, the funding that these ministries can access concerning both humanitarian and development aid policies is the same.

Unlike the more politicized aspects typical of development assistance, the provision of humanitarian aid on behalf of the Federal Foreign Office theoretically has to follow a strict "hierarchy of needs" whereby priority is given to the provision of potable water and food, followed by the provision of medical care to meet the immediate needs of the affected populations and, finally, the provision of security and protection for the recipient populations both from the elements of nature and from eventual violent attacks (Eberwein 2002). The Federal Foreign Office has therefore a dedicated "Department of the United Nations, Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid" with exclusive competence and responsibility for the coordination of emergency relief operations and the provision of humanitarian aid. Headed by the Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid and with a staff of over 20 full-time employees dedicated solely to humanitarian aid issues, it is this department within the ministry that effectively sets the humanitarian aid agenda for the Foreign Office itself. A situation reinforced by the fact that the humanitarian budget of the Foreign Office as a percentage of the government's total humanitarian budget has steadily increased from 17% in the mid-1970s to 29% in 2000 (Eberwein 2002).

Within this context, German humanitarian aid is strategically overseen by the Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee: a body comprising representatives from the Federal Foreign Office itself, other ministries such as the BMZ and representatives

of German aid organisations (Federal Foreign Office of Germany 2008). Despite this apparent wide-ranging involvement of all relevant stakeholders, Germany has for a long time been accused of lacking an overarching strategy to guide the programming of its humanitarian aid across different ministries (Foreign Office and BMZ) or technical agencies (OECD 2010). The state of affairs described above is nevertheless in flux: Following the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer review on German development and humanitarian aid policy carried out in 2010 and in an attempt to rationalise and streamline its extremely complicated managerial and administrative developmental mechanism, Germany has now officially merged (effective from January 2011) the technical cooperation agencies made up by the Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (DED; German Development Service) the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ; German Society for Technical Cooperation) and InWEnt into a new agency called Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ; German Society for International Cooperation) thus aiming to address some of the intrinsic weaknesses of the country's humanitarian mechanism.

German humanitarian aid is driven by three fundamental principles: subsidiarity, the "principles of good practice and humanitarian donorship" and the "twelve basic rules of humanitarian assistance abroad". The subsidiarity principle is to be seen in two fundamental ways. First, the German government is supposed not to intervene directly in the provision of humanitarian aid but rather to financially support NGOs and international agencies that carry out humanitarian work on the field. The German Technical Relief Service (THW) is therefore to be deployed only in exceptional and well-documented circumstances where the host country proves itself unable to carry out specific technical tasks. Second, the German government shall always avoid providing humanitarian emergency assistance to those countries where the relevant national government is itself deemed capable of providing humanitarian assistance to the population on its territory affected by a humanitarian crisis. Concerning the "principles of good practice and humanitarian donorship", four basic tenants can be identified. First, the "humanity principle" refers to the key imperative that should drive all German humanitarian assistance: to save human lives and alleviate human suffering wherever possible. Second, the "impartiality principle" states that all humanitarian aid should be provided solely based on actual needs assessments and irrespectively of the cultural, political and religious affiliations of the beneficiaries. Third, the "neutrality principle" claims that humanitarian action should not favour any conflicting party involved in a humanitarian crises situation. Finally, the "independence principle" states that all the actors providing humanitarian assistance on the field operating thanks to financing from the Federal Government should equally refrain from taking sides and in any way favouring one conflicting party over another within the context of a humanitarian crisis (Good Humanitarian Donorship 2011). Last but certainly not least and to complement the basic principles mentioned above, the "twelve basic rules of humanitarian assistance abroad" (agreed on the 17th of June 1993 by all aid and governmental organisations involved in the Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee) are a set of principles highlighting best practice and establishing an internationally agreed code of conduct in

the provision of emergency assistance to which the German government is supposed to adhere to (Federal Foreign Office of Germany 2008).

Shifting the analysis of the German humanitarian system to its financial aspect, a number of observations can be made. To begin with, Germany's total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) throughout the 1995 to 2005 period constantly ranged around US\$ 7.5 billion. It then rather suddenly started to significantly increase under the leadership of Chancellor Merkel. The governing CDU-SPD Grand Coalition oversaw a constant increase in ODA expenditure from US\$ 7.9 billion in 2005 to US\$ 12.3 billion in 2009. Following a similar pattern, German humanitarian aid has also experienced a significant increase from 2005 onwards. Indeed, at the time of the Southeast Asian tsunami (between 2004 and 2005), German humanitarian assistance shot up from US\$ 571 million in 2004 to US\$ 839 million in 2005 and it has since then oscillated between US\$ 839 million in 2005 and US\$ 738 million in 2009. Having said that, it should nevertheless be noticed that German humanitarian aid as a percentage of total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) has actually decreased over the years. A situation whereby in 2009 only 6% of ODA consisted of humanitarian aid means that the amount of financial assistance dedicated to long-term development aid has risen faster than the component dedicated to emergency assistance (GHA 2011). Indeed this is all the more worrying in a context where, although the percentage of German humanitarian aid out of the total of Germany's ODA has risen from 2% in 2004 to 3.3% in 2008, Germany still lags far behind the DAC donors' average of 9.2% for 2008 (OECD 2010).

Moving on to the actual channels through which Germany's assistance is delivered, it immediately becomes clear that most of the country's humanitarian aid is overwhelmingly channelled through the European Commission. Indeed, in 2009 alone, Germany channelled US\$ 336.5 m in humanitarian aid to the European Commission making it by far its largest first-tier recipient. Germany's support for the European Commission has been consistent over the years with a percentage between 46% and 57% of all German humanitarian aid between 2005 and 2009 being channelled through the European Commission. A pattern that has been further strengthened by the fact that Germany contributed always over 20% of the European Commission's total Overseas Development assistance (ODA). Also in 2009 the GTZ, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW; Reconstruction Loan Corporation) banking group were awarded US\$ 66.5 m, US\$ 58.1 m, and US\$ 54.2 m in financing respectively. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) ranked fifth, sixth and seventh place as first-tier recipients with donations of US\$ 21.4 m, US\$ 17.6 m and US\$ 11.4 m each. Last but not least, the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ) were the last three top-tier recipients of German humanitarian aid with donations of US\$ 8.6 m, US\$ 5.7 m and US\$ 4.9 m in 2009 (GHA 2011).

Germany displays a significant degree of predictability for what concerns both its channels of financing and the recipient countries it decides to support. In 2009, the top

five recipients of German humanitarian aid have been the Occupied Palestinian Territories with US\$ 80.1 m (11.3% of the total), Afghanistan with US\$ 78.1 m (11%), Sudan with US\$ 62 m (8.7%), Pakistan with US\$ 45.9 m (6.5%) and Somalia with US\$ 33 m (4.6%). There is a high degree of predictability for what concerns the recipients of German humanitarian aid: Sudan, Afghanistan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories have always been among the top five recipients of German humanitarian aid throughout the 2003 to 2009 period (GHA 2011).

Figure 1: First-tier recipients of German humanitarian aid

First-tier recipient	Amount received (US\$ millions)
EC	336.5
GTZ	66.5
WFP	58.1
KfW	54.2
OCHA	21.4
UNHCR	17.6
UNRWA	11.4
WB	8.6
ICRC	5.7
BMZ	4.9

Source: Global Humanitarian Assistance 2011

4. Quantitative analysis

Having presented the key characteristics of the German humanitarian aid system, a quantitative analysis can now contribute to observe the eventual presence of a causal mechanism whereby an increase in issue salience leads to an increase in the government's disbursement of humanitarian aid. Mill's method of concomitant variation is in this context relevant when observing variation between two variables (i.e., in a bi-dimensional graph) but not sufficient to establish a causal mechanism itself. A multiple regression analysis, on the other hand, might be extremely useful in order to establish which independent variables might be particularly significant in determining the value of the dependent variable. The multiple regression analysis and the various graphs provided below aim therefore to investigate which independent variables might most strongly affect the dependent variable and, if possible, to determine the presence of a causal mechanism whereby an increase in issue salience leads to an increase in disbursements.

4.1 Multiple regression analysis with GLS on disbursement

Generalised least squares are a technique for estimating the unknown parameters in a linear regression model that helps in dealing with issues of heteroscedasticity.⁵ After

⁵ The World Dictionary of English defines as 'heteroscedastic' a multivariate distribution 'not having any variable whose variance is the same for all the values of the others'. Definition available at <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/heteroscedasticity> (last access: 27 August 2011).

having normalised the data presented in the multiple regression analysis to be better able to observe the magnitude of the absolute values of the coefficients, we have run a multiple regression analysis with generalised least squares of our dependent variable “log_disburse” consisting of the actual disbursements (as opposed to only pledges) provided daily by the German government to the countries affected by the selected humanitarian catastrophes as recorded through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ Financial Tracking Service against all our independent variables.

The independent variables whose $P > z$ value is less than 0.05 are assumed to have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The P value is the most important value to consider when observing the results of a multiple regression analysis because it tells the extent of the probability that the investigated independent variable has an impact on the value of the dependent variable. A P value of .05 (or less) suggests that there is a 95% probability (or more) that the investigated independent variable has an effect on the dependent variable and that there is only a 5% possibility that the obtained value is the result of random distribution. A P value of .05 or less is generally accepted as a good enough value to discard the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the dependent and the independent variables under investigation. $P > z$ values of (almost) 0.00, 0.01 and 0.05 for the variables fatalities, I_1 (number of articles published one day following the onset of the catastrophe) and I_3 (number of articles published three days following the onset of the catastrophe) respectively, highlight the fact that there is an (almost) 100%, 99% and 95% probability that these three investigated independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable log_disburse and that there is only an (almost) 0%, 1% and 5% likelihood respectively that the obtained value is the result of random distribution. With our normalized data, the size of the absolute value of the coefficients highlights the extent of the impact that the investigated independent variable has on the dependent variable. Indeed, $P > z$ shows the significance of the variable while the absolute value of the coefficient shows the amount of influence. In this case, the independent variables with the coefficients with the highest absolute values are those of I_1 and I_3 . Indeed, the variables I_1 and I_3 display both a very high absolute value for their coefficients (.2838705 and -.2334489 respectively) as well as very significant $P > z$ values of 0.01 and 0.05 respectively. Finally, the third highly significant independent variable (fatalities) also shows a high degree of influence with an absolute value of .1686955 for its coefficient. The most significant independent variables in determining the value of the dependent variable “log_disburse” are therefore fatalities of I_1 and I_3 . On the other hand, the variables I_2 , I_4 and I_5 are not considered significant in that their respective $P > z$ values are all well above the 0.05 threshold (0.240, 0.320 and 0.299). The results of the multiple regression analysis have also been confirmed by a logarithmic calculation.

Figure 2: MRA with GLS on the DV against all the IVs

note: crgovernment omitted because of collinearity						
note: functioning omitted because of collinearity						
Cross-sectional time-series FGLS regression						
Coefficients: generalized least squares						
Panel s: homoskedastic						
Correlation: no autocorrelation						
Estimated covariances	=	1		Number of obs	=	210
Estimated autocorrelations	=	0		Number of groups	=	21
Estimated coefficients	=	16		Time periods	=	10
Log likelihood	=	57.87691		Wald chi 2(15)	=	50.07
				Prob > chi 2	=	0.0000
log_disburse	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
gdpus	-.0000434	.0001471	-0.30	0.768	-.0003317	.0002448
clgovernment	.0678795	.0556911	1.22	0.223	-.041273	.1770321
crgovernment	(omitted)					
functioning	(omitted)					
election	-.043658	.1000641	-0.44	0.663	-.23978	.152464
fatalities	.1686955	.0624877	2.70	0.007	.0462218	.2911691
affected	-.0625432	.0546786	-1.14	0.253	-.1697112	.0446249
damage	.1060976	.0633027	1.68	0.094	-.0179735	.2301686
clarticles	.1775421	.1920355	0.92	0.355	-.1988406	.5539249
totarticles	-.1831575	.2358914	-0.78	0.437	-.6454962	.2791812
clvalence	-.0172306	.0786326	-0.22	0.827	-.1713476	.1368863
totvalence	-.0313599	.1129454	-0.28	0.781	-.2527289	.190009
l1	.2838705	.1184583	2.40	0.017	.0516964	.5160445
l2	.1373927	.1169543	1.17	0.240	-.0918335	.3666189
l3	-.2334489	.1194693	-1.95	0.051	-.4676044	.0007066
l4	-.115776	.1164043	-0.99	0.320	-.3439242	.1123721
l5	-.1140542	.1098391	-1.04	0.299	-.3293349	.1012266
_cons	.1242662	.4099972	0.30	0.762	-.6793136	.927846

Note: Codes employed for the independent variables:

gdpus = Gross Domestic Product of the investigated donor country (US\$)

clgovernment = Centre-left / liberal government in power at the time of disbursement

crgovernment = Centre-right / conservative government in power at the time of disbursement

functioning = Ease with which national humanitarian body can release disbursements

election = Presence of an election period or not at the time of disbursement

fatalities = Number of fatalities recorded

affected = Number of individuals affected

damage = Estimated damage (US\$)

clarticles = Number of articles published in the centre-left newspaper.NB: The variable crarticles is discarded because part of a binary relationship with the variable clarticles

totarticles = Total number of articles published in both newspaper

clvalence = Valence of the reported news (negative, neutral or positive).NB: The variable crvalence is discarded because part of a binary relationship with the variable clvalence

totvalence = Valence of the reported news (negative, neutral or positive)

l1 = Total number of articles published one day following the onset of the disaster

l2 = Total number of articles published two days following the onset of the disaster

l3 = Total number of articles published three days following the onset of the disaster

l4 = Total number of articles published four days following the onset of the disaster

l5 = Total number of articles published five days following the onset of the disaster

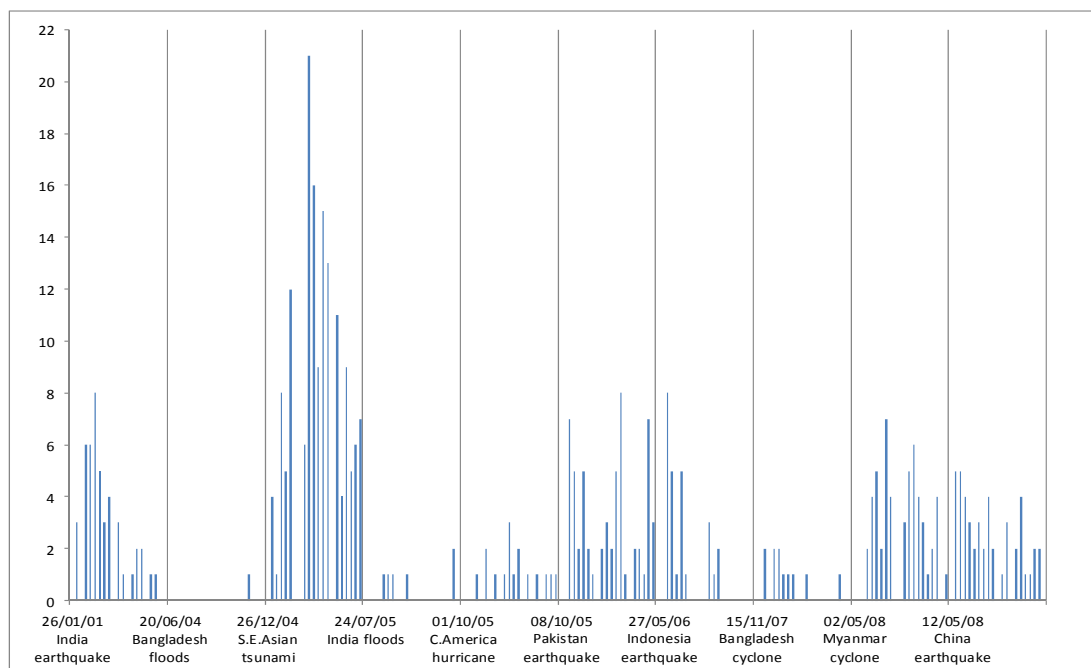
_cons = Constant

Source: the author

4.2 Number of articles over the period of analysis

This graph illustrates the total number of articles published by a leading German centre-left newspaper (*Frankfurter Rundschau*) and a leading centre-right newspaper (*Die Welt*) on the issue of humanitarian aid. The graph is divided in ten sections, each one corresponding to one of the ten natural disasters under investigation. Each visible date on the x-axis is the first of 21 days from the onset of a selected natural disaster. As one might have expected, the Southeast Asian tsunami of December 2004 recorded the highest number of articles within the whole period of analysis (1 January 2000 to 31 December 2008). While a peak of 21 articles was reached on the second week following the onset of the catastrophe, the total number of articles remained significant for both the first and the third week of analysis with a number of days where more than 10 articles were published on the topic. While the December 2004 tsunami was an extraordinary event in itself, the very magnitude of it (almost 230,000 fatalities were recorded) makes the tsunami an outlier case not necessarily representative of consistent trends.

Figure 3: Number of articles over the period of analysis



Source: the author

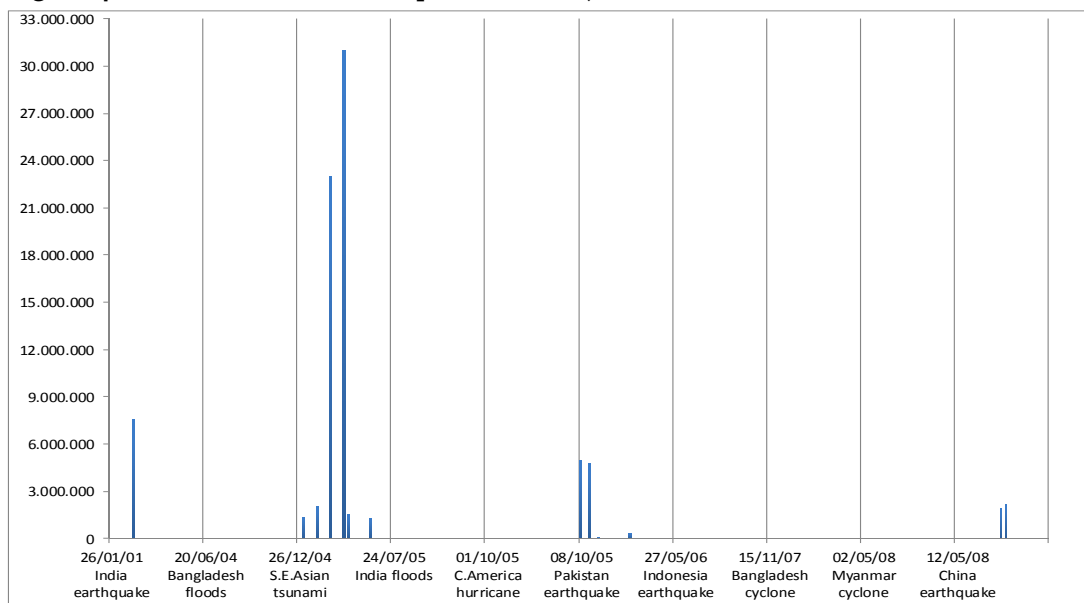
When one shifts the analysis to the other natural disasters under investigation, a number of patterns become apparent. Firstly, the maximum number of articles dedicated by German newspapers to each catastrophe seem to remain significantly similar throughout the period of analysis and the different catastrophes: in the case of the January 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the October 2005 Kashmir earthquake, the May 2008 Myanmar cyclone and the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the maximum number of articles fluctuates between a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 8 articles per day. Secondly, in all these catastrophes, the national newspapers under investigation maintain their attention focused on each catastrophe for a remarkably similar length of

time: 3 weeks. Thirdly, over a period of three weeks following the onset of a humanitarian catastrophe, all the above-mentioned natural disasters record a constant but relatively gradual decrease in the number of articles dedicated to them. A final observation must be made for what concerns the number of articles published for “minor catastrophes” in terms of the total number of fatalities recorded. Even some of these smaller catastrophes such as the Java earthquake of May 2006 (absolute day 127) can reach peaks of up to 8 articles per day and remain in the news for over one week. There seems to be therefore relatively little variation in both the total number of articles and the length of time that key German newspapers seem to dedicate to different humanitarian catastrophes.

4.3 German disbursement over the period of analysis (US\$)

The following table above illustrates the emergency financial disbursements provided by the German government to the disaster-stricken countries under investigation for the whole period of analysis. The graph is divided in ten sections, each one corresponding to one of the ten natural disasters under investigation. Each visible date on the x-axis is the first of 21 days from the onset of a selected natural disaster. This graph highlights the highly uneven distribution of humanitarian aid on behalf of the German government. While the victims of the Southeast Asian tsunami benefitted from German emergency financial assistance to the tune of well over US\$ 55 m (in more than one tranche), all other humanitarian catastrophes never managed to secure over US\$ 10 m in emergency humanitarian assistance (including multiple disbursements for the same humanitarian catastrophe).

Figure 4: Disbursement over the period of analysis



Source: the author on elaborations from the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)⁶

⁶ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Financial Tracking Service (FTS), <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=search-customsearch> (last access: 27 June 2011).

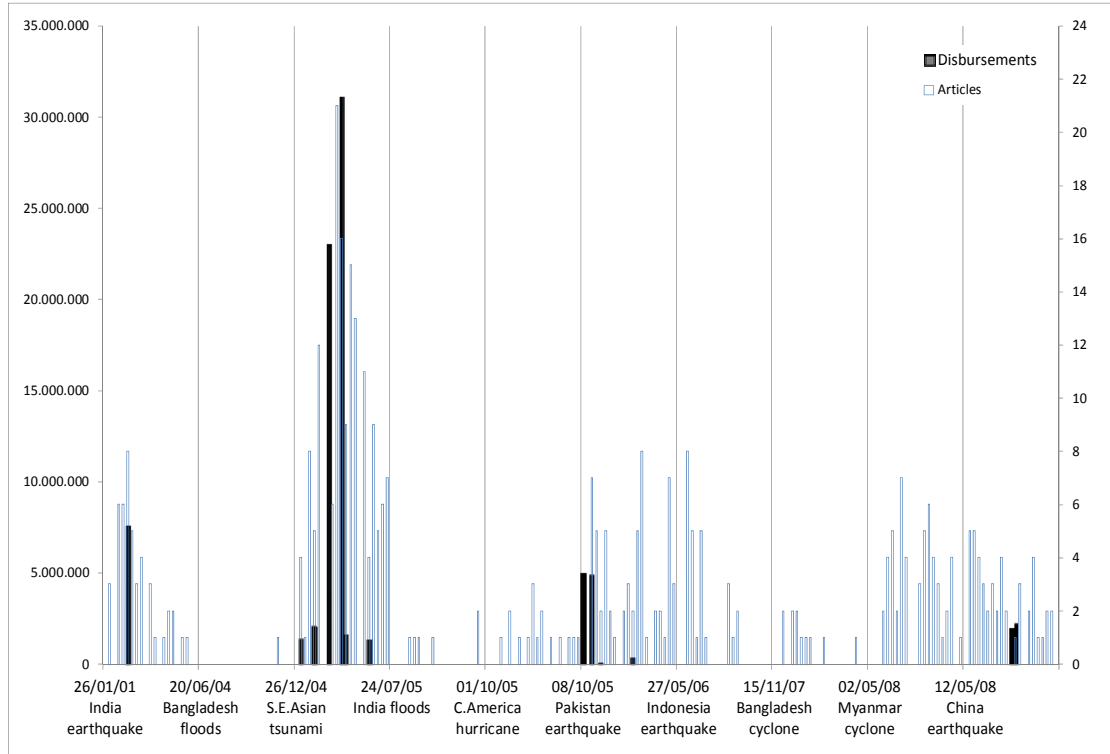
As much as the Federal Government displayed great generosity following the December 2004 tsunami, little generosity was displayed in the years preceding or following that catastrophe. While the second best-funded humanitarian emergency (the Kashmir earthquake) received US\$ 10 m in emergency aid (in two tranches) and the third best-funded (the Gujarat earthquake of January 2001) received US\$ 7.5 m all other catastrophes never managed to attract funding for over US\$ 2 m. Five out of the ten natural disasters under investigation (including the almost 140,000 victims of cyclone Nargis in May 2008) received no financial assistance from the German Federal Government. The emergency financial assistance provided by the German government to countries struck by natural disasters seems to be forthcoming only in very few and exceptional circumstances and in relatively limited amounts: the assistance provided following the December 2004 tsunami seems even more exceptional once placed within the broader context of the amounts of financial assistance that Germany has provided within the whole period of analysis, both highlighting the generosity of the days following 26 December 2004 and showing the limited amount of financial assistance provided on other occasions.

4.4 Number of articles and disbursements over the period of analysis

The graph above illustrates the total number of articles against the total financial disbursement provided by the German federal government for the ten humanitarian catastrophes under investigation for the whole period of analysis. The graph is divided in ten sections, each one corresponding to one of the ten natural disasters under investigation. Each visible number on the x-axis is the first of 21 days from the onset of a selected natural disaster. A number of observations can be made in relation to this graph. First of all, an increase in the total number of articles is not always followed by an increase in disbursement of emergency financial assistance to a catastrophe-hit country. This can be seen clearly in the cases of the Kashmir earthquake (absolute day 106), the Java earthquake (absolute day 127) and cyclone Nargis (absolute day 190): while in all these instances significant increases in terms of issue salience in the German newspapers could be observed (with peaks of 8 articles in the two earthquakes and 7 articles in the case of cyclone Nargis), in these occasions no emergency assistance was provided by the Federal Government. Second, it must be observed that whenever it takes place, an increase in disbursement is always preceded by an increase in the number of articles relating to the catastrophe to which the increase in disbursement is related. Fundamentally, this means that no disbursement is to be expected in a situation where no increase in issue salience has been recorded. Indeed, the disbursements that took place following the January 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the December 2004 tsunami and the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake were all preceded by significant increases in the total number of articles published on these natural catastrophes by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Die Welt* (all reaching 7 articles per day or more). Not the same can be said for what concerns the Kashmir earthquake of October 2005 when, following an almost immediate disbursement after the catastrophe, German authorities released no more financial assistance despite the high levels of issue salience recorded in the newspapers under investigations in the three weeks following the quake (with peaks of 7 articles per

day). Finally and as already mentioned before, some natural disasters received no financial assistance whatsoever despite significant issue salience in national disbursements: the Java earthquake of May 2006 being a case in point (absolute day 127).

Figure 5: Number of articles and disbursements (US\$) over the period of analysis

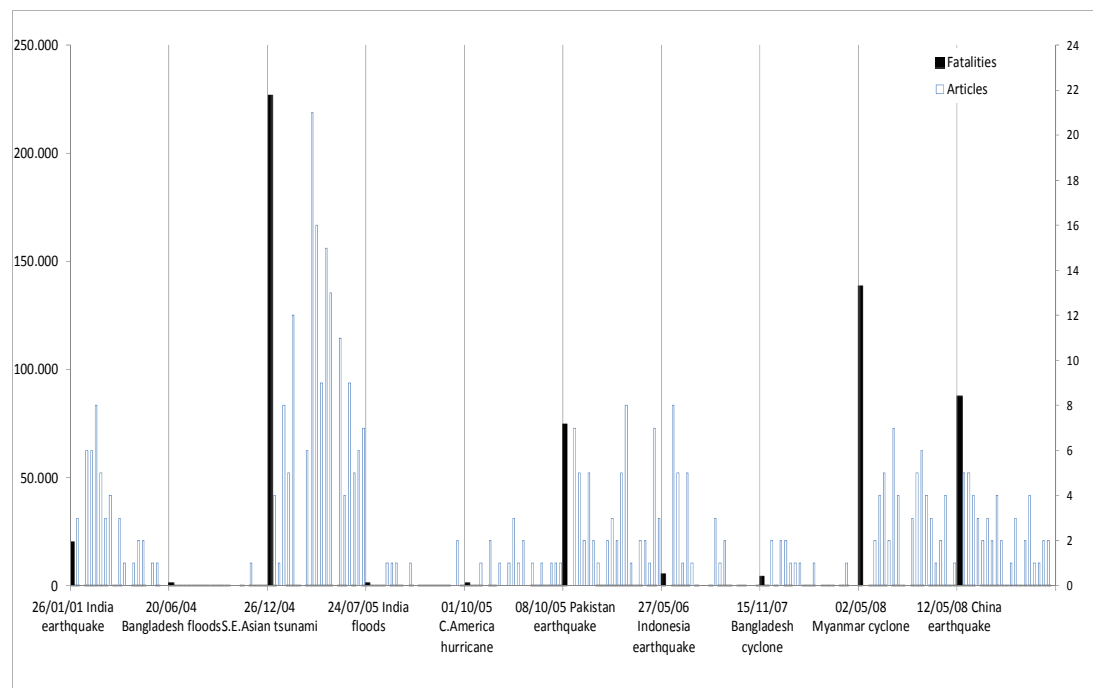


Source: the author and elaborations from the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)⁷

4.5 Number of articles against number of fatalities

The graph above highlights the relationships between the total number of fatalities registered for each investigated catastrophe and the total number of articles dedicated to each catastrophe by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and *Die Welt*. Not surprisingly, the number of articles in German newspapers reporting on humanitarian catastrophes increases following a peak in the number of fatalities recorded. This can be easily observed following the December 2004 tsunami when fatalities skyrocketed to almost 230,000 individuals: the days that followed the tsunami were characterised by an exceptional increase in number of articles per day reporting on the catastrophe. A maximum of 21 articles per day were recorded with reference to this catastrophe and for approximately two weeks the number of articles never dropped below 4.

⁷ Id., p. 12.

Figure 6: Number of articles against the number of fatalities

Source: the author and elaborations from data provided by the International Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) of the University of Louvain

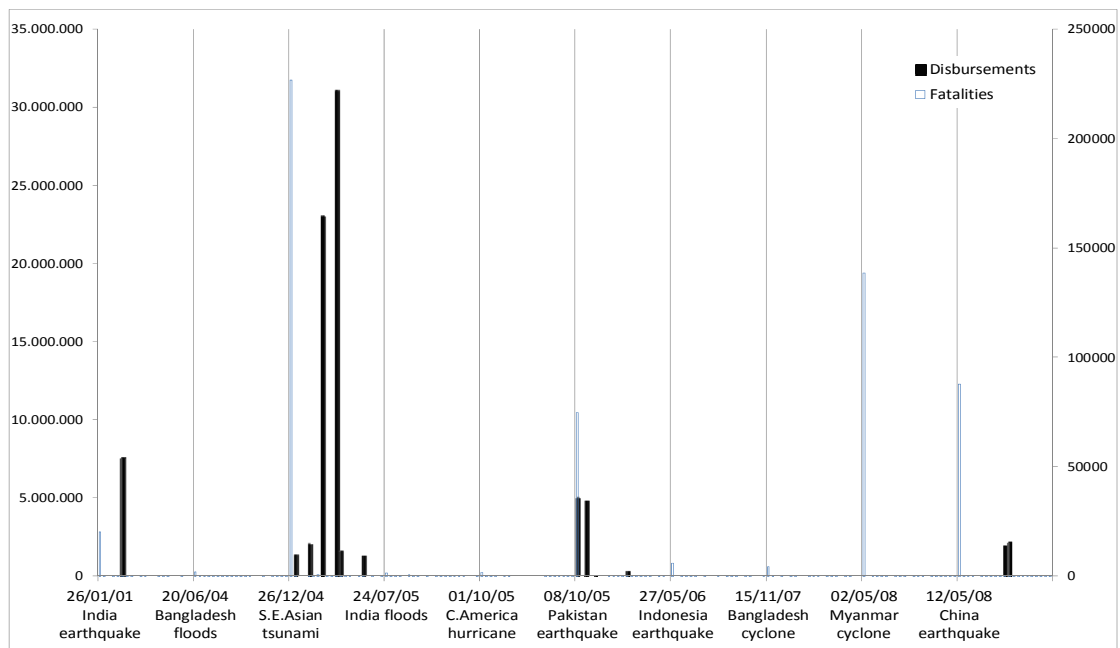
The pattern described above is not restricted to the exceptional days that followed the tsunami. Indeed, one can observe that there is a clear and constant increase in the total number of articles following a sudden peak in the number of fatalities. Other major catastrophes such as the Gujarat earthquake (India) of January 2001 (absolute day 1), the Kashmir earthquake (Pakistan) of October 2005 (absolute day 106) and the Java earthquake (Indonesia) of May 2006, all recorded impressive peaks of 8 articles per day. The pattern is absolutely clear indeed: a sudden increase in the number of fatalities due to a humanitarian catastrophe is always followed by an increase in the number of articles on the corresponding catastrophe. Finally, it can be observed that, with the exception of the December 2004 tsunami earthquake, the total number of fatalities as such does not seem to have a very significant impact on the number of articles dedicated to the humanitarian catastrophe in question. Three natural disasters with very different numbers in terms of fatalities recorded such as the January 2001 Gujarat earthquake, the Kashmir earthquake of October 2005 and the Burma cyclone Nargis of May 2008 (slightly over 20,000, approximately 75,000 and almost 140,000 fatalities respectively) all recorded peaks of between 7 and 8 articles per day each. Besides with reference to fatalities, this variation can be explained either by looking at the political and diplomatic context where the disaster took place or by focussing on key alternative explanations such as the number of individuals affected or the estimated damage reported for each catastrophe.

4.6 Disbursements against recorded fatalities

The following figure highlights the disbursements of emergency financial assistance provided by the German federal government against the number of fatalities recorded

for the natural disasters under investigation for the whole period of analysis. The graph is divided in ten sections, each one corresponding to one of the ten natural disasters under investigation. Each visible date on the x-axis is the first of 21 days from the onset of a selected natural disaster. To begin with, the amount of financial assistance provided does not seem to be in any way linked to the number of fatalities reported for a specific catastrophe. As the graph clearly highlights and leaving aside the December 2004 tsunami due to its very exceptional nature, it can be seen for instance how the disbursements provided following the Gujarat earthquake of January 2001, the Kashmir earthquake of October 2005 and the May 2008 cyclone Nargis are actually almost inversely proportional to the number of fatalities recorded. The Gujarat earthquake recorded slightly over 20,000 fatalities but received almost US\$ 8 m in emergency assistance, the Kashmir earthquake recorded almost 80,000 fatalities but was provided with approximately US\$ 5 m in humanitarian assistance and the almost 140,000 fatalities of cyclone Nargis were not enough to mobilize any financial assistance for Burma whatsoever. The reason for the fact that the victims of cyclone Nargis did not receive any emergency financial assistance from the German federal government can be found in the political and diplomatic context within which the emergency itself took place. Indeed, on the one hand and throughout the crisis the Burmese regime consistently refused to allow free and unrestricted access to international humanitarian agencies. At the same time and on the other hand, the donor community felt that it could not trust that the Burmese junta would have not siphoned off the financial assistance provided from the intended beneficiaries to its own bank accounts. These circumstances conspired to discourage the German federal government from providing emergency financial assistance despite the enormous number of fatalities reported.

Figure 7: Disbursements against recorded fatalities



Source: Elaborations of the author on data provided by the International Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) of the University of Louvain and the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Furthermore, another observation concerns the timing of the provision of financial assistance: with the sole exception of the Sichuan earthquake (China) in May 2008, it appears as if emergency financial assistance on behalf of the German federal government either is provided almost immediately following a natural catastrophe or not at all. Finally, the “pull factor” that the number of fatalities recorded in a natural disaster might or might not have in determining the disbursement of emergency financial assistance on behalf of the German federal government also plays a role. Indeed, while only natural disasters that recorded more than 20,000 fatalities received any emergency financial assistance, it should be noted that the denial of financial assistance seems to be absolutely not correlated with the total number of fatalities recorded: both relatively “minor” crises such as the Bangladeshi floods of June 2004, the Java earthquake in May 2005, the Indian floods of July 2005, Hurricane Stan in October 2005 or cyclone Sidr in November 2007 as well as “major crises” in terms of fatalities such as cyclone Nargis in May 2008 completely failed to encourage the German federal government to provide any emergency financial assistance.

5. Conclusion

Germany is a case study whereby the government's disbursement of emergency financial assistance does not necessarily follow increases in the total number of fatalities reported or increases in the total number of articles reporting on a certain catastrophe. While the multiple regression analysis shows that the number of fatalities and the number of articles published either one or three days following the onset of a catastrophe are the most significant independent variables, the bi-dimensional graph illustrating the relationship between the total number of fatalities and the German government's disbursements as well as the one illustrating the relationship between the total number of published articles and disbursements show only a partial correlation. Indeed, on the one hand, it can be observed that in certain catastrophes that recorded a high number of fatalities, the German government provided significant amounts of assistance (2001 Gujarat earthquake, 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami and 2005 Pakistan earthquake). On the other hand, however, the same graph highlights how certain catastrophes that recorded an extremely high number of fatalities received little or no financial assistance from the German federal government (cyclone Nargis in Burma in 2008 and the 2008 Sichuan earthquake being two typical examples). Last but not least, all these observations can be made within a context whereby increases in the total number of published articles in German newspapers are almost always closely correlated to increases in the total number of fatalities recorded in each natural catastrophe.

Three key considerations can be made while looking at the triangulation of the variables of disbursement, articles and fatalities. First of all, issue salience almost always increases as result of an increase in the total number of fatalities. Second, government disbursement might but does not necessarily increase as a result of an increase in issue salience. Finally, government disbursement might but does not necessarily increase as result of the amount of fatalities recorded. It can therefore be claimed that, in the case of Germany, the general hypothesis that an increase in issue salience leads to an increase

in a government's provision of emergency financial assistance holds only to a limited extent. A number of factors might contribute to explain the rather limited degree of responsiveness of the German federal government to increases in issue salience in national newspapers.

To begin with, humanitarian aid issues seem to be present to a rather limited extent in the German media. Compared with seven other EU member states under investigation, Germany comes second-last in terms of the total number of articles published on the ten selected humanitarian crises. Indeed, with a total of only 415 articles, Germany comes ahead only of Denmark (335 articles) and well behind the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and France in terms of the extent to which the issue of humanitarian assistance is present in national public discourses (Garavoglia 2011, forthcoming). When German newspapers do publish articles about humanitarian aid, these tend therefore to be presented to a public opinion that is relatively unexposed to the issue and within a context where humanitarian aid is seldom present in public discourse.

Second and compared to many of its European partners, Germany has a relatively limited colonial history both in terms of time and geographic extension. As result of this relatively limited colonial history, the economic, historical and cultural ties linking Germany to the overwhelming majority of countries that have been affected by the natural disasters taken into investigation in this study are rather limited. Compared to what happens in other European countries with much more extensive colonial pasts, there is therefore relatively little interest and incentive for German national newspapers to extensively report on the countries affected by the humanitarian crises under investigation.

Furthermore, humanitarian aid is a policy area that is relatively low on the German government's political agenda and relatively insulated from external pressure and public opinion. This is the case for two fundamental reasons. The first reason lays in the fact that, as it has been previously pointed out, Germany has one Commissioner for Human Rights who holds humanitarian assistance as only one of many policy areas within its portfolio in a context where human rights have always taken priority in terms of 'governmental attention' ahead of humanitarian assistance. The second key reason why humanitarian aid policy is a rather insulated policy area is to be found in the legislative architecture of the German parliament. While within the German Bundestag there exists a committee dedicated theoretically in equal measure to human rights and humanitarian aid, an examination of its activities reveals a much stronger focus on human rights issues thus relegating humanitarian assistance to a second-tier policy area to which relatively little attention is dedicated (Garavoglia 2011, forthcoming).

Additionally, the German federal government's humanitarian assistance might not always be so responsive to increases in issue salience in the national media due to the way in which humanitarian assistance has traditionally been organized. Indeed, German humanitarian assistance has traditionally been extremely fragmented between a number of agencies such as GTZ, InWEnt, DED, Dachverband freier Weltanschauungsgemeinschaften (DfW) and THW as well as two ministries (Foreign

Office and BMZ). Such fragmentation has been significantly reduced as from 1 January 2011 with the creation of GIZ that resulted from the merger of GTZ, DED and InWEnt. Nevertheless, the fragmentation of the past has for a long time made it virtually impossible to coordinate the simultaneous provision of emergency financial assistance from all the national bodies involved in humanitarian policy. The number of fatalities and the amount of articles published on a humanitarian crisis are certainly the two independent variables that are most significant in impacting the provision of emergency financial assistance on behalf of the German government. However, the four reasons mentioned above might explain why, in the case of Germany, the general hypothesis that an increase in issue salience leads to a concomitant variation in the increase of a government's commitment to provide emergency financial assistance can be accepted only to a limited extent.

Finally and coming back to the various kinds of possible political adoptions presented by Walgrave and van Aelst's theoretical framework, a number of observations can be made. To begin with, no reaction (i.e. no disbursements of emergency financial assistance) can be observed in relation to a number of natural disasters investigated. Indeed, no reaction can be seen in all those instances where no significant increases in issue salience are recorded: the India and Bangladesh floods of June 2004, the Indian floods of July 2005, hurricane Stan in Central America in October 2005 and cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh in November 2007. When issue salience is not significant, no reaction takes place. Furthermore, a fast but only symbolic reaction takes place following the Sichuan earthquake of 12 May 2008 but on no other occasions. Last but certainly not least, fast substantial reactions do take place on the occasion of the Gujarat earthquake of 16 January 2001, following the Southeast Asian tsunami of 24 December 2004 and the Kashmir earthquake of 8 October 2005. The fast and substantial increases in disbursements that took place following the Gujarat earthquake and the Southeast Asian tsunami can be attributed to the very significant increases in issue salience that precede the disbursements themselves. In the case of the Kashmir earthquake, on the other hand, peaks in issue salience took place following increases in disbursements. This suggests that not only increases in disbursement did not take place as result of increases in issue salience, but that, rather, increases in the number of recorded articles might be a direct result of increases in registered disbursements.

In the case of Germany, Walgrave and van Aelst's tentative theory on the media's agenda-setting power is confirmed only to a limited extent despite a situation where the media should find themselves in the ideal conditions to play their agenda-setting role. Indeed, the paper provides a context whereby the media deal with a sudden, negative and unobtrusive issue; where it is possible to observe no reactions as well as sudden symbolic or substantial reactions; and where the executive has the possibility to easily set itself free from standard bargaining processes with the legislative bodies: these are all features that should enable the media to most easily exert their agenda-setting power. Despite this set of 'ideal conditions', the paper can identify only two natural disasters (out of a total of ten) where the media might be playing an agenda-setting role: the Gujarat earthquake of 26 January 2001 and the Southeast Asian tsunami of 26

December 2004. To conclude, the number of fatalities and the amount of articles published on a humanitarian crisis are certainly the two independent variables that are most significant in impacting the provision of emergency financial assistance on behalf of the German federal government. However, the four reasons mentioned above might explain why, in the case of Germany, the general hypothesis that an increase in issue salience leads to a concomitant variation in the increase of a government's commitment to provide emergency financial assistance can be accepted only to a limited extent.

Given the state of affairs portrayed above, future research might in the coming years wish to concentrate on a few specific issues. First of all, expanding the analysis of the reporting on humanitarian issues to other newspapers and media outlets, such as the internet, might reveal new trends concerning the way the German public sphere is shaped up in relation to issues having to do with humanitarian affairs. Second, an investigation of the geopolitical and strategic determinants of German foreign policy might provide interesting insights regarding patterns in the disbursement of emergency humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the way through which lobby groups and NGOs are attempting to structure their relationship with the German Federal Foreign Office and the BMZ should receive more attention. A fresh evaluation of the *modus operandi* of the newly restructured GIZ (following the 2011 re-structuring of its activities) should provide interesting insights concerning the framing and implementation of both developmental and humanitarian policy. Finally, a qualitative research agenda that builds upon this quantitative analysis can contribute to a holistic understanding of the dynamics between changes in issue coverage and the provision of emergency humanitarian aid.

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